Nearly two decades ago, Rhaegar Targaryen sacrificed the one thing he ever truly wanted in order to maintain peace. But in the criminal underworld, peace is a fragile, fickle thing. As secrets are uncovered and loyalties are tested new love blossoms. Will history repeat itself or will true love finally prevail?

Notes

Multiple ships/storylines feeding into major plot!

tw; attempted rape
Wineseller

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shivering, Daenerys hugs herself. She’s already regretting her decision of leaving the house sleeveless… and backless. The sequin, black mini dress she chose for tonight is a far cry from her usual outfit choices, but she’s in a daring mood.

And a daring mood calls for daring attire.

“I don’t think this is a good idea,” her best friend and companion for this daring adventure, Missandei, says. “We’re too far from home.” She looks down at her outfit, grimacing. “And I look like a vampire slayer, not a party goer.” While her outfit isn’t as revealing as Daenerys’s, the black leather pants and corset top is not exactly modest.

“Who said vampire slayers can’t also be party goers?” Daenerys grins at the disapproving look Missandei gives her. “Oh come on, Missandei. This will be fun!”

Before another word of disapproval can leave Missandei’s mouth, Daenerys grabs her by the arm, continuing their walk down the cobblestone street, heading for the packed nightclub where the line is snaking from around the corner all the way to the entrance.

Lines are a non-factor for the likes of Daenerys Targaryen. She can’t recall a time she ever had to wait for anything. That isn’t her way of bragging, either. It’s a mere fact. Her family is one of the oldest and wealthiest in the city. The privilege, that she sees as underserved on her part, has always bothered her. However, tonight, she’s going to use it to their advantage.

“The line is back there,” Missandei says.

“Those poor souls will be waiting there until the club closes,” Daenerys says, remarking her shoes. “I didn’t put on these heels just to stand out here all night.”

Again, Missandei makes a point to remind Daenerys that they’re far from home which makes zero sense to Daenerys. She was born here and although Missandei was born elsewhere they grew up here together. Westeros is their home.

Because she can’t stand to make her best friend worry too much, Daenerys takes Missandei’s hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. “No worries. We won’t stay out too late. I’m sure you’d like to get enough sleep so you can get a headstart on your studies.”

She assumes that’s the reason behind Missandei’s anxiousness. Their first year of university begins in a couple of days (hence the celebratory mood Daenerys is in). And they’re both eager to impress their professors with their academic achievements, same way they impressed all of their instructors in the past.

Missandei gives Daenerys’s side profile a flat look but it goes unnoticed because Daenerys is already beaming at the thick-necked bouncer who is standing in front of the VIP door. His expression is unchanged when he spots Daenerys, though, his eyes widen fractionally.

Daenerys takes that as a good sign. It’s obvious this man recognizes her; recognizes her distinctive, physical features, that is. That means he knows the most important thing about her. Her surname.
She opens her mouth to speak, but the bouncer beats her to it.

“You’re not on the list,” he says harshly, regarding the women with a hard glare. “Scurry back to where you belong.”

Frowning, Daenerys glances around to see if there’s anyone standing behind them or in their vicinity. Surely, this man isn’t addressing her and Missandei that way. Finding no one else, she squares her shoulders and glowers up at the man, ignoring how easily he towers over her.

“And where exactly do I belong?” she asks stubbornly.

Missandei touches Daenerys’s shoulder. “We should leave,” she whispers.

“Leave? But we came all this way, Missandei.”

“Listen, we don’t want any trouble,” the bouncer says, his tone softer. “Just leave, alright.”

The bouncer isn’t suggesting they go stand in line like everyone else. He wants them to leave altogether. For a person who has never been denied entry anywhere, this is startling and honestly humiliating. She can feel the urge to stomp her feet and demand to have her way trying to take over her.

It disgusts her.

She isn’t that kind of person. At least, she has never wanted to be that kind of person. She swallows down the bitter rejection.

With a resigned sigh, Daenerys nods at the bouncer. “Forgive me,” she says quietly. “We’ll be on our-”

“They’re with me,” a smooth voice cuts in. The owner of the voice steps from the shadows of the VIP door. He’s a short man with a weasel like face, his copper hair slicked back. “Let the lovely ladies in.”

The bouncer lifts the velvet rope, stepping aside to allow the women entry. Daenerys smiles brightly, happy that things worked out in the end. She walks up to the door with Missandei reluctantly following behind.

There are about a million and one things Jon would rather be doing tonight.

Yet here he is at one of the hottest clubs in the city with his ears being assaulted by shitty techno music and his other senses being equally brutalized by the smell of cheap cigars, cheap cologne, and cheap vodka.

At least he isn’t here alone.

His cousin, Robb, who actually enjoys the club scene, is here with him, indulging in as much debauchery as he can before they can do what it is they came here to do. The others who tagged along are somewhere around here, waiting for their orders.

Jon clasps his hands behind his back, discreetly checking the gun he has concealed. He’s itching to use it. The sooner he does so, the sooner they can get the hell out of here. He sweeps his dark eyes over the lower level of the club. From where he’s standing on the balcony, he has the perfect view. He pays special attention to the not-so-discreet armed men guarding the back door of the club.
Beside him, Robb whistles at two girls who are currently dry humping on the chair next to where they’re standing. Jon can’t help but chuckle at his cousin. Robb always knows how to make the best out of any situation.

Here they are, prepared to kill at least five people tonight, yet Robb acts as if they’re actually here to have a good time. Then again, killing people does seem like a good time...to certain folks.

Not to Jon. He’s never really enjoyed it. But it’s an important component of the family business.

Honestly, Jon can’t think of anyone in his family who genuinely loves what they do. Robb isn’t the playboy, killing machine people often label him as. He’s a hopeless romantic who loves his family dearly. Jon’s half-brother, Gendry, prefers to supply their weapons rather than use them.

Then there are Jon’s uncles on his mother’s side. Ned - the head of their family - prefers to handle things as peacefully as possible without any bloodshed. His uncle, Benjen, is about the same, though, he’s known to be a little more ruthless compared to his older brother.

As for Jon’s father…

Sudden movement near the back door catches Jon’s attention. Where there were two guards, there are now four. The change could mean anything. Extra security, in a place like this, is always a smart move. Still, Jon treats it as a potential threat to their plan. Better safe than sorry.

“We might have to resort to Plan B,” Jon says to his cousin, shouting over the booming music. He brings his glass up to his mouth, pretending to sip.

Robb smiles. “I always liked Plan B better anyway. Any sign of our furry friend?”

Their “furry friend” Robb is referring to is a man by the name of Ferret. He’s the owner of the club and their target. Jon wanted to wait until Ferret left the club to avoid any casualties but it seems like they’ll have to do it here.

Doesn’t matter, Jon thinks. Small fish like Ferret need to learn their place. And who better to teach it to him than them?

Jon sees Ferret enter the VIP balcony that’s conveniently directly across from where they’re standing. He waits for Robb’s signal. Theon will more than likely be the one to take Ferret out since he’s better at long range targets. That’s why they enlisted him to join them on this hit.

“Fucking hell,” Robb curses sharply. “The fuck is she doing here?”

Jon follows Robb’s line of sight. First, he notices a tall woman with warm skin and curly hair. She looks familiar but he can’t match a name to the face. Then he catches a glimpse of long, silver hair that seems to glow under the fluorescent lights.

“What in seven hells is the Targaryen girl doing here with Ferret?!” Robb asks.

Her hair might as well be a fucking beacon for anyone with a score to settle, Jon thinks. She’s like a walking bullseye.

Anyone with half a brain cell knows who the Targaryens are. The current head of the family, Rhaegar, is the reason why there hasn’t been a gang war in nearly two decades. He’s the reason why each family controls their own territory instead of answering to one kingpin as they once did during the time of Rhaegar’s ancestors. Everyone knows that just as easily as Rhaegar granted them individual sovereignty he can snatch it away. The man is that powerful.
A lot of the families respect Rhaegar, respect his family’s name. However, there are those who would love nothing more than to wipe the Targaryens from existence once and for all. Which is why Targaryen heiresses shouldn't stray too far from southern territory.

Jon asks, “You think it’s business related?”

Robb shakes his head. “Rhaegar wouldn’t make a deal with a slimy perv like Ferret. Sure as hell wouldn’t send his little sister to handle it.”

That’s true. Perhaps if Viserys Targaryen or Arthur Dayne were sitting in VIP with Ferret, sipping on drinks and laughing it up, then Jon would be worried. But this thing with the sister appears to be coincidental.

Whatever it is, it’s a wrench in their plans.

“We can’t make a move with her so close by,” Jon says, surprised at his own genuine concern for her safety. “All it takes is one bullet to miss its target…”

Innocent casualties are always a risk during hits but the stakes are higher now. Because this isn’t just some random clubber. This is the sister of the most dangerous man in the city, a member of the main family. If she gets killed, there'll be a war.

“I know.” Robb clenches his jaw. “Plan A is back in effect.”

Jon doesn’t realize how long he’s been staring at the woman until his eyes begin to burn and his vision blurs. Blinking, he tears his eyes away from the Targaryen girl, turning his attention to the cramped dancefloor. Even though he isn’t looking at her, the image of her is still fresh on his mind.

He’s beginning to believe his earlier assumption was correct. Her presence here is wholly coincidental because there’s no way Rhaegar allowed her this far from home wearing a dress like that.

“You act as if you’ve never seen a Targaryen before,” Robb laughs. “She’s gorgeous, isn’t she?”

“Haven’t noticed,” Jon lies.

Robb snorts. “Her hair isn’t red enough for you, is that it?” His smile falters. “Sorry about that. I didn’t mean to bring her...that up.”

Jon shrugs. “It’s fine.” He glances over at Ferret, needing a distraction from the memories conjured by the offhand comment Robb made. “You and I know what he’s about,” he says. “I doubt she does. Are you sure it’s smart to wait this out?”

“She’s Rhaegar’s sister. She can’t be that naive.”

“She’s naive enough to be this far away from their territory without any bodyguards.”

“How do we know she doesn’t have any bodyguards with her?” Robb asks. He looks at the other woman. “The long-legged beauty with her looks like she wants to gouge Ferret’s eyes out. Maybe she’s the bodyguard.”

Jon hasn’t missed the venom in the woman’s eyes. He knows the face of a killer all too well. Nonetheless, Ferret is a very dangerous man.

“She could already be in trouble,” Jon says matter-of-factly. “She and her ‘bodyguard’ have accepted
drinks from him.” The more the possibility lingers in his mind, the more unsettled he becomes. “What’s worse? Mistakenly killing Rhaegar’s sister or standing by while she and her friend get roofied?”

Cursing harshly, Robb takes out his phone to shoot Theon a text. “But we don’t have a Plan C,” he tells Jon.

“We can make one.”

In retrospect, coming here wasn’t the wisest decision, but in Daenerys’s defense, she only wanted to celebrate her acceptance into her dream university with her dearest friend in the entire world.

An acceptance that would’ve never happened if she didn’t convince her overprotective brother to reconsider sending her to a private university.

Daenerys chose the club, Wineseller, for two reasons. The first reason is that it’s ranked third on the list of hottest clubs in the city. Lion’s Roar is number one on the list but the owners of the club are closely associated with her family. Number two on the list, Wolf’s Den, is too far north, and even though this “celebration” is also an act of rebellion, she isn’t stupid enough to travel that far.

Wineseller was the perfect choice because of its social status and because it’s far enough that she won’t bump into any of her brother’s acquaintances yet it’s not too far.

The issue with the bouncer nearly discouraged Daenerys but luckily the owner of the club allowed her and Missandei entry. She offered her thanks; Missandei wasn’t as polite but when it comes to strangers, especially men, Missandei is rarely polite. Daenerys accepted the owner’s invitation for drinks and a view of the club from the VIP section as a show of gratitude.

That is how they ended up here in this lavish lounge, overlooking the dancefloor.

“Enjoying the view?” the owner, Ferret, asks her as he rubs the small of Daenerys’s smooth back.

Forcing a smile, Daenerys takes another sip of her drink, nodding. “It’s lovely.” She can feel Missandei sitting as stiff as a board beside her. Offering her best friend a reassuring smile, she sits her empty glass on the table beside Missandei’s full glass. “Thank you again, Mr...Ferret for your kindness. If you don’t mind, my friend and I would like to explore the rest of the club...”

Ferret grins, revealing a gold tooth. “Of course.” His hand glides further down Daenerys’s back. “Two, beautiful women such as yourselves have to be careful in this part of town. But I can assure you both, I’ll keep you safe.”

“We would like to explore on our own,” Missandei states, tone clipped.

That is exactly what Daenerys meant to say. But for the sake of keeping up appearances, she links her arm with Missandei’s, pulling her friend into a half hug, putting on her most charming smile. “You’ll have to excuse Missandei. She’s wary of strangers. Especially those who are are as kind as you.”

“As she should be,” Ferret says, smiling as if he’s privy to a secret they’re unaware of. “Two, beautiful women such as yourselves have to be careful in this part of town. But I can assure you both, I’ll keep you safe.”

Cold dread travels up her spine. She knows what that sensation means. It’s a warning. Her hold on Missandei tightens.
“Even still,” Daenerys says, her own voice sharpening, “we should be on our way.” She leans away from Ferret.

Ferret removes his hand from her back. “Allow me to walk you downstairs, at least.”

“I’m sure we can manage,” Missandei says.

“Oh, I insist.” Ferret stands and extends his hand for Daenerys but she doesn’t take it. Her rejection only makes his smile widen. “This way, ladies.” He gestures in the opposite direction of where they entered the balcony.

Missandei is the first to stand. She offers her hand to Daenerys who gratefully accepts. As she gets off the couch, Daenerys sways slightly but catches herself. She isn’t much of a drinker. The most she’s had is wine at charity balls or holiday galas. Whatever Ferret gave her appears to be stronger than that.

It’s as if every step she takes, the heavier her body feels. Missandei says something but Daenerys doesn’t catch it. In fact, the only thing she can hear is the amplified bass in her ears or perhaps it’s her heart that’s pounding so violently. It's strange how fast everything happens despite the world slowing down for her. She swears she can see every particle of dust in the air, can hear the blood cells in her body swelling.

“Daenerys,” Missandei says, voice suddenly crystal clear.

Blinking rapidly, Daenerys looks at Missandei then glances around, taking in their surroundings. They’re standing at the bottom of the stairs now, the vibrant clubbers at their backs, a long corridor in front of them, Ferret nowhere in sight.

“Wha-,” the words die on Daenerys’s tongue as she slips into unconsciousness.

When she awakes sometime later, she’s greeted by chaos.

Distorted screams and shouts accompanied by what seems to be several tires blowing out one after the other. It isn’t until she sees a redhead man firing a gun at an unseen target does she realize it’s gunshots, not blown tires. Daenerys has never heard a gunshot in real life. Not until now. Before the panic can fully sink in, she’s granted another first time experience. Another man, with dark, curly hair guts a man. Guts him as if he were a cattle. He pulls out his bloody knife and flings it across the room with ease.

She doesn’t have to see the full picture to know this man hits his mark.

“Who in the hell do you think you are?!” a familiar voice screams.

Ferret is standing over her and for a moment, Daenerys thinks he’s protecting her from the other two men but through Ferret’s parted legs, she sees a pair of shoes that are Missandei’s. Why is Missandei standing by those men?

Daenerys tries to sit up. She tries so hard that her efforts bring her to tears.

“Miss…” she croaks desperately.

Why is it so difficult for her to move or form a sentence?
“...going to have to get through me if you want to take my prize,” Ferret yells. His words are followed by a loud clicking sound.

Daenerys makes another attempt at moving. She can’t just lie there while Missandei is surrounded by these dangerous men. Even if they’re both outnumbered and seriously outclassed in terms of fighting skills, she has to stand by her best friend’s side. They have to face this together. Sadly, the most she can do is just lie there and cry.

The two men are talking from the sound of it. Their voices are deep and thick, distinctively northern.

“You really want Rhaegar and Viserys to drench the city with blood?” One of the men is asking. “That’s what will happen if you don’t hand her over. Only a fool would even think to touch her!”

My brothers? She thinks. Granted, they have been known to be overprotective of her (both in their own, unique ways) but they would never actually kill anyone over her. Would they?

All of this is too much for Daenerys. The situation, the sluggishness in her bones, the heat blossoming up her spine, the hardening of her nipples when the other northerner begins to speak…

“Hand her over,” he says. “We won’t ask again.”

Hearing the veiled threat does something to Daenerys. Where there was once fear there is desire. Every inch of her is on fire, her skin tingling, her core throbbing. She whimpers loudly, surprising herself by how needy she sounds. She would be embarrassed if she wasn’t so damn aroused.

Why on earth is she aroused during a time like this?

“Sounds like she’s ready for me,” Ferret laughs. “Run along little doe and little wolf. Take the other bitch with you! I’ve got all I need-”

Suddenly, Ferret’s body slumps on the floor, landing right in front of Daenerys. From the way his head is slightly tilted, she can see the blade lodged between his bulging eyes.

“I told you she was the bodyguard!!” is the last thing Daenerys hears before she blacks out for a second time.

While Robb, Theon, and the beautiful bodyguard with the wicked aim cover his ass, Jon rushes to the get-away-car with Daenerys secured in his arms. He’s heard stories about Ferret’s special brand of roofies. They’re faster and more effective than the original. The creep made sure whoever was on the receiving end of his unwanted advances would be powerless to stop him yet would experience every sensation.

Jon wishes he could bring him back just to kill him all over again. He can’t help but think about his younger cousins being in Daenerys’s shoes. Hell, he doesn’t need to be related to someone to be infuriated about this.

“Burns,” Daenerys mumbles, startling Jon. “It...burns...make it stop…” Her skin is flush and sweaty, her hair is sticking to the sides of her face.

“Hush now. We’re gonna’ take you home.” Jon makes a sharp turn, the sound of gunfire and rapid steps trailing behind them. “I’m sure your brother keeps a maester at your family’s estate.” Every great family in their line of work should avoid hospital visits. Maesters are basically private practitioners who specialize in a bit of everything. “We’re almost to the car.”
“Please...touch it. Please.”

Touch it. Sounds like the little heiress is modest even when she's in a state like this. Something about that is endearing to Jon. But no matter what she says or how good she sounds when she says it, he won't indulge. She isn't in her right mind. Her thoughts and actions aren't her own right now.

Jon picks up his pace. Running faster makes the situation worse because every time his feet hits the cobblestone, the woman bounces in his arms and every time she bounces the thin straps on her dress slide lower and lower. He decides to keep his eyes forward. He does just that until he reaches the car. Even then, he only spares her a glance long enough to make sure she doesn’t bump her head as he puts her in the backseat.

“Get in,” Robb yells at Daenerys's friend. The woman complies, rushing to check on her friend. “Take them to Dragonstone!” he orders Jon. "We'll handle the rest from here."

“Robb-”

“Go, Jon!”

Reluctantly, Jon leaves. Robb, Theon, and the others are capable of handling this on their own, but he can’t help but worry about his family and close friends.

All it takes is one bullet.

Shutting the thoughts out, Jon focuses on the task at hand. Overdoses are rare when it comes to these sorts of drugs so he doesn’t think Daenerys is in immediate danger. Still, he doesn’t want to risk it. Plus, the sooner he gets her to her brother the better. The last thing his family needs is the Targaryen girl dying while in his care.

“We can’t go to Dragonstone,” the friend says once they’re on the main road, heading south.

“You can’t take her to a hospital. They’ll report it to the authorities. You know how it is.”

“I do. However, going to Dragonstone will be worse. If Rhaegar finds out…”

Jon glances at the woman through the rearview mirror, noticing the tears in her eyes. Funny, just earlier she killed a man, pulled the bloody blade from his head, cleaned it with the man's shirt, and then concealed it in her corset. All without blinking. Now she's teary-eyed and worried about her friend.

The versatility of a cold-blooded killer has always amazed him.

“Don’t tell me you two snuck out,” Jon sighs in exasperation. “If you really are her bodyguard you should know better.”

“I tried to talk her out of it without revealing too much. I...I failed…”

While Jon does want to reassure the woman, there’s something else that catches his attention. He waits until they’re stopped at a red light to turn around to get a better look at her. The first thing he notices is the way Daenerys is laid out on her friend’s lap, breast heaving, glassy eyes staring right at him.

“Please…” she whimpers. Her friend shushes her gently and caresses her face. The action appears to give Daenerys some of the affection she’s desperate for.
Jon lifts his gaze, focusing on…”I didn’t catch your name,” he says.

“Missandei.”

“Noted.” Then he jumps right in. “Are you telling me that she has no idea about ‘the family business’?”

Missandei nods sadly.

“Seven hells,” Jon curses quietly. Green light bathes the car. He returns his attention to the street and continues driving. “That’s none of my business. Only thing I care about is getting her to her brother so he can get her the help she needs.”

“But-”

“You seem to fully understand how this world operates. So, I don’t think I need to explain to you why it’s necessary for me to take her home and nowhere else. Why Rhaegar needs to know that the north had nothing to do with this.”

Missandei’s silence is an answer enough.

The remainder of the ride stays that way; neither of them talking while Daenerys moans and cries out. Jon has to put the radio on to drown the distracting noises.

Poor thing has no idea how fortunate it was that it was him and Robb who saw her. Jon isn’t proud to say he knows men who would’ve pretended not to notice her, allowed her to be swallowed up by Ferret. Even worst, he knows men who would’ve saved her and taken her as payment for their efforts.

It's a ton of twisted fucks out there. Luckily for Daenerys Targaryen, two of the least twisted fucks got to her first.

Chapter End Notes

Main ages for the main/recurring characters. Ages were altered from canon to fit the universe.

Jon - 18
Dany - 18
Missandei - 18
Grey Worm - 19
Gendry - 17
Robb - 20
Rhaegar - 36
Lyanna - 35
Robert - 40 (same as Ned)
Viserys - 25
Arianne - 19
Oberyn - 36
Ellaria - 35
People say the tall, iron gates surrounding the Targaryen estate aren’t iron at all, but obsidian. Black, volcanic glass that’s far stronger than one would think. Centuries ago, the obsidian was called dragon glass for whatever reason. Jon has never bothered learning each family’s ancient history. He only cares about their current affairs and how it can possibly affect his own family.

He knows how strangers are treated when they approach the gates at his uncle’s estate, Winterfell, uninvited. Rarely do they leave the north alive. So Jon parks a few meters or so from the gates of Dragonstone and waits. Turning the radio off, he turns around.

“Any cameras?” he asks despite already knowing the answer. There are no guards outside so there are more than likely several cameras in place.

“Yes,” Missandei says. “I’ll take care of it.” She opens the door to the backseat, carefully removing Daenerys’s head from her lap as she gets out.

Missandei walks to the front of the car and waits. Shortly afterward, Jon sees her bring a phone up to her ear. Out of habit, he pops open the glove department, removing one of the many concealed guns in the car.

In the backseat, Daenerys’s moans have settled down to heavy panting and crying. She’s in pain, that much is clear. Jon is beginning to worry that Rhaegar isn’t going to give a flying fuck about Ferret’s endgame being thwarted. Not when his little sister is suffering like this.

Perhaps he should just leave them both at the gate. After making sure someone comes for them, of course. But entering through that gate feels like a bad idea.

Missandei returns to the car. “Rhaegar knows we’re here,” she says, getting back into the car.

The gates slowly open.

Jon’s previous thoughts of dropping the women off at the gate are dismissed. He came all this way. He might as well see this through to the end. Besides, leaving them out here, especially while Daenerys is like this, is a major dick move. He may be a murderer and even a thief depending on who you asked, but he isn’t an asshole.

As he drives through the gate and up the long, winding road to the mansion, the path ahead is gradually illuminated by the outdoor sensor lights. What he sees is astonishing. He’s no stranger to massive estates with manicured lawns that seem without end, marble statues, and water fountains. However, Dragonstone is nothing like he expected; nothing like the rumors depict it. It doesn’t look like a house of endless horrors. At least not from what he can see. For all he knows, it’s the inside of the mansion that holds all the family’s dark secrets.

The same can be said for any family.

Jon doesn’t allow himself to get caught up in the grandeur. He’s entering unknown territory without any kind of backup. He needs to be on his toes. So far, he hasn’t seen any guards lining the driveway or any movement in the surrounding trees. Not even an attack dog roaming about. Either Rhaegar is cocky or he has more than meets the eye up his sleeve.

Jon figures he’ll find out soon enough.
The front door of the mansion swings open as the car rolls to a stop. A tall, middle-aged man with shoulder-length, silver hair comes running out, lips pursed and eyebrows furrowed. He opens the backseat of the car before Missandei can even lift a hand. Disregarding the woman’s profuse apologies, the man, Rhaegar Targaryen himself, calmly ushers Missandei out of the car and takes a shivering Daenerys into his arms.

Jon might as well be a leaf because Rhaegar doesn’t spare him a glance. He hurries toward the house, carrying Daenerys with a tenderness that leaves Jon frozen.

“Send him in.” Rhaegar’s voice carries to Jon’s ears as he enters the mansion.

It takes Jon a second or two to realize the man was referring to him. Two men in black suits walk up to the driver's side. They won’t take no for an answer. He can see it on their faces. Jon knows better than to bring a gun in so when he gets out of the car, he hands it over. He won’t say anything about the concealed knives. And they don’t pat him down. Which probably means they’re confident that they can kill him long before he can use the knives.

In the foyer, Jon catches the tail end of Rhaegar’s instructions to Missandei as the in-house Maester carries Daenerys down one of the long corridors.

“...stay with her. I will be there shortly.”

Nodding, Missandei glances at Jon, giving him an appreciative smile. Then she heads down the same corridor the Maester took.

The foyer of the mansion isn’t like most foyers that give a taste of what the rest of the place looks like. In here, Jon can only see two corridors on either side of the grand staircase. Black, marble floors, pristine white walls, and a dangling, crystal chandelier, are a few of the notable decorations.

Only one exit is visible. Jon makes a note of that. He’s too busy trying to take the mansion in that he doesn’t notice how intently Rhaegar is staring at him.

“You’re one of Eddard Stark’s men,” Rhaegar says, yanking Jon out of his thoughts.

Jon tenses. “I never told Missandei that.” She only knows he’s from the north but there are a lot of minor family heads who work for the Starks but have their own men who answer directly to them.

Rhaegar smirks. But not in the sort of way that would make the recipient of that smirk feel less. It’s more of a sign of genuine amusement.

“If nothing else, your accent gives you away. In my experience, Stark men have their own way of pronouncing things.” A pause. “And I mean no disrespect.”

Why is this man being so...polite? Elegant may be a better word. The way he speaks and carries himself reminds Jon of how royalty is often portrayed in films. Rhaegar isn’t using any fancy words or even clever wordplay. It’s his voice that gives off an air of grace.

“None taken,” Jon says. “The north had nothing to do with what happened to your sister. We were there handling business and happened to see her.”

“The man responsible?”

“Missandei put a knife between his eyes.”

“What establishment?”
Jon can appreciate short, forward questions like these. The less talking the better. “Wineseller,” he answers.

"The club on the western and eastern border line?"

"That's the one."

“Yet you and your fellow northerners were there on business…”

“Yes.”

“What business would that be?” Rhaegar asks. “If you don’t mind me asking.”

Rhaegar’s politeness is genuine but it isn’t without its underlying motives. He knows he can’t rightfully question Jon about northern affairs, therefore, he makes it seem as if the decision to do so is solely Jon’s choice to make.

Jon can tell the man to fuck right off. The only reason he doesn’t is that there’s something about Rhaegar’s presence that makes him want to open up to him. This is dangerous. Men - no, people like Rhaegar are dangerous.

“The club owner, Ferret, was making secret deals on northern territory without paying his respects to my un...to the head of our family.” The way Rhaegar’s eyes widened when he almost called Ned Stark his uncle makes Jon shift uncomfortably. Inwardly, he curses himself for the slip-up.

Schooling his features, Rhaegar smiles pleasantly. “I understand why northern punishment was necessary in this case. However, be mindful of the rules when handling business in other territories.” Jon nods and the man continues. “Thank you for saving my sister and Missandei. I would offer you a reward but you don’t seem like the type that would accept.”

“I wasn’t the only one who saved them,” he clarifies. “And no we won’t accept. We didn’t do it for a reward.”

“Why did you? Why did you go out of your way to save my sister?”

Jon frowns. “Would you stand by while someone was being slipped a date rape drug?”

“I don’t imagine I would. Enemy or foe. No one should have their choice stripped away from them.” He tilts his head thoughtfully and the gesture makes his violet eyes twinkle under the chandelier. “Now I wish Missandei had shown restraint.”

“Why?”

“So that I could be the one to end Ferret’s life.”

The words are spoken as carelessly as a comment on the weather. Yet in that instance, Jon sees a glimpse of the ruthlessness Rhaegar carefully masks. For the first time since arriving here, Jon is genuinely afraid. Again, it has nothing to do with what Rhaegar says but it’s the way the atmosphere around him changes whenever he says certain things. If Jon believed in horseshit like reading auras he would say that Rhaegar’s aura was mysterious, magnetic even.

“What is your name?” Rhaegar suddenly asks.

“Jon. Jon Snow.” It isn’t totally a lie. His first name is Jon. His last name is Baratheon but for whatever reason, since grade school, his close friends have referred to him as Snow.
“Peculiar last name. Who did you say your parents were again?”

“I never told you who my parents were.”

“Humor me.”

Can’t hurt to tell him, Jon thinks. They’re not enemies, and he isn’t someone as important as Robb; he isn’t the heir to one of the main families. He’s just another faceless soldier in the ranks. Another dumb bastard prepared to die for someone else.

“My father is Robert Baratheon,” Jon says, watching Rhaegar’s face closely. “My mother is Lyanna Stark.”

Rhaegar’s facial expression doesn’t change in the slightest. In fact, there aren’t any visible cues to indicate if the information affects him in any way. He simply nods.

“Well, since you have no interest in accepting any reward I may offer, that will be all, Jon Snow.” He uses the fake last name even though it’s clear that Jon's real last name is Baratheon. Maybe that's his way of respecting Jon's preference.

Jon doesn’t linger; although he wants to for some odd reason. The conversation with Rhaegar went nothing like he expected. Rhaegar is nothing like he expected. On his way out of the door, one of the guards returns his gun. As he’s walking down the short steps, he feels eyes on his back, but he doesn’t turn around to see if it’s Rhaegar who’s watching him or if it’s the guards.

Something tells him it’s the former.

He’s convinced this will be his last time ever coming here. So he takes another sweep around the estate just to say he saw the grounds of Dragonstone and lived. In the distance, he notices rows and rows of blue rose bushes.

Winter roses don’t belong down south, he absently thinks as he gets into the car and drives away.

For Daenerys, it felt as if days had passed, but according to their family’s physician, she was only in and out of consciousness for the remainder of the night and well into the early morning.

She can remember bits and pieces. A weasel of a man leering at her, gunshots, blood splattering on the walls, and distressed screams; some were even her own. These memories are fuzzy. It’s like she's staring through smudged glasses or a dirty windshield. Only one memory is crystal clear. And at this point, she isn’t even sure if it’s a memory or if her mind conjured the moment to help her through all the pain.

Daenerys likes to think it happened exactly how her mind tells her it did. She remembers being in the arms of a handsome man whose voice settled over her like a calming breeze whenever he spoke. The man looked down at her with beautiful eyes.

Then she proceeded to beg him to ease her suffering. She begged him to touch her...to touch her down there.

And that’s when the memory changes from a dream to a nightmare. She really hopes that didn’t really happen. Because she’s sure she'll die if that's something she actually asked for. From a stranger no less.

The door to her bedroom opens. Daenerys is surprised to see her brother there and not her best
friend.

As if reading her mind, Rhaegar says, “Missandei was up with you all night and morning. I sent her to bed an hour ago.”

Knowing that Missandei is safe grants her some comfort, though, she worries still.

“She didn’t want to go,” Daenerys says, struggling to sit up against the headboard. Immediately, Rhaegar is at her side, assisting her. “I kept pushing. I...I had to have my way. Please don’t punish her!”

Rhaegar looks pained. “Have I ever dished out punishment to either of you?”

“No. But I never gave you a reason to...”

“I will admit your actions have upset me greatly but, Dany, I will not punish you for simply wanting to enjoy yourself. Is that why you snuck out?”

She nods.

Sighing, Rhaegar sits on the bed. “Perhaps it’s my fault for keeping you and Missandei locked away in here with gloomy old me.”

“I never minded being here with you.” Because Rhaegar is her favorite brother. He’s the best big brother anyone could have. But... ”I wanted to escape just for one night.”

“Believe it or not, I know exactly what that feels like. To desire an escape from everything. If only for a night.”

Seeing the longing in her brother’s eyes saddens Daenerys. This isn’t the first time she’s seen that look. She wishes she knew what caused her brother so much pain but she knows he will never tell her. Rhaegar loves his secrets.

“Rhaegar, I’m sorry for being so stupid. I should have known not to accept drinks from strange men. I’ve seen that happen in so many movies.”

“You were careless, not stupid, Dany. It isn’t your fault that men like Ferret exist.”

If this were Viserys he would berate her for being a foolish girl. He’d probably pinch her and make sure she didn’t squeal loud enough for Rhaegar to hear. That same brother has broken noses and arms whilst defending her honor in the past. There are two sides to every coin, after all. She wonders how Rhaegar’s other side looks.

Then again, she’d prefer not to see it.

“Do you remember anything from last night?” Rhaegar asks.

“I remember some things.” If she tries hard enough she can remember a great deal but she doesn’t try. Some things she doesn’t want to remember. “I think two northerners saved me.”

“Yes, one of them brought you and Missandei here.”

Daenerys perks up a little at that. “One of them had red hair. The other had black hair. It was also kind of long and curly.” She looks at her brother expectantly.

“The latter was the one who ensured you both were safely returned.”
It was the man from her memories! Daenerys can’t hide her smile.

“Did you happen to get his name?” she asks.

Hesitantly, Rhaegar answers, “He goes by Jon Snow.”

“Snow. That’s a peculiar last name.”

“I believe it’s his nickname.”

“I want to thank him,” she says. “Personally.”

She doesn’t miss the slight frown on Rhaegar’s face. Assuming it’s typical, older brother protectiveness, she thinks nothing of it. Rhaegar gives it some thought. She knows he’s contemplating it because of the way his head tilts and his lips are pursed.

“Very well,” he eventually says. “I will arrange it. Until then, I want you to rest.” Leaning over, he places a gentle kiss on her forehead.

Daenerys wants to savor the moment but there are so many burning questions regarding last night. But before she can worry about any of that, there’s a more important matter.

“Does Viserys know?” she asks just as Rhaegar is exiting the room.

Rhaegar looks at her over his shoulder. “Word travels fast, dear sister. Our brother will be home as soon as tomorrow afternoon.”

“I see.” The disappointment is clear on her face. A part of her misses Viserys but she knows that once that wears off she'll be back to wishing he was gone on another business trip.

“Viserys cares for you….” Rhaegar grimaces. “In his own deranged way. No worries, I won’t allow him to harm you with his misguided attempts of brotherly love.”

“Thank you, Rhaegar.”

“Anything for you.”

There isn’t a doubt in Daenerys’s mind that her brother means that. After he leaves the room, she tries to rest, but her mind won’t allow her. Instead, she thinks about last night and how close she’d come to losing her virginity to a slimy club owner; to a rapist.

Now that she’s safely at home, she doesn’t have to pretend as though she’s unaffected by what happened. That doesn’t mean that she’ll face the reality of the situation, though. For years, she’s taken all the bad that has ever happened to her and suppressed it. In her opinion, she was fortunate last night. Many aren’t so fortunate. Therefore, there’s no use in her crying about it.

She was in danger. She was saved. The end.

Daenerys swallows the large lump in her throat and begins to carefully store away all of the terrible things about last night inside her mind. Then she closes the mental door and locks it.

The great city of Westeros is the second largest city in the world with a population of 19 million. Out of the seven territories, the north is the largest and one of the oldest. Their ancestors are said to have
lived during a time of magic and prophecies.

Jon doesn’t know shit about all of that, but he does know that his family is old money. In the north, the main trade is smuggling. They have their hands in a bit of everything, but mostly they stray away from the big threes.

The big threes are prostitution, drugs, and organ trafficking.

The Starks prefer to carry themselves as “decent criminals.” To everyone else, they’re too honorable for their own good. As for their other counterparts, like the Martell family, for example, don’t mind dabbling in any of the big three. However, the Martell family is unique. They don’t force anyone into prostitution. They don’t flood their territory or the city with drugs. In fact, they only use their vast resources to connect buyers to sellers. As for organ trafficking, they only use the organs of people who cross them.

As for families like the Tyrells and Lannisters…

Honestly, no one knows what they do exactly. It’s only known that they’re also old money, prestigious, and ruthless. And both of them are closely acquainted with the Targaryens.

Jon’s father loathes all three families with a passion. The man has always blamed them for the death of his parents.

Robert Baratheon was the son of the city’s police chief. He was the kind of person the families kept at a distance. The authorities can be a real pain in the ass and they always want a bigger cut than they deserve. But Jon’s grandfather was different. He wouldn’t accept any bribes. He didn’t turn a blind eye to the corruption in the city. Because of his meddling, he and his wife ended up floating face down in the Sunset Sea.

At the time, Robert was secretly involved with the same kinds of people who his father had fought against. Instead of turning his back on the criminal underworld and taking the path his father wanted for him, Robert grew bitter and angry. He started a war against the Tyrells, the Lannisters, and mainly the Targaryens whom he’d always despised even prior to his parents’ murder.

Ned Stark supported his childhood best friend, and in turn, the Tully’s and Arryn’s joined the fray.

Jon isn’t sure of what exactly occurred during the war. He only knows that by the end of it, the main families gained control of their own territories, his mother and father were married, and he was born shortly afterward.

A low whine tears Jon out of his thoughts, bringing him back to the present. When he’s not out making runs or carrying out hits, he’s working in one of his father’s auto shops, dissembling stolen cars or reupholstering them and padding the interior with stolen goods.

He’s in the middle of finishing up a job when his dog, Ghost, reminds him that it’s time for them both to eat. Ghost is an albino malamute. During a hunting trip, his father and uncle found a litter of them, abandoned in the snow to die. All of his cousins have one of their own, each of the dogs are bigger than Ghost, the runt of the litter.

“Sorry, boy,” Jon mutters. He rolls from under the car and sits up. Petting Ghost behind the ears he smiles. “What are we eating today?” he asks even though he isn’t going to get an answer.

“Perhaps a five-course meal in one of the city’s finest establishments.”

Instinctively, Jon grabs the gun he keeps in the bottom of the tool drawer and aims it at the source of
the voice. Beside him, Ghost growls at the intruder. When he realizes who the man is, he tenses but he doesn’t lower the gun.

Arthur Dayne doesn’t flinch. He doesn’t reach for a weapon of his own or show any sign of hostility. He glances at Ghost and whistles.

“Is that a polar bear?” he asks. “Gods, he’s huge!”

“He’s hungry, that’s what he is,” Jon says threateningly.

It’s said that the only time Arthur Dayne pays anyone a visit it’s for one reason. To wipe them from existence.

Arthur chuckles, “Are you going to sic him on me for simply walking into your business and offering to take you out for lunch? Terrible customer service, Mr. Snow. You’re nothing like your uncle.”

“I know why you’re here,” Jon says.

“A mind reader and a mechanic. Delightful.”

“You’re here on Rhaegar’s orders.”

Arthur smiles. “Well, that’s quite obvious but I’ve got to hand it to you. That’s some powerful psychic skills you have there.”

Jon scowls. “He sent you here to kill me, didn’t he?” He raises his gun higher, aiming straight for the head. If he shoots Arthur Dayne he better be sure to kill the man.

Suddenly, another person enters the shop. He can hear the bell over the door chiming.

“Arthur,” a soft voice calls out; a distinctively feminine voice.

At the sound of it, Jon lowers his gun slightly and Arthur’s relaxed composure disappears. Now he’s in kill mode. And Jon can understand the sudden change when the newcomer comes into view. He puts the gun away before Daenerys can see it. With the potential threat gone, Arthur reverts back to his casual demeanor.

Daenerys looks at Arthur first. “I was worried you were threatening my lunch date,” she says teasingly.

“Of course not, my lady,” Arthur says, bowing slightly in an attempt to appear knightly. “I was just in the middle of extending your invitation.”

Daenerys looks at Jon, and it’s the first time he’s seen her eyes so vividly. They aren’t clouded by lust and her pupils aren’t dilated from the drugs. Her eyes are the same color as her brothers and her father even still they’re unique in a way. He glances down at this oil stained clothes. Undoubtedly there are a few smudges on his face too.

Here he is looking like a mud rat while she’s standing there in her pretty, powder blue dress. Then again, what does it matter? It’s not like he cares what some heiress thinks about him. He’s surrounded by wealthy, beautiful women all of the time.

“So, will you join me?” Daenerys asks, hopeful.

“For?” Jon asks lamely. He lost his train of thought while gawking at the woman he claims to have
zero interest in.

Arthur sighs at the idiocy. But Daenerys giggles.

Gods, she’s cute.

“Lunch,” she says patiently. “I wanted to show my gratitude for what you did for me the other night.” She quickly speaks again before he can protest. “I know you didn’t do it so you could get rewarded but please...please allow me to do this.”

How in the hell can he say no to something like that? She even said “please” for fuck's sake.

“Your puppy can come, too,” Daenerys says, smiling brightly at Ghost. “I’m sure he can fit in the SUV. Don’t you agree, Arthur?” She turns to the man.

“I wouldn’t call that bear a puppy,” Arthur mutters. “But he can fit. Shall we be on our way then?” His question is directed at Jon.

“I need to shower and change first,” Jon says, feeling numb. “There’s a shower here. Won’t take me long.”

While Daenerys and Arthur wait outside, Jon locks the shop up then he and Ghost head upstairs to the studio apartment he uses whenever he needs a break from home which is every other night these days. Family drama aside, he can’t believe he’s agreeing to lunch with Daenerys fucking Targaryen while Rhaegar’s right hand man chaperones.

Even more surprising is how much he’s looking forward to it.
Lunch is at one of the city’s Michelin star restaurants located in downtown Westeros which unbeknownst to Daenerys serves as mutual territory for the main families. When one party wants the other to feel at ease, they conduct their meetings downtown at one of the many establishments.

Apparently, Rhaegar didn’t want Jon to feel threatened during this outing. The main reason Arthur Dayne is here is to ensure Daenerys’s safety, not intimidate Jon. After what happened to his sister, it makes sense he’d only want the best of the best protecting her.

Jon is once again reminded of the Rhaegar’s kindness and now it appears he’s considerate, too. He feels foolish for assuming Rhaegar had ordered a hit on him, especially after the exchange they had. But in this world, one can ever be sure of a person’s true motives. He’s learned that the hard way.

If it were up to Daenerys she would’ve definitely opted out of an overly priced, upscale restaurant for lunch. She wouldn’t have asked the owner of the restaurant to close the doors for a portion of the day, either.

Not because she doesn’t believe Jon Snow is deserving of special treatment. But because she can tell he isn’t the sort of man who cares for extravagances like this. From what she sees, in the way he dresses, carries himself, and reacts to his surroundings with a disinterested air tells her that he’s a simple man with simple tastes.

She can only imagine how odd they look together as they sit at the small table across from one another. Ghost is outside on the nearby balcony eating a steak while Arthur is more than likely still marveling over his size.

It’s not the privacy she wanted but at least the balcony doors are closed. She halfway expected Arthur to sit down with them or hover over their table.

“I feel like I’m underdressed,” Jon mutters, ending the silence that’s captured them ever since the ride here.

Daenerys shakes her head. “Your attire is fine.” The black crewneck he wears fits him well, the rolled sleeves displaying his toned biceps. “And I did spring this on you unexpectedly. Forgive me.”

“There’s nothing to forgive. There’s also nothing to thank me for but you seem intent on having your way.”

Initially, she’s irritated by his words simply because her desire to always have her way is partially the reason for what she experienced at the club. However, Jon is only teasing her. He’s only trying to dispel the awkwardness that surrounds them.

Daenerys can appreciate that.

Smiling, she asks. “Do you have a problem with being treated to nice things, Jon Snow?”

“Not at all. I treat myself occasionally.”

“To what?” Daenerys asks, far too quickly for her own liking. She doesn’t want to come off as too eager, but it’s rare that she gets to chat with someone new; someone who isn’t related to her or
known her since she was a child.

Jon doesn’t seem to mind at all. “Depends on what I’m in the mood for,” he says vaguely. “I like to collect things.”

“Things like?”

“You’ll laugh at me,” he says bashfully.

The fact that he thinks she’ll laugh at him is incredibly endearing. It also makes her all the more eager to know.

“Let’s make a deal,” Daenerys says, brimming with excitement. “You tell me about your hobby and I’ll tell you about mine.”

Jon tilts head to the side, thinking over her terms. Briefly, Daenerys is reminded of Rhaegar who does the exact same thing every time he’s seriously contemplating something. She always appreciated the way her older brother took his time to consider his words and actions. It would appear Jon Snow is also a thoughtful man.


“You’re quite the gentleman,” she sarcastically quips.

“I do my best.”

“Very well, Jon Snow. I will go first like the brave woman I am.” Jon scoffs at that but then immediately smiles, the corners of his eyes crinkling. Daenerys can’t take her eyes off of him. “I love books,” she says quietly. “Rare books with elegant spines and delicate paper that requires extra care when touching. The story doesn’t matter but I do love the myths and legends of ancient Westeros.”

Jon’s smile falters and his eyes widen partially. Daenerys retreats back into herself, afraid that her enthusiasm over something so mundane has driven him away.

“It would appear our passions are similar,” he says, surprising her. “But I collect rare daggers and swords instead of books. Well, I’d like to collect them but I’ve only come across one rare sword and a dagger. They’re both Valyrian steel.” He pauses. “Valyrian steel is-”

“I know what it is,” she says, happy to have something relatively in common with him. “You know, some of my ancestors were from ancient Valyria.”

“I’ve heard that. Longclaw was once owned by the Mormonts.”

“Longclaw?”

“The sword.”

“What’s the dagger’s name?”

“Catspaw.”

Daenerys grins. “I’ve always found the idea of naming a sword interesting. My brother, Rhaegar, also collects rare swords. He keeps a display of them at our home. As a child, I loved to hear stories of my ancestor who wielded the sword Dark Sister. She was a fierce warrior. Dark Sister hangs on the wall beside the sword Blackfyre.”
Jon’s reaction is comical. He leans over in his chair, his eyes wide and bright as if he were staring at a pot of gold. “Your brother has Dark Sister and Blackfyre in his possession?”

Men and their toys, she fondly thinks.

“Yes.”

“I thought both swords were lost centuries ago.”

“Rhaegar found them. I’m sure if you asked, he’d allow you to see them. My brother seizes any opportunity to show them off.”

The idea of returning to Dragonstone doesn’t seem like a good idea in Jon’s opinion. He simply nods at her suggestion and takes a sip of his water. Daenerys takes that as a “no, thank you.” She won’t push the subject.

All of their talk about swords and daggers does make her think about Jon viciously gutting a man at the club. The memory came out of nowhere, assaulting her. Up until now, she forgot that even happened. Picking up her glass with trembling hands, she also takes a sip of water. She notices Jon noticing her change in demeanor, but she doesn’t meet his gaze. It never happened, she tells herself. Jon is a hero. Her hero. He wouldn’t butcher a man. He isn’t a killer.

Daenerys sets her glass down. Her nerves are settled now. She has a talent for feigning ignorance.

Before she can strike up another conversation, the server approaches their table.

For a moment, Daenerys forgot where they were because she was lost in Jon’s eyes, lost in her own thoughts. She hasn’t spared the menu a glance and neither has Jon. They decide on two, chef’s specials.

Once the waiter leaves, Jon is the first to speak.

“Why books?” he asks.

Daenerys doesn’t have to think her answer over. “Books are capable of transporting us, well, at least our minds, to different places, different realms. We can escape inside of them. Most of the books I’ve collected are so old they’re impossible to read but staring at the pages, seeing remnants of what once was is enough for me.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone who’s this passionate about books or reading.” Jon chuckles. “I suppose that makes it sound as if I only surround myself with empty-headed scoundrels.”

“Not at all. I understand that everyone has different things they prefer to dedicate their time to. My best friend, Missandei, is fluent in nineteen languages!”

“Nineteen.” Jon whistles. “That’s impressive. I bet she’s useful during foreign business deals.” He sees the way Daenerys frowns in confusion and quickly changes the subject. “Your chaperone seems quite taken with Ghost.”

Daenerys turns her attention to where Arthur and the dog, Ghost are, but she doesn’t forget the comment Jon made about foreign business deals. She just files it away for later.

Her “intimidating” chaperone is currently giving the dog belly rubs. Arthur has always been a softy. Even when she was a child. He would sneak her sweets and carry her on his shoulders during festivals so she wouldn’t miss a thing. Arthur grew up alongside Rhaegar. The same way she and
Missandei grew up together.

“Any family pets at the Targaryen estate?” Jon asks.

Shaking her head, Daenerys takes her eyes off the heartwarming sight, returning them to the handsome man across from her. One of Jon’s curls is hanging in front of his face. Her hands twitch with the desire to brush it away. Jon takes care of it on his own, but the stubborn curl doesn’t stay put long.

Huffing an irritated breath, Jon tucks the curl behind his ear. “Not a fan of animals?” he asks.

“I love animals. But my brother, Viserys, loathes them.” She thinks it’s best not to tell the guy she’s developing a crush on that one of her brothers isn’t above torturing and killing animals. That isn’t a proper lunch topic. “Your hair doesn’t seem to like you that much.” She jokes.

Jon releases a suffering sigh, “You have no idea. I contemplate cutting it at least three times a week.”

“Never cut it,” Daenerys says, not bothering to mask her feelings on the matter. “Your hair is beautiful, Jon. Which parent gave it to you?”

“My mother.” Jon’s face softens at the mention of her. “I’ve picked up everything from her. Even her habit of throwing her hair up into a ponytail and not fooling with it for days.” He laughs.

Their food is brought out. The plates sit in front of them, untouched, as they continue talking about everything from the strength of genetics to their favorite bands. Jon even shares a couple of stories about the times he’s gone to concerts or traveled with his cousin and his brother. She’s both surprised and pleased that he’s this talkative. The man’s stories are refreshing and exciting, they mirror the sort of life Daenerys wishes she had.

Whenever she travels, anywhere, her and Missandei are constantly surrounded by her brothers, Arthur, and other security guards. Because of her status as a potential heir to her family’s wealth, there have been several kidnapping attempts and strangely enough death threats.

Most of them happened when she was a child so she doesn’t remember them thankfully.

“I’ve never been to a concert,” Daenerys admits after Jon finishes his story. “I imagine they’re quite the experience.”

Jon looks as if Daenerys just revealed that she was a flat earther. “Never been to a concert? Not one, ever?”

“Nope.”

“You ever listen to The Minstrels? They’ll be in town next weekend…”

“Is this your way of asking me to accompany you, Jon Snow?” She sure hopes it is.

“I’d love to take you…” He quickly adds, “Missandei is free to come, too, if that’s fine with your brother.”

Daenerys raises a brow. “Who said we needed my brother’s permission? Missandei and I are adults.” In her brother’s eyes, they’re still the little girls he gave piggyback rides to, but Jon doesn’t need to know that.

Jon’s expression is telling. He isn’t fooled for a second yet he plays along anyway. “My apologies
for assuming such a thing. If you’re both up for it, you’re free to come.”

After the stunt she pulled, she doubts Rhaegar will allow it. But she really doesn’t want to pass up the chance of experiencing her first concert and spending more time with Jon. In the midst of her planning, she looks out on the balcony and sees Arthur checking his watch. Her time is almost up.

Thinking quickly, Daenerys takes her phone out of her purse. She hardly uses the thing, never really had a reason to do so, but now it’s the most important thing in her possession.

“I will need some time to think about it,” she lies as she slides her phone on the table. “I’ll let you know beforehand what I decide.”

Jon looks at the phone as though it were a foreign object. “You...want my number?” he asks dumbly.

Daenerys is beginning to worry that her handsome knight has a few screws missing. “How else will I reach you? Shall I contact you telepathically?”

Rolling his eyes, Jon picks up the phone. “You and my younger cousin would get along swimmingly. Both of you enjoy your sarcasm,” he says.

“Younger cousin?”

“Her name’s Arya.” Jon puts his number in and hands the phone back to Daenerys just before Arthur walks inside with Ghost padding beside him.

Mission accomplished, Daenerys proudly thinks.

She isn’t even disappointed when Arthur lets them know that it’s time to depart. Arthur makes a comment about their untouched food but they both pretend not to hear him. As they’re leaving the restaurant, Daenerys catches Arthur handing a thick, white envelope to the maître d.

“For your silence,” he says to the man.

That’s one more thing for Daenerys to tuck away inside her mind for later observation.

Watching the SUV drive off, Jon continues to float on the cloud he’s been soaring on ever since he was graced with Daenerys’s warm smile back at the restaurant. And to think he almost passed on her invitation, even acted as if he was only doing it to appease her when in actuality he had his own selfish reasons.

The last time he went on a date with a woman like Daenerys was...well, shit, he’s never been on a date with a woman like Daenerys. He isn’t even sure he knows any like her. The women he’s been with in the past were much like him. They were apart of his world.

Despite Daenerys’s family’s ties to that same world, the woman herself remains uninvolved. She’s innocent and uncontaminated by the ugliness. A part of Jon wants to stay as far away from her as possible as not to taint her.

Ghost whines. His way of voicing his disagreement. As bizarre as it sounds, oftentimes, his loyal pup seems to know exactly what’s on his mind.

“She’s too good for me, boy,” he mutters, watching the SUV turn the corner and disappear. “She’s practically royalty and I doubt her brothers want her involved with a guy like me.” He turns and walks up to the auto shop, taking his keys out of his pockets. “Besides, you know I’m still not over
what happened to her...”

Ghost wines once more, this time expressing his own grief. Less than a year ago, Jon’s girlfriend at the time died in his arms from a bullet wound to the heart. Simply thinking about pursuing Daenerys makes him feel guilty. Jon swore off dating after Ygritte was killed. He didn’t want to put anyone else in harm’s way like that again. He’s better off alone.

Inside the shop, Jon locks the door behind him and Ghost.

“Long time no see, brother.”

Turning around, Jon sees his younger brother, Gendry, walking from the back office, his hands stuffed in his pants pockets. Unlike Jon, Gendry possesses their father’s eyes, his hair, and the physical stature Robert used to have before all the drinking and whoring. The latter vice resulted in Gendry’s birth.

It’s only been a couple of weeks since they last saw one another but that doesn’t stop Jon from being happy to see him.

Seeing the smile on Jon’s face, Gendry takes his hands out of his pockets and walks up for a brief hug that manages to convey the words they’re too proud to say aloud. Even though Gendry is only his half-brother and they’ve bumped heads in the past during typical, sibling squabbles, they’re protective and fiercely loyal to one another, even going as far as to protect the other from their father’s temper.

“What brings you out of your cave?” Jon asks, patting his brother on the back. He keeps his hand on the younger man’s shoulder, keeping him close.

Gendry smiles. “I’d rather be back in my cave.” His cave is his underground sanctuary where he oversees his black market arms dealership. “But mother called.”

Jon’s expression turns somber. “Is she alright?” Immediately, he regrets being away from home for as long as he as. Granted, it’s been less than a week but with his mother’s current state and his father’s overall existence, staying away longer than a day or two is never good. But Jon needed his space. “Has father upset her again? I swear to the gods if he has-”

“Mother is fine. She’s tough, you know that.” Gendry smiles fondly. “And you know I would’ve gone straight there to see about her instead of coming all the way out here to you. She may not be my actual mother but I love her.”

“I know, brother.”

“She called on father’s behalf. He’s furious that you saved the Targaryen girl.” Gendry rolls his eyes in annoyance. “Uncle Ned rewards Robb for his involvement in saving her meanwhile our father wants to scold you. The fuck is his issue with the Targaryens, anyway?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.” Jon steps away from his brother, not bothering to mask his irritation. “She would’ve been raped. I couldn’t just stand there.”

Of course, he doesn’t have to justify himself to Gendry who would’ve more than likely done the same had he been in Jon’s position. Their mother made it known how fortunate she was to have two sons who behaved nothing like their father. Admittedly, their father was loyal and dependable but when it came to his enemies and even the innocent relatives of his enemies, he was a wicked, hateful man.
“There’s something else,” Gendry says.

“Seven hells! I was stupid for thinking the rest of my day would be as good as my afternoon!”

Gendry’s eyebrows raise. “What made your afternoon so good?” He kneels down to pet Ghost who licks his face affectionately. Gendry chuckles.

“Doesn’t matter.”

“The hell it does. When do you ever have a ‘good’ anything?” He’s joking but his words hold some truth. “I thought you looked upbeat when you first walked in.”

Jon knows he can tell his brother and it won’t get back to their father or anyone else. Gendry prefers to keep to himself. Occasionally, he likes to spend time with their cousin Arya, the only person aside from Jon and Lyanna who can get Gendry away from his weapons.

The point is, Jon can trust Gendry.

“Daenerys wanted to thank me for saving her.”

Gendry’s eyes widen. “You fucked Rhaegar’s little sister!” Jon is too stunned by his brother’s deduction skills, or lack thereof, to interrupt his wrong assumption. “Holy fuck, that’s awesome and also troubling. Better hope father doesn’t find out. How was it? I never saw her up close but from what I hear she’s the finest woman in Westeros!”

“Gendry.”

“Huh?”

“You’re a fucking idiot, you know that right?” Jon sighs heavily. “She didn’t spread her legs for me. She took me to lunch.” He glances at Ghost. “Ghost too.”

Ghost wags his tail in response.

Gendry barely reacts to the insult of his intelligence. It happens so much it no longer phases him. “Lunch? That’s...nice.”

“Arthur Dayne chaperoned it.” The more he thinks about it, the funnier it is. “The right hand to Rhaegar fucking Targaryen chaperoned our lunch date. I nearly shat myself when he walked in here,” he chuckles.

“Arthur Dayne was there?! “Gendry’s eyes are the size of saucers. Men like Arthur and Rhaegar are regarded as untouchable legends in their circle. They’re practically celebrities. “Did he have Dawn with him?”

Leave it to his brother to only care about that. Dawn is the custom made gun Arthur is known for carrying. It’s so shiny and polished that it blinds whoever he aims it at.

“If he had it with him, I didn’t see it. Thank fuck.” Jon heads upstairs to the studio apartment, Gendry, and Ghost following him. “You said there was something else. What is it?”

Upstairs, Jon packs up his clothes and guns into a duffle bag. Better for him to go home now, check on his mother, and deal with his father now than later. As he packs, Ghost lays on the rug and Gendry sits on the bed.

“Uncle thinks there’s a traitor in our midsts,” Gendry says. “Early this morning, someone raided one
of our warehouses, killed a good bit of the men guarding it, too.”

Jon stiffens. “Which warehouse?” And why in the fuck did no one tell him sooner?

“The one ran by the Glovers. Had to be someone from the family because they knew the access codes, knew all the ins and outs, even knew where the secret cameras were hidden. Uncle Benjen thinks it’s more than one rat.”

“Uncle Benjen’s back?” Jon packs his bag with more speed. “That means this is serious.”

Gendry’s expression is grim. “I overheard Father and Mother speaking. If you could call it that.” He rolls his eyes. “While they were fighting, Father let it slip that there’s a war brewing against the northern families. Some of them aren’t happy with Uncle Ned’s rules about the big three.”

“There’s more money in prostitution, drugs, and organ trafficking than there is smuggling. Only thing they care about is fucking money.” Jon zips up his bag and slings it on his shoulder. “Let’s go.”

Once the bedroom door is shut and she’s certain no one is eavesdropping, Daenerys joins Missandei on the bed, the both of them giggling like schoolgirls. They have every right to be giddy. This is the first time Daenerys has been on an outing where her company wasn’t family or a close friend. The first time she went on an outing with someone she’s romantically interested in.

Neither of them will mention the fact that Arthur was there as well.

Daenerys clears her throat, taking the time to gather herself before filling Missandei in. During the entire ride home, she kept replaying her conversation with Jon over and over. But now as Missandei was waiting for the details, Daenerys can’t remember how their conversation started.

She decides to just wing it. What does it matter if she sounds like a blubbering idiot? This is Missandei. She doesn’t have to worry about being judged.

The first thing she mentions is how good Jon looked in his oil splattered, sweaty shirt clinging to him when she saw him in the auto shop, and how well he cleaned up. She spends a great deal of time talking about his appearance, even going into detail about his hair and his plump lips.

Daenerys hates to fit into the cliche of a sheltered, boy-crazy virgin and technically she doesn’t. In fact, she’s a sheltered virgin who’s rapidly developing feelings for a man. See, there’s a difference.

“Did you two talk or did you just admire his features the entire time?” Missandei asks, amused.

“I’m good at multitasking.”

“How was the conversation? Is he more than just a pretty face and a nice ass.”

Daenerys gasps, pretending to be scandalized. “I haven’t even checked out his ass...yet. I didn’t want to treat him as though he were a piece of meat. Surprisingly, our conversation went well. I worried he’d be the quiet sort but he kept the conversation going. It never felt forced.”

“Maybe he is the quiet type. Maybe you were able to bring him out of his shell.”

“Don’t tell me that,” she says, blushing furiously. “Because I’ll start to actually believe he has any interest in me.”

“You don’t think he does?”
“I think he was only being nice.”

“What did you two talk about?”

Daenerys doesn’t leave a stone unturned, though, she tells the events out of order. She tells Missandei about Jon’s hobby and spoke briefly about the stories he shared. She even mentions Ghost. The last thing she brings up is the invitation Jon extended to them.

“A concert?” Missandei asks, nearly as excited as Daenerys. But her excitement is short-lived. “I doubt Rhaegar will let us go after what happened…”

“Wouldn’t hurt to ask. Besides, I think Jon has proved that he’s more than capable of returning us home in one piece.”

“Are you sure he wants me to come, too?”

Daenerys nods. “He said so himself.”

“How exactly did he say it?”

“I’d love to take you,” Daenerys says, using her best impression of Jon’s thick accent. “Missandei is free to come, too, if that’s fine with your brother.”

Missandei laughs. But not at Daenerys’s poor performance. “He only mentioned me as an afterthought. Clearly, he only meant to invite you. Sounds like he wants to take you out on a date but he doesn’t want to make it that obvious.”

Of course. How did she not realize that at the time? Grey Worm does the same exact thing whenever he wants to spend time with Missandei. Daenerys finds it funny how Missandei never notices Grey Worm’s intentions yet she can easily decipher Jon’s. Both of them are blind when it comes to their own affairs it would seem.

Daenerys feels so incredibly light all of a sudden as if she’ll fly away at any moment. “That means he likes me too,” she whispers, her entire face heating up. “I was worried that I made a fool of myself when I went on and on about bloody books, but he brought up the concert after the books so surely that means he doesn’t mind that I prefer books over...well a lot of things.”

“How will you two contact one another?” Missandei asks.

“I have his number,” she says, proud of herself for thinking fast. “Is it bad that I want to text him now? I feel like that would make me seem too desperate…”

“It wouldn’t hurt to text him so that he can save your number.”

Duh, Daenerys thinks.

She’s acting as if they haven’t watched every romcom they can get their hands on. She isn’t completely clueless. It’s just that this isn’t a movie. This is the real deal and she’s so afraid of messing this up.

Luckily for her, she has Missandei.

“Text him later,” Missandei says. “Right before you go to sleep.”

“Why so late?”
“Because if he never responds at least you’ll sleep well tonight. We do start classes tomorrow.”

“I almost forgot about classes tomorrow.” A few days ago, starting university was constantly on her mind. She was so excited she created a countdown. “You’re right, Missandei. Education comes first. Plus, if I do poorly, there goes my little bit of freedom.” She can’t hide the sadness in her voice.

Missandei squeezes her hand. “Rhaegar will come around. Yes, our little ‘prison break’ will count against us but he just needs time.” She grins. “Until then, tell me more about your future husband,” she jokes.

But it helps to lift Daenerys’s spirits. Even though she’s already told Missandei mostly everything, it can’t hurt to go into further detail.

“That piece of shit tried to make a whore of my little sister!” Viserys seethes bringing his glass of whiskey up to his mouth. Scowling over the brim, he adds, “Is that what they think of us now? They think they can touch one of ours without repercussions?”

Sighing heavily, Rhaegar closes the crystal decanter, cutting his younger brother off from alcohol for the remainder of the afternoon. As soon as Viserys caught wind of what happened, he put his affairs in the neighboring country Essos on hold and boarded his private jet.

For all of his faults and cruelty, Viserys cares for his family.

Rhaegar walks to the sitting area in his office, taking the seat across from his brother. Arthur is leaning on the desk, peeling an apple with his pocket knife.

“Missandei did well,” Arthur remarks. “She killed the man. The northerners helped.”

Rhaegar was only upset with Missandei for a short time, but that was more so out of concern. When he traveled overseas for business twelve years ago, he encountered two orphans on the streets. The girl was crouched behind the boy who was protecting her from the man who sought to take her virtue.

After killing the man, Rhaegar fed and clothed the children. And when he returned to Westeros, he brought them with him. Daenerys needed friends her age. The abandoned children needed a safe home. In the end, everyone got what they needed.

The boy, who chose the name Grey Worm, was trained by Arthur and Rhaegar. Now he resides as the head of their foot soldiers, responsible for keeping the peace within their territory. The girl, Missandei, was also trained in case she needed to protect herself as well as Daenerys.

All in all, they’re family.

Viserys scoffs. “Of course Missandei did well. She’s one of ours. As for these northerners...they only did it to save their own skin, surely.”

“Even still,” Rhaegar says, “what’s done is done. Daenerys and Missandei are safe, both are untouched. The man is dead. There is nothing more to be done.”

“Fuck that. This rodent, Ferret, still has a gang.” Viserys sits his empty glass on the circular coffee table. Afterward, he rubs his nose with his thumb. A tell-tale sign that he’s snorted a line or two before coming in here. “He still has those who are loyal to his shit-stained memory. We need to wipe them out. Show them and everyone else what happens when they cross us!”
Arthur nods sadly. “Something like this wouldn’t have happened 18 years ago. It wouldn’t have happened 3 years ago either. These up and coming gangs don’t fear the old families as much as they should. They view us as relics of a bygone era.”

“What will you have me do?” Rhaegar asks irately.

“Fight, brother,” Viserys urges, his eyes brimming with madness. “Teach them a lesson. A lesson that the others will take note of.” When he feels that isn’t enough, he reminds Rhaegar, “That sack of shit was going to rape our little sister. Our Dany. He knew who she was. He fucking knew and he was going to do it anyway!”

Rhaegar’s mask cracks, the carefully concealed rage peeking out. He can’t stop thinking of how furious he was when he saw Daenerys suffering like that or how badly he wanted to find every last one of Ferret’s men and burn them alive.

Arthur seals the deal. “The main families are aware of what happened. Surely they’re waiting to see how you’ll respond to this insult. They’re probably waiting to see if the dragon is still awake or if it’s cowering in the shadow of the past.”

“Viserys, find Grey Worm,” Rhaegar orders. He doesn’t need any more convincing. “We’ll handle it tonight.”

Pleased with the outcome, Viserys leaves the room without another word. Once he’s gone, Rhaegar’s shoulders slump, the weight of his exhaustion bearing down on him. He’s hardly slept for the past three days. He even considers fixing himself a drink.

Arthur turns around, staring at the rose garden outside the window. “Shall I share my thoughts now or when you’re in a better mood?” he asks, keeping his eyes on the blue roses.

Despite wanting nothing more than a nap before the upcoming blood bath tonight, Rhaegar desperately wants to know what his best friend has to say. The truth is, he purposefully ordered Arthur to accompany Daenerys earlier today instead of Grey Worm or another capable guard.

He needed his dear friend to see what he saw in Jon Snow.

“Do you agree or disagree?” Rhaegar asks.

Sighing, Arthur pockets his knife and discards the apple’s core. He walks over to sit beside Rhaegar. “The boy is Lyanna’s. There’s no doubt about it.”

Initially, Rhaegar assumed Jon was another one of Robert’s bastards. That’s what he wanted to believe.

Rhaegar feels as if someone stabbed him the heart with a spear. His eyes burn. “She married Robert, had his child…” His hands ball into fists so tight, his nails dig into the skin painfully. Nothing is as painful as the feeling of his poorly mended heart shattering again.

“Lyanna loathes Robert,” Arthur reminds him. “She would’ve taken her own life rather than be his wife.”

“Yet she is. She’s married to him. She has been for 18 years!” Rhaegar allows a single tear to fall. Wiping it away, he laughs dryly. “Even in the end, that bastard, Robert, bested me.”

Robert has the life Rhaegar wanted, the wife he wanted, and even a son who from what Rhaegar has seen is a stand-up guy. He wishes he would’ve killed Robert...killed his entire family when he had
the chance. But no, he had to be the bigger person. He had to be the honorable one.

Hundreds of people were suffering, children were losing their lives from stray bullets, innocents were killed in bombings. The city was in utter chaos, and his father, Aerys, basked in it. In order to restore peace, Rhaegar annulled his forbidden marriage to Lyanna to appease the Starks who in turn convinced Robert to stand down. He murdered his own father to appease the other families. Then his mother died while giving birth to Daenerys.

Rhaegar lost the love of his life, his father, and his mother.

“You two deserve closure,” Arthurs says quietly. “It wasn’t right how things played out. I see how that still eats away at you.”

“I haven’t seen Lyanna since shortly after our wedding night. Her brothers have been making sure of that.” It’s as if they’re keeping Lyanna tucked away in the north, hidden from even the public eye.

Arthur knows all too well about the Stark’s interference. “Understandably, they wanted to protect their own,” he says, always seeing things from an objective standpoint. “They needed an arm’s dealer and Robert is the best in the city. The Starks needed to uphold the marriage contract between Lyanna and Robert.”

Rhaegar is pissed off all over again. “Lyanna was being forced into a marriage she didn’t want. She was more than the trophy Robert saw her as. I loved her for who she was. I still do.” He chuckles humorlessly. ‘Like a fool, I still love her after all this time. When I saw Jon...I instantly knew. I just knew that he was her son.’

“So did I.” Arthur looks Rhaegar in the eye. “But I did not see Robert in him at all. Not even a glimpse.”

Neither did Rhaegar but his sorrow distracted him. “Stark genes are strong.”

“Targaryen genes are strong too, dear friend.”

“You can’t possibly mean to say-”

“That whenever I looked at Jon Snow I not only saw Lyanna but I saw my best friend too.”

“Robert would’ve made her abort any child she may have carried long before they married. He despises me too much to allow any child of mine to see the light of day.”

“But if Robert were to believe the child was his own...”

It’s a possibility that Rhaegar can’t help but consider even as he knows no good will come of it. “Let us deal with this Ferret business first.” He can’t allow this potential revelation to throw him off his course. "Afterward, I need to find a way to get Jon Snow back to Dragonstone.”

“All we need is a strand of his hair,” Arthur says. “We can do a paternity test. Easy.”

“Yes, I know. However, I wouldn’t mind talking to Jon again.” Rhaegar smiles to himself. “He has so much of Lyanna in him.”
Storm's End

Chapter Notes

Chapter picks up on the same day the last chapter ended on!

“Going somewhere?” Daenerys asks, eyeing the black duffle bag on Rhaegar’s desk.

Not missing a beat, Rhaegar lies, “Short notice business trip.” He steps around the desk, positioning his body in front of the bag, that’s filled with guns, knives, and grenades, to draw her attention away from it. “I’m sorry I won’t be here in the morning to see you and Missandei off for your first day.”

The effectiveness of Daenerys’s eye roll is watered down by the high blush on her face. “It’s not our first day of grade school. We don’t need you to see us off.” Then she mutters, “If only we lived on campus.”

Sighing, Rhaegar motions his sister closer. She reluctantly complies. “Do you understand why you and Missandei can’t live on campus like ‘normal’ students?”

She nods.

“I need to hear it, sister.”

“Because I’m a Targaryen. People who don’t even know me personally would abduct me for ransom or worst.”

“Precisely.”

He has considered purchasing the girls an apartment close to their university and posting guards around the perimeter; without Dany knowing, of course. But first, he needs to see how this whole university thing works out. At the start of junior high, he foolishly allowed Daenerys and Missandei to attend a public school. The girls were constantly bullied for a full week before they finally broke down and told him.

Rhaegar than pulled her and Missandei out and placed them in a private institution moving forward; the same one the Tyrell kids attended. If the same thing happens at university, Rhaegar won’t deny Viserys his vengeance this time.

“That wasn’t why I came here, though,” Daenerys says and the tone of voice she’s using tells him that she’s definitely going to ask for something.

“I’m listening.”

Daenerys smiles at him in a way that is meant to be sweet and charming but he only sees a young girl who is prepared to play on her older brother’s weaknesses.

“I know that you have every right to say no to this—”

Rhaegar chuckles, “You haven’t even asked me anything yet.”
“Before I do so, I want to once again express how deeply sorry I am for betraying your trust by sneaking out and everything that happened as a consequence for my actions. Please note, that is the first offense on my record and-”

“Are we in a court of law?” Rhaegar humorously asks. “Do you see me as a judge?”

Daenerys blushes. “Okay, allow me to try a different approach.”

“Or you could simply ask whatever it is you mean to ask and we’ll discuss it from there.”

Daenerys stares at her feet unassuredly. He doesn’t know when his little sister’s confidence dwindled so. Delicately, he touches her chin, returning her gaze to his face.

“Go for it,” he says encouragingly.

Taking a deep breath, she says, “Jon Snow invited Missandei and me to a concert—you know we’ve never been to a concert, like ever—and we really want to go! I think he’s proven that he’s the responsible sort. Oh and he collects rare artifacts, you collect rare artifacts. That means he’s an okay guy, right? Or at least you can have something to talk to him about when and if he comes to the house to pick us up. Of course, that is all dependent on if you say yes or not.” She beams at him. “Please say yes.”

Rhaegar doesn’t think his sister took the time to catch her breath or even blink. He’s surprised that he managed to catch the main points of what she said. Jon wants to take the girls to a concert, and Jon apparently shares his passion for rare artifacts. Interesting.

The most important thing out of all of that was that now he has a reason to get Jon back to Dragonstone.

“Grey Worm has never been to a concert, either,” Rhaegar quietly remarks, feigning contemplation. “Perhaps he should accompany you girls as well.” With Grey Worm there, the man can protect Daenerys alongside Missandei and experience his first concert. Two birds, one stone. “Oh, if Jon is fine with that, of course.”

“He is!” Daenerys practically shouts it. God’s she’s so elated. Rhaegar has never seen her quite like this before. “Is that a yes?”

“One condition.”

Daenerys waits on bated breath.

“Jon has to stop by an hour or two early so I can test his knowledge on rare artifacts.”

“You really just want to show off your collection, don’t you?”

“Well, of course. What's the point of having such fine things if I can't show them off?” He doesn't expect an answer. "Do you agree to the terms?"

“Yes!” Daenerys gives Rhaegar a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. “Thank you! Have a safe trip! I love you!” She dashes out of the room, more than likely running off to share the good news with Missandei.

As the door to the office closes, the hidden door along the wall to his left clicks open. Viserys steps out with a duffle bag of his own in hand. He smirks at Rhaegar.
“Our sister sounded happy when she left,” Viserys says. “What did you promise her this time? A pony?”

“I see you’ve picked up a sense of humor during your travels.”

Viserys sits his bag down on one of the lounge chairs and walks over to the mini bar to fix himself a drink he doesn’t need. “You know you can’t protect her forever. Soon, she’ll find out all about the depraved and twisted things our family has done and still does.” He gives Rhaegar a pointed look. “She’ll learn all about what her precious, big brother has done.”

“Do you plan on revealing it to her, brother?” he asks, his voice tinged with an underlying threat.

Tossing his drink back, Viserys grimaces. “No worries. I won’t be the one to spill the beans.”

“Then how will she find out?”

“You know as well as I that our family’s secrets don’t stay hidden for long.” Viserys turns away from the bar, facing Rhaegar. “Why do you bother keeping it from her, anyway? Afraid she’s too fragile for the truth.”

“She isn’t fragile.” Like him, Daenerys was born of death, in the midst of sorrow. People like that are never fragile. “I keep the truth from her because she’s better off without it. Daenerys is the best of us.”

“How so?”

“Well, for one, she isn’t a raging psychopath who only builds relationships with people in order to promote her own selfish needs. Daenerys doesn’t pretend to care about those who are unfortunate because she knows she’s under the gaze of the media. She cares because she simply cares.”

“A true woman of the people.” Viserys's tone is laced with sarcasm. “You were like that once. Remember?”

“I was never like Daenerys,” Rhaegar remarks thoughtfully. "I was aware of the good nature and I used it to my advantage. Our dear sister’s naivety is one of her most redeeming qualities.”

There’s a knock at the door. Rhaegar grants the person entry. Grey Worm steps in to let them know that it’s time to go. As they’re loading up their black, unmarked Jeep, Viserys leans over and whispers to Rhaegar.

“You may see Mother Teresa in our little sister but I’ve always seen something else.”

“Pray tell, brother.”

“She has the dragon’s blood in her,” Viserys says. “The same as you and I. Our sweet, innocent Dany is a dragon whose darker impulses are currently dormant. But the first taste of blood she gets…” He grins sadistically. “She’ll never be the same again.”

“You’re wrong,” Rhaegar says, firm in his belief. “The only way I can see Dany doing anything remotely as cruel as what we’ve done is if she has to protect the ones she loves.”

Viserys shrugs. “I suppose we’ll never find out either way.”

And for that, Rhaegar is grateful.
The house Jon grew up in is by no means comparable to that of Winterfell, where his uncle and cousins reside, nor Dragonstone. Nonetheless, it’s a sizable, three-story mansion filled with more bedrooms and baths than they ever needed, expensive yet simple furniture, and sparse decorations. There are no gardens at their estate, only thick, verdant shrubbery to make the outside grounds look homey. His mother tried to keep a vegetable garden some time ago. But she neglected it as well as herself.

The rotten garden was plowed over and his father had the area renovated. Now it was a gym, fully decked out with state of the art equipment. Jon makes good use of it. Sometimes his mother will go and hit the punching bag until she’s exhausted. Jon always finds her afterward, crying on the mat, her knuckles purple, and red.

The first time Jon saw his mother like that was when he was ten. However, she was in the parlor instead of the gym, drinking and crying. He tried to console her despite having no idea where to start. He only knew she was his beloved mother and he would do anything to make her happy.

“This is the only good thing,” his mother whispered that night as she cupped his cheek. “You’re the only good thing out of all of this.” She smiled at him, her watery eyes full of love and pain. “You look just like him.”

“Who?” Jon timidly asked.

“Your father.”

His mother passed out right after that. Jon was too scrawny to carry her to bed so he brought her a blanket. He never told anyone about that either. Often, he wonders if his mother loves him as much as she does because of how good he is at keeping her secrets.

Home, as in the actual mansion, never quite felt like home to Jon. It’s something else he’s never shared with anyone. How could he? How could he tell anyone that the house he grew up in, experienced so many good things in, was never a place where he felt like he belonged?

“Father isn’t here from the looks of it,” Gendry says as they pull into the garage. His voice helps to bring Jon back to the present, anchoring him there. “That gives us enough time with mother.”

The brothers waste no time. They don’t even bother grabbing their bags from the trunk. Ghost pads behind them, his tail already wagging excitedly.

Their mother is waiting for them in the den. First thing Jon notices is that she looks good, healthy even. Her clothes are fitting her again, her skin isn’t as pale, sickly, and she even styled her hair. By styled, he means instead of her usual messy ponytail, her loose curls are flowing down her back. His mother is a petite woman with delicate features that barely contain her northern fierceness.

She's younger than most of the mothers they knew and never seemed to fit into the role of dutiful wife and mother the way their aunt Catelyn did. But Lyanna is a perfect mother in Jon's and Gendry's eyes. She didn't turn Gendry away when his mother dropped him off, days after he was born, expressing how she had no desire for a child.

No, Lyanna took Gendry in and raised him as her own. That's something a lot of women in her position would never do. Jon never cared that his mother didn't always have dinner waiting for him after school or did whatever else most mothers did for their children. She's always been good to them both and that's all that matters.

“Welcome home,” Lyanna greets with a warm smile as she hugs Gendry first. “Thank you for
fetching my other two boys for me.”

“No problem, mother.” Gendry savors the hug a little bit longer then pulls away. He steps aside for Jon. “Smells good in here. You cooked?”

Lyanna embraces Jon, squeezing her slender arms around him with a strength incongruous to her stature. This is his true home, Jon thinks.

“Cooked? Me?” Lyanna snorts. She pats Jon’s back then steps away. Kneeling down, she hugs and pets her “third son,” Ghost. “I had a caterer drop off some food for you two. Figured you boys would be hungry when you got here.”

That’s all the information Gendry needs. He slips into the kitchen without another word. Shortly afterward, Ghost follows.

“How are you?” Jon asks his mother quietly. “Really.”

“I’m better.” Lyanna clasps her hands together to keep from fiddling her fingers. It’s a nervous habit she’s picked up along the way. The idea of discussing her mental health with her son makes her uneasy because she’s constantly trying to present herself as capable. “I found a new hobby!”

Jon glances at his mother’s hands, noticing the slight tremor. That’s how he knows she isn’t telling the whole truth, and he knows it’s because she doesn’t want to worry him. For her sake, he won’t push. Not now, at least.

He smiles. “Don’t tell me you’ve quit fencing?” His mother is the one who got him into fencing in junior high and onward. She’s also the reason for his interest in rare swords. “Who will I spar with now?”

“Fencing will always be a part of me. But I needed something new.”

“And that is?”

“You’ll think it’s silly.” She gives him one of her rare smiles that’s all cheek and teeth, her eyes nearly closed.

The tension all over Jon’s body seeps away, his body relaxing. He chuckles. “Will you take up knitting now? Going to make Gendry and I tacky scarves and mittens?”

Lyanna laughs, the sound of it warming Jon’s heart. From the kitchen, Gendry laughs as well. “I fucking hope not!” he shouts back.

“I won’t be knitting by the fire!” Lyanna nudges Jon’s arm playfully. “But I will be doing arts and crafts, I suppose. I’ve taken a couple of pottery classes with Sansa and Catelyn. I went because they wouldn’t stop asking. I found it...soothing. So, I went with them a second time and then on my own.”

“Did you make anything that won’t leak if I put water in it?” Jon asks teasingly.

Gendry leaves the kitchen with a plate full of food. He sits on the adjoining loveseat and stuffs his face.

Lyanna gets up from the couch, walking over to the fireplace. She gestures at the white vase that has yellow flowers painted around the lower half. “You’re looking at it,” she says proudly.
Jon and Gendry share a look then turn their gazes back to the vase and then their mother. “You bought that, didn’t you?” Jon asks knowingly.

“...okay, I bought it off Sansa because for the life of me I can’t make even a proper bowl.” Lyanna laughs along with her sons. “Yet! Just you two wait. Soon, your mother will be the best damn potter in Westeros.”

“Of course you will,” Gendry says with a mouth full of food. “You’re capable of mastering any skill you want!”

Jon nods in agreement.

Even though they enjoy teasing their mother they always support her. And it’s clear that their support means a great deal to Lyanna.

She returns to the couch, retaking her seat next to Jon. “I’m thinking of having a home studio built for myself,” Lyanna says. “You two wouldn’t mind helpin-“

The front door opens and slams.

Immediately, the atmosphere shifts, a chilliness settling over the den. A loud call of their names confirms what they already know: Robert is home. Watching the light leave his mother’s eyes as her smile slowly fades, tears Jon apart. Instinctively, Jon turns his body so that he’s shielding his mother. To his knowledge, his mother has never been abused by their father. Not physically at least. Their father isn’t a terrible man, not necessarily. It’s just that he’s so damn angry all of the time for no reason at all.

Robert enters the den and for a moment it looks as if he’s charging toward them. Four of his men are with him. They stand in the archway silently.

“You had the nerve,” Robert bellows, his voice echoing throughout the house, “to put your own bloody neck on the line for our enemy! Your orders were to deal with that sniveling Ferret. That was it!”

Standing up, Jon meets his father’s fiery gaze head on. “Are you seriously mad with me for saving a woman from being raped? Do you hear yourself?!”

“It was that Targaryen bitch! Not one of ours, not someone who mattered! Had it been anyone else-“

Jon cuts his father off, “The Targaryens aren’t our enemy! They haven’t been for damn near twenty years!” While they go back and forth, Lyanna and Gendry stair at their laps, waiting for it to end. “Uncle Ned didn’t have a problem with it. Why do you? He’s the head of this family! Not you!”

Robert bawls his fist. “Watch yourself, boy,” he grits out, so angry that his entire face and neck are crimson. “You’re my son! I can’t have you getting killed while protecting some Targaryen wench!”

“Don’t speak of her that way!” Jon knows he’s skating on thin ice. He knows he can’t openly defy his father this way. Still, he hates the way the man disrespects Daenerys. She’s the victim here. Why can’t his father see that? “She’s not involved with her family, father. She’s a civilian.”

“She’s a filthy whore like her whore brothers,” Robert spits. “The whole family is full of incest abominations who should’ve died in the womb!”

Lyanna quickly stands. “That’s enough, Robert!”
“Quiet you!” Robert shouts at her then turns his gaze back to Jon. “You think she’s innocent, is that it? Let me tell you something, boy, and you do well to remember it. There are no innocent Targaryens. The first time you let your guard down, they’ll stab you in the back!”

Jon narrows his eyes at his father. “Why do you hate them so much? Is it because they’re one of the main families? Is it because their very names hold weight in our world and the outside world while no one barely knew who you were until you married my mother and used her name to build your—”

Blood fills Jon’s mouth. Robert punched him hard enough to make him see stars. Stumbling back, he clutches his face. His mother keeps him upright, giving him time to gather himself as she yells at Robert. Somewhere in the room Ghost is barking and growling. Lyanna then has to calm the dog down. Tearing away from his mother, Jon licks his bloody teeth and rushes toward his father. Somehow, Gendry gets in between them. His brother must’ve already been standing before the punch came. He must’ve seen it coming.

“That’s it!” Robert yells, patting his own chest. “That’s my son!” He glances over his shoulder at his men and laughs. “Only time the son of a bitch resembles me is when he wants to knock my teeth in!”

Gendry struggles with all of his might to hold Jon back. Jon’s vision burns red hot. He hardly hears his mother and brother urging him to calm down. All he wants to do is make his father bleed.

Robert continues laughing, “Calm down, boy! Ned needs to see all of us to discuss this warehouse incident. You can cry about it to your mother later.” He casts Lyanna a harsh glare before he departs with his men.

The rage builds and builds inside of Jon until it’s unbearable. He loathes it when he gets this angry because it makes him more like his wretched father.

“Take him to the punching bag,” Lyanna says, sounding tired as she pets Ghost. “Let him get it all out before the meeting.”

When they’re in the gym, Gendry is wise enough not to try holding the bag for his brother. He simply leans against the wall watching Jon send the weighted bag swinging back and forth until it falls off. Even then, Jon gets on top of the bag, pounding and pounding away at the proxy for his father.

Jon feels drained in the end. His anger is still there but for now, it’s sated.

“I need a good fight,” Jon says, removing his drenched shirt as they head back inside. “After the meeting, we’re going to see Tormund.”

Gendry groans. “See, this is why I prefer to stay in my cave,” he mutters to himself.

Each of the main families conducts their meetings differently.

The martels meet in a bathhouse called The Water Gardens and sit around in the sauna or in the pools discussing their plans for the month and plotting the deaths of their enemies. Families like the Lannisters and Tyrells host their meetings at their own estates over lavish five-course meals. The few remaining Tullys conduct their meetings under the cover of fishing trips and the Arryn family usually meet at the planetarium in a private room. “Taking a gaze through the Moon Door” is the code they use whenever they need to meet.

No one really knows how the Targaryens go about things. They’ve always been a secretive bunch.
Some say they meet in the dark catacombs beneath the city, surrounded by thousands upon thousands of skeletons. Of course, that’s probably just another one of the creepy tales people enjoy telling about the infamous family. The most popular rumor is that the three main children are the products of incest. Rhaella Targaryen hardly left the confines of Dragonstone for anyone to confirm or deny.

As for the Starks, they meet out in the woods outlining Winterfell, beneath the great weirwood tree; a rare species with white bark and red leaves. A typical meeting would include the head of each minor family along with their second-in-command.

However, due to the recent turn of events, Ned only summoned his direct kin and close relatives; Benjen, Robb, Lyanna, Robert, Jon, and Gendry.

Per usual, the meeting begins after the purpose for it is made known. And the purpose is, as Ned grimly states, “Someone has betrayed us.”

“I bet my two front teeth it was the bloody Karstarks!” Robert growls. “We should’ve never given them control over that much territory!”

Jon clasps his hands behind his back, still battling with his emotions; still wanting nothing more than to stick the entirety of his foot and leg up his father’s ass. Despite that, he has to agree with his father, and from what he can see he isn’t the only one. The Karstarks have never hidden their disdain for the family’s aversion to the big three.

They aren’t the only family who feels that way, however.

“I don’t think they’re working alone,” Robb says, taking the words right out of Jon’s mouth. “I haven’t heard anything from them exactly but I’ve long suspected the Boltons as well.”

“The Boltons have been loyal to us long before either of you were born,” Ned says as if he doesn’t want to believe that longtime friends would do such a thing. “What reason do they have to go against us now?”

Jon speaks up, “People change. Maybe the Boltons want more money, more power.”

Ned shakes his head, not wanting to believe it. “Roose Bolton has done questionable things in his personal life, things I don’t agree with, but he’s an honorable man and a reliable ally.”

Personally, Jon thinks Roose Bolton would sell his own mother’s skin for fifty bucks and a bottle of gin, but what does an upstart like him know? Glancing up, his eyes lock with Robb and he just knows his cousin’s thinking the same thing. Jon loves his uncle but he can’t wait for Robb to take over because he knows Robb has the right balance of honor and brutality. That's what their family truly needs.

“Jon has a point,” Lyanna says, giving each of her brothers a hard look. “We can’t rely on past loyalties to determine our present actions. People do change. For all we know, Roose wants to rule the north and he’ll start by hitting our warehouses.”

Robert spits on the ground. “You want us to start butchering our allies until the traitor reveals himself?”

“That isn’t what my sister is saying,” Benjen says, cutting his eyes at Robert. “We should tread carefully. Trust no one outside of the immediate family. From now on we should conduct our meetings with only those currently present.”
“Our meetings?” Robert scoffs. “So you’ve decided to participate now? Did you finally remember what your last name was?”

“Do you remember yours?” Benjen retorts hotly. “If I recall correctly, it’s Baratheon, not Stark. Or did you take my sister’s surname as well as her inheritance?”

A heavy silence blankets them. Similarly to Jon’s remark from earlier that night, Benjen’s words touch on the same subject. A touchy subject that Robert loathes. One night, when his parents thought he was asleep, Jon eavesdropped on one of their arguments.

It’s believed, at least by his mother and obviously his uncle Benjen, that Robert only pursued Lyanna in order to obtain her inheritance and her seat at the table; her high status in the family’s affairs. Without Lyanna, Robert wouldn’t even be allowed at this meeting. By law, Lyanna isn’t supposed to be here either since Robert now "speaks for her" but Benjen wouldn't allow her to be excluded from what her flesh and blood built.

Ned sighs, “Enough of that. We’re here to prevent a civil war not argue amongst ourselves.”

“If we don’t know who to trust how will we proceed?” Jon asks. “We can’t let the others know we suspect a rat because whoever the rat is will work harder not to get caught.”

Robb adds, “We should set up a trap for them. Trick them into telling on themselves.”

“We need to feed each head of the family different information. False information.” Jon bounces ideas off of Robb the same way they do whenever they’re handling hits or working on assignments together.

“What’s the point in doing all of that?” Robert asks, clearly irritated that the “pups” are the ones making the plans.

Ignoring him, Lyanna smirks and says, “Ah, I see. My son and nephew are clever. Best way to catch a rat is to draw it out.”

“We tell each of them a different story,” Benjen starts, a metaphorical light bulb beaming above his head. “Perhaps we’ll tell them about a big shipment coming in and give each one a different pickup location. All of us can take a few good men and spread out, lie in wait at each location. Whoever shows up without clearance, is the rat.”

Jon is already seeing how well that plan can work. Shipments are only handled by those assigned to them. If one of them were to let slip during a casual conversation the address to one of the pickup locations and someone who isn’t assigned for that shipment arrives then that should give them an idea of which family betrayed them.

Of course, Ned has an issue with that plan. “We will not deploy dishonorable tactics. What of the other, innocent men we'll be deceiving? How will they feel when they discover our schemes?”

“Fuck their bloody feelings!” Robert shouts. “Honor doesn’t exist in times of war!”

Once again, Jon hates that he agrees with his father. Who gives a shit about honor when it’s a matter of life and death? Honor can fuck right off.

“These aren’t warring times,” Ned reminds each of them. His eyes settle on every face. “If our allies believe we don’t trust them that will only give more cause for a mutiny.”

“Then what will we do?” Benjen asks. “Wait around for more of our men to die? What of our
family?"

“We’ve survived traitors before and we’ll survive them again. For now, we will remain cautious and alert. No one has permission to try and snuff the rat out. That’s an order. You’re all dismissed.”

As disappointing as the meeting was, Jon is glad he can finally knock somebody’s lights out. He knows Robb probably wants to do the same. This isn’t the first time Uncle Ned has disregarded their suggestions in favor of a more honorable route.

“I’m heading to Tormund’s if you want to come with,” Jon says to Robb as they’re leaving the woods, the old heads walking in front of them, whispering amongst themselves.

“Well, I was going to see if Ros was available but perhaps I’ll call her afterward.” He grins at Jon and Gendry. “There’s nothing like a good fuck after a fight.”

Gendry and Jon chuckle.

In the northern territory, further north than Winterfell, there’s an underground boxing club where secret hotheads like Jon go to blow off some steam, have a couple of drinks, and dick around. The club owner, Tormund Giantsbane, was once an enemy to the Starks and the other northern families; he still doesn’t fuck with the other families.

But they're all on relatively peaceful terms.

Jon isn’t sure how he and Tormund became good friends. One day they were at each other’s throats then the next they were getting pissy drunk together and sharing war stories. Free Folk, the boxing club, is where Jon met his ex-girlfriend, too. That’s a story he isn’t in the mood to get into right now. Instead, he focuses on his opponent.

Some green boy from the neighboring city decided to stumble into the wrong club, it seems like. Jon doesn’t go easy on him, though. There’s a sign on the door. The guy knew what he was getting himself into.

Fueled by the roaring cheers from the arena, Jon rushes his opponent, ducking quickly to avoid an incoming attack and following it up with a punch to the man’s ribs. As the man doubles over, Jon delivers a haymaker, knocking him out cold.

The referee’s counting is drowned out by shouting and yelling from the stands. Jon doesn’t wait to see if his opponent will get up. He knows he won’t.

In his corner, Robb, Theon, and Gendry are waiting for him. After congratulating him, Robb quickly jumps in the ring, eager for his own victory. Taking the water bottle from his brother, Jon pours a bit of it on his head then drinks the rest.

“Plan on fighting?” Jon asks.

Gendry shakes his head. “I’ll let you three have all the fun.”

“That’s another way of saying he’s too chicken shit,” Theon teases. It’s all in good fun, though.

“Fuck off,” Gendry shouts, shoving at Theon.

While the new contenders are being announced, Jon scans his eyes around the packed club, looking for his next opponent. That one fight isn’t nearly enough to sate him. During his search, he sees
Tormund heading toward them with a tray filled with beers.

Smiling at his friend, Jon meets him halfway and takes one of the beers. “You’ve got a packed house tonight,” he says.

Tormund hands off the rest of the beers to Theon and Gendry. “People like to see other people beat the shit out of each other. Gets them off and gets me paid!”

They all laugh and clink their glasses together. When Robb’s fight starts, Jon and Tormund catch up while they watch Robb toy with his opponent. Usually, his cousin prefers a serious fight but tonight they’re here to enjoy themselves. Not seek glory and status.

“ Heard one of your family's major warehouses was hit,” Tormund says, his thick, red beard damp from beer. Wiping it, he adds. “Lots of talk about war around these parts.”

“There won’t be a war.” At least Jon hopes there won’t be. “But if there is one, on which side will you stand?”

“On my own side. The side of the free folk.” Tormund gives Jon an intense stare that would’ve made a lesser man flinch away. “We do not kneel. You know that.”

“Aye, I know you don’t like to get involved with the families and you do things your own way. But if a war does break out, you think you all will be bulletproof just because you do not kneel?”

In the ring, Robb moves to the side a second too late and suffers for it. His opponent punches him square in the jaw. It’s a weak punch from the sound of it. Robb headbutts the man and the crowd screams with delight.

Fuckers love a good fight.

Tormund laughs. “You pretty boys sure know how to take a punch,” he says. The change of subject is his polite way of letting Jon know he isn’t up for any more talk of war and allegiances.

Good. Because neither is Jon. He hates he even brought it up.

Tormund gestures to one of the servers who are walking around with trays of drinks. “Here,” he tells Jon, handing him a shot glass. “Drink some more then go knock some more teeth in.”

Jon accepts the drink gladly. After Robb wins, someone else fights before Jon takes the ring again. By then, he’s had three beers and a shot of Vodka.

His second opponent for the night is a tall burly man with a barreled chest and meaty fingers, reminding Jon of his father a little. While the announcer does what he does best, Jon continues to size up the beast of a man up. Compared to the man, Jon is small, probably harmless to those who don’t know him. He can see the bets being made and jotted down by the bookies who then write the predictions up on the chalkboard. A good bit of the audience thinks Jon will lose.

“You see that pretty girl,” the opponent bellows, sounding every bit as monstrous as he looks. “Run home to your little nest, baby bird. Run home to your mommy!”

Tormund’s loud voice echoes throughout the club, “My money’s on the pretty crow!” He takes out a wad of bills and the bookies scramble for it.

The crowd just eats that shit up.
Then the fight begins.

Tucking and rolling, Jon evades a wide swipe that might’ve thrown him from the ring if it weren’t for his quick reflexes. Regaining his footing, he slaps the back of the man’s head, just to piss him off and get a couple of laughs from the crowd. He succeeds.

“You’re going to die for that,” the man growls as he turns around and charges at Jon.

Sidestepping, Jon punches the man in his side repeatedly to no avail. He’s a solid rock. But no matter. Rocks can crumble. For a good portion of the match, Jon is ducking and dodging, trying to tire the beast out, but unlike most men of his stature, the man doesn’t seem to tire easily.

“Are you going to keep hopping and running around like a fucking bunny?” the man asks. “Did your whore mother teach you how to cower and-”

Something inside of Jon snaps, and he punches the man right in the mouth, drawing blood. He then takes a tip from Robb’s handbook and headbutts him, hard. They both stumble back from the force of it. Jon can feel a small cut on his lip. He swipes his tongue over it, savoring the bitter taste. More derogatory comments about Jon’s mother are made, feeding the monster inside of him. The next time the man lunges forward, Jon is waiting for him. He knocks him on the mat, straddles him, and punches until he hears bone cracking and his fists are wet. Even then Jon has no intention of stopping.

The referee has to pull him off.

The crowd isn’t too happy about the outcome of the fight, considering most of them betted against Jon. But the few who betted on him, including Tormund, are very happy.

Climbing out of the ring, Jon is met with Robb and Gendry’s concerned expressions. There’s a little bit of fear in the latter’s eyes, and Jon wonders if perhaps his brother sees a glimpse of their father in him. With that thought in mind, he’s too ashamed to meet his brother’s gaze.

Jon is staring at his bruised and bloody fists when Tormund comes up behind him, patting him on the back and waving two stacks of money in front of his face. “Look at how much money you’ve won me!” He hands one stack to Jon. “Here’s your half.”

“Keep it,” Jon says, heading to the locker room. “Buy everyone a round with it, if you want.”

Thankfully, the locker room is empty giving Jon the privacy he wants. He plops down on the bench and puts his face in his hands. His heart is pounding violently in his chest from the adrenaline. He wants another fight already. Sometimes he wishes he weren’t himself. Wishes he didn’t have all of this anger and hatred inside of himself.

What does he have to be so angry about, anyway? His childhood was decent. Yeah, his parents argued a lot, his father was and still is a hard ass, and he was exposed to the family’s business before he could even walk. But his mother did what she could. She made some good, memorable moments for him. Growing up with his cousins and brother wasn’t so bad, either. Jon had it better than most.

So, why? Is it genetics? But even his father wasn’t always angry.

Jon finds the locker where he put his bag and takes out his phone. There are several missed calls from the same unregistered number. He knows it’s one of his clients who are too antsy to wait until he contacts them about the stolen parts they want to buy. He’ll deal with them tomorrow.

Amongst the string of calls are two text messages from an unfamiliar number. Rarely does Jon
conduct business through texts. Whoever this is must have the wrong number.

>I wanted to thank you (and Ghost) again for accompanying me for lunch earlier.  
>Btw this is Daenerys. Just in case you had lunch with more than one book nerd today :)

Jon considers not responding because he doesn’t see what good it’ll do. It isn’t like they can actually build anything, rather it be romantic or platonic, from this. Didn’t stop him from trying to ask her out on a date, though. He’s beginning to regret doing that.

He continues staring at the message, his heart pounding loudly, blotting out the sounds of the cheers from the arena. Walking further into the locker room, he taps the phone icon at the top of the message thread then brings the phone up to his ear. His actions are 100% influenced by the alcohol, the adrenaline, and the desperate need to center himself before he goes back out there and picks a fight with someone bigger than the guy he just pummeled.

Daenerys picks up on the fourth ring with a soft, “Hello.”

Hearing her voice makes Jon feel as if the wind is knocked out of him. He isn’t sure how to respond or what to even talk about. Calling her was impulsive. He expected her not to pick up. But now that she has he feels like a fucking idiot.

“Jon, are you there?”

“Yeah,” he croaks. Clearing his throat, he asks, “Did I wake you?” He doesn’t even know what time it is. It’s just that she sounds like she was sleeping. Her voice is all soft and airy.

“No, you didn’t. This is very unexpected.”

“Sorry, I just…” What in the fuck is he doing? “It doesn’t matter. I should go and let you get back to whatever it is–.”

“I was asleep,” Daenerys says. “And you woke me. I could’ve rolled over and ignored your call but I didn’t. So, if you’re planning on ending this conversation after only…” A brief pause. “One minute and eleven seconds then you’re going to end up on my list.”

The corners of Jon’s lips tilt upward slightly. “What kind of list is it?”

“The exact nature of the list is only for me to know.”

“Seems a bit unfair.”

“More unfair than you ruining a girl’s beauty rest just to rush off the phone with her as soon as you hear her voice?”

“Sounds like I did you a favor then. You’re beautiful enough. Any more beauty rest and you’re going to have rabid fans chasing after you.” The words come out so easily he doesn’t have the time to be embarrassed by them.

There’s a brief pause on the other end, aside from Daenerys’s hitch of breath, he can’t hear a thing. Then she speaks, “Are we speaking from experience?” she asks, her voice like honey.

Jon sits on the floor, his back against the wall. His heart is no longer beating wildly in his chest, and he’s no longer hungry for blood. “I’m not important enough for a fan club. No one likes the sullen type.”
“You didn’t come off as sullen during lunch.”

“Suppose it all depends on the company.”

Again, Daenerys is quiet on the other end. Jon is content with listening to her breathing. He wonders if she’s still laying in bed or if she sitting up, if she’s on her back, staring blindly into her dark bedroom or if she’s lying on her stomach, swinging her feet back and forth while she twirls a strand of her pretty silver hair.

Whatever she’s doing, he’s sure she looks damn good.

“Are you at a show?” Daenerys asks.

“No, a club.”

“I see…”

“Not a nightclub,” he says, the memory of their first unofficial encounter coming to mind. “A boxing club owned by my friend.”

He can hear the smile in her voice when she says, “You don’t strike me for the type. Not to imply that you’re…wimpy or anything. And there’s nothing wrong with being a wimp, I suppose. But your face…”

“What about it?”

“I imagine a boxer is prone to cuts and bruises. Broken noses and jaws.”

“It happens.” More than he cares to admit. “You just caught me on a good day.”

“Lucky me.”

It suddenly hits Jon that they’ve been flirting with one another this whole time. It’s a wonder how he’s ever dated anyone in the past with his level of obliviousness. He should make an attempt to wrap up the call before things slip out of his control, but he likes talking to Daenerys. And she seems to like talking to him, too.

“Have you fought yet?” Daenerys asks, voice somehow even softer than it was previously.

“Twice.”

“Did you win?”

“What do you think?”

She laughs, and Jon wishes he was there with her right now to see her face light up. “Well, you did sound upset when you first got on the phone so I’m guessing you lost and needed a pep talk from me.”

“Why on earth would I need a pep talk from you?” he chuckles. “Are you secretly the heavyweight champion of the world or something?”

“Of course not, but I have a talent for boosting morales.”

“But you can’t tell me what that exact talent is because it’s only for you to know. Am I right?”
"You’re a fast learner, Jon Snow."

"I’ve been told."

"I wonder what other areas you excel in."

The way Daenerys words it leaves a lot open to interpretation, and try as he might, Jon can’t help but think of her words in sexual terms. But he isn’t some horny middle schooler eager to talk about sex. If Daenerys is trying to take the conversation there, he’ll let her steer it in that direction then he’ll take over if he needs to.

But Daenerys is obviously not the sort of woman to dive right into that so soon.

"I’m actually glad you called,” Daenerys says. “I have good news to share.”

"Then share it."

"Missandei and I will go to the concert with you. If the invitation is still available…”

This is the part where Jon comes up with some shitty excuse as to why he actually won’t be attending the concert to avoid getting closer than he already has to Daenerys. Instead, his dumb, pigeon brain short circuits and he does the exact opposite.

"The invitation is still open. I’m happy you two decided to accept.” He’s happy and shocked that Rhaegar gave them the green light, is what he means.

"I know it’s rude to invite someone to an outing I too was invited to but do you mind if a friend of ours tagged along? His name is Grey Worm, and before you ask, no that isn’t his real name but it’s what he prefers. He’s super chill and…”

As Daenerys continues to speak highly of her friend, Jon is mentally cursing. Of fucking course, he knows who Grey Worm is. The guy has a reputation of his own in the city. He’s another reason why people steer clear of the Targaryen’s territory. Their foot soldiers operate and fight like actual, unified soldiers, and Grey Worm is their commander.

"Yeah, that’s fine,” Jon says, knowing he doesn’t have a choice in the matter. Rhaegar is probably sending Grey Worm because he’s around the same age as them and can blend in at a concert setting whilst protecting Daenerys. “The more the merrier.”

"Great! And one more thing...Rhaegar wants you to stop by beforehand so he can brag about his swords.” She laughs.

"Seriously?” Jon can’t even pretend as if he doesn’t want to see Rhaegar's collection. "He’ll let me have a look at Dark Sister and Blackfyre?’"

"Yup. That means you two can fanboy together and then we can go listen to good music.”

"You’ve been listening to The Minstrels?” He smiles; they’re his favorite band only second to the Indie singer Prodrick. “What song do you like so far?”

Jon misses her response because Robb and Gendry rush into the locker room, cursing loudly and carrying an unconscious Theon in. The Greyjoy’s entire face is bloody.

"I’m sorry, Daenerys,” Jon regretfully says, “But I have to go. Something has come up.”

"It’s fine,” she says, disappointment clear in her voice.
“Can I call you some other time. Before the concert..."

That seems to make up for his abrupt departure. “Sure. Texting is fine too.”

"Okay. Goodnight.” He won’t dare utter her name while the others are around.

“Goodnight, Jon.”

Jon keeps thinking about how sweetly Daenerys spoke his name for the remainder of the night. Even while him, Robb, and Gendry are in the alley behind the club, kicking the shit out of the asshole who snuck a pair of knuckle rings into the ring during his fight with Theon.
The week passed by in a blur.

For Jon at least. He couldn’t speak for Daenerys who had a new, infuriating, university experience to share every time they talked on the phone; which was every night following that first time. Jon doesn’t know when the line between cordial and up close and personal was crossed. They just transitioned into it with ease.

On Daenerys’s first day, her professor made a rude comment about her last name while he was giving the attendance sheet a once over and acknowledging the students he had high hopes for. “Oh
look, we have a Targaryen gracing us with their presence,” Daenerys said, using a dry, nasally voice to mimic her professor. “I better not fail this one or she’ll burn us all.”

Jon remembers being furious when she told him that, but mostly because he could hear the hurt and confusion in her voice.

“Then everyone laughed. Like it was some kind of inside joke. I wish Missandei was there but we’re in different classes. We want to trade our newfound knowledge with each other,” Daenerys explained to him. “Why would he even imply such a thing?”

Because her father, Aerys, “allegedly” bombed an entire courtroom filled with people just to kill one person. Shortly after that, Aerys was murdered; by his own son, some people say. But all the regular people in Westeros believe he died from natural causes.

Jon didn’t mention that story to Daenerys. It wasn’t his place to shed light on her family’s past though it made him uncomfortable to hide the truth from her. She had a right to know why people she’d never met or heard of hated the very sight of her.

“Would it be better if you and Missandei just took classes together? You wouldn’t feel so alone...” Jon kind of wished he went to her university, but there’s no reason for anyone in the family to bother with higher learning.

“No,” Daenerys said stubbornly. “I can’t always hold her hand. I have to get through this on my own.”

Jon admired her for that.

Her professor wasn’t the only one giving her a hard time. The next day it was some twat in a fraternity who asked her, “does the carpet match the drapes,” and Daenerys admitted having trouble understanding his question.

“I was in the middle of my history lecture when I realized what he’d meant,” she said, laughing at herself.

Each day, Jon added a new person to the list of people he wanted to have words with on Daenerys’s behalf. Her shitty professor, the asshat frat boy, and the girl in class who was telling people that Daenerys fucked the entire admissions board to get accepted.

“It’s fine,” Daenerys would always say. “I’m used to it. There are good and bad people in the world. Besides, I can’t cry about how unfair life is when my life has been astoundingly better than most.”

“How are you even real?” Jon finds himself asking by the third consecutive night. They started their phone call later than usual because he had work to do alongside Robb and Uncle Benjen. He quickly discovered that hearing Daenerys’s voice after a brawl mellowed him out in ways alcohol and detached sex could never.

Daenerys is tired tonight but stayed up to talk to him. “What do you mean?” she asks.

“Ohers in your position, with a wealthy family backing them, would’ve gotten that professor fired without a chance to get another position in this city. And I’m sure your brothers would love to take a crack at that frat jerk, too.” Jon sure as shit wants to.

“I prefer to allow karma to do all the dirty work.” She laughs tiredly. “Also, that professor has tenure.”
“Of fucking course he does.”

“You sound like you’re more upset about it than I am,” she says.

The words tumble out of Jon’s mouth before he can stop them. “I care about you, Daenerys. It pisses me off that you’re being treated this way when you don’t deserve it.”

“Sometimes I feel like I do deserve it,” she says, sounding small. “There are people who can’t afford clean drinking water, Jon. Women who can’t feed their children. And here I am, attending university for a degree I don’t need and will probably never use.”

“Not your problem. Not your responsibility.”

“Doesn’t stop the guilt. I asked Rhaegar to sponsor ten, recent high school graduates so that they could have the same opportunity as I do. But it still feels like it’s not enough.”

“You’re something else, you know that?” Jon says, completely and utterly smitten by her.

Once again he’s reminded of how she’s far too good for the likes of him. She’ll be better off with one of the scholarly types at her university. Someone that shares her passion for books and philanthropy. She needs someone without blood on their hands.

“I only know that I wish you were here right now,” she says, voice barely above a whisper. Then her breathing changes, becoming heavier. “Stay on the line with me, please.”

Jon can feel his black, shriveled heart slowly expanding and pumping with affection and hope. “I’m not going anywhere.”

And the promise extends beyond this moment, beyond the bounds of this phone conversation. Jon isn’t going anywhere until Daenerys finally sees him for what he truly is. A better man would remove himself before attachments and bonds are formed but Jon has never done anything solely for himself. He’s never reached out and grabbed what he wanted.

Even with Ygritte. They only crossed paths because Jon was sent to infiltrate Tormund’s gang and rip them apart from the inside out. It was easy for him to slip in unnoticed during that time because he didn’t have as nearly as much street recognition as he does now. His relationship with Ygritte, albeit genuine once it developed, was built on lies and his unwavering duty to his family. Jon supposes that’s why it ended tragically.

An unjust beginning means for an unjust end, after all.

But this thing with Daenerys, whatever it is, is different. He just knows it. Ygritte used to tell him that he knew nothing, and perhaps she was right back then. Now things are different. Jon is different, and he knows Daenerys as well as what little they have is special.

“Today’s the big day,” Viserys announces dryly as he enters Daenerys’s bedroom without knocking. Per usual he’s wearing a black, tailored suit with the top two buttons of his red dress shirt undone, a gold watch on his wrist and pensive expression on his face. He walks over to her wardrobe, running his slender fingers over the lilac dress she’s set out for the occasion. “Is this what you’re wearing?”

Daenerys swallows down her irritation. She has lost count of the number of times she’s asked him to knock before entering. Viserys’s bad manners aside, she’s in a great mood because in three hours Jon will be here to pick them up for the concert. Her entire first week of class was terrible but at least she can end the week on a good note.
“Do you dislike it?” Daenerys asks. She spent a majority of her night trying to find something to wear since Jon was out too late for their nightly call. She tries not to think about what he could’ve possibly been doing. He isn’t her boyfriend, though, she wishes he were.

“The dress is fine, I suppose,” Viserys says, tapping his chin thoughtfully. “A bit short, don’t you think?”

“I’m short. So it isn’t too revealing.”

Viserys looks over his shoulder at where she’s sitting on her bed, cross-legged with a fashion magazine in front of her. “I can’t believe he’s allowing you to go anywhere with this…” He curls his lips in disgust. “Jon Snow fellow.”

“Do you disapprove of Jon specifically or the fact that Missandei, Grey Worm, and I are finally being allowed to have fun?” Daenerys flips through the magazine absently, skimming her eyes over items she already owns.

“I think our brother is up to something.” Viserys stares off into a random corner in the bedroom. “Yes, that’s it. He’s using this northerner for some sort of scheme…”

Daenerys frowns. “Why do we refer to our counterparts in the northern neighborhoods as northerners? They’re still from the same city as us.” It’s a habit she picked up from her brothers but she never knew the history behind it.

She might as well be a tree stump because Viserys once again says nothing in response to her inquiry.

“Could this Jon Snow be our brother’s key to obtaining what he truly desires?”

“What does Rhaegar truly desire?”

“Simplicity,” Viserys says. “He desires that which was stolen from him.” Regarding her with a mixture of pity and disdain, he waves a dismissive hand. “Why did I bother coming to you in the first place?”

“I am wondering the same thing.”

Viserys walks toward her bed and Daenerys stiffens. This can go either way. Her brother will either dote on her or torment her. She prays it’s the former because she doesn’t want to risk Jon seeing any bruises on her arms or legs.

“You still slouch,” he says, taking a seat on the bed. “Your posture is that of a common whore.”

“Common whore? It’s the 21st century.” She laughs nervously. “No one talks like that.”

He smiles and it reaches his eyes. Daenerys relaxes. She knows now that her brother is in a good mood; he must have taken his medicine for once.

“You don’t have to be insecure anymore, Dany. You’ve grown into a fairly decent young woman. I’m sure this Jon Snow fellow will be enamored when he sees you in that dress.”

“Thank you, Viserys.”

“Don’t fuck him, though. You hardly know him and he’s...from the north.” Viserys says that as if to be from the north is the greatest sin. “I won’t have a slut as a sister, either.”
I can do whatever the hell I want with my body, is what Daenerys wants to say. But she holds her tongue and simply smiles.

Viserys sighs loudly, thums his fingers on his thigh nervously then abruptly stands. “Very well,” he says, rubbing his nose. “Nice chat, sweet sister.”

He leaves.

Daenerys isn’t sure what any of that was about, but she figures it could’ve gone a whole lot worse. With Viserys gone, she resumes her earlier task of freaking out about the concert.

The dress she chose is simple at a first glance, but what Viserys couldn’t see is the laced up back that leaves a portion of her skin exposed. Tonight will be her first time wearing the dress out. She can’t remember purchasing it or when/where she expected to wear it, but when she tried it on today she knew it was a perfect choice. But now she needs to decide on which shoes and accessories to wear, how to style her hair, and if she opted for make-up would that make it look as if she were trying too hard.

Decisions like these require her best friend’s input.

Despite there being plenty of private suites and baths within the mansion, Daenerys and Missandei share a suite and their rooms are adjoined by a bathroom which they also share. They’ve always preferred to stay close to one another.

As Daenerys is walking through the bathroom to Missandei’s room, she hears faint voices. The closer she gets to the door she can make out Rhaegar’s voice. It isn’t her intention to spy, but when she hears her name mentioned, she can’t resist.

“...I want you and Grey Worm to be alert tonight. More than you usually are,” Rhaegar is saying in a tone Daenerys has never heard him use. “There’s been talk of dissension in the north. The venue is near their territory and the heir to Winterfell will be present so keep your guard up.”

“Understood,” Missandei says, her voice cold and detached. “The venue’s security will conduct a thorough search to check for weapons. Grey Worm and I will have to be unarmed.”

“You’ll be with one of theirs. I doubt you’ll be searched at all.”

Numbly, Daenerys backs away from the door and stumbles to her bedroom. Closing the door softly, she leans against it, waiting for her thundering heart to settle. She tried to forget about what happened at Ferret’s club, tried to forget about the shooting, the screaming, and the blood. She never questioned Missandei about it because she didn’t want to relive everything. But after what she just overheard, she knows she can’t continue to pretend as if she doesn’t want answers.

“You’ll be with one of theirs…”

Was Rhaegar referring to Jon?

A sudden knock at her bathroom door startles Daenerys. She all but jumps out of her skin. Her heart is beating so loudly now she almost misses what the person says.

“May I come in?”

It’s Missandei. Sweet Missandei who may very likely have a darker side. Daenerys counts down to ten, putting her mask back on. Soon, she’ll get all the answers she needs. For now, she’ll do what she does best: pretend.
Daenerys opens the door and greets her best friend with a smile.

Jon isn’t immediately greeted by a servant or any menacing henchmen when he arrives at the Dragonstone estate Friday evening. Instead, he is met by Viserys Targaryen. The younger Targaryen’s attire and overall appearance are well-kept and one could even say he looked decent but Jon knows a coke head when he sees one.

“So, you’re the northerner everyone is raving about,” Viserys says as Jon is getting out of the car. “You don’t look like your fat father.”

Jon clenches his jaw. “You look exactly like your father. He was always the sickly sort.”

Viserys’s smile fades, and his violet eyes harden. “Careful, little wolf. You’re a long ways from your den.”

“Are you here to give the big brother speech?”

“Do I look like I give a fuck about this date or whatever you’re taking my little sister on? I want to know why Rhaegar is so interested in you.” Viserys regards Jon. “There’s nothing particularly remarkable about you at all.”

The same can be said about Viserys. If it weren’t for the man’s last name he’d be another addict with a trust fund, riding the coattails of his family’s legacy. Instead, he’s one of the most important people in the city, if not the world. Viserys handles his family’s foreign affairs and from what Jon has heard, the man does a good job of it. If only he’d lay off his own supply.

“I doubt Rhaegar’s interested in me,” Jon says. “He just wants to make sure Daenerys is in good hands.”

Viserys gives Jon a long, hard, blank stare that makes Jon shift uncomfortably. Several seconds pass before the man speaks. “I’ve yet again wasted my time on a pointless exchange.” He steps to the side and waves a hand to the front door. “See yourself in.”

Jon watches Viserys walk to one of the luxury cars in the driveway. He doesn’t go inside until Viserys is out of sight. That was his first time being this close to the man or even hearing him speak. He hopes it’s his last time.

Inside of the mansion, Rhaegar is waiting for him. Unlike Viserys, he greets Jon properly without all the hostility and thinly veiled indifference.

“Would you like any refreshments?” Rhaegar asks after Jon is patted down by the guards. “I could have something prepared for you if you’d like.”

“No, thank you.”

“Very well. Right this way.”

Rhaegar leads him down the corridor to the right of the grand staircase. The walls are dark mahogany and the floors are the same. Thanks to the wall lamps, the corridor doesn’t look too gloomy yet there’s a somberness about the place nonetheless. Jon was nervous before he arrived, but now his nerves have skyrocketed. There are no family portraits. There’s a vintage painting hanging at the end of the corridor, but it appears to be the only art around.

“Why Jon Snow?” Rhaegar asks. He stops in front of a black, arched door with a silver dragon’s
head handle to their left. Upon a closer look, Jon can see that it’s actually a three-headed dragon.

“I didn’t choose it myself. My peers gave it to me years ago.”

“I see.” Rhaegar takes a key out of his pocket, unlocking the door. He opens it and steps in. “Prepare to be amazed, Mr. Snow,” he says with a theatrical flair, reminding Jon of his mother oddly enough.

Visibly relaxing, Jon smiles. “You can call me Jon.” He follows Rhaegar into the room and is immediately taken aback by how luxuriant the room is. “You collected all of this?”

"Took me a while to find most of it. My uncle, Aemon, helped.”

There were rows and rows of glass cases filled with gold, silver, and bronze artifacts, ranging from daggers to pottery. On the walls, swords were mounted and a tapestry of Old Westeros hung on the far wall. A full suit of armor stood in the middle of the room, it’s steel plate was black with a three-headed dragon carved into it, the dragons’ eyes that once held rubies are now hollow.

“And here they are,” Rhaegar says, walking to where the swords are mounted. “Can you tell which is which?”

Jon would be embarrassed by his eagerness to show off in front of Rhaegar if anyone else were in the room, but it was just the two of them. He points to the sword on the left, with the ruby pommel. “That’s Blackfyre.” He points to the right. “And that’s Dark Sister.”

“Very good, Jon.” He sounds genuinely proud. “Did your mother teach you about swords?”

“She did…” Jon glances at Rhaegar. “How’d you figure?”

“Did you know that I reigned as the fencing champion for the region for four consecutive years?”

“I’ve heard.”

“Until a certain someone forged their parents’ name on the application and entered the tournament disguised as a boy. Are you familiar with this story, Jon?”

“My mother defeated you and took your title?” He chuckles.

Rhaegar chuckles as well. “She had to forfeit her claim on the title since she wrongly entered the tournament, but in my eyes, Lyanna is the one who unseated me.” His eyes and voice soften considerably. “No one moved like her on that day. She was truly magnificent.”

“She still is,” Jon says. “She taught me how to fence and we still spar together.” Whenever she’s in a decent mood, that is.

“I’m happy to know that she still fences.” He quickly adds, “It’d be a shame if all that talent went to waste. Come, let me show you the daggers.”

They walk to the other side of the room where the shorter cases align the wall. Rhaegar opens the case for Jon and allows him to examine each dagger closely. Jon is so enthralled that he barely registers their proximity. He’s comfortable in Rhaegar’s presence. More than he is around his own father. Maybe that’s because Rhaegar isn’t a walking, talking anger bomb ready to explode at any given moment.

Jon is admiring the ornate handle on a curved dagger when he feels the tiniest prick at the back of his head. Beside him, Rhaegar is admiring a dagger of his own and there’s no one else in the room.
Thinking nothing of it, Jon returns his attention to the blade.

He isn’t sure how much times passes while they’re in there, sharing stories of their respective hunts for rare items, but by the time they’ve made their way around the room, it’s time to head out for the concert.

“Thank you for allowing me to see what you’ve collected,” Jon says as they’re walking back to the foyer. “I wish you could see Longclaw and Catspaw, but I doubt you’d be as welcomed in my home as you’ve welcomed me here.”

Rhaegar smirks. “Your father still hates me, I take it.”

“Fucking loathes is more like it,” Jon says, fighting the urge to tell Rhaegar that if it were up to him he would be invited over anytime. His loyalties lie with his own blood, no matter what.

Grey Worm is waiting for them in the foyer. Even in his stylish, casual clothes, he looks ready for a fight. When he locks eyes with Jon, he nods his head in greeting. The few times they’ve crossed paths in the past, Grey Worm was always cordial yet he made it clear he’d kill Jon if needed.

Jon respects people like that.

“I see the girls are still taking their time,” Rhaegar jokes.

“We’re here,” Daenerys says from the top of the stairs. Missandei is right beside her. They walk down the stairs, the former looking only at Jon and the latter has her eyes on Grey Worm who isn’t so stoic anymore.

Jon hates that this is playing out like a scene from a cliche romcom where the love interest is slowly descending down the stairs and the lead guy is enamored by her beauty, but that’s exactly what’s happening; minus the slow motion. Daenerys’s lilac dress is short and flowy, with a small dip in the front. The jacket she wears covers any possible cleavage and he’s happy because he doesn’t want to be gaping at her chest while her older brother is around.

Her silver, wavy hair is parted to the side and flowing freely. If she’s wearing any makeup he can’t tell because her face is always this stunning. Yet again, Jon feels extremely underdressed and lackluster in comparison. He looks like a gloomy troll and Daenerys a fae queen.

“Ready?” Daenerys asks Jon as she reaches the bottom stair.

“Um...yeah,” Jon mutters lamely, garnering quiet giggles from Daenerys and Missandei. He feels like an idiot.

Rhaegar pats him on the shoulder and whispers. “Have them home safely and at a decent time.”

“Will do,” he promises.

Just as Rhaegar said, the security guards take one look at Jon and grants all of them entry without conducting a thorough search or any search at all. Daenerys doesn’t allow that to dampen her mood, however. The truth will come to light in due time.

Inside the venue, Daenerys is immediately overwhelmed, in a wholly good way, by how insane it all is. There are so many people and the music is deafening. Jon takes them to a large, exclusive glass room that overlooks the entire arena. Before The Minstrels take the stage, they all mix and mingle.
Jon introduces them to his cousins Robb (who Daenerys discreetly thanks for his involvement in rescuing her from Ferret) and Arya, and his younger brother Gendry. For the most part, everyone is friendly and inviting. Aside from Jon’s family, Daenerys sees Margaery and Loras Tyrell. The siblings, mainly Margaery, is visiting with Robb. If the two are an item it’s difficult to tell.

Once the introductions are over, Grey Worm and Missandei give Daenerys and Jon their space but remain at a safe distance. Daenerys is thankful for her friends, though, she’s sure they’d like some time alone, too.

“Want me to take your jacket?” Jon asks. “There’s a closet in here. No one will touch it.”

“Sure.” Daenerys has been waiting to take her jacket off ever since they pulled out of the driveway. She removes it and hands it to him. “Thank you.”

The closet is behind her. While Jon hangs up her jacket, Daenerys simply waits. She knows he’s seen the back of her dress by the way he stares at her when he returns.

“You look…” Jon cuts himself off much to Daenerys’s disappointment.

“I look?” she prompts.

“Fucking gorgeous. Sorry, I tried not to swear but can you blame me?”

Daenerys laughs to hide the blush forming on her face. “You don’t look too bad yourself.” That was an understatement. Jon also looked ‘fooking gorgeous’ in his black, ripped jeans and dark green bomber jacket. His hair was in a low bun but she wanted to free it and run her fingers through it.

“I wanted to make sure I looked good enough to stand beside you,” he jokes.

“Who do you think I wore this dress for?”

Jon’s smile fades, hunger taking over his features. He steps closer to Daenerys, their chests nearly touching. “You didn’t need to wear a dress like this to get my attention but I’m grateful for it.” He puts his arm around her waist, his fingers ghosting over the smooth skin of her back.

The warmth in her face feels like it’s traveling south, spreading throughout her body. She wants to press closer, allow him to touch and feel more of her and vice versa. The desire is so intense it startles her. She moves away from him.

“I’m parched,” she says, not knowing what else to say. “Is there anything non-alcoholic to drink?”

She glances around the room to keep from meeting his dark gaze.

Jon takes her by the hand, tugging gently. He doesn’t let her hand go for some time. Even as he has the bartender fix her a glass of sparkling water. Even after she’s finished that glass. While Arya and Robb play a round of darts, Dany and Jon sit on the couch, their thighs touching, their hands still linked. They laugh at Robb’s antics together and cheer when Arya wins despite her brother’s cheating. Grey Worm is invited to play during the next game and he accepts. While the three play, Gendry serves as the referee, and Missandei, and Margaery talk amongst themselves at the far end of the couch.

Daenerys loves how well everyone is getting along.

“Glad to see you’re enjoying yourself after the week you’ve had,” Jon says. When he speaks, she’s sucked away from the room and pulled into their own, private bubble. They’re sitting so close she can feel his cool breath on her face.
“Everything that happened during the week feels insignificant now. I’m really happy you invited us. And your family is very welcoming.”

“I made sure to bring the good ones along,” he says as a joke but she can tell his words hold some truth. “Once the concert really starts we’ll go down to the floor. It can get a bit intense so if at any time you want to watch from here just let me know.”

“I wouldn’t want to ruin your fun, Jon. I can just find my way back I’m sure.” Or suffer through it. She doesn’t mind doing that for him.

Jon chuckles. “Forgot how stubborn you were,” he says fondly. “I've been to plenty of concerts, but this is your first so I want you to enjoy yourself. That’s all that matters to me right now.”

His sincerity wins her over. “Okay. I will let you know if it’s too much.” Filled with the sudden urge to kiss him, she glances at his lips. But she looks away just as quickly.

The music from outside the room stops, signaling the start of the show. Jon takes her hand again and they head out behind everyone else.

“Ready?” Jon asks.

Daenerys answers with a bright smile and an eager head nod.

On the floor, the atmosphere is completely different, electrified. Her entire body is thrumming with excitement. When the stage lights are lit and the first strum of a guitar is made, she’s transported to a different world filled with good music and even better vibes.

Everyone around her appears to be riding the same wave. It’s like nothing she’s ever experienced. For the first couple of songs, she sings along with Jon. Then she dances with Missandei and Arya for a good bit. She’s just met Arya but it feels like she’s known her for longer. During the songs she doesn’t know, she’s in Jon’s arms while he sings to her. She can’t tell if he’s decent or not because the music is too loud, but the facial expressions he makes while he sings are hilarious.

She laughs and smiles so much her face hurts.

Mid-way through the concert, Daenerys is in need of a glass of water and her feet need a break. She also wants to get actual alone time with Jon before the night ends.

Circling her arms around his neck, she hugs him close. “Can we go back now?” she asks.

Jon nods and leads her safely through the packed crowd. No one is in the room when they return. They close the doors behind them and flop down on the couch with an exhausted huff. Then they laugh.

“That was amazing,” Daenerys says. She smooths her hair down and grimaces when she realizes how sweaty she is.

“Need a napkin?”

“Yes.”

Jon grabs a few for them both. Daenerys should be mortified to be sitting next to her crush while she wipes sweat from her forehead and neck but Jon is doing the same and he doesn’t seem to mind it at
all. Why bother with pretenses anyway? She’s opened up to him quite a bit already, and he’s still here.

After discarding their napkins, they help themselves to the fruit on the food table. Daenerys watches Jon take a bite of pineapple and she has to stop herself from staring at the juice that wets his lower lip. She focuses on her own fruit, missing the way Jon stares at her. They sit on the couch, quietly eating and sipping on water. Perhaps it’s the fact that they’re alone together behind a closed door that has things feeling awkward between them.

“Do you like the fruit?” Jon asks, keeping his eyes on his empty plate.

She laughs. “Are we resorting to small talk now? I thought we were better than that, Jon.”

“Small talk is a good distraction.”

Daenerys doesn’t fully know what he means, but she thinks she has an idea. Setting her plate on the coffee table, she takes his plate and sets it down as well. Then she takes his hands into her own.

“Jon, look at me.” Reluctantly, Jon faces her, and she can practically see the battle in his eyes. She finds his restraint oddly attractive. “Whatever it is, don’t be afraid to voice it.”

“I want to kiss you,” he says and hearing that gives her a confidence boost.

“What’s stopping you?”

“Lots of things.”

“I doubt any of those things matter. You want to kiss me. I want you to kiss me and we’re up here alone…” She touches his shoulder and leans in.

Jon curses quietly and meets her halfway.

The kiss starts off as a tender brush of their lips, and Daenerys thinks that’s all it’ll be, but then the kiss deepens and evolves. The heat she kept at bay earlier all but consumes her now. Jon’s tongue presses against her lips, she gasps and clutches the front of his shirt. Gently he prods and explores her mouth as his hands cup her face delicately. He tastes sweet, like the fruit he just ate.

Soon his hands are on her shoulders, sliding lower and lower until they’re resting on her hips. His grip is strong and firm. Daenerys hears herself moan. Before she can be embarrassed about it, Jon makes a sound akin to a low growl and nips at her lip. Whatever humiliation she felt is thrown out the window. She kisses him back, just as desperately as he kisses her. Blindly, she reaches for the binding in his hair, unties it, and digs her fingers into his hair. The kiss is interrupted when Jon picks her up and settles her on his lap.

Then it resumes.

They only take small breaks for air. During those times, Jon peppers hot kisses on her chin and down the column of her pale neck. She no longer bothers with suppressing her moans or the breathy whispers of his name. Because whenever she does one or the other, she’s rewarded with a harsh curse or a growl, a bite at her lip or a rough grab of her ass that she shouldn’t like as much as she does.

It’s as if something raw and carnal is stirred inside of her. She would say the same about Jon but she has a feeling that this side of him has always been around. She wants to see more of it.
Jon grabs her ass again, rewarding her for another call of his name, and she rocks her hips forward. That action causes them both to stiffen momentarily. Jon’s eyes appear darker now; if that’s even possible. And his jaw clenches and unclenches. He looks angry but Daenerys knows better.

Curiously, she rocks her hips again, gasping at the sensation of something hard and thick brushing against her panties, against her clit. She wants to feel more of that sensation. She needs more of it.

Jon’s hands are bruising at her sides. “Dany,” he croaks, his voice deep and raspy.

“Dany?” Gods, she sounds drunk. She feels that way, too. “Only my family calls me that.”

“Sorry.”

“No, it’s okay. You can call me Dany.” She kisses him sweetly. “I like how it sounds with your accent.” She tries to kiss him again, but she’s stopped. “What’s wrong?”

“If we don’t stop…” He warns.

“But...it feels really good.” Better than she thought it would. And all they were doing was kissing. She’s curious to know how much better sex is but she knows she isn’t quite ready to find out. “You’re right. We should probably stop…”

Jon seems relieved.

Unable to resist, Daenerys rocks again. “Oops. Sorry,” she says, not sorry at all.

And Jon knows it. Gripping her hips, he settles her on top of his erection and holds her there as he kisses her deeply. Every time she squirms against him, pleasure shoots up both of their spines. It’s maddening. Daenerys can feel him through her panties and she’s sure he can feel how wet she is. What if she allowed Jon to pull her panties to the side, or better yet rip them off, and take her right here on the couch?

Would that make her a slut in Jon's eyes? Would he cast her aside afterward?

Viserys always tells her that men only want one thing from women and once they’ve had it they move onto the next “cunt.” She doesn’t want to only be another notch in Jon’s belt.

Daenerys ends the kiss. “Jon,” she says quietly.

Sensing the change in mood, Jon abruptly stops himself from attacking the exposed top of her bosom with more kisses. “Something the matter?”

“I...what am I to you?”

Jon is quiet for some time and her heart sinks. She moves to get off of him, but he keeps her in place. “I haven’t considered seriously dating anyone else for nearly a year.” He tucks her hair behind her ear and she flinches away from him. “Dany...”

“You don’t have to coddle me, Jon. I understand.”

“I don’t think you do. Can I finish explaining myself before you chop my head off?”

Daenerys wraps her arms around herself, suddenly feeling vulnerable. “You may continue.”

“There’s no better way to go about this so I’ll be frank. My first girlfriend was killed in front of me less than a year ago. Since then, I haven’t been serious about anyone.”
Daenerys touches his face. “I’m so sorry, Jon. Do you mind if I ask how it happened?”

“A bullet in the heart.”

The gears in her mind are beginning to turn. Before she puts the pieces together, she has to know.

“So, that’s why you don’t want to be with me. You’re still not over her.” Which is completely understandable.

“I don’t think I’ll ever be over what happened to her because I feel responsible. However, I do want you Dany. Not just for one night or a couple of nights. But our families would never allow that. At least not mine.”

“I have never felt this way about anyone. Granted, I’ve never dated anyone or even kissed anyone. But what I feel for you is real. We can face whatever obstacles together. But, I need you to be honest with me about something.”

Jon nods.

“Is my family dangerous?” She can see how Jon is closing himself off to her. She cups his face. “I need to know. I’m tired of being in the dark.”

“That’s something you should discuss with your brothers. It’s not my place to tell you, and I can’t risk it.”

“You mean you can’t risk causing trouble for your family?”

His silence is answer enough.

“Fine. At least tell me the truth about yourself and your own family. I want to trust you, Jon. I want to be with you but I can’t if I don’t even know what you do during the nights you’re too busy to call me.”

“Once you learn the truth, I doubt you’ll want to be with me at all.”

“You kill people,” she whispers, watching his face fall. “Like you did that night at the club…”

Jon doesn’t avert his gaze or cower away. He accepts what he is. “I kill those who threaten my family. Killing isn’t all I do. I’m a smuggler, a thief, and I enjoy fighting.” Each admission brings his face closer to hers. “My hands are so filthy with blood I could wash them a thousand times and they still wouldn’t be clean.”

“You have a kind heart.” She places her hand over his heart, feeling it flutter beneath her palm. “I see the way you interact with your cousins, your brother, and how your face lights up when you talk of your mother. And you make me feel safe.”

“Doesn’t change what I’ve done or what I’ll continue to do.”

“Will you ever hurt me? Could you hurt me?”

“Never.”

“What if your father ordered you to hurt me? Or is it someone else who gives the orders?”

“I’d tell them to piss off.”

Daenerys isn’t sure who initiates the kiss. She only knows that she can sense the truth of Jon’s words
and his feelings for her through the kiss. They kiss until their lips are sore and their lungs ache from lack of air. As the concert carries on below, they cuddle on the couch. Jon pets her hair and she breathes in the scent of him.

“Jon.”

“Hm.”

“Never betray my trust and I’m yours,” she says.

“I ask the same of you.”

“You have my word.”

Jon kisses the top of her head. “You have my word, as well. I wish I could promise you that no harm will come to you as a result of my lifestyle, but I can’t. I can only promise you that I’ll keep you safe and butcher anyone who dares harm you.”

Daenerys doesn’t doubt that for one second. “That’s enough for me, Jon.”

It scares her how much she means that. Any decent person would want to keep their distance from Jon. Instead, she finds herself drawn to him even more than she was before. What does that say about her? She doesn’t want to know. She just wants to linger in this moment with Jon.

Tomorrow, she’ll confront Rhaegar.

Chapter End Notes

Now the real fun can begin! Thanks for reading! Comments are always motivating!
The response for last chapter was amazing! Wow I'm on a cloud! Thank you all! And noordinarylines did another amazing mood board :)

“How were you able to snag a piece of his hair without him noticing?” Arthur asks Rhaegar. They’re on the lift, traveling deep below the estate where a majority of the family’s secrets lie.

It seems fitting that they conduct their business down here.

Rhaegar stares at the two, small vials in his hand, each containing a strand of hair, one black, one silver. “I used a method that I’m not quite fond of,” he says, a frown set on his fine brow. “By giving him a toy to keep him occupied, I got what I needed and pretended to be distracted with a toy of my own when he looked my way.”

Arthur laughs. “That’s how most parents are with their children. They slip medicine or veggies in
their food. You did nothing a parent wouldn’t do.”

“We haven’t even handed off the samples yet. We don’t know that he’s mine.”

“When you’re around him do you ever doubt that he is?”

Rhaegar looks away from his friend. When the lift reaches its destination, he opens the gate and they step off into the cool, damp space. Much further down the bunker, there is a door that leads to the city’s catacombs. As a child, Rhaegar would sneak down here in search of dragon bones but he never found any. He was a foolish child with an imagination bigger than his head. The only bones down in the catacombs are human, perhaps even a few dogs and cats. Nothing of myths and legends.

The estate’s Maester is waiting for them in his lab/medical room. They don’t bother with hospitals. Everything they need is here.

“How long will it take?” Rhaegar asks as he hands over the samples.

“No more than a day or two, Master Rhaegar.”

Rhaegar wants to know now, but he understands things like this take time. “Thank you, Maester. Let me know if you need anything else.”

They leave the Maester to his work and go to Rhaegar’s study. One of the doors in here open to a spiral staircase that can take a person all the way up to his office or even one of the bedrooms. His ancestors loved their secret passages.

Sitting at the desk, Rhaegar runs his fingers through his silver hair. There’s a five o’clock shadow on his face and bags under his eyes. He can’t rest until he knows the truth.

“What will you do if he is yours?” Arthur asks, taking a seat in front of the desk.

“I’m not sure. I do know that I’ll need to see Lyanna either way. Robert has lost his edge according to my sources. And Ned Stark has a war to prevent. I think you can arrange a meeting between Lyanna and I without anyone knowing.”

Arthur is happy to hear that and he doesn’t hide it. “Gods, I’ve missed her.”

So has Rhaegar. So much that it hurts to even think about her. If he closes his eyes he can still see her in her wedding gown or her on their wedding night, lying under him, hair spread out on the pillow while she promises to always belong to him in mind, body, and soul. Rhaegar made that same promise ten times over.

“There’ll be plenty of issues to face if the results are positive.”

Rhaegar nods. “If Robert finds out, he’ll want blood. His pride will demand it.”

“And I know you. If he provokes you or threatens the ones you love—“

“I’ll give him fire and blood,” Rhaegar seethes. “First, I’ll bring Lyanna and my son here to keep them safe from his wrath. This time, I’ll end Robert before a war even begins.”

“I will stand by your side as always.”

“I never doubted that.”

“But there is something else to consider, Rhaegar.” Rhaegar looks at Arthur expectantly. Continuing,
he says, “Jon and Dany seem quite taken with one another.”

Rhaegar thinks back to the way Jon stared at Dany earlier that night. It was hard to miss. Glancing around the office, he gazes at the portraits of his family, specifically his mother and father who were brother and sister, forced into a marriage neither of them wanted. Prior to that, others in their family wed within to keep the bloodline pure. What was accepted or at least tolerated during ancient times is unacceptable now. At least that’s what society believes.

What are the odds of Lyanna’s son falling for his sister? It’s as if history is repeating itself. A forbidden affair between two, young lovers born on opposite sides of the city. Perhaps he’s getting ahead of himself. They’ve just met, after all. Then again, he loved Lyanna the moment he saw her.

“I’m not sure how to proceed,” Rhaegar admits. “You know me, a champion for true love and all that. But I can’t keep them in the dark. They deserve to know if they’re related and whatever decision they ultimately decide, I’ll support it.”

“Maybe it won’t develop into anything,” Arthur says, hopeful. “They’ll have our support but we’re only two, old men who’ve seen enough of the world to not care about something like incest.”

“If Jon turns out to be Robert’s son then the problem is solved on its own.” But Jon isn’t Robert’s son, and no amount of denial will change that. A subject change is in order. “Viserys will be home longer than foreseen so we’ll need to check in with our warehouses in Essos…”

It’s nearing two in the morning when Rhaegar and Arthur head back to the office. Rhaegar knows the girls and Grey Worm made it home around midnight because he saw them on the security footage. Perhaps he should allow them more nights like this since they’re responsible enough to return at a decent hour.

“I have to meet with Tywin Lannister in a couple of hours,” Arthur says, yawning. The lift stops and he slides the gate open. “I might as well stay up.”

“Must he always choose to meet at dawn?”

“Early worm gets the gold coin, is what the Lannisters say.”

Rhaegar glances at his friend. “I thought their saying was, a Lannister always pays their debts.”

“Potato, pa-fucking-tahto.”

Laughing tiredly, Rhaegar opens the door that leads to his office, flooding the cold, dark space with light. “You should nap for an hour. I need you at your best if you’re to conduct business with the sly lion.”

Arthur’s response dies on his tongue when he sees who’s waiting for them inside the office. He forgets to even close the door behind him.

Daenerys peeks behind him. “I see the family’s secrets are vast, brother,” she says, her violet gaze piercing. “I wanted to wait until later but I couldn’t sleep until I knew the truth.”

“The truth about?” Rhaegar asks. He closes the door behind Arthur who is still rooted in place.

“Don’t play coy with me, Rhaegar.” Her voice softens. “Please, no more lies. No more secrets.”
“Very well. Arthur, would you please excuse us?”

Arthur doesn’t waste any time getting the hell out of there. The tension is palpable. Daenerys sits with her arms crossed and her delicate features are as sharp as knives. For the first time, ever, Rhaegar is wary of his little sister. He has to tread carefully. If he blatantly lies in her face, she’ll despise him. And if he tells her everything she’ll despise him even more.

Rhaegar sits behind his desk and folds his hands on top of it.

“Where would you like for me to begin, Dany?” He needs her to think she has the upper hand to put her at ease. “Or would you care to tell me what made you suspicious in the first place?”

“How has our family earned and maintained wealth for all of these years?”

“We are the descendants of kings and queens-”

Daenerys slams her hands on the top of the desk, and leans forward, getting in his face. Rhaegar is both mesmerized and startled by the action. Her chest is heaving and her breathing is harsh. There are tears in her eyes.“I don’t want a history lesson,” she says, drawing out each syllable. “I want the truth. Don’t sugarcoat it. Don’t dress it up in flowery garb. Just say it.”

*She has the blood of the dragon.* Isn’t that what Viserys told him?

“Our family dabbles in a bit of everything from illegal gambling rings to drug dens.” He watches the fire leave her eyes and her shoulders slump. Gods, he hasn’t even gotten to the half of it and she’s already crumbling. “Dany, I kept this from you because your safety has and always will be paramount.”

Daenerys staggers back to her seat. “Go on,” she whispers. “That can’t be all the family has their hands in.”

“No, that isn’t nearly everything, but you must understand that we have been doing this long before I was born. Before father and mother. Before our grandparents. Our allies are as vast as our enemies. Everything I’ve done was to keep you safe.”

“What else is there?”

Rhaegar’s brows furrow. He doesn’t have the stomach for this. Revealing all of their family’s darkness is akin to torture. He can’t torture his sister with the knowledge. But what he can do is be there to pick up the pieces afterward.

“Let’s make a deal, Dany.” Rhaegar holds up his hand, stopping her from interrupting. “I won’t keep you from the truth any longer, but I won’t be the one to give it to you.”

“Am I to figure it out on my own? Unbelievable! You’ve been lying to me my entire life and now you don’t have the decency to tell me!”

Rhaegar smiles sadly. “I’ve never been a decent man, sister. You’ll soon learn.” He stands and walks around the desk to where she’s seated. She moves away from his touch and he drops his hands to his side in defeat. “I’ll go get our brother. I’ll let him tell you.”

As he’s leaving out, he asks, “Are you sure you want to know?”

Daenerys doesn’t turn to face him. “Yes. I want to know everything.”
“So be it.”

They use the same door Rhaegar and Arthur stepped out of earlier that morning. It’s a door that Daenerys never knew existed just like the lift and the dreary bunker that lies beneath the home she grew up in. During the journey down, she hugs herself to fight off the cold. Viserys is unfazed. If anything, he appears to be more at ease down here then he ever is anywhere else inside the house.

“What have you eaten recently?” Viserys asks for no apparent reason.

Daenerys shakes her head.

“Good.”

The lift creaks and thuds as it comes to a stop. A light in the distance flickers on and off. Something rank and bone-chilling fills her nose and fear settles in the pit of her belly. She glances at Viserys who has his eyes straight ahead.

“Last chance,” he warns. “Once we go to the end of the hall, there’s no turning back. You won’t be the same.” It almost sounds as if he’s remorseful. As if he wants to maintain the innocent image of her that Rhaegar also has.

“I am tired of being left out. I am tired of people protecting me and willing to die for me without knowing what drives them. Is it love for me or fear of my family?”

“Depends on the person,” Viserys says as he opens the gate. He takes her hand and helps her out. It’s too dark where they are, but he knows his way. “The guards around the estate obey out of fear and perhaps even loyalty. But Missandei and Grey Worm care for you, Dany. Arthur would take a bullet for you. Rhaegar too.”

“And you?”

Viserys snorts. “I’m not dying for anyone. I’m not valiant,” he says without care. “I’m not a hero. I’ve long accepted that I will never be Rhaegar. That’s why I prefer Essos. There, I don’t need love and loyalty. Fear and power are what matters.” He gives her hand a small squeeze. “But I would kill for you, Dany.”

“Why do I get the feeling that you’d do that for anyone?”

They stop in front of a metal door that’s partially covered in rust. It looks like something from a horror film. Instinctively, Daenerys leans closer to Viserys. She never thought she’d seek him out for comfort, but here she is.

“Why would I bother ruining my Versace suit when there are hundreds of men and women who would kill for me?” Viserys sucks his teeth. “To die by my hands is an honor few are given. But, I’ve once again made an exception for you.”

Viserys opens the door and makes Daenerys step in first. Once she’s inside, he slams the door behind them. The sudden noise causes her to jump. A red light is flipped on, shedding light on a bloody figure strapped to a wooden chair.

“Oh my god,” Daenerys gasps. She stumbles back, blindly reaching for the door so she can run away.

But Viserys is behind her, blocking her exit. He grabs her arms and holds them behind her back to
keep her from covering her eyes. When she tries to squeeze them shut and look away, Viserys yells
at her.

“Don’t look away!” He pushes her forward and she struggles in his arms. “Does he look familiar?”
he asks.

Daenerys refuses to open her eyes. She doesn’t want to see. She can’t. The potent scent of blood and
rot fills her nostrils and she gags. Hot tears roll down her face. This isn’t what she wanted.

“This cunt,” Viserys seethes, his voice filled with hatred, “worked for Ferret. He was one of the
many men who planned on passing you around like a fucking collection plate all night long! Isn’t
that right?” He snickers. “Oh, that’s right. I’ve cut out your tongue. My apologies.”

The man’s screams and words are mumbled. But Daenerys just knows he’s begging for mercy. She
can practically feel his pain and sorrow.

“Viserys,” she begs, “please. Stop this!”

“Do you have any idea what Ferret was going to do to you, Dany? What he did to countless, naive
girls like you? After he had his fill, he was going to give you to his lackeys, allow them to film you,
and post it online for all to see the Targaryen heiress-”

“Stop!” Daenerys cries. “I-I don’t want to know!”

Viserys laughs darkly, but he lets her go. She falls to the floor and cries in her hands. “This is what
we do to those who cross us. I’ve had him down here for…” He pauses to give it some thought.
“Five nights. I’ve kept his wounds tended to and had him fed just enough to keep him alive. People
become chatty when they have their toes cut off one by one.”

“Why didn’t you just kill him? Isn’t death enough?”

“Not nearly. I want him to never forget what happens when worthless scum like him even thinks
about touching my sister.” Viserys kneels down. He places a slender finger under her chin and lifts
her head up. Their eyes meet. “I want his reincarnation to remember my wrath. He’ll never live
another life where he thinks it’s okay to touch a Targaryen.”

Daenerys has always known her brother was unstable mentally, but this is beyond insanity. She
remains on the floor as Viserys finishes the man off. His tortured screams make her bones rattle.
Eventually, they cease.

But she can still hear them.

As Viserys cleans off his knives, he speaks. “We have a cocaine and opium business in Essos. Here,
we have clubs that serve as fronts for gambling and prostitution. We only cater to the upper echelon.”
He places several trash bags on the floor. Blankly, Daenerys watches him lay the butchered body
down. “We’re old money so we have powerful allies.”

“Who are they?” Daenerys hears herself ask.

“The Lannisters, the Tyrells, and the Martells. Technically, we operate separately but if another war
was to break out, they’d back us.”

“Margaery and Loras?” Not them too.

“Their family’s top hitmen. They’re very impressive.” He wraps the body and uses duct tape to
secure it at the head and legs. “Each family has its own territory in the city. But we’ll discuss that whenever we’re near a map. They’re difficult to remember for a newbie.”

“Is...are the northerners our enemy?” She wants to ask about Jon directly but she can’t risk Viserys learning about the extent of their relationship. Not after she’s seen what her brother is truly capable of.

“Not anymore.”

“They were our enemies during the war?”

Viserys smiles proudly. “Yes, sister. The last gang war ended before you were born. Rhaegar ended it when…” He stops abruptly. “Perhaps I’ll allow him to tell you about that part. I was still a child myself.”

“Does Rhaegar...torture people?”

“No, that’s my specialty. Our brother prefers quick deaths.” Viserys sits on the floor with her, the wrapped body directly behind him, still in her line of sight. “You’re handling this better than I expected.”

Daenerys closes her eyes and a single tear rolls down her cheek. “I’m glad you think so. What of our parents? You two rarely speak of them. I...I don’t even know what they look like. I only know our mother died giving birth to me and Father died before her.”

“That may be too much for one night.”

“No, I want it all in one go.”

“Fine. Let me get rid of our friend first.”

Daenerys tells herself she doesn’t want to see yet she looks anyway. With great effort, Viserys picks up the body and carries it over to a machine in the far corner. Once the small door is open, she realizes it’s a crematory. They watch the body go up in flames together. The heat feels good on her skin, and it terrifies her.

The next stop on the family horrors tour is Rhaegar’s underground study. The study once belonged to their father and his father before him. Yet again, Viserys allows her to go in first. Unlike the torture room, it’s warm and homey in here. The space is decorated with polished woods, horsehair chairs, and a Dornish rug. A portrait of a strikingly beautiful woman with long, silver hair and violet eyes catches her attention. She finds herself oddly drawn to the woman.

“Beautiful, isn’t she?” Viserys asks.

Daenerys nods. The man beside the woman isn’t deserving of a second glance. He’s frail looking, with a long, white beard and stern violet eyes that turns her blood cold.

“Who are they?” she asks.

“Rhaella and Aerys Targaryen. Our parents.”

The physical likeness is uncanny. Even though the woman is a mirror of perfection and the man is a wicked, gnarled thing, there’s no denying it. They’re related.

Daenerys shakes her head, not wanting to believe what’s staring her in the face. “No...”
“Yes, Dany. They were brother and sister.”

“No!” She tears her eyes away from the portrait, trying to find something else to latch onto to keep her grounded. But the walls are covered in portraits of her ancestors. She’s surrounded by cold, violet eyes. She needs to leave this place. She doesn’t want to stay here another second.

Viserys doesn’t stop her. When she stumbles and falls in the dark corridor, he helps her to her feet, and they get on the lift. Rhaegar is waiting for them when they return to his office. He takes one look at Daenerys and his heart shatters. She’s too wrapped up in her own suffering to care for his.

Daenerys all but runs out of the door. Her brothers follow behind her, calling out to her. She ignores them. The first thing she does when she’s in her bedroom is grab her phone from the bedside table.

“Dany, what are you doing?” Rhaegar asks warily. He enters her room cautiously as though he were entering a bear’s cave. Viserys remains in the hallway.

“I don’t want to spend another second here. I’m leaving.”

“You can’t-”

Daenerys faces her brother with a venomous glare. “What are you going to do? Tie me to a chair and torture me?!?”

Rhaegar scowls at Viserys. “Nice going!”

“Well, she wanted the truth! What better way to give it to her than with a visual presentation?”

“All of my life, I just thought people hated me because I looked different.” Daenerys breathes a shuddering breath, her eyes stinging with tears. “But now I know that their hate is justified. You know, I’m not even upset that my entire family is filled with murderers.” Because she still cares for Jon, a murderer. “I’m angry because you were never going to tell me the truth. You were going to let me carry on without knowing my own parents were…” She can’t bring herself to say it aloud.

“I’m so sorry, Dany. I never wanted to make you feel isolated. I just wanted-”

“To protect me?” Daenerys shakes her head at Rhaegar. “You wanted to control me!”

Rhaegar steps forward but keeps a respectable distance. “No, I wanted you to have a life better than Viserys and I. Our father was a cruel man. I wanted to raise you different from how he raised us.”

“By holding me hostage here?”

“I was too overprotective, I’ll admit. I watched too many friends and loved ones die.” Rhaegar looks so sincere and pained that Daenerys almost gives in. “After everything we’ve lost, I couldn’t lose you too.”

“I had a right to know why people hated my very existence. You knew why those kids constantly bullied me and Missandei during junior high. Does everyone in the city know about our parents?”

“There are only rumors and speculation.”

“That’s more than enough.” Daenerys closes her eyes and she can see the bloody man’s face, and when she opens them she can see Rhaegar’s sad eyes. Is there nowhere safe for her to look? “I can’t be here,” she says, staring down at her feet.

Rhaegar sighs, “Okay. I’ll have Grey Worm and Missandei-”
“No. I...I can’t see them right now. I don’t want to be angry with them for your deceit.”

“Send her to our beach house at Summerhall,” Viserys says, from the safety of the hallway. “She can spend a week or so there to clear her head.”

“I’m going where nothing will remind me of my family.”

“And where exactly is that?” Rhaegar asks.

“I’ll have Jon pick me up.”

Viserys and Rhaegar curse simultaneously. The latter says, “You can’t be out there on your own.”

“I won’t be alone. I’ll be with Jon. He’s kept me safe before. And he’s never lied to me.”

“That you know of,” Viserys says irately. “You’re safer with your own.”

Daenerys has already made up her mind and Rhaegar can see it in her eyes. Her eldest brother concedes.

“I will have a couple of guards follow at a safe distance,” he says. “The first sign of trouble and I’ll have them bring you home kicking and bloody screaming if I have to. I’d rather you hate me forever than to see you harmed.”

“What if I never come back?” Daenerys asks. “What if I decide to live separate from the family for the rest of my life?”

Viserys chuckles, “You’re a dragon, sweet sister. You’ll always come back.”

She knows he’s right.

“I’d offer you tea but there isn’t any,” Jon says with a smile to lighten the mood.

Daenerys’s smile doesn’t reach her eyes. She stands in the doorway of the studio, her arms hanging limply at her sides. Carefully, he takes the small overnight bag from her and sets it down on the nearby accent table. When he faces her again, she embraces him. He can feel her breaking in his arms.

Jon closes the door and helps her over to the bed, hugging her as she cries. Ghost pads over to them and lays at their feet.

Good thing he was up when Dany called him asking if he could pick her up from Dragonstone. There was a hit on another warehouse. This time, one of the culprits was apprehended by Benjen who happened to be there. They believe Benjen was the real target. People know he’s dangerous. Benjen was in the middle of interrogating the man when Dany called. Jon isn’t a fan of watching men cry, piss, and shit themselves as they’re being cut into tiny pieces so he was grateful for a valid reason to leave.

“I’m sorry.” Daenerys sniffles. “I...I just didn’t have anyone else to call.”

“It’s alright. I don’t mind it.” What he does mind is the Targaryen foot soldiers surrounding the perimeter of the auto shop. They think they’re being discreet but he can smell them a mile away. “I take it you confronted your brothers.”

Dany nods. “Viserys showed me...”
“Showed you?”

“A man from Ferret's club. He’d been torturing him for five nights simply because the man planned to...rape me. But he never got the chance, so why?”

“Can I be honest with you, Dany?”

“Always. Even if the truth is too much. I prefer honesty always.”

“If a man had planned to do that to any of my cousins, my mother, or you...I’d want him to suffer. Viserys’s method may not be my thing but it’d be close enough.”

Dany lifts her head to look up at him with watery eyes. She looks like a child who just discovered that Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny are a load of rubbish.

“You would kill for me, Jon?”

“I already have.”

“Why?”

“Because you were in danger.”

“So, you did what was right. That further proves that there is good in you, Jon.”

“Same can be said for your brothers. They do what they have to in order to protect their own. You can be upset with them and hate what they do but they’re still your family. And in this world, family is important.”

Daenerys returns her head to his chest, snuggling close. “I learned something else tonight. About my parents...”

Jon has an idea of what she's hinting at but he prays he's wrong. Daenerys has enough on her mind as it is. She doesn’t need to deal with that.

“I’m sure you already know what that is,” she says. “The entire city seems to know.”

“There are so many rumors about your family, I doubt anyone knows or cares what’s true. People will hate you regardless because you’re somewhere they’ll never be.”

“So, you do know what I’m referring to.” She starts crying again. “How can you even want me knowing what I am?!”

“Same way you can be with me despite all that I’ve done.” Jon cups her face and makes her look at him, at the sincerity in his eyes. “Do you honestly believe I give a shit about who your parents were or their relation to one another?”

“You should. Everyone else seems to care! I’m the product of incest, Jon. Doesn’t that make me...disgusting in your eyes.”

Jon shakes his head, his lips tilting at the corners. “Not at all. I still think you’re the most beautiful thing. Even with snot and tears running down your face.” That gets a laugh out of her and Jon is glad to hear it. “You had no part in your conception, Dany. Why would I fault you for it?”

“Thank you, Jon.”
“Let’s try to get some sleep.”

When they’re under the duvet, lying in the dark, with nothing more than the sound of Ghost’s light snores filling the space, Daenerys kisses Jon on the cheek and buries her face in the crook of his neck. He isn’t sure how a bastard like him ever got so lucky.

A sharp curse and a loud thud wakes Dany. Peeking her eyes open, she finds the space beside her empty and a spear of sunlight dancing on the beige sheets. Another curse draws her attention across the studio to Jon who’s hurriedly throwing on a pair of jeans. She sits up and rubs her eyes.

“Sorry,” Jon mutters. “I’m running late.” He walks over to the bed, leaning down to kiss her forehead. There’s cool mint on his breath. “Got a lot of errands to run today.”

Daenerys is disappointed, but at herself for not considering Jon’s plans for the day before she loaded all of her problems onto him.

“No, I should be sorry. I’ll leave,” she offers, already throwing the duvet back.

“You can stay here until I get back. Ghost will keep you company.”

Ghost barks in agreement and Daenerys smiles at the dog. “Well, if you insist. How long will you be gone?”

“Should be back before 3 or 4.” Jon walks to the small closet and grabs a shirt to replace the one he’s wearing. Dany gets an eyeful of his toned back and she has to fight the urge to call him back to bed.

“There’s no food here but I’ll have some dropped off for you.”

Walking back over to the bed, Jon kneels down and reaches under it. He pulls out a gun and Daenerys’s heart races.

“No one should bother you here but just in case.”

“Don’t aim this at yourself,” he says, pointing at the end of the chamber. He laughs at the unamused look Daenerys gives him. “Never close your eyes when you shoot. That’s lesson one.” He puts the gun in the top drawer where it’ll be easily accessible.

Daenerys wants to know more but refuses to seem too eager. She’s still trying to grasp everything she’s learned. She isn’t ready to join the family business and she doubts she’ll ever be ready. However, she wants to learn how to protect herself and her loved ones if it ever comes to it.

“I’m really sorry that I have to leave you here,” Jon says.

She moves to where he’s still kneeling, her legs hanging over the side of the bed. Whatever words of reassurance she planned to give are forgotten when Jon moves between her legs.

“Are these yoga pants?” he asks as he admires how the grey spandex sticks to her skin.

“Yes.” Unconsciously, she spreads her thighs wider. She doesn’t realize her mistake until Jon looks up at her with the same hunger from last night.

Jon touches her thighs, nudging them apart gently. “Do you partake or are these pants just for show?”
“A little bit of both.”

Jon hums appreciatively. He places a kiss on her inner thigh, and another, each kiss brings him closer and closer to her core. Daenerys bites her lip to suppress a moan. But a tiny one slips out anyway, sounding like a needy whimper.

“Fuck,” Jon curses. He cups his hands under her knees and pulls her further off the bed, her legs instantly wrapping around his neck.

Daenerys relishes in a couple of hot kisses before the moment is shattered by the loud ringing of Jon’s cell. At first, it seems as if he’s going to ignore the phone and risk whatever repercussion. But then the ringing stops, and a new tone suddenly fills the room.

Whoever the special ringtone is for is important enough for Jon to leave her high and dry.

“I’m on my way,” Jon says immediately after answering. Then he hangs up and gives Dany a remorseful smile. “Raincheck?”

Daenerys nods because she doesn’t trust her voice right now. Or herself for that matter. He kisses her before he leaves then he orders Ghost to behave.

“Does he always leave you behind?” Daenerys asks Ghost. It’s strange how the dog appears to understand her. Ghost whines and lays his head on her lap. She pets him behind the ears. “We’ll have a good time on our own. By...staring at the drywall…”

From a brief sweep around the room, there isn’t anything of note. There’s a bed, a kitchenette, a bathroom, and a small couch facing a flat screen that’s mounted on the wall; serving as the den area. No decor, no art on the walls, nothing personal.

This isn’t Jon’s real home.

He brought her to the place he crashes at after long nights. Maybe he brings other girls here, too. Daenerys dismisses the thought. For all she knows, this is the place Jon calls home or maybe he can’t take her to his real home because it’s too dangerous. His decision to bring her here has nothing to do with how he truly feels for her.

Daenerys decides to busy herself. First, she takes a shower and shampoos her hair. The bathroom is very clean. In fact, the entire studio is. She shouldn’t be too surprised. Jon is very clean. His beard is well-kept, his nails are always clean, and he smells divine. She snoops around the bathroom to see if he wears a certain cologne. She finds none. That’s as far as her snooping will go, however. She doesn’t want to invade his privacy, especially since she wants them to trust one another. The way she sees it, as long as they have trust, they can face anything.

Ghost joins her on the couch after he has his breakfast. Leave it to her boyfriend to have food for his dog but not himself.

Wait.

Is Jon… her boyfriend?

Daenerys smiles to herself. He is, isn’t he? She has an actual boyfriend! And they slept in the same bed last night and from what she can remember Jon was the perfect gentleman.

Daenerys needs her phone. She has to tell Missandei about this.
Then she remembers, and her happiness fades. She shares all of her secrets with Missandei, even the embarrassing ones. It hurts knowing it hasn’t always been reciprocated. She doesn’t want to hate Missandei or even Grey Worm. She doubts she’s even capable. However, she knows things will probably never be the same between them, and that’s what hurts the most.

Ghost bumps her hand with his snout and licks her palm to comfort her. Only then does she realize she’s crying.

Jon doesn’t make it back until much later that night, an hour or so after the sun has set, long after when he promised he’d return. The day was long and arduous. Despite how hectic his day was, he stayed in touch with Daenerys throughout and had food delivered for her by his trusted best friend, Sam. Even after all of his thoughtfulness, he feels like an ass for leaving her here.

When he opens the door to the apartment, Ghost darts out and dashes down the stairs to go for his nightly walk. He’s trained well enough to return on his own when he’s ready. The amused giggle that filters out of the door brings a smile to Jon’s face.

Daenerys looks over the couch at him as he walks in.

“Welcome home,” she says.

The dark cloud that’s been hovering over him since he left that morning dissipates. Daenerys tilts her head back and he kisses her. It feels so natural, being here with her like this. He should be afraid of how fast things seem to be moving, but it just feels...right.

Jon sits on the couch beside her. A movie is playing but he pays it no mind. She has all of his attention. “Sorry for taking so long.”

Daenerys looks at his hands and frowns. “What happened?” She lightly brushes her fingers over his bruised knuckles.

“Had business to handle. What were you and Ghost up to all day?”

“We watched a lot of television and we napped. Oh, and we ate. Can you thank Sam again for bringing me food? He was very kind.”

“Will do.” Jon looks past the smile on her face the same way he does with his mother. “How are you feeling, Dany. Really.”

Her expression falls. “I’m still trying to sort through everything. Whenever I close my eyes...I can still see that man strapped to the chair. Each time I see his tortured form the less I care about his suffering.” She stares at Jon yet her violet eyes are looking beyond him. “He was going to hurt me. My brother punished him for it. Why should I care?” She blinks and returns to herself. “Does it make me a terrible person for thinking that?”

“You’re asking me?” Jon is admittedly surprised by how she’s able to see the situation for what it is so soon. He remembers when his cousin Sansa learned the truth about their family. Took her nearly a year to be fine with it, and even still she likes to pretend they’re not what they are and prefers to keep her distance.

“I’m asking you because I trust and value your opinion, Jon. I don’t want to be a monster but even before I learned the truth there have been moments where I…”

Jon nudges her arm gently. “You can tell me, Dany.”
“My thoughts aren’t full of unicorns and rainbows. I wish ill on wicked people and a part of me wishes I could be the one to dish out their punishment. I hate how long karma takes. But I know if I were to act on my impulses, I’d be no better than them.”

“Did you hear what you said? Wicked people. Not innocent bystanders or random men and women. You only think of harming those who harm others. That doesn’t make you evil, Dany. If anything, you’re Batman.”

Daenerys lowers her head to hide the small smile on her face, but Jon sees it anyway. He moves closer and nuzzles her face, his beard tickling her.

“Better yet, Wonder Woman,” he corrects himself. “I could see you in her costume actually.” She squeals as he puts most of his weight on her, causing her back to touch the couch. They nearly fall off. He keeps them from doing so. “Gods, I’d let you lasso me with that whip any day.”

“Leave it to you to sexualize a beloved hero.” Daenerys twines her arms around his neck, her legs secure around his waist. Her eyes are bright and flooding with something akin to adoration.

Jon is torn between kissing her and staying right where he is with a perfect view of her lovely face. “You’ve never admired Batman’s spandex?”

“Actually, I prefer Superman.”

“And here I thought you were a woman with refined tastes.”

“Is Batman even a superhero?” she asks. “A utility belt is hardly a superpower.”

“Take that back.”

Daenerys quirks her eyebrow. “Or what?” she challenges. “What are you going to do-”

Jon begins the tickle attack on her sides. She doubles over, laughing so hard her entire face burns red and her eyes begin to water. He shows her no mercy. Even when she’s wheezing and begging him to relent. When he finally decides she’s had enough, he stops.

“You’re horrible,” Daenerys says, winded. She playfully shoves Jon away when he tries to kiss her. “No kisses for you until you admit Superman is better than your bat boy.”

“Superman is better.” He quickly says before kissing her.

They melt into one another, the kiss as sweet and effortless as it was the first time. Daenerys has a thing for his hair apparently. Her fingers find their way there. The tugging and caresses on his scalp would normally drive him to kiss her harder and possibly resume what he’d tried to start earlier. However, Jon is exhausted.

Daenerys is the one to end the kiss. She smiles in understanding. “Take a nap. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Jon doesn’t have the energy to pretend like he doesn’t want to take a nap. And he knows Daenerys will watch over him.

“I doubt it’ll be a nap,” he says. His ears perk at the sound of Ghost returning. Dany moves to close the door behind him, but Jon stops her. “It’s fine.”

Daenerys’s eyes widen when she hears the door close. “Did...your dog just close the door?”
“He pushes it close with his nose,” he yawns and nestles closer to her. “Ghost isn’t your average
dog.” His words are slurred.

“Sleep, Jon.”

The last thing he remembers before he drifts off is the feeling of her hands in his hair and her chest
rising and falling against his head.

“My reports tell me that Daenerys is safe and sound,” Arthur says to offer his friend some comfort.
“Grey Worm is on patrol in the area.” Receiving no reply, he adds in good nature, “My pride doesn’t
want me to admit that he’ll soon surpass me.”

Rhaegar doesn’t utter a word. He doesn’t blink nor nod. He doesn’t do anything to indicate that he’s
listening. His gaze remains on the flickering flames in the fireplace. Dragonstone is a bit chilly at
night and early morning due to its proximity to the water.

Sighing, Arthur picks up the nearly empty decanter on the table and pours himself a drink. Rhaegar
has been like this every since Daenerys left. Arthur asked him why he would allow her to go with
Jon when there’s a strong possibility that the boy is his son.

“It’s out of my hands,” Rhaegar told him. “If I would’ve prevented her from going without a valid
explanation she would’ve despised me even more. If I would’ve told her that there was a possibility
they were related and the results came back negative, that would still open the door to something I’m
not ready to discuss with her.”

That was the last he spoke. Arthur oversaw today’s operations alongside Viserys. They heard word
of another disturbance in the north. He expects a couple of more hits like that before a bloody war
breaks out. The other families, including them, are simply waiting to see how it all plays out.

“Do you remember,” Rhaegar starts, his voice raspy and uncharacteristically frail, “when Daenerys
was born?”

Arthur smiles nostalgically. “She was a tiny thing with a mean cry. My ears still hurt from her
wailing,” he chuckles. Immediately after she was born, she didn’t make a peep or barely move, and
they feared she was already lost. Dany took her first breath when Rhaella drew her last.

“I promised my mother that things would be different now that father was...out of the picture. I
promised her that I would take care of her from then on out. That no one would ever hit her again.
She died shortly afterward and I never got a chance to keep my word.”

“You can’t keep blaming yourself.”

Rhaegar cuts in, “I didn’t think I could experience hurt anymore after Lyanna was taken from me,
but then my mother died. I wanted to follow her. But then Daenerys shattered our ear eardrums with
her first cry.”

“Then we all cried with her. Viserys wouldn’t leave her side for the first month.” It’s a pity how
damaged Viserys is due to years of emotional abuse by Aerys. He was a kind child afraid of his own
shadow. Now he was something else entirely. “We took turns changing her diapers and did a shit job
at it. Thank the gods for nannies.”

“Do you think she knows how much I love her?”
“Dany doesn’t hate you. She’s rightfully upset but she doesn’t hate you.”

“I suppose I knew this day would come. I assumed I would control when and how she found out. That’s my problem. I always have to control things.”

Arthur finishes his drink and sets the glass down. “We need to consider how we’ll proceed if Daenerys decides she wants in. I know you want to continue to see her as the little girl who cried when you accidentally sat on her stuffed animal because she genuinely thought you’d killed it but she hasn’t been that little girl for years.”

“The decision is solely up to her,” Rhaegar says. “I will no longer dictate her life. I don’t want her to hate me.”

“You’re still sensitive, old friend.”

Rhaegar smiles sadly. “That’s how I earned Lyanna’s favor. She had rugged, ill-mannered men like Robert and that one Umber boy pursuing her constantly. Then the pretty boy who loved to sing asked her out.”

“And she told you to ‘fook off’,” Arthur laughs at the memory. “Was she the first girl to not swoon at the sight of you?”

“She was. I might have asked her on three separate occasions before she agreed. I wanted to take her to see a movie and she wanted to fight. So we fought.” He tells the story as if Arthur wasn’t there for it all. But it makes Arthur happy to hear his friend speaking again so he simply listens. “I thought she wanted to fence again but she wanted an actual fist fight. Gods, I thought she was mad.”

“But you fought her anyway.”

“I didn’t have a choice in the matter,” he laughs quietly. “It was either fight or get my ass kicked.”

“You still got your ass kicked.”

“Yes, but I didn’t go down without a fight.”

“That was her way of determining if you were worth her time if I remember correctly.”

Rhaegar shakes his head as if he can’t believe a woman like Lyanna even exists. “According to Lyanna, most men who lose against her have one of two reactions: they get pissed and insult her because their egos can’t handle losing or they claim they allowed her to win. I did neither. I simply praised her. Then I asked if she wanted to catch the next showing of the movie.”

“She was the one smitten after that, I take it.”

Their conversation is interrupted by one, light knock on the door of the office. It’s the Maester’s knock. Rhaegar and Arthur share a look.

“Well, that didn’t take long,” Arthur mutters. He bids the man entry.

Rhaegar returns his gaze to the flames. His face is expressionless, giving nothing away.

Arthur knows better than to rely on the man’s face for answers. When it comes to Rhaegar the truth is always in his hands; his finger rather. From years of fencing, Rhaegar has picked up a nervous tick where his right index finger twitches when he’s nervous or unsettled. Even when he’s prepared to kill.
That finger twitches now.

“I have the results, Master Rhaegar,” the Maester says. “Shall I relay them?”

“Please without any long-windedness,” Rhaegar says. “Give it to me straight.”

“The boy is yours.”

“I see. Thank you.”

The Maester takes his leave. Neither of them says a word for some time. Naturally, Arthur knew this would be the outcome. Still, hearing the words out loud is something he didn’t prepare for. To think, his best friend has had a son all of this time without know. He can't imagine what's going through Rhaegar's head right now. Knowing Rhaegar, he'll still need to hear Lyanna say that Jon is his.

When Rhaegar speaks, his voice is thick with emotion. “How soon can you arrange a meeting with me and Lyanna?”

Arthur is already out of his seat, his tired bones renewed with purpose. “I'll call after I've set it up.”
Reunite/Divide

Being the glorified wife of a belligerent arm’s dealer was never the life Lyanna envisioned for herself as a child or even a teenager. As a girl of fourteen, she was dead set on representing Westeros on an international scale in the fencing category, and she wanted to keep her hands out of the family business at all costs. She saw no reason to get involved, honestly.

Brandon was the eldest and next in line to sit at the head of the table once their father’s time was up. If Brandon died - which he did - then it would go to Ned then her after him. The way she saw it, she would never hold that power. And there were plenty of people working for their family. They didn’t need her.

Of course, things didn’t work out how she planned.

On her sixteenth birthday, Lyanna made her first kill when enemies, whose names she’s long forgotten, shot up the restaurant her family used to own. Lyanna’s brother, Brandon, put a gun in her hand and told her to defend her home. So, she did. All the lessons at the shooting range her father forced on her finally paid off.

Since then she’s been a part of the family’s business. Her father allowed her to fence in her leisure but never on a grand scale like in the tournaments. By seventeen, she was fed up with the small fry and sought a bigger challenge.

That’s how she met Rhaegar.

In exchange for Benjen’s help and his silence, Lyanna promised to leave immediately after the fight was over and to never reveal herself. But she wanted to see the look on Rhaegar Targaryen’s face when he realized a girl had bested him. His reaction wasn’t what she expected. She didn’t expect to be on the receiving end of those violet eyes. Plenty of folks talk about the great war, but only a handful know that it began the moment she removed her fencing mask in that arena.

Their fate was sealed then.

Lyanna didn’t want to love him. She fought it harder than she’d ever fought anything or anyone. But Rhaegar invaded her thoughts like a sickness and stayed like an incurable disease. She once thought herself immune to handsome men or men in general. Gods was she wrong.

After their first date, they met in secret for months, never at the same location. Their meeting at The Water Gardens in the Martell’s territory is one of the most memorable, and the most painful to think about. It was during that meeting that Lyanna told Rhaegar about the marriage arrangement Brandon and her father were concocting behind her back.

They wanted her to marry Robert Baratheon in order to obtain the man’s black market connections (which were near impossible to obtain back then). Benjen was furious when he told her. He believed it was wrong to force anyone into a marriage they didn’t want, but with him being the youngest brother his opinion on the matter was irrelevant. They couldn’t go to Ned because Robert’s his best friend and Ned was too obedient to their father and older brother. He always did their bidding without question.

When Lyanna told Rhaegar, he didn’t hesitate to ask for her hand in marriage.

“They can’t marry you off if you’re already someone’s wife,” he said.
The Martells, mainly Oberyn and his long-time lover, Ellaria, offered to use their resources to secure them forged passports and new identifies so they could have safe passage to Dorne, the neighboring country. Lyanna hoped to live there with Rhaegar for the rest of her life. She was ready to marry him that night, but things like forged papers take time, and Rhaegar didn’t want to leave without ensuring his mother and younger brother would be safe from Aerys.

Their original plan was to bide their time. Then when everything was in place they would leave, marry in Dorne, and begin their new lives together.

Unfortunately, time wasn’t on their sides.

Robert was impatient.

Looking back, Lyanna wonders if he noticed how different she was when she was sneaking off to see Rhaegar. Perhaps he could tell that her heart was being claimed by another man. Whatever the reason was, he wanted them to marry the same week the official announcement was made, way sooner than Rhaegar predicted.

They decided to marry in Westeros instead of Dorne. The night of, Benjen helped her slip away from Winterfell, Arthur and Oberyn found the cathedral, Ellaria gave her a beautiful, Dornish dress, and Aemon Targaryen obtained an online priest’s license to wed them; he complained about how in the “old days” he could’ve wed them without the bloody thing since he’s a Maester.

Not long after the wedding, the war truly began.

Among the first casualties were her father, Brandon, and Rhaegar’s dear friend, Gerold Hightower. Robert’s wrath bled into every territory. No one was safe. Aerys didn't back down, either. He employed every tactic in his arsenal, regardless of how deplorable it was.

How many men, women, and children died for their love? Lyanna often asks herself that.

Robert is drunk. Surprise surprise.

He bursts into the bedroom that night, red-faced and glassy-eyed. She can smell the Bourbon leaking from his pores even though she’s all the way across the room.

Rolling her eyes, Lyanna watches him through the vanity’s mirror as she brushes her hair. She finally took the time to shampoo it tonight. Her new medication doesn’t make her as fatigued as the old meds did. For that, she’s grateful. Now her boys can stop fretting over her, though, it feels good for someone to give a shit about her in this house. Her darling husband calls her affliction the “housewives sickness” while people with functioning brain cells rightfully refer to it as depression.

Damn right she’s depressed. She has to lie next to this insufferable man every night. Not every night. Robert has to visit his whores thrice a week. Those are her favorite nights. She gets the best sleep when she sleeps alone.

“Why are you still up?” he asks, words slurred and damn near incomprehensible. “Thought you’d be sleep.”

“I’m heading there now.”

Lyanna pulls all of her hair over to one side and tilts her head as she whips her ends into submission.
As she’s contemplating a haircut, she catches the way Robert is staring at her with lustful eyes. He wants her. He always does even when he curses her and calls her every name under the bleeding sun. He still wants her.

*Tough fucking luck.*

Finishing up with her hair, she gets up and walks over to the bed. Robert is undressing her with his eyes, but she ignores him.

“Lyanna,” he says in the way he does whenever he’s aching for her love and attention, for things he can never have. Which is only when he’s drunk these days. He gets on the bed, crawling toward her.

“Goodnight.” She turns her back to him sharply, feeling not a fragment of remorse or pity for him.

The real Robert rears his ugly head. “Damn you, you hateful bitch!” He grabs her shoulder and turns her over roughly. “I am your lawful husband!” he spats.

“And that gives you easy access to my cunt?!” This is why she could never love or even respect Robert. He treats her like property, not a partner.

“It does and I’ve had it with you denying me what’s mine by right!” Robert fists the top of her gown, tearing at the silk. “I haven’t touched you in years! Have you no love for your husband at all?!”

Lyanna reaches under her pillow, removing her switchblade. In a blink of an eye, she has the blade pressed against his throat. “Get. Off.”

It’s as if every time she denies Robert, he wants her more. “You’re fierce, woman. That’s why I wanted you. That’s why I still want you. In the end, it was me who won you! Me! Not that waste of sperm Rhaegar!”

“You didn’t win me. You bought me.” Lyanna adds pressure to the knife, drawing blood to show him she’s not bluffing. “Get off or I’ll gut you like the pig you are.”

Robert rolls over to his back and curses harshly. He touches the small cut on his neck. “If I were a lesser man I would’ve taken you three times over by now.”

“Go wet your prick with one of your whores, Robert. I have nothing for you.”

“I never wanted any of them. It’s always been you.” Robert turns over to look at her but she refuses to meet his eyes. “You allowed me on our wedding night.”

Lyanna was so drunk and sick with grief that night she could have lain with a coat hanger and wouldn’t have known the difference. It’s a miracle she didn’t miscarry.

“Then there was the other time…” Robert says. “You wanted me then.”

It was Rhaegar she yearned for; it’s always Rhaegar. That night, she was weak, vulnerable, and missing Rhaegar something fierce. It was wholly carnal. Her body demanded attention. She probably would’ve taken anyone just to sate her needs. Back then, Robert was still brawny and not terrible to look at. She figured if she kept her eyes closed she could pretend it was the person she truly wanted. Didn’t work.

After that failed experiment, Lyanna invested in a vibrator. Most times she’s too mentally exhausted to even crave sex but when the rare moments arise, she takes care of it herself.
“You stink,” Lyanna tells Robert. “Smell like cheap Bourbon. Take a shower or sleep in the guest room.”

Robert sucks his teeth, calls her another colorful word and then leaves. Lyanna changes the sheets to rid the smell of him.

Sundays are the only days Robert isn’t breathing down her neck. It’s the only day when she’s free of the useless guards who have become her shadow ever since they married. Robert didn’t grant her this reprieve until recently. She has Jon to thank for that. Any other day of the week, she can’t even check the mail without being watched.

Robert has forbidden her from ever leaving the northern territory. He fears what will happen if she were to ever travel south again. He believes the moment she steps foot on southern turf, she’ll be swept away by Targaryen men and taken directly to Rhaegar.

Years ago, Lyanna would fantasize about that happening. Now, she doubts she’ll ever see Rhaegar again.

If the boys are home, Lyanna likes to spend the day with them. They’ll have a picnic at the park or visit the lake if the weather is fair. But the boys aren’t home today, sadly.

The Flea Bottom Market is being held in one of the lesser neighborhoods. By lesser she means their involvement in criminal affairs is minimal. It’s not a term she likes but she didn’t come up with it. When she arrives at the market that morning, it’s already swarming with people and the air is fragrant with fresh fruit and spices. If she were the cooking sort she imagines she’d be thrilled to get her hands on organic ingredients. But she’s just there for the decent people and the atmosphere.

Every vendor she passes grants her a smile. Lyanna knows it’s only because they want her money.

A man selling trinkets compliments her sundress. It’s a simple, periwinkle thing with thin straps, and it hugs her body well. She doesn’t think she looks like much but she buys one of the seashell bracelets he’s selling anyway. Feels good to be complimented from time to time by someone she doesn’t detest. He helps her put the bracelet on and she tips him.

Admiring the bracelet, she nearly bumps into the flower vendor two stalls over who has stepped away from the booth to hand out free flowers to children.

“Forgive my klutziness,” Lyanna laughs.

The man waves her off. “Don’t worry about it.” He regards Lyanna, his plain features gradually brightening with recognition. “Ah, for you, I have something special!”

Lyanna refuses to fall for another selling tactic so soon. Before she can politely decline whatever he’s offering, her breath is stolen from her when she sees the blue rose in his grasp. A winter rose; her favorite.

The merchant presents the rose with a slight bow, allowing her to see the small piece of paper hidden in the petals.

Swallowing thickly, Lyanna gathers herself. She never knows who’s watching. “How much do I owe you?” Messengers are never free.

“For the northern beauty, no charge at all.”
Lyanna takes the rose, and thanks the man. Leaving the stall, she brings the rose up to her nose and sniffs. Tears prick her eyes but she blinks them away. Finding a quaint shop to slip into, she pretends to browse for a minute or two before she reads the note. Amidst the elation, fear, and anxiousness, there’s a little relief.

Thank the old and the new gods that she just shampooed her hair last night.

There isn’t a fire nearby and she doesn’t have a lighter. She swallows the note. She has time to kill so she returns to the market.

“What’s this?” Daenerys asks warily. When Jon told her that he wanted to show her something, she wasn’t expecting him to make her put on a disguise (a ball cap to hide her hair and shades for her eyes) and drag her and Ghost all the way out to the woods.

They’re in neutral territory, Jon told her on the way here.

Jon walks over to a wooden bench, picking up every rusty tin can he passes. He lines the cans up on the bench with a good bit of space between them. “Usually we’d go to the range that my family owns but you know why we can’t.”

“Range?” she asks.

“Gun range.” Jon walks over to her and takes out the handgun she didn’t even know he had. She should just expect him to always have one at this point. “I need my girlfriend to know how to fend for herself.”

“I haven’t come to terms with everything yet and I don’t even know if I want to be a part of my family’s...business. Don’t you think you’re being inconsiderate right now, Jon?” Daenerys hugs herself, afraid that she made a mistake in trusting him so soon.

“No, I don’t think I am,” Jon says. “I’m considering the facts, Dany. It doesn’t matter if you’ve made up your mind yet. The streets will make it up for you and when that time comes, I want you to be able to protect yourself.”

Daenerys knows what he says is true. And she knows Jon and her family won’t be able to protect her all of the time. She wanted to take her time, consider the pros and cons of her involvement, but she never really had a choice in the matter. She was born into this. She might as well suck it up.

“Hand it over,” she says, gesturing to the gun.

Chuckling, Jon moves the gun out of her reach. “Let me show you how it works first. You need to understand the mechanics of a gun before I send you off into the wild.”

“You talk as if I’m a fox cub or a doe.”

“What are baby dragons called?” he asks as he unloads the gun for her to see how it’s done.

“Whelps.”

“That’s what you are.”
“Are you sure it’s wise to insult me before arming me?” She raises a delicate brow. To her, she looks playful and charming.

Jon sees something self. He swallows, and his Adam’s Apple bobs. “Damn it, Dany. How am I to teach you if I keep wanting to kiss you?”

Daenerys smiles. “Does this mean we can put our lessons on hold?” She steps up to him, biting her lip.

“Tell you what,” he says, taking a step back. “Shoot at least three out of the five cans and I’ll give you whatever you want.”

“Alright. I’ll hold you to that.”

Jon has her unload and reload it herself a few times until her hands get used to the task. Naturally, she fumbles the first couple of times. The gun is heavy, the bullets cold and slippery. But after a while, it doesn’t feel so strange anymore. He makes her continue until she can do it without any mistakes.

“Good,” Jon praises her. “Where do you think the safety is?”

Daenerys turns the gun over carefully. She’s seen movies so she at least knows where the safety isn’t. Using the process of elimination, she points at the tiny latch on the side, near the trigger. Jon praises her again, and she’s beginning to think she has a thing for that. Standing behind her, Jon guides her hands up, aiming the gun at the middle tin can. He places his thumb over hers, showing her how to turn the safety off. The weight and heat of his body on her back is distracting. Daenerys leans into his touch, her hands slipping on the gun.

“Focus, Dany,” Jon says, his tone stern yet gentle.

Daenerys straightens up. “Sorry,” she mutters.

After making sure her arms are steady, Jon removes his hands. “Lightly graze the trigger,” he whispers.

Daenerys hovers her finger over the trigger, not touching it. She’s afraid. No, she’s nervous. Perhaps even both.

“Whenever you’re ready,” Jon says. “Just keep your eyes open and-”

The bullet misses the can, lodging in one of the trees. Her hands and arms feel like jelly and they tingle from the recoil. Her ears are ringing, her heart still beating just as violently as it was before she fired the gun.

However now, it’s for a different reason.

“That wasn’t so bad,” Daenerys says, lowering her arms. Honestly, it was exhilarating.

“Gets easier the more you do it.”

“Does that also apply to killing?”

Jon doesn’t immediately respond. She turns around to look at him. His expression is somber, his eyes distant and guarded.

“I don’t like killing,” he confesses. “Fighting is good. A couple of punches and cracked ribs is
nothing compared to taking a life. But it’s necessary. I wouldn’t say it gets easier, either."

Daenerys faces her targets again, more determined than ever to master her aim. Something about Jon’s words reminded her of the countless times her family and her best friends have put their lives on the line for her sake. How Jon killed for her. How he promised to do it again if he needed to. If she isn’t willing to do the same for any of them, she isn’t worthy of their loyalty. Forget about her reservations or her self-righteousness. She said she was tired of being left out, tired of being in the dark. This is what she must do in order to make sure she doesn’t get left behind again.

This time when Daenerys fires the gun, she grazes the can. It isn’t perfect, not by a long shot, but the can falls nonetheless. Next time, she’ll shoot it in the center.

“One down,” Daenerys says, already aiming at the next can. “Four to go.”

She won’t settle for only three.

“Must I keep these on the entire time?” Daenerys whispers across the table.

“Can’t risk anyone noticing you,” Jon says, laughing. “Besides, you’re the one who chose to come to such a crowded place. I offered to buy you a pint and we could’ve eaten it at home.”

It’s as if everyone in town is stuffed into the small ice cream parlor. Okay, it isn’t that bad. Jon just gets antsy in public places like this. Too many civilians around. Too many opportunities for his bullets to hit the wrong target. But he shouldn’t be thinking about any of that. This is an innocent outing not a prelude to a bloodbath.

“We share a home now?” she licks at her ice cream cone, smiling the whole while. “Why, Jon, you speak as if we’re an old married couple.”

“We won’t grow old together if my father finds out about us.”

“Why would he disapprove?” she asks, keeping her voice low. “Our families aren’t enemies. Viserys said so himself.”

Out of habit, Jon scans his eyes around the room, making sure there aren’t any familiar faces in sight. Picking up his chair, he sits next to Daenerys, their shoulders touching.

“My father and your brother, Rhaegar, have bad blood between them. Been that way since the war. No one really knows why. Well, not any of us younglings.”

Daenerys tilts her head thoughtfully as she continues to lick her ice cream. Jon doesn’t know why he finds the action so sexy. Yes, he does. It’s because it's Daenerys and every little thing she does drives him crazy.

Leaning forward, Jon glances at her through his thick, dark lashes. “Can I taste?” he asks quietly.

Nodding, she hands the cone to him. He doesn’t take his eyes off hers while he samples the Pineapple Delight. Too sweet for him but the lingering taste of Dany makes up for it. When she resumes eating without a second thought, he has to stop himself from kissing her.

“Is this what people call an indirect kiss?” she asks, licking with purpose now. She’s testing him. Either that or she’s trying to get him to pin her on the table in front of all these people.
There are children here, Jon, pull yourself together, he thinks.

Daenerys seems to have a similar, internal conversation with herself. She moves away from him, averting her eyes elsewhere. “Can you tell me about the war? What caused it?”

“Not sure.”

“What do you know about it?”

“Hundreds died. Possibly more. It’s the second, bloodiest street war this city has seen.”

“The first?”

The parlor is loud enough with everyone engaged in their own conversations so they don’t have to worry too much about discretion. Jon tells her the abridged version of how the Martells wreaked havoc on the entire city following the abduction and eventual rape and murder of their princess by one of the Greyjoys. The Martells loathe the Greyjoys to this day.

“Princess?” Daenerys asks. “How long ago was this conflict?”

“I think my mother was a girl of five when this happened. But the Martells still refer to their heirs as prince or princess. Do you understand how the line of succession works in families?”

“Every legitimate child born of the head of the family is in the line of succession. If anything were to happen to Rhaegar it would be Viserys who takes over since Rhaegar doesn’t have any children.” Daenerys sighs. “And I will be next in line after Viserys.”

“Unless you marry,” Jon says. “Then your husband will have your claim. Our laws are as old as this city, meaning they’re kind of crappy.”

Daenerys looks at Jon her expression unreadable. “If we were to marry…” She laughs at the startled look on his face. “Only hypothetical, Jon. Relax.” She nudges him playfully. “How would that work if you’re affiliated with another family?”

“It wouldn’t work…” Jon figures it’s better to explain it to her now than later. “Not unless our families agreed to some sort of alliance, but that’ll never happen. The north and the south...we...our families just don’t mix.”

“So, if we were to get married, we would have to do it without their blessing?”

“That would be the only way, yes.”

Daenerys is quiet after that, her remaining ice cream untouched and beginning to drip down the sides of the cone. She’s probably thinking the same thing that has crossed Jon’s mind once or twice.

What are they doing? Whatever it is, how long will it last?

After a while, Daenerys asks, “Is something like that enough to start a war over?”

“Anything is cause for war, Dany.” Jon touches her arm and she looks away from him, more than likely to hide the sadness in her eyes. But she can’t hide for him. He whispers in her ear. “I’ve learned it’s best to live in the moment. In this life, nothing is promised. We have to enjoy what we have for as long as we have it.”

Daenerys turns her head and their foreheads touch, their lips mere inches apart. It’s such an intimate moment for such a public place but everyone else is irrelevant. It’s only him and her.
“Live in the moment,” she repeats, her sweet, cold breath fanning his face. “I’m fine with that.” She pulls away, picks up a couple of napkins and wipes the ice cream from her hand. “I want to see a movie,” she says, cheery again. Her mood change gives him whiplash. “You promised to do anything I wanted. And I shot all 5 cans, remember?”

Jon snorts. “How can I forget?” He’ll never forget. And she isn’t a perfect marksman or even a good shot, but she’s damn good for a beginner. With more practice, she’ll be a handful. “What movie do you want to see?”

“Doesn’t matter.” She works on finishing off her ice cream. “Are there any dog-friendly theaters?”

“Don’t worry about Ghost. He’ll find his own fun.” Even now Ghost is out there somewhere doing whatever the hell he does whenever he runs off on his own. The only thing that matters is he always comes back.

“Ghost is a very peculiar dog.”

“Ghost is more wolf than dog. His mother was a wild thing that died fighting a stag.” He laughs and Daenerys gives him an odd look. “Sorry, just thought of my own mother.”

“Wolves,” Dany says, understanding now. “Your family’s crest.”

“My mother’s family. Do you know what the Baratheon sigil is?”

“Baratheon? Isn’t that the name of the police chief?”

“My uncle.”

Daenerys nearly drops her cone. “Your uncle? Does he know?”

Jon nods.

“I thought he was a just and honorable man.”

“He is. We just stay out of each other’s way. There are areas in the city that are off limits. If he spots any of us lurking about he won’t hesitate to haul our asses in.”

“So, you’re a stag, not a wolf.” Daenerys laughs. “I take it your mother and your father-”

“Fight all the damn time,” Jon says, happy that Dany understands the reference he was making earlier. The she-wolf dying while fighting the stag. His father always says his mother would be the death of him, but he’d take her with him. Jon won’t let that happen, though.

“Tell me about your mother, Jon. She sounds like quite the woman.”

Jon doesn’t know where to start. His mother is the most complex person he knows, more so than his mysterious uncle, Benjen, who comes and goes as he pleases, even more than Rhaegar Targaryen who Jon has felt drawn to ever since he met the man.

During the remainder of their time at the ice cream parlor and the drive to the movie theater, Jon tells Dany about his mother. All of the good, the bad, and the downright depressing, because it’s easy for him to share personal things with her. She’s a good listener.

Daenerys really enjoys the story of how Lyanna single-handedly ended a petty dispute over territory between the Manderlys and the Starks that had been going on for years. It was nothing more than ten or so acres of farming land yet the Manderlys acted as if it was triple that. Lyanna was sixteen at the
time, newly inducted into the family’s business.

“You want your bloody land back?” She asked the head of House Manderly. "Send one of your best to fight me for it. If I win, I want your lot to shut the fuck up about it!”

“Did she win?”

Jon nods, pulling into the movie theater parking lot. “She did and the Manderlys shut the fuck up about it.”

“Fook,” Daenerys says, giggling.

“What?”

“Fook. That’s how it sounds when you say it.” She laughs harder when he frowns at her.

“I don’t say it that way.”

“Fookin’ hell!” she mimics him poorly. “Fook this! Fook tha-”

Dany screams when he tickles her. Ghost barks excitedly in the back seat, his heavy tail hitting the seat. Jon loves it how Dany’s entire face, no, her body lights up when she’s like this. She’s beautiful. Even when she’s scarlet in the face and cackling like a hyena.

Cupping the side of her face, Jon caresses her cheek with his thumb and kisses her, softly, at first, wanting to draw it out and savor the taste of her. He doesn’t want to see a movie. He wants to see how she’ll look while she’s riding his face or overcome with the pleasure he’ll give her. And he knows he can make her feel good, with more than his mouth or his hands.

If only she’d let him.

“Jon,” Dany says, putting a hand on his chest to put distance between them. “We’re going to miss the movie.”

_Fuck the movie_, is what he really wants to say. But Jon has never been the pushy sort. No matter how bad he wants it, he won’t push.

“Okay. Please don’t pick anything cheesy.”

As if to spite him, Daenerys chooses the cheesiest looking film there is. And like the lovesick idiot he is, he buys the damn tickets; and popcorn and gummy worms.

It feels as if there are rocks in Lyanna’s stomach.

She’s wrung her hands in her dress so many times her fingers ache and her dress is wrinkly at the stomach. Nervously, she wraps her hands around herself to hide the wrinkles as well as hold herself together. Feels like if the wind picks up she’ll be carried away from this place, this city, away from this wretched feeling that consumes her.

This high up, the earth is still, quiet. Grey, thick polluted clouds shroud her. Even the gods can’t see her here. Lyanna looks over the building’s ledge, seeing nothing. But she can still hear the city below.

The tallest building in the city used to house a string of establishments. One of the most notable was a love hotel. Her and Rhaegar spent their honeymoon there in secret. No one expected the likes of
them to hole up in a place like that.

The Tower of Joy. That’s what Rhaegar called it.

One of the attendants recognized Rhaegar and sold them out for the hefty reward her family was offering. She always told him his stupid hair was like a blaring, neon light for trouble. Thank every god in creation Jon took mostly took after her.

Now the tower is home to luxury condos owned by a Pentoshi businessman. If Lyanna remembers correctly, the Targaryens have business ties in Pentos.

“Do you remember the first time we were here?”

Lyanna closes her eyes to steady herself. Hearing that voice after so many years...it nearly ends her. She nods, unable to utter a word. She hugs herself tighter, refusing to face him.

“There used to be a movie theater here,” Rhaegar says, his voice sounding closer than it previously was. But he was still far away. “Do you remember what he watched?”

“You...” Swallowing hard, she steels herself. “You picked something corny.” He always did, and each time she pretended to hate it.

A slight draft carries his laughter to her ears. Lyanna shudders, sensing him at her back suddenly. How is it possible that after all of these years he can still affect her like this? She can smell him. If she tries hard enough she can remember his taste on her tongue.

“Do you remember the last time we were here?” Rhaegar asks, his breath tickling her ear.

Lyanna turns around sharply, finding it easier to go on the defense than to just stand there like a frightened lamb. Too late does she realize that facing him is a mistake. It’s those damn eyes again that swallow her whole.

“I have dreams about that night,” Rhaegar continues, still as beautiful as she remembered him, though, noticeably different. Gone are the boyish features that initially won her over. Now a man stands before her. Sharp jawed, dull-eyed, and jaded. “Nightmares too.”

“You never could let the past go.” She pretends to be unfazed, unbothered. If she strolls down memory lane, she will be lost forever. “Why did you want to meet with me? I’m a busy woman. I don’t have time-”

“Come now, Lyanna, we both know better.” Rhaegar invades her personal space, only because she allows him. At least she tells herself that. “The past hurts you, too. Doesn’t it?”

“What’s done is done.”

“So, you’re enjoying your life with Robert? You enjoy being his trophy?”

What good will it do to tell Rhaegar how much she hates every second spent breathing the same air as Robert or how if it weren’t for Jon and Gendry she would’ve taken her own life as a final act of rebel? It burns her insides to be made some man’s pet, to be treated like a bargaining tool by her family.

“Why ask questions you already know the answer to?” she asks, letting her exhaustion show.

“Because I want to hear you say what I already know.”
“And that is?”

“That you’re still mine, Lyanna.”


Rhaegar laughs and she wants to punch him square in his pretty face. It also makes her want to kiss him and hold him close so that he’ll never leave her again.

Lyanna needs to leave this place. Fast.

“Well, since you don’t have anything to discuss,” she says, brushing past him. “I’ll be on my way.”

Rhaegar grabs her arm, and she pivots her body, ready to break the limb clean off but his words give her pause.

“You may no longer be mine but Jon is.”

Her knees give out, the weight of the truth crushing her. Rhaegar doesn’t let her fall. He hugs her from behind as she cries.

“H-how did you find out?”

“Paternity test. I...borrowed a strand of his hair.” Rhaegar brushes her hair softly. She’s surprised she even notices on account of how numb she is.

Lyanna exhales a shaky, empty laugh, tears streaking her face. “You mean you stole a strand of his hair, you inquisitive asshole. Why do you always have to pry?”

“It’s my nature. You know that.” Rhaegar hugs her, burying his face in her hair. “Why did you keep this from me? You know nothing would’ve kept me away from you, from our son, had I known.”

“Was I supposed to send a raven to Dragonstone? Robert wouldn’t allow me a phone, no way of contacting the outside world.” Her shoulders tremble as she cries harder. Thinking about how lonely she was during her pregnancy and how she badly wished Rhaeger was there to comfort her forces all of her emotional doors to open, the tears flowing out of her endlessly. “I couldn’t risk him knowing or even suspecting that Jon wasn’t his.”

Rhaegar turns her around to face him. Tentatively, he wipes her tears but more continues to fall so it’s a pointless endeavor that’s done only out of love and affection. His eyes are glossy with unshed tears, reminding her of a time when she thought him strange for how unabashed he was when it came to expressing emotions in front of her.

Growing up around the cold, stone-faced people in the north conditioned her to think emotions were a sign of weakness. Then she saw the bravest, strongest man she knew cry as he told her about his mother’s abuse at the hands of his father and how he felt powerless to stop the man.

Lyanna was already head over heels by then but that moment made her fall harder for Rhaegar.

“Can you ever forgive me for not being there for you and Jon?” Rhaegar asks, and Lyanna actually does punch him in the arm.

“The hell are you apologizing for? You had no idea, Rhaegar!”

Rhaegar smiles down at her, cupping her cheek tenderly. “You’ve finally said my name.” His other arm keeps her body pressed to his. “Dreams don’t compare to reality.”
“You actually expect me to believe you’ve been holding a candle for me all these years?” Lyanna can see it in his eyes, can feel it in the way he holds her but her own insecurities won’t allow her to accept what’s right in front of her. “From what I hear you courted the likes of Cersei Lannister and Elia Martell after I married Robert.”

“Tywin wanted me to marry Cersei. She prefers her twin and I prefer you. As for Elia, I entertained the thought briefly because I wanted to get over you but it felt wrong to use Elia that way, or anyone for that matter so I declined.”

“Noble Rhaegar,” she says sarcastically. Secretly she’s glad he turned both women down. At the same time, her heart aches for him. “Perhaps it’s time for you to move on, Rhaegar. Robert will kill me before he allows another man to have me.”

Rhaegar doesn’t appear to be listening to her. Or perhaps he is but he doesn’t care to hear. “Why did you name him Jon?” he asks.

“Ned named him,” Lyanna says, averting her gaze. “He...he was there when I discovered I was with child. I begged him to not say anything to Robert. I told him that Robert would force me to abort the baby if he knew, and Ned knew what I said was true. So, he convinced Robert to marry me the next day...to make him believe the baby I carried was his.”

“The honorable Eddard Stark helped you deceive his own best friend. I didn’t think he had it in him.”

“Neither did I, but I think he could see it all over my face.”

“See what?”

“That if he betrayed me and told Robert, I would’ve taken my own life and the baby’s before I let Robert take it from me.”

Rhaegar kisses the top of her head and lingers there. Closing her eyes, she savors the moment for as long as she can because it won’t last. Nothing good ever does.

“I’ve missed you, Lyanna,” Rhaegar says, voice thick and gravelly. “Every moment of every day, I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you, too, Rhaegar.”

“I’m tired of being without you. I know you feel the same way despite what you say and how you try to keep yourself guarded and hidden from me. Come home with me, Lyanna. Right now. I’ll go to war with Robert, I’ll uproot his entire operation and put an end to him if I have to. I don’t care anymore. I just want you back.”

Lyanna can hear the desperation in his voice. This is the same man who cried after hearing the news of children dying from stray bullets. The same man who was torn apart with guilt for crimes that were not of his own hand. If she tells Rhaegar to save her, he will suffer through carnage again for her despite how much it eats away at him. And she loves him far too much to put him through that again.

“Rhaegar, I—”

“You’re going to reject my offer, aren’t you?” Rhaegar says, knowingly. He doesn’t even have to look at her to know her thoughts. “Do you truly expect me to live without knowing my son? Or go another day without you now that I remember what it feels like to hold you? Either way, Robert will
The city hasn’t fully recovered from the last war. We can’t use the excuse of being selfish teenagers anymore. We’re adults. I’m married, bound by a contract sealed with my blood.”

“Do you still love me?”

Lyanna sighs, “Why bother asking a question you already know the answer to?”

“Then nothing else matters.”

“Damn you, you stubborn—” Lyanna’s cellular rings, and she’s immediately filled with dread. It’s a special phone with access to only one line, in and out. She hates the damn thing but rarely does it ring, especially on Sundays.

Answering the call, Lyanna’s heart thuds in her chest as she waits for Robert to speak. Rhaegar stares daggers at the phone, but he holds his tongue. The message Robert gives is short, to the point. When the line dies, she’s still holding the phone up to her ear, frozen in shock.

Rhaegar takes the phone from her, checking to make sure no one is on the other end first. Then he touches Lyanna’s face. “Lyanna?”

“I-I have to go,” she mutters. But her body won’t move.

“If he somehow knows you’re with me then there’s no point in you going bac—”

“Rhaegar.” She looks him dead in the eye, her tears returning. “Ned...Benjen...Robb...they’re...” She can’t bring herself to finish the sentence.

Before Rhaegar can speak, the sound of a door quickly opening and slamming shut startles them. Arthur Dayne rushes toward them and Lyanna is too overwhelmed to be delighted to see her old friend.

Arthur sees the expression on Lyanna’s face, and she knows he’s just learned the same news as her. “We have to return to Dragonstone,” he tells Rhaegar. “The Boltons and the Umbers have taken Winterfell. “ He glances away from Lyanna. “Ned, Benjen, and Robb Stark are presumed dead.”

“I have to go,” Lyanna says stiffly. “My family is under attack. I need to see about Catelyn and my nieces and nephews. And—”

“Jon,” Rhaegar mumbles. He frowns. “This is a hostile takeover. They’ll want to eliminate anyone with a lawful claim to Winterfell. The northerners don’t know Jon is a Targaryen.” He’s already taking out his phone.

Lyanna is confused. “Who are you calling? You can’t get involved in northern affairs, Rhaegar! And we can’t risk others learning about Jon right now!”

“My little sister is with Jon!”

“...why are they together?” Lyanna asks in confusion.

Arthur and Rhaegar share a look that Lyanna isn’t sure she likes.

Live in the moment.
Daenerys repeats those words to herself as she stares at her reflection in the bathroom mirror. Throughout the movie, she tried to mentally prepare for this, but all of the pep talks in the world isn’t enough to quell the butterflies in her stomach. It isn’t fear that’s stopping her. She wants this. She wants him.

What’s holding her back is doubt, uncertainty. Will he like what he sees? Surely he’s been with more experienced women who are confident in their bodies and their sexual prowess. Women who are everything she’s not.

Gods, she wishes Missandei were here to shove her out of the door. But she isn’t. Daenerys is on her own for now.

Everything is in place. Ghost is out for his walk, and so far he appears to be keen when it comes to giving humans their space when necessary. That dog is the best wingman, ever.

Daenerys gives herself another once over. No amount of staring will make her breast bigger so she might as well get over it. She walks up to the door, takes a deep breath, turns the knob and steps out.

Jon is sitting at the edge of the bed, holding his phone. He powered it off during the movies and she hopes he hasn’t powered it back on. She wants no interruptions.

“I was going to order take out,” Jon says without turning around. “Got a taste for anything?”

“Jon,” she says in an attempt to sound enticing. But her nerves betray her.

Regardless, his attention is captured anyway. When he sees her, standing there, fully nude, his mouth opens partially, his eyes widening. It’s hard to decipher rather that’s a good or bad reaction. She supposes she’ll find out soon enough. Jon’s dark eyes travel from her head to her polished toes, making her nerves skyrocket. Self-consciously, Daenerys tries to cover herself. Jon stands then and in mere seconds he’s in front of her, staring at her face as though she were some rare treasure he’d just uncovered. She waits for him to speak but he never does.

Their lips meet in a fervid kiss without build up or prelude. It’s as if Jon puts everything that he has into that one kiss. Her insecurities and her doubts shed away like old skin as she twines her arms around his neck and melts into him.

The journey to the bed is a short and forgotten one. Jon barely gives her time to register any of her surroundings. She only knows that she was once standing, then she was lifted, carried, and deposited on the bed, his lips never leaving hers, his hands never in the same place.

Jon asks her if she’s sure she wants to do this.

Daenerys answers by taking his right hand and putting it between her legs so that he can feel her wet thighs. No more questions are asked after that. It’s as if her bold action unlocks a new side of Jon. His kisses and touches become rougher, more purposeful. She helps him out of his shirt, kissing his collarbone and pectoral muscles as she does so.

Every time she’s hugged him in the past, she’s felt the hardness of his body, but seeing is an entirely different experience. Jon’s body is as beautiful as carved marble. She nearly cries when he moves away from her, depriving her of her prize.

Jon kisses his way down her body. Lavishing each nipple with hot, wet kisses that makes her head spin. He trails his hands down her sides, down to her hips, following the same path with his greedy mouth. When his head is between her legs, he curses at the sight and the heady smell of her. She feels his nose press against her thigh then her mind goes blank after the first lap of his tongue. He
licks clean the wetness from her thighs first, taking his time with each side, biting and sucking on the tender skin.

Daenerys grips his hair with more force than intended. He groans and the vibrations travel through her. She can hear herself begging, and even to her own ears, she sounds crazed. But in the end, she gets what she wants and beyond that.

Jon seems just as eager as she is. No longer drawing it out or torturing her with his teasing, he takes her clit into his mouth, suckling and swirling his tongue around it. With his name on her lips, Daenerys squeezes her thighs around his head, her hips bucking wildly as the pleasure overtakes her.

It’s like nothing she’s ever experienced.

Whatever pleasure she tried to give herself in the past feels like a flickering candle in comparison to the smoldering wildfire he creates inside of her. Daenerys can feel it blossoming at her spine before expanding throughout, consuming everything in its path.

Jon only lets up when she’s sobbing and trembling. He kisses her sensitive clit as he presses a finger inside of her. She’s so wet she barely registers it until he curves that finger. Once again, the fire inside of her is kindled. When a second finger is eventually added, she tenses a little. Immediately, Jon is there, kissing her face and murmuring endearing words to her. Daenerys allows herself to be swept away again, placing herself in his full care.

“Jon,” she pleads.

“Jon,” she pleads. “I don’t want to hurt you. Not even a little.”

“You won’t.” She doesn’t know that for sure, but even if he does manage to hurt her she won’t care at this point. “Please. I’m ready.”

Without his fingers inside of her, she feels oddly incomplete. It’s short-lived, thankfully. Jon kisses her deeply as he breaches. She’s dripping by now, making it easier for him to slide home.

Daenerys loved it when Jon used his mouth. She loved having his fingers curving and twisting inside of her. But being with Jon like this is transcendent. It’s as if they’re one, single functioning unit. It’s like they were meant to be together. The way he stares down at her, onyx eyes bright and blown-wide, she knows he’s thinking something similar. Time slows down at that moment. His thrusts, that she assumed would be as violent and passionate as he is, are measured, drawn out. Not because he thinks her fragile but because he doesn’t want it to end.

As much as Daenerys wants the same, it simply feels too good. Clasping his face, she kisses him, her legs tightening around his waist. Just like that, the atmosphere is altered. They move against one another in a near frenzy. She drags her nails down his back, and he sucks on her neck as he fucks her deeply, pushing her over the edge for the third time. Daenerys’s walls clamp and pulse around his cock as she orgasms. She can feel him throbbing inside of her as he releases.

Afterward, they lie there, idly caressing one another. Daenerys rests her chin on Jon’s chest and traces her finger over a random freckle while he brushes her hair out of her face. Eventually, Daenerys breaks the silence.

“So, about that take out?” She’s definitely worked up an appetite now.
Jon kisses her forehead. “I’ll get you anything you want.”

“You’ve been in the giving mood today.”

“I’m a giver naturally.”

Daenerys’s body stirs again. “I guess that makes me a lucky girl.”

A vicious growl, followed by loud barking distorts the peaceful moment. Jon sits up, carefully settling Daenerys to the side. He gets off the bed, hurriedly putting his pants on.

“Jon?”

“Go in the bathroom, lock the door. Don’t come out until either I or someone you trust comes for you.” He opens the top bedside table drawer, taking out a gun.

Quickly, Daenerys ties the sheets around her body. She wants to know what’s going on but his tone prevents her from asking. Whatever it is, it’s serious. He gives her the gun, and she runs to the bathroom to do as he instructed.

Not a second later, the door to the studio is kicked in. Daenerys tries to make out the sounds as best she can but at the rapid rate her heart is pumping, it’s difficult for her to focus. Kneeling down by the tub, she clasps the gun tightly, waiting.

She hears Ghost growling, flesh being torn into, and a man screaming. Shots are being fired. Jon is yelling and grunting. Fists are colliding. Wood breaking. Heavy footsteps are rushing up the stairs. More gunshots. A bullet passes through the bathroom door, hitting the mirror, splitting it. Biting her lips, Daenerys muffles her scream. She gets in the bathtub and lays low.

“Smells like pussy in here!” a man screams. A northerner from the sounds of it. “Were you getting your dick wet before we got here, boy?!”

Another shot is fired, followed by a struggle. Ghost can no longer be heard and that worries Daenerys.

“Take him down to the truck!” The same man from earlier orders.

Daenerys's heart seizes. She moves to get out of the tub. But the door is kicked off the hinges before she moves a muscle. A tall, bald man with terrifying eyes sees her. Grinning, he walks toward her.

Raising the gun, she shoots him in the shoulder. The man curses, his eyes burning murderously. Daenerys fires again but her hands are trembling so badly she misses. The man grabs her by the hair, takes the gun from her and drags her out of the tub.

“Look what I’ve found!” He throws her on the floor, presenting her to the other men in the room. He tears a large piece of his shirt and wraps his own shoulder to stop the bleeding.

From a glance, there are about eight of them. Jon and Ghost are nowhere in sight. The men circle around her, leering down. Daenerys pulls the sheet up to cover herself, and the men cackle.

“Bloody hell,” one exclaims. “Is that one of them Targaryens?”

“Looks like it,” another says, his beard long and Auburn. “Whatever happens to her we can blame it on the boy. No one else is here to say otherwise.” He grins at Dany. “And she won’t be able to tell anyone the truth after we’re done with her!”
From downstairs, in the auto shop, Daenerys hears Jon screaming and fighting. The men who have him are having trouble keeping him contained from the sounds of it. The man who Dany assumes is the leader, pulls her off the floor. She struggles the whole while, hitting and kicking to no avail. The man drags her down the stairs, her knees and legs bruising from the steel railing. The sheet gets snagged somehow and she loses it, leaving her nude and exposed to these animals.

When Jon sees her, he fights harder than before, breaking the arm of one man and cracking the jaw of another. He rushes to her, but some of the men from the studio block his path. It takes four of them to hold him down. Even then, he won’t stop fighting.

The leader yanks Daenerys up, forcing her to stand in front of him. “Give it up, boy!” he shouts at Jon. “Or I swear, I’ll gut her in front of you!” As if to show how serious he is, he puts a knife to Daenerys’s throat.

Jon grits his teeth, his face angrier than she ever thought possible. But he stops struggling. The four men lift him up and take him toward a black SUV they’ve driven right through the garage door. More bodies are laid out, their throats are torn out. Ghost is definitely responsible.

Laughing, the leader pushes Daenerys to the floor, stepping over her as he walks to where Jon is being taken. “You men can have as much fun with her as you like. I prefer redheads! And if you see that mutt of his again, shoot it on sight!”

Hearing that, Jon headbutts a man to his left and almost slips out of the other man’s grasp but never makes it to her. Another man hits him on the back of the head with the butt of his gun. Daenerys cries as Jon’s unconscious body is carelessly tossed in the back of the truck.

As the truck is pulling off, the remaining, four, men grab at her arms and legs. Daenerys kicks one man in the face and tries to claw the eyes out of another man. Unfortunately, she’s greatly outnumbered.

“She’s a pretty little thing, isn’t she?” the bearded man from earlier says. “I wonder if she-” A blade lodges in his throat, killing him instantly.

Daenerys is dropped to the cold ground as the men scramble to see where the attack came from. They never get the chance to draw their guns. Grey Worm and Missandei move in unison, slitting throats and butchering the men so quickly Daenerys isn’t sure if it’s really happening or not.

It isn’t until Missandei hugs her that she realizes this isn’t a dream. “We got here as soon as we could,” Missandei says. “Are you alright?”

“Jon...they took Jon!” Dany cries on her best friend’s shoulder. “We have to go after them. Please, please! We have to save him!”

Kneeling beside them, Grey Worm removes his leather jacket and puts it on Dany’s shoulders. “They took him north,” he quietly tells her. “We can’t go north. Not any longer. Ned Stark is dead. The entire territory is on lockdown. If we trespass there’ll be war.”

"Rhaegar has ordered us to bring you directly to Dragonstone," Missandei says. "I'm so sorry."

Daenerys’s heart shatters. She clutches on to Missandei as though she were life support. Lost in her own, deteriorating thoughts, she doesn’t hear Missandei tell Grey Worm to grab her something to put on. She’s unresponsive as her best friend helps her dress. And when they take her to the car, she still thinks she’s sitting on the floor of the auto shop surrounding by dead bodies. The dead bodies of the men who disrupted their happiness and took Jon away from her.
As they’re driving away, Daenerys says, her voice void of emotion, “You should’ve kept them all alive and taken them to Viserys.”
Rescue Mission

Daenerys used to believe her home was haunted, and that was why no one ever visited them. On a normal day, Dragonstone is dismal and bone-chillingly quiet. A passerby would assume the estate was well-kept yet abandoned. Today, Dragonstone is unrecognizable to Daenerys. She’s never seen so many people walking on the grounds or within the walls.

Inside, the mansion is buzzing like a beehive. Men and women she’s never seen before are carrying assault rifles through the corridors, a group of men is bustling down the stairs carrying a big, black trunk that she just knows is filled with guns and other weaponry.

“We’re preparing just in case the northern conflict spills over into our territory,” Grey Worm explains as they head to Rhaegar’s office. “The other families are doing the same.”

There are plenty of people here ready to die and kill for her family. Would they also help her rescue Jon if she asked?

The two, black oak doors of Rhaegar’s office are wide open, giving her a peek into the chaos. Rhaegar, Arthur, and Viserys are all bent over a large map on the desk while a dark-haired woman paces the floor, muttering angry curses.

“They probably took Jon as far north as possible,” Arthur says, and Daenerys’s heart soars. They’re going to save him. They’re going to save Jon. “We’ll start a war if we’re noticed.”

“They have my son!” Rhaegar shouts. "I’ll go to war with anyone for my family. You know that, Arthur!”

Daenerys’s blood runs cold. Any relief she might have felt is now ashes on her tongue.

“Your...your son?” she asks so quietly it’s a wonder how anyone hears her.

Four heads sharply turn in her direction, each wearing a different expression that collectively means the same thing; oh shit.

Overcome with nausea, Daenerys clutches her stomach with one hand, and blindly reaches for anything to offer her support with the other hand. Missandei is there.

“I only learned this morning, Dany,” Rhaegar says, approaching her. “There’s so much for you to be filled in on but as you know we don’t have time. We need to make a move n-“

Daenerys can’t hear a word following that first sentence. She burrows inside of her own mind and hides there. Yet she doesn’t even realize she’s doing it.

At least this isn’t something her brother has kept from her this whole time. That’s one positive. And now there’s a legitimate reason for her brother to order his men to storm the north and recover Jon. A second positive. This is a good thing, right? Yes. Everything is working out for the best.

So, why is everyone looking at her as if she’s lost her mind?

Probably because she has.

Daenerys hears her own laughter, and it yanks her out of her thoughts and back into the office. Her body shakes with the laughter at the same time her eyes swell with tears. She can’t make any of it
stop. It's as if she's lost control of her body, her mind.

“My god, she’s mad…” Viserys mutters in astonishment.

“No,” the dark-haired woman says, “the poor girl is in shock! Stop bloody gawking and get the maester!”

Daenerys laughs, “You sound just like Jon!” This has to be Jon’s mother, yes. Jon resembles her and he also resembles Rhaegar. How did she miss it before? He resembles her older brother because he’s…”My nephew.” Her laughter ceases. “Jon is...he’s my nephew…”

Suddenly images of her and Jon kissing fill her mind. Images of her fingers threaded through his hair, her hands on his bare chest, his head between her legs, the sound of his groan as he thrusts into her...

The memories are too much for her to handle. As an act of self-preservation, her mind shuts down along with her body.

A bucket of freezing cold water is poured on him, startling him awake. Gasping and coughing, Jon rolls to his side, spitting the excess water on the dirty floor.

“Good morning, Sleeping Beauty.”

Jon knows that voice.

Gritting his teeth, he glances around the room wildly to see the face the voice belongs to. He finds the man sitting on the other side of the iron bars, a plate of food in front of him. There’s a hulking guard standing beside him. As ugly as they come.

As the man stabs a piece of meat with his fork, he casually says, “At first, I thought they’d brought me another girl to play with.” Ramsay Bolton grins at Jon. “I wanted your cousin Sansa but her bitch mother made sure Sansa, along with her siblings made it out of the country. Well, minus Robb, of course.”

Ramsey sees the confusion on Jon’s face and his grin widens. Pushing his plate aside, he stands and walks over to the cell.

“How rude of me. You don’t even know what’s going on. Allow me to fill you in! My father cut your uncle’s head clean off. Your other uncle, Benjen, and your cousin Robb were blown to bits.”

The rational side of Jon’s brain kicks into overdrive. If he prematurely mourns his family he’ll never make it out of here alive. Ramsay Bolton has a reputation for mentally and physically breaking his victims. For now, Jon will assume every word that comes out of Ramsay’s filthy mouth is a lie. It’s the only way he can keep his head clear.

“...your half-brother Gendry tuck tail and now he’s somewhere deep in Martell territory, far out of our reach.” Jon allows himself to be proud of his little brother for using his head for once. “As for your lovely mother…”

Jon steels his heart against whatever may come next.

“Well, no one knows where she or your father ran off to,” Ramsay admits, glancing over at his bodyguard. He squats down, smiling that damned smile the whole while. “Doesn’t matter, though.
Because we have the heir to Storm’s End! Your father will come for you because you’re important and we need him to come because he’s important!”

The Boltons can’t hold Winterfell if the other families think there’s a rightful heir left to claim it. They’re nothing more than pretenders, usurpers, and the north won’t support them until they legitimize themselves.

Jon cracks a smile but says nothing. The action garners the reaction he was hoping for out of Ramsay.

“I wouldn’t be smiling if I were you,” Ramsay says, standing up. He clasps the bars, pressing his face closer. “Your family is finished, Winterfell is ours, and soon your mother’s and father’s heads will rot beside your uncle’s.”

“Are you finished?” Jon asks, feigning boredom just to rile the man up. “I’d like to get some shut eye.”

“Oh, you’re under the impression that you’re an honored guest. Look around you, little girl. This isn’t a luxury hotel. The only sleep I’ll grant you is death.”

But he can’t kill Jon. Not right away, at least. And Jon knows his father won’t come for him on his own. He’ll send his men to do all the work. He doesn’t care about Jon enough to risk his own hide.

“You’re a talker,” Jon says, smirking. “In my experience, talkers are always the first ones on the ground during a brawl.”

Ramsay’s jaw clenches and Jon knows he’s struck a nerve. “I hear your girlfriend was a talker too. Well, a screamer. She screamed as my men passed her around like the whore she is. I have pictures if you’d like to see them.”

Jon refuses to believe that. Grey Worm was patrolling the area; he has been ever since Dany left Dragonstone. Those men wouldn’t have had the time to take their cocks out before they were killed. But how does Ramsay know that Dany was there with him? Someone had to live in order to relay the message.

No. No, Jon can’t believe a damn thing that Ramsay says. Dany is safe. Dany is safe. Dany is safe. He repeats it like a mantra. If he lost his family and Dany, gods be damned. Jon will kill every last person responsible then he’ll kill their loved ones, too. Guilty and innocent alike.

Hatred boils and simmers in his gut. He glares at Ramsay’s leering face.

“Are you going to torture me by talking my fucking ear off?” Jon asks. He’ll keep up this pretense as long as he can. If he breaks he won’t be able to avenge anyone.

Ramsay walks back to the table, taking a seat. “I want to finish my meal first. Then you and I are going to get acquainted.”

As soon as Ramsay opens that gate, Jon is going to bash his fucking head in with his fist, and then he’ll kill the guard too.

From what he can tell he’s underground somewhere, maybe a safe house or bunker in the woods. He won’t fair too well on foot if that’s the case. So, he’ll need to steal a car when he makes it outside. His best bet will be to find somewhere safe to lay low until he can regroup, and come back here to raise hell on the fuckers. He also makes a mental note to steal a phone as well so he can check on his family and Dany.
While the gears in Jon’s mind works overtime, he doesn’t notice the white smoke that’s being omitted from the vent in the cell until his lungs are filled with the substance.

Ramsay and the guard head out of the dungeon to avoid breathing it in as well. Laughing, Ramsay says, “Do you really think I’m stupid enough to try my luck with Lyanna Stark’s son? Oh no. You and I are going to play on my terms. Not yours.”

His maniacal laughter echoes in Jon’s ears until he succumbs to the sleeping gas.

Dragonstone is quiet again when Daenerys awakes in her bed.

Missandei is sleeping beside her, and for only a brief moment, Dany relishes in the warmth and safety of her best friend. Then she slips out of bed, careful not to disturb Missandei’s slumber. She must be exhausted, Dany thinks. Missandei is known to be a light sleeper. Sleeping in filthy alleys and constantly being haunted by sick men during her time in Essos are to blame. Grey Worm’s sleeping habits are born from similar circumstances.

Daenerys remembers swearing to find every person who ever hurt her friends and pinch them until they cried. She was a child then.

But what would she do now to those who would dare harm her loved ones?

The lift is difficult to operate on her own but she manages. When Viserys brought her down here, she wasn’t in her right mind. One could argue that she isn’t in her right mind now but Daenerys disagrees. Now, she’s exactly as she should be; how she should’ve been all along.

It was the naive girl who was foolish enough to accept a drink from a man she didn’t know. It was the weak girl who was powerless against those men who took Jon. Those men threatened her in order to tame Jon. She was a source of weakness for him, not strength.

“I knew I’d find you down here,” Viserys says from behind her.

Daenerys doesn’t take her eyes off the portrait of their parents. “Did they love each other?” she asks.

“Our grandfather forced them together to fulfill a ridiculous prophecy. They despised each other. Father beat and raped her repeatedly and confined her to their chambers.”

If she had asked Rhaegar he would’ve kept it simple, spared her the ugly truth by giving her the water-downed version. Viserys is the older brother she needs right now. She needs to feed off of his brutality, his cruelty.

“Where is everyone?” Absently, she reaches out and brushes her fingers over the portrait’s frame.

“Rhaegar and this woman of his are traveling north via the catacombs. Arthur and Grey Worm are meeting with Tywin Lannister, Doran Martell, and Olenna Tyrell. War may be on the horizon. But nevermind that.” Viserys touches her shoulder, urging her to look at him. “Our brother has given me full permission to do what I do best. Come, I want to show you something.”

Daenerys nods. “Okay.”

Leaving the study, they travel further into the bunker, opposite to where Viserys tortures people. He takes her to a room filled from wall to wall with small television screens that display security footage
of the estate. There’s a single desk with two laptops on it.

“I had one of our men obtain the security footage from the auto shop.” Viserys taps the mouse pad on one laptop, bringing the screen to life. A video of Daenerys being dragged down the stairs plays.

Seeing her naked self being humiliated like that should conjure some sort of emotion out of her. It doesn’t. She watches the video with as much disinterest as she would have whilst watching a badly acted play.

Viserys unlocks the other laptop, quickly typing into the keyboard. “Using our facial recognition software, I determined who the other men are. I’m to get information out of them to locate Jon’s whereabouts and relay the information to Rhaegar.”

“Then what?” she asks, blankly staring at the screen. “What will we do to them after you have what you need?”

“We?” Viserys smiles, and it’s the happiest she’s seen him in a very long time. “We will show them what happens to those who fuck with our family.”

Daenerys looks at the laptop again. The video is playing on a loop. Now it’s back to the part where she was being dragged down the stairs. She pauses the video and points at the man that she shot in the shoulder but failed to kill.

“I want him first,” she says.

Viserys purses his lips. “Come here, Dany.” When she does as she’s bid, he brushes her hair over her shoulders then gathers it up in his hands and piles it on top of her head. “You’d make a ravishing brunette, sister.”

Daenerys remembers what the man said before he left her to his men. “No, he prefers redheads.”

Viserys rolls his eyes. “Red isn’t your color but I suppose it’s fine for one night. I’m sure I can procure a red wig and contacts. Makeup can deal with your eyebrows...” he mutters to himself as he takes out his phone to send a text message. “We’ll need to leave soon. Rhaegar is depending on me to figure out where Jon was taken.”

“How do you feel about all of this? About Jon being…your…” Daenerys closes her eyes. “Our nephew.”

“Well, I’m not thrilled about it. The dragon has three heads, not four.” He pauses. “Then again, he’s only half-Targaryen so I suppose that’s fine.”

“You’re not angry that technically he’s the rightful heir?”

Viserys stares at Daenerys like she’s grown a second head. “You really don’t know me at all, do you? You think I want to abandon my throne in Essos just to come here and be restricted by the same laws that our brother has to adhere to? I love my freedom too much. I love being able to do whatever the fuck I want when I want. Rhaegar, he doesn’t have that luxury. To wear the crown comes with great responsibility. Never forget that.”

Daenerys supposes that makes sense. She isn’t even sure why it matters to her, though. She still hasn’t sorted through the commotion inside of her head, and she doesn’t want to.

Saving Jon is still a priority.
“How do you feel about it?” Viserys asks her. “I’m not blind, Dany. I know you two fucked.”

“How am I supposed to feel about it?”

“I’ve never fucked my nephew before so I don’t know.” Viserys sighs and pats Dany on the back. “Let’s go murder some people then you can figure all of this out later.”

Daenerys likes the sound of that. But does she have it in her?

The video plays in the background, all the way up to the moment Missandei and Grey Worm arrived. Those men were going to rape her. She didn’t do anything to them, they barely knew who she was on a personal level yet they were going rape her. There’s never a justification for rape. Ever. But why did they immediately resort to that?

She voices her confusion to Viserys.

Viserys says, “When men look at you, they see a frightened little mouse. Men like that believe they can do whatever they like with scared little mice because mice can’t fend for themselves against wolves.”

How many women and children are targeted based on that same logic? Missandei and Grey Worm were victims as children. Had it not been for Rhaegar, she doubts they would’ve lived past the age of eight. It sickens Daenerys to know men like that exist in every part of the world.

“Do you know why I was so pissed when I first saw this video?” Viserys asks. “Because once again you were a victim. Are you done pretending to be a mouse, little sister?”

Daenerys’s eyes begin to water. “I’ve always been a mouse. I wasn’t born like you or Rhaegar. I’m not... I’m not strong. You know better than anyone. You always beat me as a child!”

“I was cruel to you, I know. Partially because father was cruel to me and sometimes I see him in myself, though, I wish I didn’t.” The confession is the closest thing to sorrow she’s ever heard in Viserys’s voice. “The other reason was to make you realize what you are.”

“And what’s that?”

Viserys wipes her tears. “You’re a dragon.” His eyes crystalize. “Be a dragon.”

Daenerys recalls the moment in the woods with Jon when he was teaching her how to shoot, and how she assumed he chose to call her a baby dragon because of her family’s sigil. But now she understands that he saw what Viserys has always seen in her.

“Are you finally ready to bloody your hands and be a part of this family, Dany?”

“Yes.”

Lightly, Ramsay drags the knife down Jon’s abdomen without piercing the skin.

“Not to come off like a homosexual or anything,” he says, “but you’re much prettier than your fat father. You definitely take after your mother but there’s something else inside of you.”

Jon fruitlessly struggles against the restraints. He woke up to his hands and feet chained to a saltire cross, and a muzzle covering his mouth. The guard from earlier is nowhere around. It’s just him and
this irritating asshole.

“I once heard a very interesting story about your mother.” Without warning, he slices Jon’s chest. It isn’t deep so it only stings. “My father told me that years ago, your mother ran away and married someone she wasn’t supposed to.” He slices Jon again. “Your grandfather and uncles didn’t like that.” Another slice.

The cuts are as threatening as ant bites to Jon. Still, it irritates the hell out of him. He hates how weak he is. It’s exactly how he felt when Dany was in danger and he couldn’t save her. Then this sack of shit, Ramsay, put a muzzle on him as if he were some mutt.

Jon is burning with rage. He grinds his teeth so hard his head hurts.

Ramsay slices Jon’s stomach one, twice, then he continues his story, “Robert Baratheon started a war just to get your mother back. Did you know that? Did you know that the great war was all because your whore mother couldn’t keep her legs closed?”

Jon jerks forward, desperately trying to lunge at Ramsay. The most he does is make the chains rattle against the wooden device.

Laughing, Ramsay places the end of the knife on Jon’s throat, adding slight pressure. “Has your mother ever told you this story? I suppose she wouldn’t. She wouldn’t want her precious boy to know she used to fuck Rhaegar Targaryen of all people. I hear he’s grotesque under his clothes.” He lowers his voice, whispering, “You know, from all the incest in his family.”

Disregarding that last part, and most of what Ramsay said, Jon fixates on the mention of Rhaegar. He doesn’t want to believe anything Ramsay says, but he can’t help but wonder if it’s true what he says. Did his mother truly run away to be with Rhaegar? Is that what started the war?

A clicking noise is the only warning Jon gets before his body is overrun with a powerful electrical current. His eyes roll into his skull, his toes and fingers curl abnormally, and drool drips down his chin as he grits his teeth. It’s too painful for him to even scream. Afterward, the wave passes, he slumps forward, the chains digging into the flesh at his wrists.

Ramsay returns the taser stick to the back of his pants. “Sorry about that. Had to see if you were still awake.” He grins and resumes his task of slicing Jon’s upper body. “My father wants to give your mother and father quick deaths out of respect. But I think we should commemorate this special occasion by using your father’s organs as the first we sell on the black market and by putting your mother in one of our newly opened brothels. She hasn’t gone through menopause yet has she?”

Jon stares at Ramsay, saying nothing, though, it’s not like he could utter a word if he wanted to because of the damn muzzle. If he could speak, he’d tell Ramsay to go fuck himself. No point in telling the man everything he plans on doing to him once he’s out of these chains. He prefers actions over words. Ramsay can have his fun now. It’ll be Jon who gets the last laugh.

“You’re a tough one,” Ramsay remarks when he’s done with the pointless slicing. “I haven’t broken you yet. I can see it in your eyes.”

If he thinks a few half-assed cuts and a little electrocution is enough to break Jon then he’s dumber than he looks.

“Don’t worry. I know exactly what will do the trick!”

Ramsay leaves.
Jon tries to get a peek outside but isn’t so lucky in that department. However, a cool draft blows in before the steel door slams shut. He isn’t underground then. That means he’s probably above ground in some sort of windowless building. He can’t think of anything like that up north. Then again, he hasn’t seen every nook and cranny of the north.

The door opens again. Jon prepares himself for another bout of amateur hour.

“My father let me keep this.” Ramsay carries a black garbage bag. He walks over to the table where he had his supper hours ago and deposits the bag’s contents onto the table. “Say hello to your uncle Ned!”

Jon can’t stop the bile from rising up. Most of it ends up on his chin and neck rather than the floor. He didn’t want to believe it. He couldn’t. But now the truth was literally staring at him. They butchered his uncle like cattle and had the audacity to keep his head.

Hot, angry tears fall, and he thrashes wildly against the chains.

Ramsay is delighted by the reaction. “Very soon, your aunt Catelyn, and all of your cousins will be added to my collection.” He steps up to Jon, smiling at his useless struggling. “Your father, too. After we sell his bits on the market. And your mother will be the finest whore in our brothel! Perhaps I’ll be her first customer!”

“I’ll kill you,” is what Jon tries to say but his words are nothing more than an anguished growl.

He’s electrocuted again. It takes two more rounds of it to strip him of his ire. When his nose starts bleeding, Ramsay stops for now. He leaves Jon alone in that room with his uncle’s head.

Does this mean that everything Ramsay said was true? Robb and Benjen are dead. And Dany. Roose Bolton’s men raped Dany after he failed to keep her safe as he promised her he would. First, he failed Ygritte. Now he’s failed another woman who trusted him.

Jon deserves to die here. But he won’t. He doesn’t deserve to rest until he avenges his family and Dany.

Dread.

That’s the name of the man who was in charge of the team that was sent to capture Jon. He’s the same man Dany shot in the shoulder.

To celebrate their victory over the Starks, Dread and his remaining three men grab drinks at a northern pub. They’re loud, obnoxious, and downright mannish. One of the men, Locke, slaps the ass of every waitress that passes their table. Another man in the group has made at least five jokes about his cock.

Small men, Daenerys thinks as she swirls the olive in her martini. These are small men who have what’s coming to them. She’s glad they’re all together. The sooner they can get what they need, the sooner Rhaegar can find Jon. Whatever happens post-rescue is beyond her. She’ll cross that bridge when she gets to it. She has to focus on the current task.

When she first walked in the bar, the sea of people parted to make way for her as though she were the Moses of the scanty bar scene. Even with her unique features hidden she’s capable of turning heads. Every so often she catches Dread watching her. Initially, she worried that he’d recognized her but the look in his eyes is of lust, not suspicion.
The next time Dread looks in her direction, Daenerys takes the olive out of her drink and pops it into her mouth, chewing it slowly. He gets up from his chair abruptly, stumbling slightly. As he walks over to her, Daenerys has to steady her heart. She can’t give the game away so soon.

“You’re the sexiest piece of ass in all the north!” Dread says as he plops down in the chair beside her, reeking of whiskey and tobacco.

Daenerys doesn’t bother with her usual manners. Men like Dread don’t care for manners. Or showers from the smell of it.

“I’m sure you say that to all of the girls.”

Dread chuckles like she actually said something funny. “Only the ones that look like you.” Shamelessly, he runs his eyes over Daenerys, lingering on her thighs and hips. “And I do love redheads.”

Looking up, Daenerys notices the doors lining the walls on the second floor. Viserys did mention something about private rooms.

Leaning over, Daenerys touches Dread’s huge bicep and whispers. “I came here for a good time. Mind showing me one?” She glances at the second floor.

Dread grins.

This close up she can see how wretched his mouth looks. Most of his teeth are rotten and the two in the front have gold caps on them. He doesn’t waste any time pulling her up from the chair roughly and taking her up to the second floor. His men whistle and shout crude words to their backs as they slip into one of the rooms.

Whoever decorated this room was clearly inspired by web searches for “cheap whore house aesthetic.” Everything is either polyester or some kind of animal print. The circular bed has seen better days and so has the faux fur rug that accents it.

Dread gives her a hard slap on the ass. “I bet when I take this dress off everything will stay right in place.” He gets up behind her, grinding his erection on her back and fondling her breasts.

Daenerys is numb to it all. “There’s a perfectly good bed over there,” she says.

“You’re one of them fancy broads, ain’t you?” He sucks his teeth. “I want to fuck you right where you stand!” He yanks the straps of her dress down.

“Very well.”

Daenerys faces Dread. He’s far taller than she is so she has to tilt her head back a little. She bats her eyelashes like an innocent lamb, and his eyes darken with hunger. Men like Dread love it when they can look down on their women. It makes them feel powerful.

Sinking to her knees, she drags her hands down his thighs. Dread fists her hair and shoves her face into his crotch.

“Get it harder for me, baby,” he groans.

One hand touches his pant’s zipper while her other reaches between her own legs to grab the knife from her thigh holster.
Dread’s incessant tugging on the wig reveals her real hair underneath. “What the fuck?!” He pulls the wig off fully, his eyes widening when he sees silver. “Yo-”

Daenerys stabs him in the thigh. Screaming, he grabs a chunk of her hair, trying to throw her across the room. But Daenerys stabs him in the hand. He reaches behind his back, for a gun more than likely, and she stabs him in his groin.

The sound of his agonized wailing is sweet music to her ears. As Dread doubles over in pain and slowly bleeds out, Daenerys rises to her feet.

“Would you believe me if I told you this was my first time?” she asks, her voice cold, detached. “I don’t think I’ve ever even injured anyone before. Not on purpose.” She stares at the blood as it oozes out from different areas. “Just last week, I was a normal girl, excited about university and my first concert...”

“You crazy bitch!” Dread tries to reach for his gun again and Daenerys kicks him in the face. Now his nose is leaking blood, too.

Walking behind him, she lifts his shirt, finding the gun. “I was upset when I learned the truth about my family.” She takes the gun. “But Jon...Jon made it better. We were so happy during our short time together...”

Dread’s eyes widen at the sound of gunfire coming from downstairs.

Ah, Viserys and Missandei have made their grand entrance.

Smiling to herself, Daenerys sits on the floor next to Dread. He swipes his uninjured arm at her, and she easily evades it. He’s too weak to be a threat now. “I experienced a lot of firsts with Jon.” Calmly, she removes the bandage from Dread’s shoulder, regarding the wound she left there. “My first date, my first concert, my first kiss. He was the first man I’ve ever been with, too.” Taking the knife, she digs the sharp end of it into the bullet wound, drawing more blood. Over his screams, she says, “Experienced my first real orgasm, too. Jon made that happen with only his tongue. Gods, he was such an amazing lover. An amazing boyfriend. Not that I have anyone to compare him too.”

Up until now, Daenerys hasn’t truly mourned what happened. She knows Jon isn’t dead but the loss of their relationship is something to be distraught over. They were perfect for one another. But now they can’t be together.

Daenerys cries. “If it weren’t for you and your men, Jon and I could’ve lived in ignorance bliss a little while longer. He was mine and I was his. But you took him from me!” She drives the knife in deeper.

Dread slumps over. He’s not dead yet. He’s thick-skinned and tough to kill. Good. Because Dany isn’t finished with him.

“I have a confession to make,” she says quietly, no longer crying. She turns Dread over on his back, straddling his stomach. His gaze is venomous yet most of his blood is on the carpet so the glare is ineffective. “I love my nephew. Not the way I love my brothers or my dear friends. I love him in the way a woman loves a man.” It feels so good to admit that aloud. “I know I shouldn’t. It’s wrong. It’s gross. But I can’t change how I feel. I crave his touch still. I still feel him inside of me, even now. I want him just as desperately as I did before I learned the truth.”

“Bitch!” Dread seethes. His voice is noticeably weaker and his eyes are drooping close.

Daenerys removes the knife from Dread’s shoulder. “I love Jon. And even though he’ll probably
want nothing to do with me when he learns the truth, I will make sure that everyone responsible for his capture as well as the attack on his family will die screaming!"

The killing blow is delivered. Blood spurts from his neck. Some of it splatters on her face like a warm baptism. She’s reborn. After basking in the afterglow of her first kill, she cleans off the knife and returns it to the thigh holster. Taking Dread’s gun, she leaves the room.

Downstairs, the walls are covered in bullet holes, the floors are riddled with bullets, blood, and bodies. The man, Locke, is ducked behind the bar, threatening to blow the brains out of one of the waitresses if they don’t cease their shooting. He has no idea who he’s attempting to negotiate with, obviously. Viserys doesn’t give a shit about some waitress.

Daenerys watches it all play out from the second floor’s balcony. From where she’s standing she can shoot Locke but she waits for her brother's signal.

Viserys has his foot on the neck of one of the other men. His name escapes Dany. “Kill her,” Viserys says with a dismissive shrug of his shoulders. “I can save myself the trouble. I’m not allowing a single northerner to leave here alive.”

The woman pleads for mercy and Locke shuts her up. “She’s pregnant, you cunt!” he yells like that’s supposed to mean something to Viserys.

“Two for the price of one,” Viserys laughs. He lifts his foot to allow the man beneath him to gasp for air.

As much as Daenerys tries to act unaffected, she can’t stand by while a pregnant woman is murdered for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

“We’ll take the woman with us,” Daenerys says, scaring the crap out of Locke.

His bulged eyes skit in her direction and he aims his gun at her. But Locke can’t make the shot without fully exposing himself. He makes the wise decision and takes his gun off her.

“Take her with us?” Viserys asks. “For what reason?” The man on the floor tries to squirm away and Viserys returns his foot to his neck without so much as a glance.

“She won’t be able to tell anyone about us being here. Then when we have Jon we can let her go.”

Viserys looks at Missandei. “Very well.” He nods.

Missandei looks up at Daenerys, giving her the signal. Daenerys shoots the hanging rack of alcohol behind the bar. As liquor and glass fall, Locke makes the careless mistake of turning his full attention to Daenerys. Effortlessly, Missandei jumps behind the bar, knees Locke in the face and subdues him. The pregnant woman tries to run out the back door but Daenerys stops her.

“Don’t be stupid,” she tells the woman.

“Now the real fun can begin,” Viserys says, removing his blazer and draping it over a fallen chair. “Who wants to go first?” He rolls up his sleeves.

Missandei drags Locke from behind the bar by his shirt. She deposits him in front of Viserys.

“Fuck you, you southern cunt!” Locke shouts. “You won’t be getting a damn thing out of me!”

Viserys claps. “We have a winner!”
The pregnant woman sits in the booth lining the wall and Daenerys sits across from her, pointing the gun at her protruding belly. She won’t shoot her but she won’t let her escape either.

While Viserys interrogates Locke, Missandei sits on the other man as though he were a lounge chair. Before they left Dragonstone, Daenerys made Missandei swear to never keep anything from her ever again, to never betray her. And Missandei swore on her life to keep her word. That was all it took for Daenerys to open herself to Missandei again. But she doesn’t know how to tell Missandei or anyone what she confessed to Dread. Confessing to a dying man is nothing. What matters most is what Jon will think about it. Can he still be with her despite them being related to one another?

Daenerys can’t believe she’s fine with it. She wouldn’t say she’s fine with it. She just doesn’t hate the idea nearly as much as she should. Learning about her parents nearly broke her, and initially learning the truth about Jon did break her.

She fainted after hearing the news. But while she slept, she dreamed of Jon. Dreamed of all the perfect moments between them and she couldn’t deny her feelings or ignore the way her clit throbs every time she thinks of him.

“L-last Hearth! Last Hearth!” Locke cries out with a lisp he didn’t have moments ago. His two front teeth have been yanked out with pliers. Saliva and blood spill down his chin. “Ramsay Bolton and the Umbers have him!”

Viserys calls Rhaegar and relays the information. His fun doesn’t end there, however. He resumes the task of removing Locke’s teeth one by one. The other man has already passed out. He’s a fool if he thinks unconsciousness will save him. When it's all over, he’ll die screaming just like Dread did.

On foot, it would’ve taken them a full day to travel through the catacombs so they rode motorcycles, only stopping to make sure they were on the right path north. Some of the main tunnels were blocked off, causing more delays than they would’ve liked. But they managed to get deep into northern territory undetected. By the time they reached the surface, it was nearing dawn. Now it's hours past daybreak.

It’s been ages since Rhaegar has been out in the field. If he recalls correctly, the last time he dirtied his own hands was when Viserys was attacked by one of the Faceless Men during his earlier years in Braavos. Their foreign competitors wanted to do away with his little brother. But they underestimated Viserys’s paranoia. Long story short, the attempt on his brother’s life was a complete and utter failure. Viserys fed the assassin to the sharks he keeps at his villa. Then Rhaegar personally delivered a message to their competitors.

They never bothered his brother again, is all he’ll say on the matter. That was six years ago. Long enough for him to get rusty.

Luckily for Rhaegar, there’s plenty of fodder for him to warm up with. He and Lyanna have split up in the woods surrounding Last Hearth; they work best when they’re not worrying about the other. They’ve been making their rounds, stealthily dispatching the guards as they make their way closer to where Jon is being held.

Rhaegar can only imagine how terrifying he looks dressed in all black from head to toe with only his eyes showing. Every man he’s killed has died with recognition on their faces. They realize who he is after it’s too late. He’s snapped so many necks he can still hear bones breaking even as he’s crouched
behind a tree waiting for his next victims to draw near. He’s forgotten how much he enjoys being out here. It’s not the killing he particularly fancies rather the adrenaline.

“Fuckers aïn’t picking up on the radio,” one of the men says to the other two. “Think it’s time we alerted Ramsa-“

Rhaegar attacks all three from behind. He disarms the first man, and stabs him in the jugular with a hunting knife he picked up off a man he killed earlier. Before the body can drop, he slices the wrist of another, preventing them from firing their handgun. The third man actually tries to make a run for it. Rhaegar flings the knife at the back of his head, instantly killing him.

Behind him a gun cocks. Damn it. He has gotten rusty. A fourth man managed to sneak up on him.

“He was always a coward,” the man says in regard to his fallen comrade. He presses the cool steel to the base of Rhaegar’s skull. “Real fucking stupid of you to come out to these woods with no gun.”

Rhaegar catches the faint sound of leaves crunching. He smiles. “My wife is carrying the guns.”

“I’m better with them,” Lyanna says. She shoots the man before he can turn around. The gunshot is muffled by the silencer.

“I wouldn’t say you’re better with them,” Rhaegar says. ”I was taught how to shoot long before you were.”

Lyanna adjusts the strap of the assault rifle on her shoulder. “You called me your wife.”

“Old habits die hard.” He definitely did that on purpose and Lyanna knows it.

She flips him off. He isn’t bothered by it in the slightest. It’s Lyanna’s way of flirting. She’s just a softie on the inside and profanity and crudeness are her defense mechanisms. Rhaegar used to say the sappiest things just to tick her off.

The man Rhaegar forgot to kill makes himself known at that moment. “Shit, I thought he was dead.” Gods he’s making amateur mistakes.

Lyanna finishes the man off. “He is now.” She hands the gun to Rhaegar. “I think you’ve proven that you are not the man you once was. Now take the damn gun.”

Reluctantly, Rhaegar takes the damn gun.

They continue moving forward. No one has been alerted to their presence yet. The problem with the northerners is their aversion to modern technology. No one would ever get this close to Dragonstone without him knowing. It’s a wonder the northern territory has survived this long. Probably because they’re too stubborn to die.

“You hear that?” Lyanna asks.

Rhaegar nods. They share a glance then they move in opposite directions. Lyanna takes cover behind a tree and Rhaegar a large boulder. Since he has enough room to peek and still remain hidden he checks for any incoming threats.

There are none.

Straining his ears, Rhaegar can hear what sounds like flesh being torn. He signals to Lyanna to stand down.
“An animal is feeding,” he says, “We should go around to avoid disturbing its meal.”

“You and those supersonic ears of yours,” Lyanna jokes. “I see you haven’t completely lost your edge.”

“My ears are my best asset.”

Lyanna stares at his arms. “I disagree.” She looks away quickly, looking ahead. “Last Hearth is about a mile or so up ahead. We need to keep moving.”

Rhaegar files the moment away for later and considers it a small victory. Lyanna still finds him attractive. Those secret pilate sessions have paid off. And Arthur had the nerve to tell him that only housewives and grandmothers did pilates.

They cover a lot of ground without any interruptions. Soon they can make out the gates of Last Hearth. The Umber’s ancestral home looks like a lego set compared to Dragonstone or even Winterfell. He’s about to suggest they split up again when he hears something running in their direction.

“I believe the animal has picked up on our scents,” Rhaegar says. Whatever it is, it’s huge. And fast. “We need to hi-”

The beast arrives before he can finish his sentence. Rhaegar raises his gun, and Lyanna stills his hand.

“Don’t shoot.” She laughs. “Seven hells, Ghost. How’d you get all the way up here?”

The massive creature wags its tail and gallops up to Lyanna, it’s snout and white fur covered in blood that isn’t it’s own.

“Friend of yours?” Rhaegar asks.

“He belongs to Jon.” Lyanna kneels on the ground and hugs Ghost’s neck tight. “I bet he came up here for him. Ghost and his siblings are more loyal than some of the people I know.”

“Aren’t all dogs...or wolves like that?”

“Not in the same way as this litter. If Ghost is lurking around here that means Jon’s still in there.” Lyanna rubs the dog behind the ears one last time. “Looks like we have backup now.”

“The more the merrier,” Rhaegar says. He notices how the dog stares at him with those red eyes that are far too human-like. It’s as if the dog can see right through him. Unsettled, he averts his gaze. “I’ll take the back. Do you think you and Ghost can handle the front?”

Ghost’s body shifts into an attack stance, and Lyanna grins. “I think we can manage just fine.”

Of course, they can. It’s Rhaegar who’s out here acting like a green boy. Despite knowing Lyanna is capable of handling herself he still worries. Gerold was strong and smart. Yet he was slain by an upstart. His mother died doing something she’d accomplished twice already. And his father, who was once the most powerful man in the city, was killed with a letter opener.

Death doesn’t care who a person is or how capable they are. It takes, and it takes, and it takes...

“Rhaegar,” Lyanna says, “we’re going to bring our son home.”

Home. The emphasis on that word doesn’t escape him. Lyanna intends to return to Dragonstone with
him, for good. And why wouldn't she? Without her family, there's nothing left for her in the north. The promise gives him the motivation and focus he needs.

“I’ll see you later then.”

I love you, is what he wants to say. But what’s the point in telling her something she already knows. She hates it when he does that.

“Sometimes I wish Robert knew just so I could throw it in his face!”

“The seed is strong, Lyanna. Stark eyes and hair aren’t even enough to hide it. Robert probably already knows. Let’s hope he’s too proud to call attention to it.”

“You look just like him.”

“Who?”

“Your father.”

“Mother, does father like to fence too?”

“Yes. I beat him once.”

“Really?!”

“But you should never mention that to him, Jon. Please, don’t let him know I told you.”

"Can you keep a secret for mommy?"

“I once heard a very interesting story about your mother...”

"Did you know that? Did you know that the great war was all because your whore mother couldn’t keep her legs closed?"

“How can you even want me knowing what I am?!”

“Live in the moment. I’m fine with that.”

Out of all the scattered memories, that’s the one Jon clings to. Thoughts of Dany are the only thing keeping him whole right now, keeping him somewhat sane. Nothing else makes sense to him. He’s lost the ability to differentiate between his dreams and his reality. In between Ramsay’s visits, he even had conversations with his uncle Ned.
His head, rather.

They talked about things they’ve never discussed while the man was living: family secrets, bad decisions, and regrets. Jon finally got the chance to ask his uncle why he always kept him at a distance. That question conjured a string of memories he thought he’d long suppressed as a child. But being here at the mercy of this sadist has left his mind vulnerable.

“Dany,” Jon mutters, hoping to see her face or hear her voice again. She always appears whenever he calls out to her.

“You have to come back to me, Jon,” Daenerys says, her voice as warm and as sweet as he remembered. It feels so real. “You promised to keep me safe. You can’t do that if you’re dead.”

“But I already failed you.”

“It’s not too late.” The fantasy of Daenerys cups his face and kisses him tenderly. “Do whatever you must.” She tells him before she fades away.

Whatever he must.

Opening his eyes, Jon avoids looking at his uncle’s head again. He’ll never rid himself of the image no matter what. Testing the chains around his wrists, he tries to determine if he’ll have enough room to slip his hand out if he simply breaks it. But if he breaks one hand, he won’t be able to remove the chains from his other hand or his feet. The chains are thick and new so he can’t break free, either.

Ramsay turned out to be a whole lot smarter than he looks.

Jon hears the latch on the door being lifted, and he pretends to sleep. The door opens and he can hear running and yelling echoing in the distance.

“The damn Starks just won’t die,” Ramsay is saying to someone out in the hall. “First Robb and Benjen Stark managed to survive the car bomb, now we have to deal with whoever took out all of our men in the woods. Take him to the Dreadfort. I’ll meet you there!”

Robb and Benjen are alive! Jon nearly cries in relief.

“Are you going to stay and fight the intruders?” The subordinate asks.

“I’m going to Winterfell to warn my father!”

Coward, Jon thinks.

Ramsay is going to tuck tail and run. He’s fine with torturing people when they’re subdued but when it comes to a brawl he’s useless. It’s just as Jon said. Talkers. They’re the first to fall every time. The door closes again. Jon doesn’t risk opening his eyes to determine if anyone has entered or not.

He patiently waits.

“Pussy,” the man who was talking to Ramsay whispers to himself. “He talks a big game but he pussy outs every time.” He unlocks the chains at Jon’s feet first and then moves to his hands.

Once both hands are free, Jon makes his move. His body is weak so he fights with what’s left of him. Snarling, he bites the man’s ear, his teeth digging into the flesh. A chunk of the earlobe is torn clean off. Spitting it in the man’s face, Jon wraps his hands around the man’s meaty neck. They both fall to the ground. The man punches Jon in his ribs. Ramsay electrocuted him in that same spot so
many times the nerves are probably fried. Jon doesn’t feel shit.

Choking is taking too long. So, Jon reaches for the chains. Wrapping them around his fist, he beats the man’s face in, hitting him repeatedly until his hands are drenched in blood. Even then he doesn’t stop. Ramsay is the person he wants but the coward ran.

This cunt will have to do for now.

Jon only stops when his breathing is labored and his own fists are bleeding, bruised and swollen, possibly broken. Falling over to the side, he lets go of the chains. Being strung up like that for hours has left him weak. He manages to take the muzzle off with one hand, but even that’s a task. He has to catch his breath. Eventually, he struggles to his feet. The first time, he falls back down, hitting the cement hard. The room spins above him, and his stomach turns. After throwing up a little, Jon stands up again then rushes to the door.

Abruptly, he stops. He can’t leave his uncle here.

Jon returns the rotting head to the garbage bag. What the Boltons and the Umbers did to his uncle, what they did to his family, will never be forgiven nor forgotten. The north will remember, and one day winter will come for every last one of them.

With effort, he makes his way out of the cell and up the short staircase at the end of the hall. It leads him to a longer, dimly lit corridor that’s riddled with bodies. That’s when he remembers that Ramsay’s man mentioned something about intruders. Using the wall to support his weight, Jon heads for the door at the end, hoping it leads outside.

“Jon?”

Sharply, Jon turns around to see a man wearing a black mask approaching him. He bends his knees, ready to kill the man the first chance he gets.

“It’s okay, Jon. Everything is okay now. We’re here.” The man takes off his mask, revealing a head of silver hair.

Jon doesn’t know why he’s so happy to see Rhaegar yet he is.

“What’s...what’s in the bag, Jon?” Rhaegar asks as he takes carefully measured steps toward Jon. It’s as if he’s approaching an injured animal.

“I-I couldn’t leave him,” Jon croaks. His eyes begin to water. “I couldn’t leave my uncle in there all alone…”

Rhaegar swallows hard. “It’s okay now. You can give him to me. I’ll make sure he gets a proper burial. You have my word.”

For all Jon knows this is just another dream. Why else would Rhaegar Targaryen be here? To save him? That doesn’t make any sense, therefore, it has to be a dream. Despite thinking this, Jon hands the bag over. He doesn’t want to carry the burden of its contents anymore and he trusts that Rhaegar will keep his word.

“Your mother has secured transportation for us. We need to leave before their backup arrives.”

Jon closes his eyes and leans his head against the wall. His mother is here? Of course, she is. She wouldn’t abandon him. Ever.
Body growing heavy, he slides down the wall. “And my father?” he asks, fighting off his exhaustion. “Is my father here, too?”

Rhaegar puts Jon’s arm over his shoulder and helps him the rest of the way. “Yes, Jon, Your father is here,” he says. “You can rest now. I’ve got you.”

Jon allows his body to rest.

Arthur and Rhaegar carry Jon up the stairs into one of the guest rooms, the Maester, and Lyanna right behind them.

Daenerys keeps her distance. She tells herself that it’s enough that he has been returned safely. She doesn’t want to get in the way, either. What will her tears do for him, anyway? The maester is there and Jon has his mother...and his father watching over him. He doesn’t need her.

Ghost doesn’t appear to agree. The dog nudges her up the stairs. Every time Daenerys hesitates, he whines. For his sake - and only his - she goes to where they’re keeping Jon. But she remains in the hallway, and that seems to be good enough for Ghost. As quiet as his namesake, Ghost pads into the room and lays at the foot of the bed.

Daenerys covers her mouth when she catches a glimpse of the cuts and burns on Jon’s body, and how abnormally large his right hand is. After cleaning Jon, the Maester applies a special ointment to his wounds and bandages him. Then he has to drain the blood from Jon's hand to decrease the swelling and reset his broken fingers. The entire process is excruciating. Worst of all is Jon's screams.

His mother, Lyanna, cries in only a way a mother can. After everything Daenerys has heard about the woman, she honestly didn’t expect to see this side of her. Rhaegar comforts her, and Daenerys is envious of the palpable love between them. Whatever there was between Jon and her will never be the same once he learns the truth. They'll never have what her brother and Lyanna have.

She hates herself for worrying about something like then when Jon is in so much pain. She wishes she could transfer his pain to herself. That's how much she cares for him.

With Rhaegar’s help, the Maester has Jon drink what the old man refers to as broth. It actually tastes like liquid death. But it’ll give Jon the nutrients he needs in order to heal. As she’s already pointed out, Jon doesn’t need anything from her. Yet she lingers there in the shadowy hallway.

“With time and proper care, he'll recover, the Maester says. "The boy is strong, Master Rhaegar."

That’s all Rhaegar needs to hear before he leaves with Arthur to prepare for the coming storm. They entered the northern territory during a lockdown and took one of the Bolton’s keys to maintaining Winterfell; Jon. There’ll be a price to pay, and her family is willing to pay it.

Once the Maester leaves, Lyanna and Ghost are the only ones left in the room with Jon. Daenerys decides it’s time for her to leave, as well. Down in the bunker, Viserys is gathering more intel from Locke; the man was down to six teeth, four fingers, and one eye last time she saw him. Perhaps she’ll go see what else he’s lost.

“Dany…” Jon whispers.

Daenerys's heart lurches in her chest. Even in his sleep, Jon is thinking of her. She moves toward the door, desperate to be by his side.
“You don’t have to hide out there,” Lyanna says, keeping her eyes on her son. “You can come in, Daenerys.”

It’s strange hearing the woman say her name. They barely know one another. The first time they were in the same room together, Daenerys had a mental breakdown and collapsed. Not the best first impression. But to decline would be rude.

Daenerys still keeps her distance, though. She stands opposite to where Lyanna is sitting.

“I’m happy you and Rhaegar were able to retrieve him,” she says. Happy doesn’t even come close to how she feels knowing Jon is alive.

Lyanna looks at her. “You’re very beautiful, Daenerys. Rhaegar always talked about you during your mother’s pregnancy.”

Interested in hearing more, Daenerys inches closer to the bed. “Thank you. You and Rhaegar were…."

“Married.”

“And that’s what started the war.” Everything was starting to make sense now. “Does Jon know yet?”

“No. Not yet.” Lyanna lowers her head in shame. She fidgets with her shirt. Daenerys knows emotional trauma when she sees it. It comes in all shapes, sizes, and nervous quirks. “When Rhaegar found him...Jon was delirious. We couldn’t just unload everything on him.”

“I understand.”

“I’m sorry you found out the way you did,” she says, honest and sincere.

“It’s not your fault. It isn’t anyone’s fault. I was going to find out either way.” She can no longer resist. She kneels beside the bed and clasps Jon's uninjured hand. “Your son means a great deal to me. He...he helped me through a tough period…”

“Do you love him?”

The question startles Daenerys. She wasn’t expecting the bluntness. Then again, she has to remember who she’s talking to. “Jon is my nephew. Naturally, I care for him-”

Lyanna sighs, “You can be honest with me, Daenerys. I know you don’t know me from a telephone pole but if we’re to be family, I need you to learn to trust me.”

“I do,” Daenerys confesses quietly, her voice barely above a whisper. “I do love him.”

The silence the follows is suffocating. Daenerys drops Jon’s hand and moves to leave. “I shouldn’t be here,” she says, afraid to see the look of disgust on Lyanna’s face.

“If you truly love my son then you have every right to be here.” Lyanna gets up from the chair. “I had my time with him during the ride here. Tell you what, you can have the first watch. Then I’ll come to relieve you.”

Daenerys stares at the woman with wide eyes. “You want me to stay with him? Even though…”

“It wasn’t my name he was murmuring in his sleep. Right now, Jon wants you here. I don’t know if he’ll feel the same once he learns the truth. Jon is my son but he’s always been his own person. I
can't make him do anything and I won't even try. It's out of my hands."

“Thank you...Ms.Lyanna?”

Lyanna heads for the door. “Hell no. That makes me sound old as shit. Just Lyanna is fine.”

Daenerys smiles at the woman’s retreating form. She’s exactly how Jon described her. Ghost lifts his head as she passes him. She supposes she has him to thank for giving her the push she needed. She’ll be sure to treat him to a nice, juicy steak later. He deserves it for being the best wingman ever.

She sits in the chair Lyanna previously sat in and watches over Jon as he sleeps. Right now, he wants her here, and this is where she’ll remain.
“There’s been a change in plans,” Roose Bolton, the current head of the northern families, says. Picking up the painted dragon piece, he moves it several tiles ahead of where it originally sat.

His bastard, Ramsay, and Harald Karstark are present. The former is silently fuming over the loss of his plaything. His fun with Jon Snow had only just begun before he was interrupted. Roose has long suspected that torturing people gives his son some sort of sexual gratification. The way he’s been obsessing over Jon Snow is akin to a new infatuation. Meanwhile, Harald is only present physically. His mind is elsewhere. Probably still lost in the memory of Robb Stark chopping his father’s head off only hours ago.

During the attack on Last Hearth, Robb Stark and a few men ambushed Rickard Karstark at his own home. There was too much going on at once that Roose decided to retreat to Winterfell until the chaos passed.

It’s a pity truly. Roose was the one to kill Ned. The Karstarks were still undecided about their involvement. But now he has their full cooperation so perhaps it isn’t a pity at all.

Continuing, Roose brushes his fingers over the dragon piece. “Rhaegar Targaryen's unforeseen involvement has confirmed what I’ve long suspected.”

“Jon Snow doesn’t know a thing about his supposed parentage,” Ramsay says. “Rhaegar could’ve intervened just to make Lyanna happy. I hear he’s the romantic, queer sort.”

“You only know what you’ve heard about Rhaegar. But I’ve fought against him. He isn’t a careless man ruled by emotions. Rhaegar would only risk a war for his own blood.”

“Jon Snow is Rhaegar’s son then?”

“The son of his enemy hidden right under his nose for all these years. Robert will be murderous when he finds out…” Roose smiles.

Suddenly, Harald throws a chair across the room, smashing it against the wall. “They killed my father!!” he screams and cries, face red and furious.

Ramsay and Roose blink, unmoved by the theatrical display.

For the sake of maintaining their alliance, Roose sends Harald out to find Robb and Benjen Stark. The hunt will prove fruitless but it’ll give the boy something to do, and in his absence, Roose will control Harald’s men.

When Harald is gone, Ramsay laughs. “He’ll never find Benjen and Robb Stark. They could be hiding in the very walls of Winterfell and we wouldn’t know.”

Roose agrees.

Their best bet is to stay on guard and wait for Benjen and Robb to come to them. Until then, there are other matters that require immediate attention.
“Take five good men and find Robert Baratheon,” Roose orders. “Bring him to me. Alive. Unharmed,” he expresses with added emphasis. “Once he learns of his wife’s deceit, he’ll join us against the southern families. We’ll need every lesser family’s cooperation.”

“Robert won’t like that you murdered his best friend.”

Roose smiles. “Rickard Karstark murdered Ned Stark. No one else was there to say otherwise.”

The first week was an absolute nightmare.

When Jon wasn’t muttering threats to an invisible enemy, he was screaming and fighting the air. Sometimes he cried in his sleep. During those moments, either Dany or Lyanna was there to wipe his tears away. A handful of times, Arthur and Rhaegar had to pin him down while the Maester administered medicine. Rhaegar worried that Jon was permanently unhinged from his short time with the Boltons which is a justifiable concern. Whenever Rhaegar describes how Jon was when he found him, there’s always a distant yet fearful look in his eyes.

However, the Maester believes Jon is so hungry for revenge that he isn’t allowing himself to heal properly. Thankfully, the medicine helps him sleep, and that’s a sure way to a speedy recovery. They try to keep him on the meds as much as possible.

By the second day, Daenerys’s and Lyanna’s shift-taking system collapsed. They watched over Jon together, both unable to rest while he was suffering. Rhaegar dropped in at least three times a day to see how they were faring. He made sure they both ate, and while they went to do so he sat with Jon. Sometimes Arthur joined him.

One night, Daenerys walked in on her brother quietly singing a lullaby he used to sing to her and Missandei every night. Back when she believed her brother was the kindest man in the entire world. Hearing his melodic voice reminded her of that time, and it filled her with a happiness she hadn’t experienced ever since Jon was taken and returned.

Her happiness was short-lived, unfortunately. Not long after Rhaegar finished his song Jon woke up screaming and fighting. She wasn’t allowed to get too close to him whenever that happened. He nearly hit her one time. Daenerys knows Jon isn’t attacking her; he isn’t attacking any of them. The person Jon wants to hurt is the person who hurt him.

Truthfully, the entire ordeal wasn’t filled with sorrow.

Daenerys got the chance to actually sit and talk with Lyanna, the woman who captured her older brother’s heart, the woman who started a war. Helen of Troy incarnate.

Lyanna told Daenerys the story of how she and Rhaegar met and recounted their love affair all the way until the painful end. Well, it never ended. Not truly. Dany can see that in the way Lyanna and Rhaegar interact with one another. She can see it in the way Rhaegar cares for Jon, the son he wasn’t aware of until fairly recently. She thinks it’s his deep love for Lyanna that allows him to accept Jon so easily.

Daenerys also learned about Jon’s childhood and his troubled years in high school. Each tale consisted of varying degrees of Jon’s character. He was never cruel, never an instigator or a bully. He never started trouble but if he had to, he’d finish it. She almost wishes Rhaegar and Lyanna raised Jon together. From the stories Lyanna shared, Jon, was a quiet, lonely, child despite having a younger brother, cousins, and a mother who adored him. Had Jon known his true father perhaps he wouldn’t have felt so alone.
Her desire for that altered reality is always tarnished by her own selfishness. The chances of them being together now are already slim. If they had grown up together, raised with the knowledge of their blood relation, there was no way they’d ever be together romantically.

At least with the way things are there’s a chance. Daenerys feels disgusting every time she has a thought like that.

The second week is about the same as the first.

Except, Jon no longer wakes up screaming in his sleep. He rests peacefully now, only waking at random, short intervals. Long enough for a spoonful of broth and medicine. Dany and Lyanna take turns administering both.

With the growing tensions between the northern and southern territories, Rhaegar has every available person alternating parole routes. Still, Missandei visits with her whenever she can. Even Grey Worm has popped in a couple of times. Ghost seems to dislike the mansion so he roams the woods, occasionally returning for nuzzles and treats, and to see if Jon is awake.

The only person who hasn’t bothered to see about Jon is Viserys and Daenerys never expected him to.

Viserys hates sickness in any form. He loathes weakness, frailty. He hates it in others and he hates it in himself.

It isn’t until Thursday mid-afternoon that Viserys emerges from the bunker and pays his nephew a visit. Lyanna and Rhaegar are out shopping. After his endless pestering, Lyanna finally agreed to allow Rhaegar to get her clothes, a new phone that actually operates as a phone and not a walkie-talkie, and some things for Jon.

Daenerys is anxious to know what Jon will make of all this. She supposes she’ll just have to wait.

“The more I look at him the more he looks like Rhaegar,” Viserys says, lingering in the doorway. “Do you think you subconsciously saw our brother in Jon and that’s why you fell for him?”

Daenerys has wondered the same. Rhaegar has always been an example of the ideal man. Naturally, she would want to be with a man with similar characteristics.

“Perhaps.” Daenerys fixes her hair and smooths down her dress to make herself presentable. Only the gods know how unkempt she looks. “How is our friend, Locke?”

Leaning on the door’s threshold, Viserys folds his arms and pouts. “He died this morning. That’s why I’m here. I’m bored.” He looks at Jon thoughtfully. “He’s strong. I can tell.”

For some reason, hearing that fills Daenerys with pride. It’s the closest thing to approval anyone could hope to receive from Viserys. And even though Jon is no longer her boyfriend it makes her happy to know her brother approves.

“The Maester said he should be able to walk around by Saturday.” Daenerys thinks it’ll be sooner than that. Jon looks healthy again already. “I want to show him the gardens.”

Viserys yawns. “You need to train, Dany. You’ve been withering away up here, watching over someone who won’t benefit from your tears or your prayers.”

“I don’t pray anymore.”
“Good. I always told you it was a waste.” He chuckles. “Just like enrolling you and Missandei in university.”

Daenerys forgot they were even enrolled. She forgot that was something she used to want badly. She might as well drop out. Missandei too.

“Come, Dany. It’s time for you to learn how to fight. What good can you do by sitting around, anyway?”

“Have you ever been in love, Viserys?” she asks, staring at Jon’s placid face.

“Yes.”

Startled, Daenerys looks at her brother. “Who was she? What was she like?” She wants to know the kind of woman capable of capturing Viserys’s attention.

“Whoever said it was a woman?” Viserys scrunches his nose as he turns away. “Once Rhaegar and his woman have returned. We’ll begin your training.” He disappears down the dim corridor.

Daenerys smiles to herself. She doubts even Rhaegar knows that about their enigmatic brother.

She brushes a stubborn curl away from Jon’s face. “That’s the first time Viserys has ever shared details of his personal life with me. I know it was very small but it’s still something to celebrate. I want to know more about the one that got away but I doubt Viserys will go into detail…”

Whenever it’s only her here, she likes to talk to Jon about any and everything. Of course, it’s always a one-sided conversation. Still, it helps her cope. Not just with Jon’s current state, but with everything in general.

It’s also easy to speak freely with an unconscious person.

As it turns out, Jon can hear plenty.

His eyes may be closed but that doesn’t always mean he’s asleep. Sometimes it’s as if he’s trapped in sleep purgatory, straddling the line between conscious and unconsciousness. He can hear voices yet it’s not always easy to distinguish them from one another. He only knows that whenever he does open his eyes the same three people are always there; his mother, Dany, and Rhaegar.

Most of what he’d heard over the past few days is forgotten, but the important things remain.

His mother loves him.

Dany loves him.

Rhaegar Targaryen is his biological father.

None of the voices he’s heard has explicitly confirmed the last fact but Jon has had enough time to sort through the buzz in his mind to draw his own conclusions. All of the memories from his childhood make sense now. He understands now why his mother never seemed happy no matter what he tried or why his Uncle Ned kept him at a distance. He always thought it was because of something he’d done. But it would appear the only thing he was guilty of was being born.

Jon supposes a part of him has always known. Not that Rhaegar was his father, but that Robert wasn’t his father. The only time he ever felt connected to Robert was when he was angry. They rarely saw eye to eye, never had a bonding moment or a time where they actually sat down and
talked to one another like human beings. When he was a boy his father… no, Robert tried to build a relationship with him.

Instead of taking Jon to the park to toss a ball around or taking him on a fishing trip, he put a gun in Jon’s hand and taught him how to shoot. Jon was eleven at the time. Back then, he hated the very idea of violence. So, he hated his father for taking him to that gun range. When his mother found out she was pissed.

“He’s my son!” Robert had shouted that day with his fist balled and his eyes bulged. “If I want to teach him how to be strong, I have the right!”

His mother looked like she wanted to blurt it out then. Now that he’s reminiscing on that moment, he can see it all over her face. “But he’s not your son!” That’s what she so badly wanted to scream. But she couldn’t.

She couldn’t risk Robert’s wrath. Jon understands that. Robert loathes Rhaegar. He would kill anyone related or affiliated with the man without a second thought. It upsets him that she kept this from him, but he can at least recognize why she did it.

Doesn’t give her a pass, though. Not by a long shot. Jon isn’t angry. He’s fucking pissed because he doubts his mother ever planned on telling him. She was going to keep him in the dark, allowing him to wander aimlessly in search of answers for why he’s never felt at home in a place he grew up in or why his proxy father sometimes looks at him as if he doesn’t recognize him.

Jon thinks Robert knows the truth or at least suspects it.

Did Rhaegar know? Is that why he seemed genuinely interested in getting to know him? Foolish of Jon to think someone like Rhaegar Targaryen could be interested in a worthless foot-soldier.

Did Dany know? The thought of her, the thought of what they did...Jon tries not to think about it. He’s barely holding on as it is. Once he faces that ugly truth, so long to his sanity. But he doubts Dany knew who he was. She couldn’t have. The way she reacted to her parents’ sibling relation is telling enough.

What about Gendry? His poor little brother will be devastated to learn the truth. He’s always expressed how fortunate he is to be related to someone like Jon. To have proof that he won’t turn out like his father, proof that his blood isn’t fully tainted.

Did his mother ever consider how this would affect Gendry? Or anyone else?

She should’ve just aborted him.

That’s his rage and disappointment talking. And also his fear. How can he ever face Dany again, knowing what he knows? He’ll never look at her the same. She’ll never look at him the same. Whatever they had is gone. And that’s what angers him the most.

Someone is singing to him again. Their singing quiets the thrum of voices in his head. Like a siren’s call the voice summons him out of his faux slumber. Blinking slowly, Jon adjusts his eyes to his surroundings. His view is blurred and distorted. Eventually, he recognizes that the ceiling and walls belong to the room he’s been confined in.

The singing stops. A face comes into view. Wide, violet eyes meet his. The relief swirling in those eyes confuses him until he remembers that this is one of the proper reactions from a father whose son has been unconscious for a majority of his recovery time. Without any warning or hesitance, Rhaegar
touched his forehead and instead of recoiling from the touch as his mind tells him to do, he doesn’t move an inch.

“Your fever has gone down,” Rhaegar whispers delicately as if he’s speaking to an infant. “When your fever returned earlier we feared your wounds were infected again. But you appear to be fine…”

Rhaegar’s face moves away and Jon panics a little. Then he mentally scolds himself for reacting that way. He’s supposed to be pissed beyond belief, not craving this man’s attention.

Is his desperation for acceptance truly enough to cloud his justifiable anger?

“Here,” Rhaegar says, propping Jon’s head with one hand while bringing a cup up to his lips with the other. “It’s water. Drink,” he commands gently.

The taste is god awful but it’s refreshing. Rhaegar keeps him from drinking too fast and wipes his chin after he’s done. He helps Jon sit up against the headboard, as well.

“The Maester said you should be up and walking by tomorrow but I think you’re good to go now,” Rhaegar says.

Jon thinks the same. Aside from his hand, he doesn’t appear to have any major, physical injuries. His mind is another situation entirely.

Rhaegar continues talking, “Your mother is downstairs taking part in Daenerys’s training.” He frowns. Either he disapproves or he isn’t completely comfortable with it.

“Dany’s training now?” he croaks, his voice hoarse and raspy. “Why?”

“A lot has happened in the time you’ve been incapacitated.”

“Mind filling me in?” He isn’t ready to see his mother just yet. Or Dany. He doesn’t really care to see anyone right now but he needs to know what he missed.

“Do you remember being captured by Roose Bolton’s men?” The hatred in Jon’s eyes says enough. “Your uncles Ned and Benjen, your cousin Robb, they are among the first casualties of the northern conflict. I’m very sorry, Jon.”

Jon shakes his head. “Robb and Benjen survived the hit on them.” He doesn’t bother confirming Uncle Ned’s death. He can still see the man’s head. “We need to figure out where they’re hiding.”

“If what you say is true then I just figured out who ambushed Rickard Karstark’s men and beheaded him. Talk about poetic justice,” he mumbles.

Jon was thinking the exact same thing. Fuck. But talking about the northern conflict gives him the distraction he needs.

“Viserys has hired The Spider to keep us updated on our enemy’s movement. We suspect Roose Bolton is trying to gather allies.”

“Our enemies?” Jon lets out a noise that’s supposed to sound like a sarcastic chuckle but instead sounds like dry leaves rattling in the wind. “Forgive me if I’m wrong, but this is a northern issue. You’re the head of a southern family. It’s not your place to get involved.” He’s just goading the man now. Despite wanting to avoid the topic of his parentage, he can’t resist himself.

Rhaegar’s nostrils flare. It’s the only visible sign of irritation. “Roose Bolton disrupted the chain of
command. He spat on tradition and honor. Without our laws, we’re no better than rabid dogs.”

“But you didn’t send any of your subordinates to Last Hearth. You came yourself.”

“I wasn’t going to allow Lyanna to go alone. My men won't follow her even if I ordered it.”

Another half-assed excuse.

Jon lets out another dry chuckle. He hopes it sounds as malicious as he feels. “I suppose I should feel lucky that The Rhaegar Targaryen went all the way up north just to save me.”

Rhaegar’s eyebrows pinch, his lips tighten, and Jon expects him to lash out, to reveal his true nature so he can have a reason to hate him.

“You know,” is all Rhaegar says.

Nodding, Jon closes his eyes and tilts his head back. He feels a little dizzy. Probably because he worked himself up. “There have been hints all of my life, and Ramsay told me the story of how the last war really started. Then you were at Last Hearth with my mother. That pretty much confirmed it.”

“Jon, I-“

“Did you know all this time?” Because if he knew, that would make him a neglectful, asshat of a father.

Rhaegar puts his face in his hands and sighs. “No,” he says, his voice muffled. “Not until I stole a strand of your hair and had the Maester conduct a paternity test. I received the results the morning you were taken.”

“And Dany...does she know?”

“She found out after you were taken. She...she’s been dealing with everything best she can.”

It’s then that Jon recalls something Ramsay told him. “When Roose’s men took me, they...did they...hurt Dany?”

“They never got the chance. Missandei and Grey Worm arrived in time, thankfully. Had they not taken you, I would’ve still had cause for revenge.”

Jon is relieved to hear that Dany was saved. He would’ve never forgiven himself otherwise. “I always heard you Targaryens would do anything to avenge your own,” he says.

“You’re a Targaryen too, Jon.” Rhaegar reaches out to him but he lets his hand drop. “I know I haven’t been there for you. I wish I had, but your mother had to protect you-“

“Just like you had to protect Dany. How did that turn out for you?”

“Not so well.”

“Not so well,” Jon repeats. “I don’t doubt my mother had my best interests in mind but knowing that doesn’t make me any less pissed off than I am. Dany and I...we were in love.” He still loves her but that’s irrelevant. He’ll just have to learn to love her differently, that’s all. “Did you know that?”

Rhaegar nods.
“Now you’re telling me she’s my aunt and I’m her nephew. How am I supposed to handle that?”

“Either you face the truth or it’ll end you,” Rhaegar says. “Lyanna can’t change the past, no one can. She did what she thought was best and because of her silent suffering, you’re still breathing. Be upset with her, be upset with me. It doesn’t matter because at the end of the day, you’re my son. And I won’t stop until every last Bolton, Umber, and Karstark is eradicated. You can either join me or you can go wallow in self-pity elsewhere. Your choice.”

The tension in Jon’s body relaxes as Rhaegar’s words wash over him. As much as he hates to admit it, the man has a point. He can either be mad about something he can’t change or he can deal with it over time and focus on what’s more important. Some things are better off suppressed and dealt with later.

A usurper has stolen his family’s birthright, murdered his uncle, and denied him a proper, northern burial. Roose Bolton scattered their pack to the winds, leaving them helpless. Something like that can’t go unpunished, and he has someone, someone powerful willing to help him get revenge. Jon won’t do it for himself. He never wanted Winterfell, and as it turns out, he never had a true claim to it. He’ll do it for his uncles, his cousins, and his mother. He’ll do it for his family.

“What else has The Spider told Viserys?” Jon asks, his decision made.

Rhaegar smiles proudly.

“Our son has informed me that he doesn’t want to see anyone for the remainder of the day,” Rhaegar says. “Except for the Maester.”

The sudden news distracts Daenerys and she pays for it. Missandei puts her in a headlock and holds her there until Viserys orders her to stop. They’ve been going at it all morning, and the better part of the afternoon. Earlier, she sparred with Lyanna. Well, she got her ass kicked by Lyanna like she’s been getting her ass kicked by everyone. Per Viserys’s orders, they all avoid her face. For that, Daenerys is grateful.

Lyanna doesn’t take the news well. She turns toward the door of the fitness room more than likely prepared to storm to the mansion, through the front door, and up the stairs to where Jon is staying.

“He knows, Lyanna.”

“You told him? How dare-”

Rhaegar sighs, “He figured it out on his own. Apparently, you haven’t been as secretive in the past as you’d like to think. If he was able to put the pieces together, I can’t imagine how Robert failed to do so.” A pause. “The man is a buffon, though. Nevermind.”

Viserys snorts.

Lyanna rolls her eyes. “We were supposed to speak with him together. I told you he’s in a delicate state right now!”

“Delicate?” Rhaegar scoffs. “He seems fine to me.”

“Because you’re such a good judge of mental stability.”
“What is that supposed to mean?”

Before the bickering can escalate, Daenerys asks, “Did Jon specifically say that he didn’t want to see anyone?” She wants to know if it’s mainly her he’s avoiding.

“He only told me that he wanted to be left alone,” Rhaegar says, not taking his eyes off of Lyanna. The two have been bickering nonstop for the past two weeks. Viserys thinks it’s nothing more than sexual tension. Daenerys agrees. She hopes they sort that out sooner rather than later. “The topic of his parentage is off limits until he’s ready to discuss it. However, Jon will be ready to discuss business as early as tomorrow.”

Lyanna shakes her head. “He’s not ready. We’re at war, Rhaegar. Jon hasn’t fully healed.”

“I said he was ready to discuss business, not be directly involved in said business.”

Daenerys tunes them out after that. Her brother has more or less confirmed what she’d already suspected would happen. Jon is going to ignore the truth for as long as he can. He’s going to ignore her. She might as well prepare herself to do the same to him.

She faces Missandei. “Let’s go another round.”

Yet again, she gets her ass handed to her. But this time around, the hits don’t hurt as much as they used to. She’s learning how to take a punch. Soon she’ll learn how to throw one. Trying to focus on evading Missandei’s swift attacks will distract her from the heartache. Hopefully, with time, she’ll be completely numb to it.

“You’re distracted, Dany,” Viserys shouts.

Then immediately afterward, Missandei is pinning her on the mat. When she asked her best friend not to go easy on her she didn’t expect her to actually listen. This is a good thing, however. She needs this tough love. Without it, she’ll remain weak and spineless forever.

Viserys squats to her level, sucking his teeth. “Missandei has killed you ten times already, sister. You won’t always have a gun or a weapon on you. I need you to be able to defend yourself.” He stands. “Again.”

They go again.

Daenerys has learned that despite her right-handedness, Missandei is ambidextrous when it comes to fighting. She doesn’t appear to have a weak side, she never leaves herself open, and she seems to know all of Daenerys’s moves long before Daenerys even thinks of them. If she wants to beat Missandei she has to stop being so predictable for starters.

That means she has to think outside of the box.

The next time Missandei lunges at her, Daenerys does something insane. She does something she’s seen Jon do. She headbutts Missandei. Her aim is off so she hits Missandei in the nose instead of the forehead. As Missandei staggers back from the random attack, Daenerys charges her, knocks her down on the mat, straddling her.

Blood drips from Missandei’s nose, and Daenerys panics. But Missandei grins at her.

“Very good, Dany,” Missandei tells her.

Daenerys looks at Viserys for approval. His eyes are nearly as wide as Rhaegar’s. Viserys is stunned
because he doubted she would be able to do something like that so early while Rhaegar is surprised that she’s capable of something like that at all. Imagine how he’ll react when he learns that she’s killed a man before. She wants to keep him in the dark about that for now.

After helping Missandei to her feet, Daenerys frets over her nose. “I hope it isn’t broken,” she says apologetically. Even though they’re sparring, hurting her best friend still makes her feel terrible. “I can go get you some ice.”

“A bloody nose is easy to accomplish, but it takes more strength to break a nose,” Missandei says. “But you’re getting there.” She wipes her nose with the back of her hand then turns to Viserys. “I think she’s ready to train with Arthur.”

Viserys turns to Rhaegar. “What do you think?”

“I think I’ve been underestimating our sister,” Rhaegar says. “Missandei is right. She’s ready to train with Arthur. But it’ll have to wait until tomorrow. I have him on an important assignment.”

Viserys knows better than to pry apparently. Because he doesn’t say another word on the matter. Daenerys assumes she’s off the hook for the rest of the day. She’d like to soak in the tub, maybe eat finally.

“Well, you two can continue sparring,” Viserys says, shattering her fantasy before it can fully manifest. “I want you to win at least three more matches before you’re allowed to rest.”

Normally, this would be the moment when Rhaegar would intervene and tell Viserys he’s being too harsh. Instead, her older brother wishes her good fortune before he leaves the gym with Lyanna.

Daenerys is a mixture of elated and frustrated. On one side, she’s glad she isn’t being treated like a fragile object anymore. On the other side, she really wishes she could take a break. However, none of her enemies will grant her a reprieve so she might as well get used to it.

“So, you have Arthur on a top-secret mission,” Lyanna says as they’re walking through the gardens. “I wonder what that could be...”

Actually, Rhaegar has Arthur carrying out two missions. The order in which the assignments are completed is of no importance. He just wants them both completed within the time frame he’s set. With the help of The Spider, he wants Arthur to find Benjen and Robb Stark, and bring them back to Dragonstone. If he’s to obtain the help of the other southern families, he needs the true heir of Winterfell to ask for his aid. It’s his damn fault for creating the stupid laws in the first place.

Initially, he thought Robert was the true heir, and there was no way in hell the bastard would ever come to him for help. So, he was going to just use his own resources to get rid of the Boltons, the Umbers, and the Karstarks.

But now that he knows Robb and Benjen are alive, he has an easier, less stressful solution. As for the other assignment, well that’s obvious.

Rhaegar wants Arthurt to find Robert and kill the man. It’s a task he would love to do on his own, but he has his hands full. He has to command his men, keep an eye on Dany’s mental state, keep Viserys on a leash, bond with Jon, and woo Lyanna. He can’t possibly squeeze an insect like Robert Baratheon into his schedule.

“I can’t tell the wife of my enemy classified information,” Rhaegar says. “What do you take me for?”
“An asshole, that’s what.”

“You say ‘asshole’ but what you truly mean is ‘the love of my life’. Remember, I own the sole copy of The Lyanna Stark dictionary.”

Lyanna nudges him in the side. “We’re immature,” she remarks, laughing. “We bicker, we taunt one another. It’s like we never aged after all this time.”

“Have you seen the crow’s feet near your eyes? You’ve definitely aged.”

“You’re no ageless beauty, neither. Do you think your silver hair hides all the grey? It doesn’t.”

Rhaegar feigns a pout. “And to think I spend so much money on touch-ups.”

They stop at the gazebo and sit underneath it, winter roses surrounding them. He brings her out here every day to make sure the bleak walls of the mansion don’t drive her mad, and because he wants her to see that he kept his promises to gift her a thousand blue roses as a wedding gift.

“Do they even have your color in the salons?” Lyanna asks. She pulls all of her hair to one side and begins braiding it. “If they did, what would the name be? Pompously Platinum?”

“Perfectly Platinum.”

“Stupid Silver.”

Rhaegar chuckles. “You’re jealous. Admit it.”

“I prefer not to attract unwanted attention everywhere I go, thank you very much.” Her smile fades, and she looks out at the roses. “I wanted Jon to have your stupid hair despite how dangerous it would’ve been.”

He knew she wouldn’t be able to keep the playful banter up for long. This situation with Jon is bothering her way more than she’s letting on.

“Lyanna, he won’t be mad forever.”

“You don’t know Jon. The boy has a temper, always has. He can hold a grudge, too. He got that from you.”

“Do you honestly believe Jon will be angry with you, the woman who’s given so much to keep him alive and healthy, forever?”

“No, but I can’t stand him being mad at me at all. We’ve never been at odds before.”

Rhaegar pulls her into his arms. Her unfinished braid comes undone. “We’ll just give him his space. We’ll focus on taking back what belongs to your family. Then we’ll work on strengthening our own.”

“As long as Robert is alive, he’ll never let us be together. He isn’t going to divorce me. He won’t rest until I’m either by his side or dead in the ground.”

“Benjen and Robb survived their attack.” She tenses, and he holds her tightly against his chest. “Jon told me. Do you understand what this means? Robert isn’t powerful enough to be a threat to anyone. He isn’t the man he used to be. Benjen hates him, your nephew Robb is nothing like his father before him. No one is standing in our way anymore.”
Lyanna is too overwhelmed with emotion to respond, but Rhaegar can tell he’s gradually getting through to her. He doesn’t understand why she seems afraid of Robert all of a sudden. The Lyanna he knew wasn’t afraid of anyone or anything. It scares him to think about all she had to endure while living under Robert’s roof.

“We have to find them,” she says. "Benjen, Robb...I need to be here. They can't be in the north. It's not safe."

“Top secret mission, remember?”

“And what about Gendry? I know he’s safe with the Martells but I miss him, Rhaegar. I need to see him.”

Rhaegar isn’t petty like Robert. He won’t hate Gendry for simply being the man’s spawn. “I’ll see that Arianne has him brought here. Viserys may not care for so many visitors, though.”

“Viserys can fuck off. I don’t complain about the bloody opera he plays all night.”

Rhaegar laughs. “See, you already sound as if you belong here with us.”

“My father is probably turning in his grave.”

“Can dust turn?”

Lyanna punches him. But he knows she’s smiling. He laughs, and she tries to move away from him. He doesn’t let her go. If she really wanted to break out of his hold, she could’ve done so without breaking a sweat.

“Let go,” Lyanna says, glaring dull daggers at him. There’s no heat in her gaze. “Or I’ll break your arms.”

Rhaegar leans close, but he keeps a sliver of space between their lips. “Does kissing still make you extremely wet or was that only with me?” he whispers.

Bright, crimson covers Lyanna’s face. “S-shut up!”

“Shut up? What are you? A third grader? You’re even blushing like a schoolgirl.” Rhaegar leans back a little. “Are you the same woman who blowed me in the theate-”

Lyanna covers his mouth. “Speak of that ever again and I will choke you. Need I remind you that I’m a married woman?”

He nips at her palm. After she drops her hand, he asks, “Need I remind you that I don’t care?” Then he kisses her briefly. “And neither do you. So, stop the pretense, Lyanna.”

Lyanna fists her hands in his shirt and jerks him forward, kissing him hard. She always kissed, fucked, and loved the same way she fights; aggressively, fiercely. While Rhaegar was always the passionate, tentative one in both his fighting style and intimacy. The first time they kissed since being reunited was the night they brought Jon home. Lyanna was inconsolable. She cried during the entire affair. But she needed a distraction and that’s all it was.

Now, it’s more of the same.

Rhaegar can tell Lyanna is only trying to distract herself. A part of her may want this as much as he does but that part is dwarfed by the part of her that’s still grieving a brother and worrying over her
“I’m sorry,” Lyanna says when the kiss ends. “I want to...it’s just…”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about. I understand. I’m a little offended you feel the need to apologize.”

“Sorry, living with a man who doesn’t like to take no for an answer is to blame.”

“Has Robert ever…?” Gods Rhaegar will call Arthur right this instance and have Robert brought back alive instead of killed on sight just so he can make his death excruciating.

It takes a second or two for Lyanna to realize what he’s inquiring about. “Never. He wouldn’t be alive if he had.”

Rhaegar cups Lyanna’s chin. “What I told you on our honeymoon applies moving forward. We will never do anything you don’t want to. All you have to do is tell me, Lyanna.”

“I know you’re nothing like Robert. I just have to get used to you again.”

“That’s fair. We have to reacquaint ourselves.” Rhaegar gathers up Lyanna’s hair, putting it all to one side, and he begins to braid it. “Shall we paint our nails and talk about boys. Will that help?”

Lyanna laughs. “You’re an ass.” She tilts her head for him. “Did you have to do your sister’s hair a lot or did you hire someone?”

“Daenerys’s hair was easy to care for. I had to learn for Missandei’s sake. Poor girl. I’m sure I don’t have to say this but, Arthur and I were not the best dads. We didn’t know shit about shit.”

“Of course not.”

“Being the Westerosi idiot that I am, I never considered how culturally unprepared I was when it came to raising a child from Naath. Then there were Daenerys’s endless questions about why she didn’t look like her friends. After trying and failing to style Missandei’s hair on my own and accurately answering Daenerys’s questions, I hired a woman from Naath to serve as their nanny...”

Lyanna is intrigued.

Perhaps regaling her with the misadventures of his and Arthur’s shit parenting can serve as a healthy distraction.

A hot meal and an even hotter bath do wonders for Daenerys. She still feels as if she was hit by an 18-wheeler but at least she can walk on her own. After her bath, she hoped to visit with Missandei before bed but from the not-so-quiet sounds coming from her best friends bedroom, Grey Worm is back from parole.

Daenerys sits on the back veranda by the pool that’s rarely used and watches the sky change from blood orange to black. By the time the stars appear, she’s yawning and nodding off. With today’s revelation, she thought she would have to resort to sleeping pills to avoid spending the night obsessing over what-ifs.

She supposes there’s nothing like a good beating to exhaust the body and mind. She feels strong though. Despite the soreness in her bones. She feels much stronger than she was when she woke up
that morning.

“Careful.”

Blinking awake, Daenerys moves away from the pool. She almost fell in it. “Thank you,” she says, glancing over at her savior. One look at them is enough to wake her fully.

Jon is dressed in black sweats and a black t-shirt, and his arm is in a sling. His face is a stark contrast against the night sky. He actually looks good for a man who was bedridden for two weeks. To her surprise, he sits down beside her. Well, not beside her. There’s a noticeable distance between them. It’s as if they’re strangers. She tries not to hyper-fixate on that. She’s just happy he’s willing to be this close to her at all.

“Long day?” Jon asks.

Daenerys looks ahead, unable to face him. “You can say that.”

“I heard you’ve been training.”

“A little bit.”

Silence blankets them. It’s difficult to determine if it’s awkward silence or not because the air is so thick and suffocating that she can’t pinpoint the exact mood. Whatever it is, it’s too much for her to bear. She wants to escape.

“Dany...”

Daenerys snorts quietly. “I told you that only my family called me that. Never knew how right I was.” Feels like there’s a jawbreaker sized lump in her throat. She swallows it downs. “I’m happy to see you’re doing better. I’m going to bed.”

“Can I walk you to your room?”

Well, that’s definitely on the list of things she never expected to come out of his mouth right now. She should decline because nothing good will come from it. He’s simply being a gentleman as always.

“Sure.” She’s a glutton for punishment apparently.

Jon isn’t familiar with Dragonstone’s many corridors, dead ends, and trick doors so Daenerys leads the way to her bedroom. Literally. She walks a couple of paces in front with him silently trailing behind. Having a silent man follow her down dark hallways should make her nervous, but Jon makes her feel safe. Even when they’re in such an uncomfortable predicament.

He’s staring at her. She can feel his gaze on her back. What is he thinking? Is he disgusted by the sight of her? Is he regretting his decision to extend an olive branch? Is this an olive branch or is Jon just being Jon?

Is he thinking about the time he was inside of her? She’s thinking about it. Gods, she needs to get away from him.

Daenerys is relieved when they stop in front of her door. Turning around, she intends to bid Jon goodnight but is startled by how close he is. Her back hits the door.

“Sorry,” Jon mutters, frowning. He steps back. “Goodnight.”
“Jon, wait.” He waits. She continues, “I know you aren’t ready to discuss...this but I just want you to know that I don’t want things to be awkward between us.” That’s the dumbest shit she’s ever said. “Scratch that. I honestly don’t know how things cannot be awkward between us.”

“I told Rhaegar that I didn’t want to see anyone today, but that wasn’t true. I wanted to see you. I did. It’s just that, I don’t know how to talk to you anymore.”

This is progress, she thinks. At least he’s willing to open up to her.

“I’m still the same person, Jon. The same Dany.”

“You’re also my aunt,” he says, not masking his disgust. It's an expression she never thought she would see aimed at her. It reminds her of how people stare at her whenever she ventures out of Dragonstone.

Daenerys blinks rapidly to keep her tears at bay. “You regret it, don’t you?” He regrets kissing her, he regrets being the first man to ever touch and feel her. He regrets loving her.

Jon looks pained. Like he wishes he could blend in with the carpet and disappear. “I should regret it considering we’re related. But you gave yourself to me. You trusted me. It’d be wrong of me to say I regret it.”

“But you do. You don’t have to say it. I can see it all over your face.”

“I don’t regret it. It was just a mistake.”

“A mistake?” Daenerys asks incredulously. “Is that all I am to you now? The aunt you mistakenly fucked that one time? Do you want to just pretend as if it never happened? Fine. It never happened. Goodnight!”

She’s so angry she’s shaking as she tries to open her door. The bloody doorknob won’t turn, and it pisses her off more, and now she’s crying and she can’t see anything because of the tears blurring her vision. A mistake. Is that what people think of her. Is that what her mother thought when she discovered she was pregnant with her abuser's child, her brother's child, for a third time.

Jon touches her. His hands burn her skin.

“Don’t touch me,” she cries, yanking her arm away from him. “Don’t… just leave.”

“Is that what you want?”

“It’s not about what I want.” Wiping her eyes, she faces him. “It’s about what you’ve already decided. I’m just a mistake to you.”

Jon looks as if he’s contemplating fight or flight. In the end, he chooses the former. Using his free hand to cradle the back of her head, he kisses her. She can taste her own tears, but pieces of Jon is mixed in, overpowering the brine. The kiss is messy, desperate, and beautiful. He wants her. There’s no denying it. Shamelessly, she moans into the kiss and presses close to him. As insane as it is to admit, doing this is more exciting than it ever was. It’s taboo. Some would even say it’s immoral.

It’s damn good is what it is.

Daenerys tugs on Jon’s hair, and he bites her lower lip. She missed his little rewards. When she tugs again, he puts his knee between her legs, alternating the pressure to stimulate her through her clothes.
“Jon,” she whimpers. “Jon…” She wants him to take her right here against the door.

Blindly, she lowers her hand in search of his pant’s zipper. What she finds is Jon’s bulging erection.

It’s as if someone threw cold water on them. Jon jerks away from her, looking as if he just made out with his mother and not the aunt he only learned about earlier today.

“It’s okay, Jon,” Dany says.

Jon frowns and wipes his mouth. “It’s not okay. It’s...It’s wrong, Dany.” He turns his head. “I...I wasn’t thinking clearly. Sorry. It was a mis-”

“A mistake, right?” She laughs humorlessly. “How many times will you mistakenly kiss or fuck me before you admit it’s what you want?”

In the short time they’ve been apart, she’s evolved from the timid, naive girl he was accustomed to. Naturally, her tone and choice of words throw him off. Good. She doesn’t want him to think for a second that she’s going to meekly accept his blatant denial.

He wants her still. That kiss proved it.

“I won’t kiss you again,” Jon says. “We can’t...we have to keep things platonic between us. What we had in the past was real for me. But we can’t be like we were anymore.”

“Okay.”

“Is that all you have to say on the matter?” Jon asks, irritated.

Fuck his irritation.

“What more would you like for me to say? You can’t even look at me without grimacing. You say you don’t want me but…” Boldly, she grabs his cock which is still hard in his pants. “But this says otherwise.”

Roughly, Jon removes her hand and gets in her face. His nostrils flare, his chest heaves harshly, but there’s a flicker in his eyes that gives the game away. He’s enjoying this.

Daenerys doesn’t back down. She stares up at him, unflinching. “What are you going to do, Jon?” she whispers in the same way she once moaned his name. “Mistakenly kiss me again?”

His eyes darken if that’s even possible. Instead of waiting for him to kiss her or breaking the flimsy barrier on her own. She puts a hand on his chest.

Yawning, she says, “Today has been long.” She looks at his slung arm. “Some rest would do us both good. I’m sure you can find your way back to your room. Goodnight, Jon.”

She leaves him alone in the hallway with a hard cock and a dumb expression on his face. Small victories.

Later she’ll probably cry about the things Jon obviously didn’t mean to say because either way it hurt to hear what they did was a mistake, that she was a mistake, and she’ll scold herself for not being considerate of his feelings. This is a tough situation for them both; him more so than her. Daenerys understands that. As much as she wants to be supportive and helpful during this time, she also wants him to stop lying to himself and just accept what she already has.

Fate screwed them over, but that doesn’t mean they have to let fate win. Regardless of what Jon
decides, their paths are intertwined.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Drop a comment if you enjoyed this chapter, please ^_^
Minutes tick by as Jon stares at the carved, three-headed dragon on Daenerys’s bedroom door. The last thing he expected was for Dany to slam the door in his face, intentionally giving him blue balls. That isn’t to say he wanted her to invite him in or anything.

Jon doesn’t know what came over him. When he saw Dany sitting by the pool, he intended to avoid her. But the way the moonlight bathed her hair and skin was mesmerizing. Next thing he knew, he was kissing her with the intention of taking her against the door if she let him.

He’s happy she didn’t let him because he would’ve ended up regretting it and hurting her feelings all over again.

“I see your night isn’t turning out the way you imagined it would.”

Hearing the voice, Jon mentally curses. Of all the people he had the misfortune of seeing tonight…”If you’re here to piss me off-“

Viserys steps out of the dark end of the hallway, yawning quietly. “Don’t flatter yourself. My room is three doors down.”

“Do all of you sleep on the same floor?”

“Only Dany and I. Rhaegar hardly sleeps at all but he’s a floor below.”

The fact that Viserys and Dany live on the same floor doesn’t sit well with Jon. Honestly speaking, he’s a little jealous of their budding relationship. From what Rhaegar has told him, Dany and Viserys have been together an awful lot.

Viserys stuffs his hands in his pockets, his gold watch glistening even in feeble lighting. “I knew you wouldn’t be able to resist coming here. Dany is the most beautiful woman in this city and I know there isn’t anything worth looking at for too long up north. She’s probably the best you’ve ever had. Gods know there isn’t much to work with up there.”

Clenching his jaw, Jon reigns in his anger. He won’t lash out at Viserys as he’s sure that’s what the man wants.

“But your mother,” Viserys starts, watching the way Jon’s hand trembles, “she’s the exception. When I heard my brother fell in love with a northerner I thought she would be some redheaded savage with only three teeth. Not someone who is quite pleasant to look at.”

“Are you finished?” Jon asks.

Stepping closer, Viserys tilts his head, regarding Jon. “Are you?” He glances at Jon’s bulge. “Looks as if you’re having some difficulty there.” Smiling he says, “Dany turned you down then? I’m actually impressed considering she’s been lovesick for weeks.”
“I suppose you’re going to try your luck then?”

Viserys doesn’t react how Jon expected. The man simply smiles, though, his eyes are sharp, predatory. “You think I want to fuck my little sister? The little sister I watched grow from a red-faced babe to the woman she is today?” Another step closer. “If I wanted Dany, you would’ve never had her. Besides...she’s missing the parts I like best.”

Jon is slow on the uptake.

“You should look after yourself, dear nephew,” Viserys says, patting Jon’s face. “I don’t shy away from taboos.”

Once again, Jon is left in a state of shock. Twice on the same night is a bit overwhelming. Is Viserys actually hitting on him? It’s difficult to tell if he’s only teasing.

At least Viserys is kind enough to share two bits of information before departing. “Your miniature horse is roaming the grounds. As for your bedroom, it’s directly below Dany’s.”

Sure enough, Ghost is outside. Together they find the room Jon’s been staying in. Medicine and water are waiting for him. He eagerly takes the medicine, hoping it will put him right to sleep and help him forget about this night.

There’s also a clothes rack by the wardrobe. It’s filled with designer suits, dress shirts made of fabric softer than silk, and shiny shoes. All in his size. Is he supposed to walk around the house in fancy garb every day? Well, that’s how Rhaegar and Viserys dress. They always look as if they’re ready to throw a dinner party at any given moment.

He’ll never fit in here. He isn’t even sure he wants to. The north is home for him. Always has been. Always will be. No amount of Targaryen blood in him will change that.

Ghost sleeps at the foot of the bed. Jon listens to his snores as he waits for sleep to take him as well. His erection has finally gone down, but that doesn’t put a stop to his lustful thoughts about Dany. She was ravishing tonight. She’s always gorgeous but tonight she was glowing. He feels like a moth drawn to a flame. Any closer and he’ll incinerate.

Jon curses in frustration. “I wish I had never learned the truth so that I can love Dany freely.”

*You still can.* A tiny voice in his head tells him.

He knows better than to listen to the voice because that same voice got him into this mess in the first place. He was supposed to let Dany be. But that voice told him to invite her to a concert, to let go and give in to his selfish desires for once.

And look where it got him, pining over his own aunt.

Tomorrow he’ll do a better job of avoiding her. It’s for the best, after all. Dany has been the victim of bullying for a majority of her life. He can’t give people another reason to hate the very sight of her. To unknowingly sleep with a relative is one thing but to do so intentionally...that’s unforgivable.

What Jon wants doesn’t matter; he isn’t even sure what he wants. He promised to protect Dany, and just because he failed once doesn’t mean he’s going to give up.
Gendry is the first to arrive at Dragonstone bright and early the next morning. Soon afterward, Benjen and Robb are escorted in by Arthur much to Jon’s surprise. The family reunion isn’t filled with snot and tears, but it’s emotional nonetheless. Lyanna gives big, painful hugs to each of them and kisses on the cheek while Jon settles for a half-hug.

As fortunate as they all are to be together again, their losses still weigh heavy on them, and there’s no shaking the dark cloud on the horizon.

“Tormund kept us hidden at the boxing gym,” Robb says as they all sit around the dining table. Their gracious host was kind enough to provide them with breakfast and privacy. No one has touched their food yet because they’ve been too busy catching up. “When we heard you were taken, we attacked the Karstarks. I thought they had you.”

Jon shakes his head, the memory of his short time with Ramsay putting a sour taste in his mouth. “Bloody Boltons had me. Ramsay to be precise. Next time I see the fucker, he’s dead.”

“I’ll be sure to leave him for you,” Robb promises. He looks over at Benjen who’s been holding Lyanna’s hand the entire time. “We figured if the Karstarks didn’t have you then the Boltons did so we went to Last Hearth but you were gone and everyone was dead.”

Benjen chuckles. “I guess we know who to thank for that.” He nudges Lyanna in the arm playfully. “How did it feel to get back out there?”

“Felt like I’d never left,” she says.

Jon glances beside him to where Gendry is quietly picking at his food. “I heard you made a deal with the Martells. Please tell me you didn’t make any marriage arrangements,” he jokes.

Gendry’s smile is forced. “I promised to start selling weapons to them for a discounted price. Our father is going to be pissed when he hears that I made a deal with the bloody Martells.”

At that, Jon and Lyanna share a look. Robb doesn’t miss it. Sharp fucker.

“I’m glad we’re all safe,” Robb says, his sincere, blue eyes touching every single face around the table. Then he glances around the dining room with its vaulted ceilings and marble floors. “Never expected us to end up in Dragonstone, though. Anyone mind telling me why Rhaegar Targaryen has invited us into his home?”

“Does it matter?” Benjen asks, and Jon just knows that his uncle is privy to more than he’s letting on. “We’re all together, Cat and your siblings are safe, and perhaps we can build new allies here in the south in order to take back our home.”

“How did Arthur convince you two to come in the first place?” Jon asks. If he can distract Robb long enough maybe that’ll give his mother enough time to figure out what she’ll say.

But his mother doesn’t need his help apparently. “Arthur put me on the phone and I told them to come,” Lyanna tells Jon without looking at him. “I knew they wouldn’t come without reassurance from family.”

“That still doesn’t answer the most important question,” Gendry says, his expression pensive. “Why are you here with the Targaryens? Our father is out there somewhere with a hit on him while you’re staying here with his sworn enemy. Why is no one out looking for him?”

Robb nods. “I was wondering the same thing. Can we cut the bullshit and get right to it? Why is Rhaegar Targaryen playing nice with us?”
“Because-” Jon starts but is cut off by Lyanna.

“Rhaegar and I were together when the attack on our family happened,” Lyanna confesses. She folds her hands in her lap to hide the way she nervously fiddles with them. “He wanted to meet with me to discuss an important matter.”

“And what was that?” Gendry presses impatiently.

Benjen touches Lyanna’s arm. “You don’t have to do this, Lyanna.”

“No, they deserve to know the truth.” Lyanna glances at Jon. “I’m not sure how to say this. I suppose I’ll keep it short and simple. Before I was forced to marry Robert, Rhaegar and I were married in secret. After we were separated, I discovered I was pregnant …with Jon.” Robb and Gendry don’t hide their surprise. “Ned knew and he helped me hide my pregnancy from Robert.”

Robb looks at Jon. “How long have you known?”

“I found out yesterday. No one knew aside from my mother and your father.”

Benjen clears his throat. “I long suspected it. Lyanna never needed to confirm it. You look just like Rhaegar, and I know my sister. She never loved Robert.”

Lyanna puts her hand on the table, slowly sliding it to where Gendry’s hands are. “Gendry, I’m sorry. But I couldn’t say anything or Robert would’ve killed Jon. You know how much he-”

“Jon isn’t my real brother then?” Gendry says, snatching his hands out of her reach. He scoots his chair back, literally and metaphorically putting distance between them. “None of you are my real family.”

“That’s not true,” Jon tells him. “You’re my brother, Gendry. Nothing can change that.”

“And you’re my son, Gendry. I didn’t carry you, I didn’t birth you, but you’re still mine.” Lyanna’s words are genuine and heartfelt. There’s no doubting that.

However, right now, Gendry’s emotional walls are as thick as steel. Right now, their words mean nothing to him. Without another word or glance, he hurriedly leaves the dining room. Lyanna tries to go after him but Benjen convinces her to let Gendry be. It’s a difficult truth for someone like Gendry to face. His biological mother abandoned him after birth. Naturally, he’d think Lyanna and Jon, who have no blood relation to him, will do the same.

Lyanna cries on Benjen’s shoulder, and Jon can’t bear the sight of it. Regardless of how upset with her he is, he can’t stand to see his mother crying.

“He’ll come around,” Jon says, trying to convince himself as well as her. “In the meantime, Robb should speak to Rhaegar. We’ll need his resources to take Winterfell back, and we don’t have time to waste.”

Standing, Robb gives his aunt a pitiful look. “Take care of her,” he tells Benjen. “Jon and I will negotiate with Rhaegar. I don’t care if he’s a southerner. He’s powerful and we need powerful allies.”

Spoken like the true heir to Winterfell.

Despite his young age, Robb has what it takes to lead and Benjen, along with everyone else, knows that. Although it pains Jon to even think this, Robb will make a better leader than Ned. Jon loves his
uncle and he mourns him daily but the truth is, his uncle had what was coming to him. He’d grown soft, careless, and too trusting. And this world is too harsh for soft-bellied people.

Leaving the dining room, they’re met by two servants who offer to escort them to Rhaegar. As the servants walk several paces ahead, Jon and Robb whisper amongst themselves. Robb regards Jon’s fancy suit and shoes.

“Fucking hell, you’re already dressing like a Targaryen,” Robb chuckles. “Will you dye your hair silver?”

“I don’t think it’ll suit me.”

“I don’t think so either.” Shaking his head, he curses. “I’m still having trouble wrapping my head around all this. But they’ve been keeping you and Aunt Lyanna safe so I have no qualms about it.” A pause. “Do you trust Rhaegar?”

“Surprisingly, yes. Doesn’t mean you need to go in there with your guard down. I’m still an outsider. Hell, I’m not even sure if I really want to be included in his affairs.”

“You’re the heir to Dragonstone, Jon. It doesn’t really matter what you want anymore.”

Jon hates how right Robb is.

Once the truth gets out, his claim to Storm’s End will be illegitimate and the northern families will lose their trust in him. He’ll be shunned if he ever tries to return. Doesn’t matter if Robb backs him or not. But how will the southern families treat him? How will they treat someone born into a northern family? He’ll be an outcast no matter where he goes.

Robb pats Jon on the shoulder. “You’re still my blood cousin either way. So, I’ve got your back no matter what.”

Jon really needed to hear that. He’s happy enough to hug Robb and plant a sloppy kiss on his cheek. But then Robb speaks again.

“Daenerys is your aunt then. You two didn’t...oh fuck. Please tell me you didn’t.” Robb takes one look at Jon and that’s all he needs. “You did. That’s...wow.”

“We didn’t know.”

“Of course.”

“I wouldn’t have done it had I known.”

“I believe you.”

“Then why are you looking at me like that?”

Robb faces forward, putting his full attention on the servants’ backs. They’ve been walking for some time. “I honestly don’t know how else to respond. You know what everyone says about Cersei and Jaime.”

“They fuck one another all the time. Dany and I did it once and that was before we knew.”

Halting his steps, Robb turns to Jon, his expression serious. “Look, I don’t care that you fucked the aunt you didn’t know about. It’s weird, I’ll admit. But it’s not my business. It’s no one else’s business. What matters to me is that you won’t turn your back on us Starks now that you know who
your real father is.”

“Have I ever turned my back on my family?”

“No, and that’s what worries me. They’re your family, too. And I know you. It doesn’t matter if you’ve known them your whole life or not. You’ll fight for them if they ask you.”

If someone ran in here right now with the intention of killing Rhaegar, Jon knows he would do whatever it took to protect the man. He doesn’t owe Rhaegar shit. Not loyalty and sure as hell not love, but he’s prepared to give just that because he’s a dumb, self-righteous fuck who has always wanted a father deserving of his unyielding loyalty. For all he knows, Rhaegar is just as shitty as Robert. But everything he’s been shown thus far says otherwise.

Jon sighs. “My mother is a Stark. That means I’m still a Stark. I will never forget where I came from. You have my word.”

“Good. I’ve already lost my father. I can’t lose my best friend, too.”

“You won’t.” Jon promises.

After a brief hug, they continue walking. The awkward tension that once stood between them is gone, and Jon is thankful for it. He’s already distanced himself from his mother, Daenerys, and Rhaegar. He needs someone to lean on during this time, though, he won’t outwardly admit such a thing.

“So,” Robb starts with a smirk, “I take it Daenerys is single now.”

Jon glares at his cousin. “Keep away from her.”

“Are you protective of your aunt or your girlfriend? It’s hard to tell,” he jokes.

Jon wants to punch him in his pretty teeth. “Should I let Margaery know that you’re in the neighborhood?”

“The rest of the world thinks I’m dead. I’d like to keep it that way.”

There are several local journalists and online news outlets covering the car bombing that was meant to kill Benjen and Robb, as well as, the gruesome murder of Ned. The outside world thinks Benjen and Robb are dead.

“She’ll find out soon enough,” Jon says. “Rhaegar will more than likely have you meet with the other families as a show of good faith.”

“Any last minute advice before I meet with your father?”

Jon is just going to have to get used to that. Rhaegar is his father. No point in him pretending otherwise. “He’s nothing like the rumors depict,” he says.

Viserys paces back and forth at the edge of the bed while Daenerys and Missandei look on silently. Her brother has been at it for half an hour now. When he barged into her bedroom that morning, she thought he wanted her to begin training again. But he didn’t say a word to either of them.

Whenever Viserys gets like this, it’s best to let it run its course.

Another five minutes pass before Viserys abruptly stops. “First, that miniature horse shed fur on a
15th-century Pentoshi rug, then that woman insulted my taste in music, and now there are three more people who I’ll have the displeasure of hosting in my home.”

Ah, so that’s what this is about.

In Dany’s opinion, it’s nice to have people staying over. There are plenty of rooms, baths, and space in Dragonstone. More than enough for ten people and a large dog. But she can understand Viserys’s discomfort. It is a little strange to have extended guests.

“They won’t be here for long,” Dany says, trying to put her brother at ease. “The sooner we help them obtain their home, the sooner they can return to it.”

“I don’t want them here at all.” Viserys crosses his arms and blows out an irritated breath.

The way he’s standing, with his hip jutted out, and mouth turned down actually highlights his attractive features. Daenerys wonders if Viserys has ever considered modeling. She voices her curiosity.

As expected, Viserys is thrilled by the compliment. The corners of his mouth quirks. “There isn’t a designer living worthy of my cheekbones.” He checks out his profile in the full body mirror. “Or my ass.”

Dany and Missandei share a smile.

“I was thinking of staying at one of our penthouses for the time being. You and Missandei are welcome to join me.”

That’s a good idea. If she isn’t here, she doesn’t have to risk constantly bumping into Jon. But the thing is, Dany wants to keep bumping into him. She wants him to see her. She wants him to be constantly reminded of what he’s missed.

It’s as if Viserys can read her mind. Rolling his eyes, he throws his hands up in exasperation. “Of course, you want to stay here for Jon. If he’s as honorable as his father there’s no hope for you, Dany. They’re the type of men to choose self-suffering over pleasure every single time.”

“Rhaegar is risking a lot to have Lyanna here with him.” Dany points out.

Viserys chuckles. “Once the war really kicks off and children start dying, Rhaegar will give up his one true love just to save the city again. He will always choose the good of the people over himself. Just like Jon.”

Although she hates to hear it, she knows it to be true. “Our relationship isn’t a threat to anyone, though.”

“Not yet.”

“So, you think I should give up then? Give up on love?”

“Love,” Viserys says as if the very word insults him. “You act as if you’re incapable of loving again. You’re only attached to him because he was the first man inside of you.”

“That’s not true.”

Smiling, Viserys sits on the bed. “Why do you love him then? Because he understands your body’s wants and needs? Anyone can if you teach them, Dany. Do you love him because he’s pretty and
valiant? So, is Rhaegar. But do you love our brother the way you love his son? Will you spread your
legs for him, as well?"

A week or two ago, Dany might’ve been offended by Viserys’s abrasiveness. But she knows now
that’s just how he is. He’s harsh and honest, and though it may hurt sometimes, he’s never without
good intentions; at least where family is involved.

“I love Jon because he never treated me like I was some helpless, stupid, little girl. He always saw
me the same way as you. I don’t feel like I have to hide whenever I’m with him. Is that enough
reason to love someone? Is that worth fighting for?”


“I just do,” Missandei says, shrugging. “Love doesn’t always need an explanation.”

Daenerys smiles. “Why do you love yourself, Viserys?”

“Seriously, have you seen my ass in these pants? It’s quite obvious why I love myself.”

They all laugh. It’s astonishing how much she understands Viserys now. He has a peculiar way of
approaching most things, but she’s beginning to like that about him.

Viserys gets off the bed, dusting the nonexistent wrinkles off his clothes. “I just needed to be sure
what you felt for him was genuine. Well, if you intend to fight for what you want, you have my
support. And if he refuses to come around, I can always take him to the bunker.”

She has no idea if he’s being serious or not. One can never tell with Viserys.

“Anyway, I’m going to The Water Gardens for a facial and maybe I’ll find someone to entertain me
for an hour or two.”

Viserys leaves.

Daenerys wonders if her brother will seek a male or female companion for entertainment. Very
recently she noticed that Viserys rarely specifies genders when he’s referring to sexual partners. Is he
bisexual then? Perhaps pansexual? He once mentioned that he’s attracted to beautiful people...

Missandei’s voice cuts through her thoughts. “About what we were discussing before Viserys
interrupted…”

“I told you there’s nothing to discuss.”

“But it’s been over a month since your last menstrual cycle…”

“Sometimes it’s late,” Dany says. “I’ve been under a lot of stress, too.”

“I heard you earlier this morning, Dany.”

Sighing, Daenerys looks at her best friend. “I thought the running sink would muffle the sounds.”
Around four in the morning, she woke up nauseated and sweaty. She assumed it was something she
ate. “Stress has a lot of symptoms. Nausea is one of them, I’m sure.”

“Did Jon use a condom?”

No. Jon didn’t use a condom. But that doesn’t mean anything. “If I take a bloody pregnancy test and
prove you wrong will you drop it?”
“Maybe.”

“Gosh, you’re irritating,” Dany says, laughing. “It’s going to come back negative, and when it does you owe me ice cream.”

“Fine.”

“How will we get one? Rhaegar keeps tabs on our credit card statements. Remember that time you bought condoms? And he and Arthur had to talk to us about the birds and the bees?”

Missandei shudders. “How can I ever forget the most embarrassing moment of my life? Rhaegar wouldn’t stop blushing and Arthur kept saying ‘love flower’ instead of vagina.” She laughs. “We were sixteen with access to the internet. Of course, we knew what they were talking about.”

“Well, we definitely can’t buy it ourselves. Neither can Grey Worm.” She wouldn’t dare ask Viserys. His unpredictability still worries her. “What about one of the servants?”

“They’re not really servants. They’re spies. Never reveal anything to them,” she warns.

“Then who can we trust with this? I could always make a bank withdrawal and use cash.”

“Too risky.”

Daenerys sucks her teeth. “Do the bank tellers work for my family, as well?”

“You family owns most of the banks in Westeros, Dany. Trust me, every move you make inside and outside of Dragonstone will get back to Rhaegar if you aren’t too careful. He isn’t actively watching you, people just offer up information in order to please him.”

That just reminded her of how ignorant she still is. There is so much for her to learn. In the meantime, she needs a solution to her current problem.

“There is someone,” Missandei says. “You could ask Lyanna.”

“Jon’s mother? Are you mad?”

“Do you intend to ask Robb Stark then? Who else, if not Lyanna? She’s fond of you and she should understand your situation considering her past.”

Despite herself, Dany blushes. “You think Lyanna’s fond of me?”

Missandei rolls her eyes. “Don’t pretend as if you haven’t noticed. If things weren’t so complicated, I’m certain you and Jon would have her blessing.”

“If only things were simple,” she says sadly. “Okay, we need to speak with Lyanna after she’s had some alone time with her family.”

“Do you know what you’ll do if the results are positive?”

“I don’t want to think about that right now.”

“Understood.”

The meeting with Rhaegar is conducted without a hitch.
Meetings tend to be that way when like-minded individuals are present. Robb and Rhaegar want the same thing; fire and blood. To avoid a messy, drawn-out gang war, they’ll launch a simultaneous attack on Winterfell and the Dreadfort to wipe out their enemies in one swell swoop.

Rhaegar even promises to move Catelyn and her children to a different safe house overlooked by their allies in Braavos to keep her out of Roose Bolton’s hands. Staying in one place for too long is never a good idea when someone is in hiding.

In exchange for the help of the other southern families, Robb agrees to give them a cut of the Stark’s smuggling business. To prevent future rebellions, he also plans to do away with the ban on the Big Three and give lesser families the option to start one of the three businesses.

It’s something Ned would’ve never allowed which is why Jon is sure it’s the right thing to do. It may not be honorable, but it’ll keep everyone happy, and that’s all that matters at this point.

The only reason Roose and his allies felt comfortable enough to challenge the Starks was because they knew the people would rally behind them. With Robb in control, they’ll think twice before they side with a lesser family against the main family again.

“What about you?” Robb asks Rhaegar at the end of the meeting. “You haven’t listed any demands. Am I to believe you’re helping us out of the goodness of your heart.”

“To assume such a thing would make you a fool,” Rhaegar says, amused. “But you aren’t a fool. There is something I want.”

Jon shifts uncomfortably in his seat. He’s curious to know what it is Rhaegar wants.

“I’m listening,” says Robb.

“Moving forward, the Starks and the Targaryens will be allies, meaning you are not allowed to go against us, regardless of the situation. I will never ask anything of you that will put your family at great risk and you must never ask the same of me.”

Robb and Jon look at one another. It’s Jon who speaks first. “What’s the point of an alliance if we can’t call on you during dire situations?”

The way Rhaegar’s nostrils flare lets Jon know that his question has somehow irritated the man. Day by day, he’s learning to pick up on Rhaegar’s ticks. For instance, Rhaegar’s index finger twitches sporadically. Jon isn’t sure why that is but he’ll find out soon enough.

“We?” Rhaegar asks. “You intend to remain in the north when this is over?”

“I haven’t made my decision yet,” Jon says.

“Then perhaps you shouldn’t speak so carelessly. If the other families were present they would’ve taken offense to your question. Once your true parentage is revealed, everything you say and do will be overanalyzed. Don’t make it easy for them to criticize you.”

Jon understands what Rhaegar is saying, but he doesn’t care too much for the man’s tone. “Are you already disciplining me? I haven’t even decided if I want you as my father yet.”

Rhaegar scoffs and faces Robb again. “As I was saying, Robb. The alliance will simply ensure that our families are never pitted against one another in the future.”

He’s lying. Perhaps not, but he isn’t telling the whole truth, that’s for sure. Jon isn’t sure how he
knows. He just knows. Rhaegar is leaving out an important detail. Should he mention it to Robb? Or should he see how things will play out?

“You have my word,” Robb stays, standing up. He extends his hand. “Moving forward, our families will set aside any disagreements and become allies.

Rhaegar stands as well, shaking Robb’s hand. Afterward, they prickle their thumbs and sign a blood contract. The agreement is irreversible now. If it turns out that Rhaegar is full of shit, Jon will hate himself for not speaking up.

“I’ll have someone show you to your room,” Rhaegar tells Robb. “You’ll be staying next door to your uncle Benjen. I expect this entire ordeal will be wrapped up in no more than three days.”

“I wish we could kill them all tonight.”

“As do I,” Rhaegar says.

Jon doesn’t leave with Robb. He promises to meet up with him later. Once Robb is out of hearing range, Jon turns on Rhaegar.

“You’re hiding something.”

“Yet you allowed Robb to sign my blood contract,” Rhaegar smirks as if his master plan has been executed. Well, it has apparently. “I wanted to test you. I purposefully scolded you to see how you’d react. I wanted to see if you would notice that I left out a major detail, and you did. Also, I needed to see if you would remain loyal to your cousin or side with me.”

“You’re a sack of shit.”

“I’m your father. If I’m a sack of shit that means you’re 50% shitty.”

Jon forces himself not to laugh. What is up with this man? Why is he joking during a serious moment? Most importantly…”That doesn’t make any sense. Nevermind that, why are you testing me? Is all of this just one big game to you?”

“Not at all. I did not deceive Robb Stark. But I can’t say that I was completely transparent, either.”

“Do you want me to trust you?”

“Of course.”

“Then stop screwing around and tell me what you’re hiding.”

Rhaegar urges Jon to sit. Then he speaks. “I love your mother, Jon. I always have, and we finally have a chance to be together again. If Robert survives this war, he’ll do everything in his power to tear us apart.”

“If my...Robert...somehow manages to get enough men together you want Robb to fight alongside you against him?”

“No. If that time ever comes, I want Robb to stay out of it. That’s it. I can deal with Robert on my own.”

“Because he’ll no longer have the northern families backing him.”

“You’re catching on.”
Jon feels sick. “Robert may not be my real father but he raised me. He took me in, he-”

“Only did the bare minimum of what a caregiver is supposed to do, Jon,” Rhaegar says. He stares at Jon with those acute violet eyes, and it’s as if he can read every thought that’s ever passed through his mind. “When Robert learns that I’m your father, do you think he will accept you regardless?”

“He may not have been the best father, but he was there for me.”

“Answer the question.”

“Fuck you!” Jon slams his fist on the table. Now both of his hands are throbbing. Hot tears burn his eyes and he lets them fall. “You think you can just swoop in and make everything better? It’s too late! Robert is the father I grew up with, he’s the only father I know. He may be terrible and fucking abusive but he’s all I’ve got!”

“That’s not true and you know it. Granted, I wasn’t there for your childhood and I had no part in shaping you into the man you are today. But that doesn’t mean you have to accept the short hand you were given. I’m here for you now, Jon.”

“Do you have any idea how many times I’ve found my mother drinking and crying her eyes out all because of you? Why did you leave her?” Why did he leave them? Is what Jon wants to ask. “You Targaryens do anything to defend your own but when my mother needed you...when I needed you...you weren’t there!”

Rhaegar’s eyes widen. “I thought I was making the right choice. Children were dying, Jon. My father...your grandfather was merciless. Before I killed him, he was going to order his men to plant bombs in the catacombs. He was going to level the entire city. It was Jaime Lannister who told me…”

Jon wipes his eyes, his rage subsiding. He’s never heard the full story about his parents. He only took the little bit of information he had and drew his own conclusions. Now he feels like crap.

“Jaime informed me of my father’s plans, I knew I had to put an end to it. My father didn’t care about Lyanna. He was just happy to have a reason to destroy the city that shunned him.”

“Jaime Lannister isn’t a prick after all then?”

Rhaegar chuckles. “Jaime’s still a prick but he isn’t as heartless as he likes to put on.” Moving closer, he tentatively touches Jon’s shoulder. Jon allows the contact. “I’m sorry for all the pain I’ve unintentionally caused you and your mother. I never considered how the truth would affect you mentally. We could...talk to someone if you’d like…”

“Family therapy? Are you serious?”

“Well, Lyanna recently shared her own experiences with therapy. I think it’s worth a try. And if we don’t like it, we don’t have to go.”

“You really want this. You really want me to be your son.”

“Damn it, Jon. You are my son. How many times do I need to say it?”

“I guess it’s still hard for me to believe that someone like you is my father.”

“Someone like me?” Rhaegar frowns. “What is that supposed to mean?”
It means that Jon never thought he’d be this fortunate. Rhaegar is everything he’s ever wanted in a father and more. Of course, Jon isn’t going to admit something so mushy to the man.

“It means that I can’t believe I ended up with someone with such a bad taste in humor. Really? 50% shitty?”

Rhaegar actually looks as if he’s hurt. “I thought it was funny. Did you even get the joke? You’re half Lyanna and half me. So, that’s 50%.”

“Still not funny.”

“Well, your mother thinks I’m funny.”

“Are you sure about that?”

“...well she doesn’t think I’m a comedian or anything but she laughs at my jokes.”

“Sure she does.”

“I’m your father show me some respect.”

Jon snorts. “Earn it first.”

“You’re grounded.”

They stare at one another, their expressions blank. Suddenly, the room erupts with laughter. Just moments ago, Jon was angry and hurt. Now he’s...happy. How is this possible?

Rhaegar claps. “Made you laugh!” Before Jon can come up with a retort, the man is already heading toward the door. “I have a business meeting downtown. I’ll see you later!”

Jon’s pretty sure the speedy exit was purposefully done.

On the way to his room, Jon spots his mother and Rhaegar in the foyer whispering and laughing together. His mother has never looked at Robert like that. She’s never really looked at anyone the way she looks at Rhaegar. Oddly enough, they remind him of how he and Dany used to be. His chest aches. He wonders if he’ll ever stop missing Dany.

They lean in for a kiss and Jon turns way. When he looks again, Rhaegar is gone but his mother is still there. She sees him.

Jon walks around the staircase, giving her a stiff nod in greeting. They haven’t seen one another since he’s been awake.

“You’re in a good mood,” Jon says. He doesn’t know what else to say. He isn’t good with awkward encounters; as proven last night with Dany.

“So are you.”

“I wouldn’t say that. But I’m doing better.”

Lyanna reaches for the hem of her shirt. Instinctively, Jon grabs her hands to keep her from fidgeting. The last thing he wants is for his mother to feel apprehensive around him.

“Where are you heading to?” Jon asks.
“I was going to see if Ghost wanted to go for a walk.”

“He went out this morning and hasn’t been back since. I don’t think he likes it here.”

Nodding, Lyanna gently pulls her hands away. “I see. Well, I guess I’ll check on everyone and see how they’re settling in. Gendry hasn’t left his room…”

And Gendry won’t leave it until he’s good and ready to. His mother should know how Gendry is by now. He’ll be upset for a day or two then he’ll be back to himself. Neither of them is very good at holding a grudge against her.

“Did you want to go for a walk?” He doubts she likes being cooped up inside of here, either. Much like Ghost, she loves the outdoors. “I want to stretch my legs…”

“I take it you’re no longer mad at me then?” she asks, hopeful.

“I’m still upset with you but I also miss you. Now, do you want to walk or not?”

Lyanna smiles softly. “Watch yourself. I can still ground you.”

“Why is everyone trying to ground me today?”

Following her walk with Jon, Lyanna popped in to check on Benjen and Robb. Both were sleeping like babies which is expected considering they couldn’t rest easy while they were in northern territory. She’s grateful Tormund got to them first.

The Free Folk keep to themselves mostly but were willing to fight for Jon, for her family. Something like that can never go unnoticed. She’ll be sure to thank Tormund the next time she sees the man.

One of the servants assured her that Gendry ate some of the food that was taken to his room per her request. The boy has the appetite of thirty men. He has to be upset if he’s only eating a little of his food. Some is better than nothing at all, she supposes. She wants to give him time but she also wants to make sure he knows how much she loves him.

Lyanna tries to find things to do around the estate to keep herself occupied. Rhaegar is off meeting with some of his legitimate business colleagues; people who are clueless about the family’s true affiliations. Jon is sparring with Grey Worm despite his hand not being fully healed. He’s eager to get in shape, and she knows better than to try to stop him. He got his stubbornness from her, unfortunately.

Gods, she’s so desperate for a distraction she actually wishes Viserys would appear out of thin air as he so often does. The man isn’t that bad...sometimes. Then again, he did rudely tell her to trim her split-ends immediately after meeting her.

Nevermind. Viserys is a cunt.

Defeated, she decides to retire to Rhaegar’s chambers. Maybe she can sleep until he gets back. Wow, she left one boring life in exchange for another. That’s not completely true. Every day there’s something new.

For such a dreary place, there’s never a dull moment at Dragonstone.

“Lyanna, there you are!”

Daenerys and Missandei corner her in front of Rhaegar’s door, both wearing puppy dog expressions
that do nothing to Lyanna’s heartstrings.

“What are you two up to?” Lyanna asks knowingly. “Want me to buy you alcohol? Sneak you out? Buy you a dildo? Whatever it is, just ask. I’m bored.”

The girls blink in surprise. Quietly, Missandei says to Dany, “Where has she been all of our lives?”

Lyanna laughs. “Seriously, what do you two want? It has to be something illegal if you’re asking me and not Rhaegar.”

“Not illegal,” Dany says. “It’s just that...no one else can know about it.”

“I’m waiting.”

“We need a pregnancy test,” Missandei whispers, glancing over her shoulder discreetly.

“A pregnancy test for who?” Lyanna looks between the girls, watching both of their faces closely. As expected, Missandei gives nothing away. Poor Dany, though. The girl can’t hide a damn thing. In her defense, it’s probably gut-wrenching to come to Lyanna of all people with this especially since there’s a chance she’s carrying Jon’s baby. Fuck. “I’ll grab a few of them just to be safe. Wait for me in your room.”

Daenerys swallows hard. “Thank you.”

“It’s nothing. Start drinking water now.”

Lyanna has to jump through hoops just to borrow one of the cars. None of the servants are willing to hand over the keys without Rhaegar’s permission. Thankfully, Arthur returns from his errands in time. He hands over his keys without much fuss. That’s why she’s always liked Arthur. He minds his fucking business.

Finding a drug store isn’t hard once she’s out of the countryside. She stops at the first one she sees.

If anyone would’ve told her that she’d be buying a pregnancy test for her ex-husband/current love interest’s sister to determine if she was carrying her son’s baby, she would’ve laughed in their face. Yet here she is.

“Well, isn’t this a sight for sore eyes. Lyanna Stark in the flesh.”

Lyanna nearly shits herself. “Jaime Fucking Lannister.” The blond asshole is standing in front of the shelf she needs to get to. “Why are you here?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Jaime talks to her as if it hasn’t been eighteen years since they last spoke. “Why are you here?”

“Piss off.” She doesn’t really mean it. Although the timing is piss poor, she’s kind of glad to see a familiar face. Even one as annoying as Jaime’s. “Cersei pregnant again?”

Jaime rolls his eyes. “Gods, I hope not.” He picks up one of the pregnancy tests and skims the back. “Our father has vowed to disinherit us if we produce another incestual offspring. Cersei thinks he’s bluffing. Tyrion thinks she should get her tubes tied.”

“I agree with Tyrion. Move out of my way.” Lyanna nudges him aside and throws several boxes into her basket. She’s sure to get different brands. “Tell anyone about this and I’ll make sure your father hears about it, too.”
“Can I at least tell Cersei and Tyrion?”

Lyanna isn’t too worried about the unexpected encounter. Jaime is one of Rhaegar’s allies. To spread rumors about anyone affiliated with Rhaegar is distasteful. Besides, Jaime was one of the few who kept her and Rhaegar’s secret in the past.

Jaime always hung around Dragonstone out of affection for Rhaella. Lyanna suspects he took the news of Rhaella’s death just as hard as Rhaegar.

Lyanna takes the low-budget pregnancy test out of his hand and replaces it with a better brand. “You’re trying to avoid hospitals and your Maester, right? Then get the best, you cheap bastard. I thought Lannisters shit gold.”

“I don’t like to carry a lot of cash.”

“Your father keeps tabs on your credit cards, is that it?” Lyanna thinks that’s why Dany and Missandei came to her with this task. “Get what you need and meet me at the register.”

Jaime sighs. “You have my thanks, Lyanna. I will be sure to send a check to Dragonstone. As you know, a Lannister always-”

“Don’t say it. I’ll knee you in the balls if you do.”

“Still as violent and devastatingly beautiful as ever, I see.”

At the register, Jaime adds a chocolate bar to the pile of pregnancy tests, and Lyanna scowls at him. Then she adds one of her own. She deserves chocolate dammit.

The cashier stares at them as she rings them up. For a moment, Lyanna wonders if perhaps she recognizes them until she realizes that it’s Jaime the young girl is drooling over.

But Jaime is looking at Lyanna. “A little birdie told me they saw two wolves entering the dragon’s lair.”

One of their spies knows Benjen and Robb are alive. They were going to find out eventually. Soon, all of the southern families will gather at Dragonstone to draw up war plans. Rhaegar has also mentioned that he wants to share the news about Jon during that meeting.

“I’m happy for you,” Jaime continues, his voice taking on a softer edge. “I was...concerned when I heard the news.” He was worried that she’d been killed along with her family.

He’s always been a softie. Unlike his twin.

“All is well. No need to worry.”

Lyanna asks the cashier to separate their items in different bags. After she pays, she hurries out of the store. Jaime stops her before she gets into the car.

“It was good seeing you, Lyanna.”

“You too, Jaime. Remember-”

“I won’t tell anyone aside from Cersei and Tyrion. You have my word.” He smiles charmingly as he walks over to his sports car. “I’ll be seeing you!”

Lyanna makes a note to slap Jaime when she does see him again.
While they wait for the results, Lyanna and Missandei sit on the bedroom floor and share the chocolate bar. They don’t talk much. They’re too worried about the outcome. Her random encounter with Jaime has Lyanna thinking about things she never considered before.

Like how hard it’s always been for Cersei and Jaime. Everyone knows about their relationship. At least those involved in the criminal underworld. For as long as Lyanna can remember the Lannister twins have been the butt of endless jokes, victims of bullying and ridicule. If they weren’t Tywin’s children their fates might’ve been much worse.

But they’re wealthy, privileged, and dangerous, meaning they can get away with a lot of things. Even their father is powerless, realistically. They’re the only heirs he recognizes. There’s no way he’ll ever disown them or allow society to shun them.

How are Dany and Jon any different?

If people fear Tywin then they definitely fear Rhaegar. They’re both from wealthy, prestigious, and dangerous families. They’re practically untouchable.

From what Lyanna has witnessed with her own eyes, Cersei and Jaime aren’t just fucking for the fun of it. They’re in love. Is it wrong for two people who genuinely love one another to be together regardless of if they’re related or not?

Lyanna doesn’t know. Perhaps her unconditional love for Jon is clouding her judgment. She wants him to be happy, and if Dany makes him happy so be it. She just wishes they didn’t have to go through this. She can’t help but blame herself.

“I think we should check on her,” Missandei says checking the time on her phone. “It’s been a while…”

Daenerys steps out of the bathroom before they get off the floor. Her face is red and puffy and her hair looks as if she’s been pulling on it. “They all say the same thing,” she says, hoarsely. She leans against the threshold, closing her eyes. “I’m pregnant.”

Lyanna needs a drink.

“...I’m pregnant,” Dany repeats numbly.

It’s exactly how Lyanna reacted when she found out she was pregnant with Jon. She went into shock, and that was how Ned caught her.

Missandei helps Dany sit down on the bed. The bathroom door is cracked. Absently, Lyanna stares at the empty boxes scattered on the floor. This is giving her too many painful memories. She was also eighteen at the time. She was terrified and alone.

Thankfully, Dany isn’t.

Lyanna joins the girls on the bed. “I wish I could tell you that everything will be okay, Daenerys. The only thing I can promise is that I’m here for you.”

Dany hides her face in the crook of Missandei’s neck. “Please don’t tell Jon. Not yet.”

“You want me to hide this from my son? I’ve kept enough from him to last two lifetimes. I can’t
keep this from him. He deserves to know.”

“I’ll tell him. Just...I just need time. Please, Lyanna!”

“Dan-”

Daenerys sits up and clutches Lyanna. Her eyes are wide and pleading. “Promise me, Lyanna!”

A similar promise is the reason they’re all in this mess.

_Promise me, Ned!_ That was what Lyanna begged her brother the night she discovered she was pregnant. She understands why Daenerys wants to wait, but she refuses to let another secret tear her family apart. This is a chance to start fresh for all of them.

Lyanna blinks away a tear. “I’ll give you a day,” she says. “If you don’t tell Jon by midnight tomorrow, I’m going to tell him myself.” She cups Dany’s face. “Listen to me. Regardless of how Jon reacts, this is your body. Only you get to decide what to do next. Not Jon. Not your brothers. Just you.”

“Jon will never be okay with it. I know he still loves me but this changes everything. He thinks what we did was a mistake. He’ll think the same about our baby. And I...I don’t know what I’ll do if Jon rejects us both...”

“You’ll cry about it until you can’t cry anymore then you’ll keep going. That’s all you can do.”

That’s easier said than done, Lyanna knows. But what else is she supposed to say? She doesn’t even know how Jon will react to this news.

“Missandei, can you find the Maester?” Lyanna asks. “I think some milk of the poppy will be best. I’ll get rid of the tests before he gets here.”

Daenerys lays on the bed and cries as Lyanna bustles around the bathroom cleaning up the mess. It’s going to be tough hiding ten pregnancy tests. She keeps the boxes under the sink for now. When the Maester comes, she tells him that Daenerys has been having nightmares and needs help sleeping. He doesn’t question it.

Once Daenerys is sleeping, Lyanna leaves her in Missandei’s care. Now she has to figure out how to keep this from Rhaegar.

“Leaving so soon?” his Dornish companion says from his place on the bed, with a heavy accent. The person is naked and freshly fucked. Their bronze skin compliments the deep purple and mustard patterns on the bedding. Arianne always keeps her brothels stocked with the best.

Buttoning up his shirt, Viserys smirks. “I stayed way longer than intended. That mouth of yours is to blame.” He almost doesn’t want to leave, and that’s why he must. Ever since the last person, he tries not to get too attached. “Perhaps we’ll meet again,” he says, not wanting to come off as too harsh.

They were pleasant company. They knew when to talk and when to shut up. He can appreciate someone who doesn’t constantly need to be told what to do. If he wanted a dog he would’ve stayed home with the miniature horse.

“Give me your number and I’ll make sure of it.”
Tempting, Viserys thinks. But he decides against it. Someone in his family needs their head on straight. He can’t afford any distractions right now. Perhaps when this is all over, he’ll return for round two. Technically, it’ll be round five.

“How about I-” Viserys hears gunfire in the distance.

Quickly, his companion gets off the bed and flips over the mattress. They throw Viserys one of the machine guns and then they arm themselves.

“Does this happen often?” Viserys asks as he checks the gun’s safety.

“Never.”

“I didn’t think so.” No one is dumb enough to cause trouble in Arianne’s establishment. So, that can only mean...

The door is kicked in. Viserys kills the intruder immediately. Stepping over the corpse, he fires at the approaching men. Martell soldiers are up on the balcony, exchanging gunfire with what appears to be northern hitmen. It’s a bloodbath.

The lovely Water Gardens look like a battlefield. The mosaic walls and floors are riddled with bullets, the pools that were once blue are murky. It’s disgraceful. He hates to see a beautiful place destroyed.

Viserys would normally retreat, but he was in a good mood and these imbeciles ruined it. So, he isn’t leaving until all of them are dead. Behind him, his Dornish lover covers him, and Viserys reconsiders his earlier decision. Maybe they should exchange numbers.

Gods, Dany’s talk about love has gotten to him. He needs to focus.

A big, ugly ginger charges at him. Viserys shoots him in the groin just because he can. Then he delivers a kill shot. One of the men curses Viserys before he kills them.

“Definitely northern,” he mutters to himself as he kills the man. But why are they here? Are they here for Gendry? Surely their spies would’ve known that Gendry is no longer here.

Viserys runs out of ammo. Tossing the gun aside, he picks up two handguns off of a body he passes. Making his way up to the second floor, he curses under his breath. “These savages got blood all over my Hermès shirt.” He unloads on one man out of irritation. “I just bought this!”

Someone tries to come up on Viserys side with a sneak attack, but his backup protects him. Damn, Viserys is getting aroused all over again.

Soon, Martell reinforcements arrive.

Viserys is sure to keep one of the northerners alive. He drags the man into one of the back offices and shoots him in both knee caps to keep him from getting away. Much to Viserys’s delight, his Dornish companion doesn’t flinch.

An iron stomach as well as a talented mouth. The gods took their time when they created this person.

“Do you know who I am?” Viserys calmly asks the screaming man.

“Fuck you!”

Viserys kicks him in the face. “Do you know who I am?” he asks again.
Clutching his bloody face, the man nods. “Y-yes!”

“Good. Then we can skip the introduction.” Because if the man knows who he is then he should know how things will go if he pisses him off. “Why are you here?”

“Robert Baratheon sent us!”

Hurriedly, Viserys takes out his phone to call Rhaegar.

The man laughs. “You’re too late! They should be at Dragonstone by now! All the northern forces...Baratheon, Bolton, Umber, and Karstark! You lot are finished!” He laughs so hard he begins choking on his own blood.

Viserys stiffens. That’s impossible. They would’ve detected a force that large. On foot ...but if they were planning an aerial attack...Fuck!

“I’ll take him to Arianne,” his companion promises. “Go!”

Shaking himself, Viserys snaps out of it. He runs out of the office without so much as a ‘see you later.’ Family comes first. Plump lips, a tight ass, and good aim won’t change that.
Honestly speaking, their enemies couldn’t have chosen a better time to attack.

It was as if they knew Rhaegar would just be returning from his meeting, that Viserys would be away, and that the other occupants of the mansion wouldn’t be in the same area. Dany and Missandei were on the third floor asleep, Jon and Grey Worm were in the gym sparring, Robb, Benjen, and Gendry were on the second floor, fresh out of their naps, Lyanna was in the master’s bathroom, crying, and Rhaegar and Arthur were in the driveway.

None of them were prepared, and it showed.

Aside from their enemies’ timing, their mode of transportation was bloody brilliant. Attacking Dragonstone head-on is a fool’s errand. Knowing this, the combined northern forces flew over the estate via helicopters. There were no more than six choppers, but that was more than enough.

As soon as Dragonstone’s alarms picked up on the movement, the first wave came.

Rhaegar and Arthur looked on in horror as three rocket launchers were fired into the mansion, setting the roof and upper exterior ablaze. The second wave came immediately afterward, right when Rhaegar and Arthur were entering the mansion and ordering their men to prepare to fight.

The foyer exploded, instantly killing a good bit of their foot soldiers. Rhaegar and Arthur were knocked back outside, landing on the concrete, shattered glass and other debris covering them.

Using an opening in the roof, some of the intruders gained access inside. And that was when the true destruction began.

Prying the bathroom door open, Lyanna climbs over the rubble partially blocking the door to find a large hole in the ceiling and one directly below. Instead of sticking around to admire the night sky, she hurries out of the bedroom.

Only one person is insane enough to carry out an attack like this, and when she gets her hands on that person, she’s going to kill them.

Lyanna doesn’t bother calling out for anyone. She knows it’s pointless what with how hectic things are, and she doesn’t want to give her location away to the intruders. Outside, in the hallway looks like a scene straight from an action film. For her, it’s more like a horror movie.

Servants are running in different directions, some are armed and running to the fight while the others are clutching their bleeding limbs and searching for a safe place to hide. One woman that bumps into
Lyanna entire face is covered in blood and fried skin. Any other time, Lyanna would’ve tried to help her. But she just snatches the gun the woman’s carrying and runs behind those who are able to defend Dragonstone.

Lyanna, along with the servants, is engaged in a bloody gunfight with some men when another explosion sounds off somewhere in the mansion. The floor beneath them crumbles and collapses. Someone grabs her from behind, saving her from the same fate as the servants.

“Robb and Gendry are outside,” Benjen tells her as they search for a safe exit. “Jon too!”

“We need to find Daenerys and Missandei!” She wishes she would’ve never suggested that Dany take milk of the poppy. The girl won’t be able to defend herself if she can barely keep her eyes open. “They’re on the second floor!”

“Let’s hope the main staircase isn’t blown to bits!”

It isn’t. But parts of it are destroyed. They have to watch their steps to avoid falling. It’s a nightmare. If they don’t hurry, escaping the mansion will be damn near impossible.

Benjen and Lyanna have to climb through brick and wood planks just to get to where Dany’s bedroom is. When they finally get through, they’re attacked by a mix of Umbers and Karstarks.

Fucking traitors. They take joy in killing them.

A big, tall fucker grabs her around the waist as if he intends to crush her, but Benjen tackles him from behind. Together they unload punches and kicks onto the man. Growling in frustration, the man grabs Lyanna’s face, squeezing hard. She bites one of his fingers, her teeth digging into the flesh, drawing blood. The man throws her off, and before she can regain her footing he tackles her.

All three of them break down the door to a nearby bedroom.

Benjen helps her up, and they brace themselves for another attack. The big fucker just won’t die. He grins at them, his silver tooth glinting. Overhead, they hear the blades of a helicopter. It’s the only warning they get.

The explosion’s impact hits them hard enough to knock them out of the window. Grass softens their fall but it might as well had been cement. Coughing, Lyanna grimaces. The glass cut up her arms and face, and her entire body aches. Her ears are ringing, her head is throbbing.

At least she’s conscious.

Benjen isn’t.

Panicking, she struggles to her side and begins slapping him to wake him up. He doesn’t budge.Lyanna considers punching him. She doesn’t get the chance to ball her fist.

One minute, she’s lying beside her brother, and the next, she’s being dragged by her hair. Robert must have been waiting for the perfect moment to snatch her. Lyanna claws at his hands, she kicks and screams.

It’s all for nothing.
With great difficulty, Rhaegar manages to pull himself and Arthur from under the debris. The blast was so powerful, one of his eardrums exploded. Blood is leaking out of his right ear and he can hardly hear a damn thing. But he’s in much better shape compared to Arthur who has a steel rod impaled in his leg, a broken arm from the looks of it and burns on parts of his face. He was closer to the blast than Rhaegar was.

“There go my good looks,” Arthur wheezes as Rhaegar sits him up against the fountain in the courtyard. “We need to retreat, Rhaegar. You need to find Lyanna and the others. And we all need to leave.”

As much as it pains him to admit it, what Arthur says is true. If they don’t manage to leave, they’ll be massacred. Their allies won’t get here in time, and he doubts they’ll remain allies for long when they hear about this.

Losing a brawl is one thing but to have enemies attack a family’s home, successfully, is disgraceful. His arrogance has cost his family greatly. But all is not lost. If they survive, they can have their revenge later.

“I can’t leave you here like this,” Rhaegar says. “You’re practically defenseless.”

“I still have my gun. I’ll be fine.”

Rhaegar isn’t put at ease in the slightest but he has to get a move on it? He leaves Arthur and runs around the back of the mansion to enter through one of the other entrances.

To see Dragonstone be rendered to ruin right before his eyes is devastating. There are so many memories here. Good, bad, and downright ugly. Dragonstone has stood for centuries. To have it fall during his reign is humiliating.

However, Rhaegar understands that despite its history, Dragonstone is nothing more than bricks, metal, and whatever else was used to build it. What he’s saying is, that it can be rebuilt. But he can’t replace his loved ones.

The first person he bumps into is Robb Stark.

Together, they finish off two of Roose Bolton’s men without breaking a sweat. Robb is limping and there’s a scar under his left eye. Aside from that, he’s in good shape. He hopes everyone else has minor injuries as well.

The northerners are merciless with the rocket launcher, and the grenades they’re dropping from the sky. Every ten minutes or so, a new explosion sounds off, and every time, Rhaegar fears the worst.

Robb presses up against the wall of the mansion and peeks around the corner.

Rhaegar waits for his signal.

“Clear.”

They keep moving.

“We need to retreat and regroup at Summerhall. So, if you’re planning on fighting to the death, know that I won’t be joining you.”
Robb chuckles. “I’m not stupid. I know we’ve lost this battle. Doesn’t mean we’ve lost the war.”

“Glad we’re on the same page.”

As soon as they enter one of the back doors, they’re blindsided. Robb is kicked in the face and Rhaegar is backed into a corner, a blade at his throat.

“Gods, Missandei, it’s only me,” Rhaegar says.

Sighing in relief, Missandei drops her arm. She grimaces at Robb. “Sorry about that…”

Holding his bloody nose, Robb shakes his head. “Ah, didn’t hurt at all,” he says sarcastically.

“Where’s Dany?” Rhaegar asks.

“We were separated. While I was fighting off the intruders, she ran off somewhere. I’ve been looking for her since.”

“She ran off?”

“The Maester gave her milk of the poppy right before the attack.”

Rhaegar starts back running, the others follow. “Why would he do that? When I find the man, I’m going to kill him.”

“Someone already beat you to it,” Robb says as though he were discussing something as insignificant as the local news. “Saw his crushed body near the east wing of the estate.”

The Maester has been with their family since Rhaegar was a boy. He will be missed. Unfortunately, he doesn’t have time to mourn right now. His main concern is Dany, Grey Worm, Lyanna, and Jon. Viserys isn’t home, and if his little brother has any sense at all he’ll stay away.

Then again, Viserys isn’t the kind of person to hide while his family is in danger.

Dammit. That’s one more person he has to worry about.

“Has anyone seen Grey Worm?” Missandei asks.

“He’s commanding the remaining Targaryen forces,” Robb says, stopping to pick up a gun off the floor. He unloads it, checks the number of bullets, and then loads it again.

Well, that’s one less person to worry about. Grey Worm knows when to retreat, and he knows that if anything were to happen to Dragonstone, the family is to retreat to Summerhall. But Jon, Dany, and Lyanna don’t know that. It’s imperative that they find them fast.

“Gendry was taken,” Robb tells them, his voice remorseful. “Actually, he went with them.” He sucks his teeth. “They told him his father wanted him back home, that he missed him, and Gendry went with them like a fool. I tried to stop him and nearly got killed for it.”

Lyanna and Jon will be devastated when they hear that. Gendry made a decision that most in his position would make. Naturally, he’d choose his flesh and blood first, especially after learning the truth about Jon.

The news about Gendry makes Rhaegar wonder if Robert is aware of Jon’s parentage as well. What other reason would he have to attack them like this?
“Do you think Robert is here?” Rhaegar asks. They stop near the staircase and hide behind a decapitated statue.

Robb’s expression is contemplative. “If your wife was with her ex-husband, a man you loathed, would you go and get her yourself or send your men to do it?”

Rhaegar is filled with cold, unbridled dread. “We need to find Lyanna before Robert does!”

Understanding his concern, Robb and Missandei pick up the pace.

Daenerys is blissfully unaware of the real danger she’s in.

Her childhood home is being decimated, Missandei was by her side a moment ago but she’s no longer in sight, and there’s a frightening man approaching her. To her, all of this is nothing more than a dismal dream brought on by the hypnotics she’s on.

“We were ordered to take no survivors,” the man says, grinning predatorily. “But I think I’ll take you with me.”

Even in her dreams, she won’t allow herself to be taken by the likes of him. Before dream Missandei disappeared, she gave Dany a knife. She keeps the knife hidden behind her back now. As the man slowly draws near, she tightens her hand around the weapon.

When he stops in front of her, she notices how much taller he is. “You’re their little sister, ain’t you?” He runs his fingers over the top of her sleeping gown.

Why are men in the north so tall? Except for Jon, though. She always thought she preferred tall men, but apparently not. The man tugs the straps of her gown down, and Dany stabs him in the ear. The knife doesn’t go deep enough so he has time to retaliate. He knees her in the stomach.

Dany barely registers the pain. Wildly, she slashes at his face and neck until he’s still. Then the knife slips out of her hand. The mansion is rocked again. There are smoke and flames beginning to spread in the room. Dazedly, she watches happens.

None of it feels real to her.

Suddenly, she’s being dragged out of the room.

“We need to get out of here!” Jon shouts at her.

Daenerys assumes he’s just a dream too.

It seems as if every time they round a corner, they have to evade bullets or fight off an attacker. Well, Jon does all of the fighting. Her dream version of Jon is much like reality. Handsome, strong, and brave. She watches on in awe as he bludgeons a man to death.

When he’s finished, Jon grabs her arm with his bloody hand. “Why on earth are you smiling?” he asks as they continue running. “And pick your feet up, Dany! You do realize that we’re under attack, right?!”

“Under attack?” she asks, numb and detached.

Frowning, Jon stops running. He grabs her face and looks at her closely. He seems to see something
in her eyes that alarms him. “What did you take?”

“The Maester gave me milk.” She meant to say milk of the poppy but Jon gets the gist.

“Seven hells,” he curses quietly. “Listen to me, Dany.” He brings her face closer so that she can see how serious he is. “Dragonstone is under attack. Me, you...our family, we’re all in danger. We have to get out of here. Do you understand me?”

Daenerys’s heart races. Is that why Missandei disappeared? And all the fire...that’s really happening? Fear begins to settle in her bones.

“I’m afraid,” she says. “I can’t determine what’s real or what’s fake.”

“This is real, Dany.” Jon kisses her forehead. “And I’m real. Stay close to me, okay?”

Dany nods.

She doesn’t know what to believe but rather it be in a dream or reality, she trusts Jon. He kneels down and rips the bottom of her gown to help her run better. Then they’re off. Dragonstone has always felt massive but now the corridors seem endless.

The more she runs, the more alert she feels, but her mind is still distorted. It’s as if she’s seeing the world through smudged glasses.

Spotting men up ahead, Jon curses sharply. He pushes Dany off to the side and tucks her under one of the oak tables lining the wall.

“Stay here,” Jon instructs. “Don’t move from this spot until I come for you.”

“Okay.”

Jon leaves, and Dany panics. Her thoughts are racing, making her head spin. What if Jon disappears the same way Missandei did and she’s left all alone? What if he’s killed while trying to defend her? Taking deep breaths, she tries to calm her breathing. But it’s hard to focus on breathing while guns are firing off and people are screaming all around her.

Why is she being so useless yet again? Granted, it isn’t her fault she was given this strong sedative, and there was no way for her or any of them to predict such an attack. Even still, she hates herself for not being able to help.

Jon’s face comes into view, and she cries. She’s so happy he came back. He pulls her from under the table and hugs her tight.

“I’m here,” he says gently. “I’m here, Dany.”

Dany clings to him, she breathes in his scent and presses her face close to his. “Please, don’t leave me!”

“Never,” he promises. Carefully, he pulls away. “Come on. We have to keep-” He glances down at her, his dark eyes widening.

Following his gaze, Daenerys sees a large spot of blood on the front of her gown. There’s so much of it. It drips down her thighs, her legs, and her ankles. Hands trembling, she reaches under her dress as if she’s trying to stop it from leaking.

“No,” she whines. “No...no...” There shouldn’t be this much blood. How did this even happen? She
prays she’s imagining the whole thing.

But Jon sees it too. “Where are you hurt?!” he asks, panicking. He touches her stomach and her back in search of the wound. “Tell me, Dany!”

Daenerys doesn’t know how to answer that. She doesn’t know how to tell him that despite all the blood, it doesn’t hurt all that much. It’s her heart that hurts more than anything. Sedatives aren’t enough to numb this pain.

Jon doesn’t wait around for her to find the words. He picks her up and carries her the rest of the way. There are tears in his eyes, and he’s running faster than before. “Hang on, Dany!” he pleads.

The dirt road that leads to the estate was blocked off so Viserys had to get out of the car and run the rest of the way. When he finally reaches Dragonstone, he’s exhausted and pissed the hell off. His Hermès shirt is beyond redemption and his facial was a complete waste of time.

He kills three men with his pocket knife, takes their guns, and then kills two more. From what he can tell, the helicopters also serve as a distraction. Northern foot soldiers keep coming out of the aligning woods, attacking the estate at all sides.

On the way here, he called Jaime Lannister and Loras Tyrell for back up. If they don’t show up, he’s going to kill them both tonight.

Viserys finds Arthur sitting by the water fountain, surrounded by bodies. Crouching at the man’s side, he sees the rod in Arthur’s leg. He grits his teeth. “They’ll pay for this,” he seethes.

“They will,” Arthur says, sounding weak, defeated. “First, we need to get the hell out of here. Rhaegar went to grab the others. He’s been gone for some time.”

“The road is blocked.” Viserys takes off his ruined shirt and sets it aside. He touches the rod. “We need to take this out.”

Arthur nods stiffly. They find a thick piece of wood amongst the shards of glass and stone, and he bites down on it. Viserys almost cries as he yanks the rod out of Arthur’s leg, it’s as if he can feel the man’s pain. He wants to kill every single intruder with his bare hands.

No one fucks with his family.

Viserys wraps Arthur’s leg. Then he helps him up. “We can still travel through the catacombs. They’ll take us all the way to Summerhall.”

“This is a surprise,” Arthur chuckles weakly. “You don’t want to stay and fight?”

“I want to bathe in their blood, but I also want my family safe. Can you understand my conflict?”

“All too well.”

There are three entrances to the bunker on the estate’s grounds. Two of those entrances are outside of the mansion. Viserys is taking Arthur to one of them. It’s the gardener's shed. Other than tools, there are guns, explosives, and a door that leads to a lift.

“Take the lift down to the bunker,” Viserys says. He leans Arthur against the wall of the shed. “I’ll gather everyone else and we’ll meet you down there.”
“Viserys, I’m not out of this fight just yet.”

Viserys sighs. “You can’t walk on your own. Do you expect me to carry you around the entire time? I may look like an Adonis but I’m not that strong.”

Arthur smiles despite himself. “You’ll turn me into a coward then? Have me break my vows to your family?”

“To die is to break your vows. You’re no good to anyone if you’re dead.” Viserys opens the door to the shed and helps Arthur inside. “Not another word out of you, young man.” Sarcasm and humor are the only things getting him through this tough time.

That puts an end to Arthur’s nonsense. The man takes the lift to the bunker, and Viserys can breathe easier. That’s one down.

Before he leaves the shed, he puts on a shoulder holster, making it easier for him to carry more guns. Outside, he’s met by a group of men who open fire on him. Luckily for him, their aim is piss poor. Did Roose Bolton send children to fight for him?

Viserys delivers kill shots to two men and manages to injure the other three. One bullet grazes his arm. It’s like an ant bite. It doesn't hurt at all but it annoys him.

Taking out his pocket knife, he lodges it in the throat of the asshat who grazed him then he kills the other man. That leaves one more.

Viserys doesn’t have to bother with him though. Out of nowhere, the miniature horse tackles the last man and rips his throat out.

“Good horsey,” Viserys says. He hates dogs but this beast is an exception. He doesn't do all of that barking, for starters. “Now, use that nose of yours to find the others.”

When Viserys said that, he didn’t actually expect the dog to lead him to everyone. But goddamn it did. They find Rhaegar, Missandei, Robb, Jon, and Dany near the back of the estate. Perhaps when this is all over, he’ll buy Ghost some gourmet doggie treats, not that cheap shit Jon feeds him.

“Okay, now all we need is Grey Worm.” Walking up to them, Viserys looks around. “Oh, and the woman. Then we can leave.” He notices how somber everyone’s’ expressions are. Yeah, their home is destroyed, their enemies have bested them, and their reputations will be ruined after this but at least they’re all fine. “What’s the matter?”

Disregarding him, Rhaegar looks at Jon. “We need to find Lyanna. There’s nothing we can do for Dany right now. She needs a Maester. Ours is dead.”

“It’s not too late!” Jon shouts back. “We can still...save...we can save...” He snaps his mouth shut and closes his eyes.

Confused, Viserys takes a closer look at Dany who’s sitting on the ground beside Missandei. Only gods know how he missed all the blood on her gown. A lump forms in his throat. “What happened?” He rushes over to her. “And why in the fuck are you all just standing around?!?”

Daenerys is crying and mumbling something incomprehensible. Without thinking, he tries to lift her gown to find the source of the blood, but Rhaegar stops him.

“Viserys, there’s nothing we can do.” His older brother touches his shoulder, urging him to move away from Dany.
Reluctantly, Viserys complies. They walk out of hearing range, and that’s when Rhaegar tells him that Dany miscarried. The news washes over him, and his entire body goes into shock. By the looks of it, Rhaegar and Jon are in a similar state.

Hell, he didn’t even know Dany was pregnant. That’s his first thought. Viserys’s second thought is that he should’ve been here. Had he been here from the start, he could’ve protected Dany, could’ve protected her unborn child, and everyone else.

He failed. He failed his family. He failed everyone. He faile-

Rhaegar cups Viserys’s face and brings their foreheads together, his eyes are wide and crazed. “I need you to keep it together, brother. Take them to the bunker. I’ll go find Lyanna.”

There’s so much Viserys wants to say, so many things he wants to know. But now isn’t the time for any of that. He promises Rhaegar to do as he’s told.

Lyanna thought Robert was going to kill her, and she wished that he had.

Robert dragged her all the way to the woods by her hair, cursing and degrading her the entire time. She was every bitch, whore, and slut in the book. He even used some words she’d never heard of before. She didn’t know his mind was capable of producing that much.

He made her watch the destruction of Dragonstone as if it was supposed to break her or something. Dragonstone can be rebuilt she told him. She also promised him that Rhaegar would make him, and everyone else involved regret ever doing this.

That had been her biggest mistake. She shouldn’t have uttered Rhaegar’s name. Hearing that name has always been a trigger for Robert.

He backhanded her so hard, she saw stars.

“Did you think I would never find out?!” He kicked her in the stomach as if to spite her for carrying Rhaegar’s child and not his. “You had the nerve to bring that abomination into my home, you made me raise it, made me name it my heir! All the while you walked around like you were pure as snow!”

Lyanna never confirmed nor denied her virginity when they married. It was Robert who made her out to be something she wasn’t. It was Robert who filled his own head with a fairy tale. But Lyanna couldn’t say any of that in her defense because he kept her head pressed in the mud for most of the beating.

Robert turned her on her back and glared at her with all the malice he could muster. “When I get my hands on your wretched offspring, I’m going to crush his head like a grape! I’m going to make you watch me do it!”

Lyanna believed him. She tried to fight back, tried to kill him to keep him away from Jon but Robert’s strength always depended on the amount of rage he could gather. He overpowered her easily.

For the first time in a very long time, Lyanna felt weak and helpless.

Fisting her hair, Robert yanked her up. “I’m going to make you watch me kill your precious Rhaegar then I’ll put a baby in you. Rather you want me to or not! I don’t give a damn anymore! You owe
Lyanna spat in his face. “I’ll never carry a child from you! Never! I’ll rip the little shit out of me!” She would rather die than give birth to a child he had a part in making. “I’ll never be yours!”

“You’re a hateful bitch!” Robert shook her until her teeth rattled. Then he started tearing at her clothes. “You owe me a child! And you’ll give me!”

Lyanna screamed and screamed until her throat was raw. She hit him and clawed at his face, but it did her no good in the end. Robert stripped her of her clothes and then he stripped her of her dignity. When he was done, he stood over her. “Maybe if I mark you proper, you’ll understand your place better…”

His intention was to humiliate her further by urinating on her. At that moment, Lyanna was relieved when his plan was thwarted by the arrival of Benjen. But looking back on it, she wishes he had never come.

Benjen and Robert fought a violent and bloody fight. Her brother always loathed Robert, and Robert never cared for Benjen. And one look at Lyanna was enough for Benjen to know what had transpired. That and the fact that Robert’s pants were still undone.

She didn’t want anyone, especially her brother to see her like that. But as tonight and the past has proved, people don’t always get their way.

Strength doesn’t matter much in comparison to speed and agility. Benjen was always quick on his feet, he always stayed in shape. While Robert was out of shape and out of practice. The fight was supposed to be easy.

But right when Benjen was winning, one of Robert’s men came up behind him and shot him in the head with a shotgun.

Lyanna tried to scream but her voice got lost in her throat. She scrambled to collect the pieces of her brother’s head despite how ridiculous that is. At the time she thought that if she found them all she could bring him back. Like a puzzle, Benjen would be restored. She can’t remember when the realization fully hit her. Perhaps it never did.

“The Lannisters and the Tyrells are here,” the man who shot Benjen told Robert. “It’s time to retreat.” He looked at Lyanna. “Are we taking your wife with us?”

Robert spat on the ground. “Leave her. I want him to find her just like this.”

The gods must favor Robert tonight because that’s exactly how Rhaegar finds her. Naked, bruised, defiled, and sobbing over Benjen’s corpse.

“Our Maester is putting in overtime tonight,” Tyrion remarks as he brings a glass of wine up to his lips. Taking a sip, he hums quietly. “Robert Baratheon has truly gone off the deep end.”

“Father is furious,” Jaime says, keeping his eyes downcast. “The Targaryens suffered a great loss yet he’s only concerned about how it’ll affect us.”

Tyrion understands his brother’s annoyance the same way he understands their father’s disregard.
“Roose Bolton and Robert Baratheon made a mockery of our greatest ally. Dragonstone has been reduced to a ruin. Lyanna Stark may never recover, mentally. Arthur Dayne may never walk again. And Rhaegar Targaryen is on insanity’s doorstep.”

From her place over by the window, Cersei speaks. “What of their sister? Did you see her gown when they brought her in?”

The mention of Daenerys makes Jaime frown. Tyrion believes it’s because of the girl’s resemblance to her mother, Rhaella. Who just so happens to be Jaime’s first love, not Cersei.

It’s fun being the keeper of his siblings' secrets.

“They’re keeping quiet about young Daenerys’s situation,” Tyrion says, though, he’s drawn his own conclusions. But he keeps it to himself. It feels strange to gossip about her. “What I find most intriguing is Jon’s resemblance to Rhaegar.”

Cersei walks to where they’re sitting, pouring herself a glass of wine. “Gods, I thought I was the only one who noticed that.”

“Do you honestly believe that you would notice something that I wouldn’t, dear sister?” Tyrion teases.

Disregarding him, Cersei says, “Jaime, you were once close to them. Do you think Jon is their son?”

“I’m sure Rhaegar will confirm on his own rather Jon is his son or not when the time comes. We still have to meet with Robb Stark to discuss our strategy.”

“Strategy?” Cersei laughs. “Why bother with battle plans at this point? Our northern counterparts only understand one thing, and that’s dishonor. In order to beat them, you have to fight dirty.”

“There won’t be a fight,” Tyrion says. “At least not so soon. The beautiful and powerful Targaryens were defeated tonight. They’ll need time to lick their wounds.” It’s a pity, truly. He only finds comfort in knowing that they won’t stay down for long. “We should take that vacation to Dorne that Cersei has been babbling about for the past month.”

“I don’t babble,” Cersei snaps.

Jaime nods. “Yes, you do.”

“Don’t bother coming to my room tonight.”

“We both know you’re going to come to mine instead.”

While his siblings bicker, Tyrion watches on fondly. However, he finds it difficult to enjoy this moment with his family when their close acquaintances are suffering.

The southern families will never forget what happened tonight.

“I thought I was ready for this. I thought I was prepared to fill my father’s shoes,” Robb says. “But I’m not. The petty shit we’ve been involved in before has never been like this. After losing my father then Uncle Benjen...after what happened to Aunt Lyanna…”

Jon’s stomach turns. First, he couldn’t get the image of his uncle’s head out of his mind. Now, all he
can think about is Dany’s bloody gown, and Rhaeger carrying his mother out of the woods last night. “You don’t have to explain yourself, Robb. I understand why you’d rather be with your mother and siblings now.”

Robb has had his fair share of traumatic events, and he hasn’t taken the time to grieve. It takes a brave individual to recognize when their mind needs a break and face the things they’d wish to ignore.

“Come with me to Braavos.” Robb turns away, ashamed that he’d even ask such a thing at a time like this. “Gendry left, and your mother… and Dany…” He stops himself. “I’m afraid you’ll turn out like Rhaegar and Viserys.”

Viserys has always been missing a few screws, but the way Rhaegar screamed when he found Lyanna...Gods, they all heard it. Only a madman could scream like that. Then the faraway look in his eyes when he carried her out. It was more than pain, remorse, or sorrow in his eyes.

Targaryen madness seems to be a real thing.

“Perhaps I’ll end up that way no matter what,” Jon says. He glances up at the window of the room Daenerys is sleeping in. Unlike Dragonstone, Casterly Rock is bright, and modern with large windows that allow people to catch glimpses of the family’s wealth. The Lannisters have always been show-offs. “My place is here with my mother and Dany. I promised her I would never leave her, and I intend to keep that promise.”

Robb nods in understanding. “I’ll be back,” he promises. “We’ll avenge our families. You have my word.”

“I don’t need it. I know you won’t let this go unpunished.”

Usually, Robb is the first to go in for a hug but this time it’s Jon. He’s going to miss Robb, and he can’t shake the fear that whenever he turns around another family member will end up dead. How many more of their own will die before this is all over? He supposes only time will tell.

Tywin Lannister gives Robb money and everything he’ll need for his trip on Rhaegar’s behalf. Rhaegar hasn’t left his mother’s side since they arrived. As much as Jon wishes to be by her side as well, he can’t see her all broken and frail like that. She won’t tell anyone who raped her. She won’t say anything at all. But they all have their suspicions.

Jon overheard the Maester tell Tywin that the event was so traumatic that Lyanna could possibly develop voluntary mutism.

As Jon is walking up to where Daenerys is staying, he sees Viserys walking out of the door. His eyes are bloodshot red and puffy. For once it’s due to crying not drugs.

“You didn’t leave with your cousin,” Viserys says, sniffing. It’s strange to see him crying. Even stranger is how he doesn’t try to hide his tears from Jon. “So, you intend to stay?”

Jon nods.

“Good, because I’m returning to Essos.”

“You’re...leaving?”

“That’s not true.” Jon is startled by his reaction. Why should he give a fuck if Viserys leaves? He’s never really liked him. “This isn’t over. We need to retaliate.” Doesn’t mean that he can’t recognize how vital Viserys is to the family.

Viserys shakes his head. His decision is made, it’s all over his face. “No, it isn’t over. I can assure you that. But we’ve lost for now. It burns my insides to say it, but it’s true. Our home…” His voice breaks. “Is gone. We could’ve had another family member but they were stolen from us. What happened to your mother…” He straightens up and wipes his eyes. “Had I been where I was supposed to be, we would’ve been a stronger unit. For my failure, I will remove myself for the time being.”

He brushes past Jon, and Jon grabs his arm.

“Please, Viserys, stay. They need you.” We need you. “Without you or Rhaegar, this family is finished.”

Viserys yanks his arm away. “You’re the heir to Dragonstone. You might as well prepare to take over the family one day. Rhaegar will never be the same after this and I can’t forgive myself for my failings.”

Then he leaves. Jon hates Viserys for leaving, and he hates himself more for not trying harder to stop him. But he can’t lie. He also feels defeated and hopeless.

Some time passes before Jon is able to get his feet moving again. He expects to find Daenerys in tears, but she appears to be more put together than he is. She’s stronger than she thinks.

“Did you see Viserys on your way in?” she asks quietly.

“I did.”

“He told you he was leaving?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t think poorly of him. Viserys is very hard on himself. It may seem like he’s running away but leaving is his version of punishment.”

Jon sits in a chair by the bed. It’s where he spent the majority of the night. “My Uncle Benjen’s the same way. But he always came back when we needed him most.” Just like he did this time. Except he won’t be coming back. Jon fight’s back his tears.

“Come here, Jon.”

Jon gets on the bed. They both sit up with their backs touching the headboard. Rather this would be considered inappropriate or not doesn’t cross his mind. Daenerys lost a baby, their baby. The only thing he cares about right now is how he can help her heal physically and emotionally.

“It’s okay if you want to cry,” Daenerys says, taking his hand into her own. “I promise not to laugh.”

Jon stares at their linked hands. Daenerys must take that as his way of expressing his disapproval. She tugs her hand away, but he tightens his grip.

“You don’t have to pretend, Jon. I know you don’t want that sort of relationship with me.”

“I thought you saw right through me.”
Daenerys looks away from him. “That was before I miscarried. I didn’t want to tell you about the baby because I didn’t want you to say it was another mistake. Now that I’ve lost it, I’m afraid you’re angry with me...”

Jon fails to understand the logic behind that. He thinks that his past behavior just has Daenerys worried over every little thing. If that’s the case, he’s a bigger ass than he previously thought.

“How would I be angry with you, Dany?”

“Men are weird.”

“Women are too.”

“Not as weird as men.”

“Dany, I’m not mad at you. I don’t hate you. I don’t find you disgusting. I don’t think what we did was a mistake. As for our baby, nothing that ever comes from you can be a mistake.”

Daenerys faces him, her face filled with uncertainty. “What about something that comes from us, Jon?”

“I could never view our child as a mistake. I can’t speak for society.”

“Fuck society. Society should have no opinion on our affairs. They don’t live in the world we do.”

“You’re starting to sound like Viserys.”

Daenerys seems to take that as a compliment. What is the world coming to?

“If you can’t stomach society’s opinion then love me in secret, but don’t give up on me over something out of our control, Jon.”

Funny how Jon was holding back his true feelings in order to keep Dany safe from outside opinions. As it turns out, she doesn’t care anymore. Why should he care either? People still fear and respect Jaime Lannister, and people still think Cersei Lannister is one of the most beautiful women in Westeros. Their status hasn’t been affected by their incestual relationship.

Dany is right, they’re in a position where they can do whatever the fuck they want, society be damned. Besides, they’re going to need one another moving forward. It’s better to be a solid unit rather than be at odds with one another.

Jon gives her hand a gentle squeeze. “It’d be pointless to love you in secret. I’m pretty sure everyone around us already knows how we both feel.”

Daenerys’s face lights up. She hugs him. Jon doesn’t return the embrace as eagerly as not to put too much pressure on her stomach.

“It’s okay, Jon. There’s nothing left to hurt.”

“I’m sorry,” he says, the tears he tried to hold back begin to fall. “I’m so sorry. Dany.” He’s sorry for what he put her through, sorry for the child they lost, sorry for not being there for his uncles or his mother. “I’m sorry...”

Daenerys doesn’t let him go.

She holds him through the tears and the muttered apologies. He’s fortunate to have her. So fortunate.
As long as they have one another, they can rebuild what they’ve lost, and for the things that can’t be rebuilt, their enemies will pay for it in blood.
The Dragon Stirs

Chapter Notes

Moodboard done be the lovely enygma0710 <3

Summerhall is breathtaking with its Valyrian inspired architecture and its picturesque location on the top of a hill that overlooks the white, sandy beaches. The domed roof and the great door are obsidian, contrasting beautifully against the white, sandstone exterior.

My silence is not my weakness but the beginning of my revenge.
There isn’t a garden or a grand gazebo like there was at Dragonstone. Only neatly trimmed hedges, narrow evergreen trees, and crisp green grass.

On the inside, the walls are bare, bone white, but the mural on the ceilings make up for the bleakness. A walk through the mansion is like a walk through history.

In the foyer, the rise of Valyria is depicted. It’s what most would describe as a Golden Age. Every scene in front of the mansion is bright and joyous, triumphant. Dragons and their riders fly around towers that touch the sky, sorcerers are depicted as noble and wise, Valyria is advanced and prosperous. Then the colors of the paintings begin to change along with the colors of the mansion’s interior the further you go.

That’s because the story changes.

Hooded figures gather around a volcano, a woman with silver hair and violet eyes has a prophetic dream and urges her family to leave, and those wise sorcerers begin to lose their luster.

Harsh reds, yellows, oranges and black dominate the painting now. Those fearless dragons and their riders who once flew carelessly fall from the sky. Those towers that once touched that very sky collapse. All of it is consumed by volcanic lava.

The Doom of Valyria hangs above Jon’s head as he sits where his father should be sitting.

Unlike a majority of Summerhall, the walls and floors in this room are black. It’s meant to intimidate as well as exude power and mystery. The Doom of Valyria is the centerpiece of the room’s design to serve as a reminder to all of two things: power isn’t permanent and Targaryens always come out on top in the end.

Jon’s existence today is proof of that. His ancestors were nearly wiped out, erased from the pages of history yet here they stand.

Too bad no one seems to give a shit. At least not Rhaegar’s business partners. They only care about the family’s present failings.

News of their humiliating defeat spread throughout the city, to the shores of Essos, and as far as Qarth. Jon knew that would happen but for five months, no one bothered them. Admittedly, he grew comfortable with having to only deal with small happenings around the estate.

Then a month ago, Rhaegar handed over his phone and that was the day Jon’s personal hell began. He seriously underestimated how important Rhaegar is, not just in Westeros but in Essos as well.

Currently, an associate from Braavos is letting Jon have it. It’s been one shit show after the other.

The Braavosi slams his fists on the table. “Where is Rhaegar?! I came all this way to speak with him, not you, whoever you are!”

“I told you, my name is Jo-”

“I do not care! Bring me Rhaegar!”

Sighing, Jon glances over at Grey Worm who is standing to his right. They’ve bonded over their annoyance for formalities such as this, among other things. With Arthur in Dorne visiting his sister, there’s no one else around to serve as Jon’s right hand. He wishes he could order Grey Worm to behead this insufferable man, but that would violate guest rights.
Plus, they need to keep their business partners happy, not kill them.

“Rhaegar isn’t seeing anyone,” Jon says mechanically. He’s had to say this about a million times a day. “As explicitly stated in the memo he sent out, I am the acting head of the Targaryen family.”

The man replies with a gesture that loosely means ‘rot in hell’ then he abruptly stands. “If Rhaegar won’t meet with me, I will take my business elsewhere!”

From the notes Jon briefly read over prior to this meeting, this man’s partnership isn’t that valuable. They can find someone who does the same work as him and probably better. But that isn’t the point. Rhaegar has managed to maintain ties with hundreds of people for two decades. He can’t just ruin what the man has built.

Unfortunately, Jon doesn’t have much say in the matter.

“Rhaegar has a week to contact me,” the man says as he stands. His bodyguard helps him into his trench coat. “One week.”

Grey Worm escorts their guests out of the room. When the double doors are shut, Jon finishes off his drink and makes himself another. Instead of drinking, he throws the glass against one of the walls, shattering it.

It’s only been a month of these daily meetings and he’s fucking sick of it. No one respects him, no one gives a fuck that he’s Rhaegar’s son. They’ve been disrespectful, demeaning, and all around rude as shit toward him.

And that’s just their foreign associates. The southern families in Westeros act as if he doesn’t exist. None of them have reached out to meet with him or even acknowledged the memo Rhaegar sent out.

“How many more are left?” Jon asks Grey Worm when the man returns.

“Eight.”

Jon doesn’t bother cleaning up the broken glass. He dusts off the sleeves of his dress shirt and adjusts the collar.

“Bring in the next one,” he says.

The following seven meetings are about the same as the previous ones. Pissed off, wealthy men yelling at Jon and cursing him in their mother tongue. Grey Worm suggested bringing in Missandei to interpret the insults but Jon cares not to know what they’re saying. He can’t risk breaking someone’s teeth in.

“Our last guests for the day has arrived,” Grey Worm announces stiffly. He’s just as fed up as Jon is.

“How do you want to see them right away?”

Jon glances up, hoping to catch a glimpse of the sky but all he sees is Valyria’s destruction. He should be used to it by now but he isn’t. His days and a good bit of his nights are spent in this very room.

“Have I missed dinner again?” Jon asks, already knowing the answer.

Grey Worm nods.
“That makes it, what? Twenty nights in a row now?”

“She understands,” Grey Worm says.

“Doesn’t make it okay.” Jon fixes himself another drink. Good thing he has a high tolerance. “Let’s get this over with.”

Their final guest, well guests, are distinctively Dornish, and one of them feels familiar but Jon can’t match the man’s face to a name. Their clothes are mustard, flowy, and adorned with gold jewels. When they walk, the bangles on the woman’s arms and ankles clink together creating a hypnotic tune.

Objectively, she’s beautiful and regal, her long, wavy, black hair flows down her back like a meandering stream. Her curves are soft, elegant. She looks like she’d make love to you as you’re slowly dying from the poison she slipped in your wine during supper.

Definitely Dornish.

Reaching the table, the man pulls out the chair for the woman and she sits while he stands to her side.

“Oberyn Martell,” Grey Worm informs Jon. He looks at the woman. “And…”


Jon has never heard anyone in this century refer to their girlfriend as a paramour but the Martells have always been rather old-fashioned in some regards.

“Were you sent here by your niece?” Jon asks. Perhaps the southern families are beginning to come around.

Oberyn’s eyes smile but his face remains impassive. “Arianne conducts her own business, her own way. We are here to see our dear friends. We came as soon as we heard the news.”

“It’s been six months.”

“There’s no cell reception in the ruins of Valyria, I’m afraid.” Oberyn admires the mural above. “We were fresh from our excursion when we were informed of the unfortunate news.”

The man seems sincere but Jon isn’t too trusting these days. He can’t afford to be when he has the lives of so many resting on his shoulders.

“Rhaegar and my mother aren’t seeing anyone,” Jon says, preparing himself for another verbal bashing.

Ellaria tilts her head. “Is Rhaegar not your father? You don’t address him as such.”

Jon bristles at that, and he isn’t sure why. Probably because Rhaegar is only his father in name. They haven’t really spoken to one another since the attack on Dragonstone, they’ve had no bonding moments. He hardly knows the man yet here he is dealing with his mess.

“I imagine it must be hard,” Ellaria continues. “From our understanding, you never knew Rhaegar was your father. Forgive me if I came off as accusatory.”

None of their guests have ever apologized to Jon. Not once.

“Nothing to forgive,” Jon mutters. He looks at Oberyn. “I never knew you were friends with them.”
Oberyn nods, a ghost of a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. “Ellaria and I were there when they married. We supported them through it all and were saddened by the news of Lyanna’s marriage to Robert.” Any hint of a smile fades. “Our sadness quadrupled at the recent news. How is she?”

“Better,” Jon quickly lies.

Ellaria and Oberyn share a look. They know he’s full of shit. Great.

Nodding, Oberyn says, “We understand why they wouldn’t be open to visitors but we had to try. In times like these, it’s important to know that they have friends.”

“Funny, you two are the only friends to stop by.”

“The southern families do things differently than our counterparts in the north. They will not voluntarily come, Rhaegar must summon them.”

Jon frowns. “But if I were to summon them?”

Oberyn waves his hand nonchalantly, his gold rings glinting. “They will not come for a man they do not know, for a man that was once a soldier in their enemy’s army.”

“I had no choice. I was born and raised in the north.”

“Be that as it may, the fact remains the same. If you want the southern families to treat you like they would Rhaegar, perhaps you should embrace your birthright.”

“That’s all I’ve been doing for the past month! Day and night I’ve been meeting with pompous pricks, trying to keep this family together and—” He stops himself. He shouldn’t be blowing up in front of guests like this. It’s not a good look.

Oberyn doesn’t seem to care about Jon’s mini-meltdown. “Where is Viserys?”

“Essos,” Grey Worm answers, giving Jon time to cool down. “Jon is the acting head of the family. He deserves respect.”

“I agree,” Oberyn says. “I’m not the acting head of a family which is why I am able to come here today. Laws are upheld and valued in the southern territories. I wish the same could be said about the north.”

Prior to the attack and what happened to Dany, and his mother, Jon would’ve defended the north from any kind of slander. Now, he could give two shits about the place. He doesn’t really care about any of the territories anymore. He just wishes he could take his loved ones far away from this damned city and be at peace.

But that’s someone else’s life. It’s not the life of Rhaegar Targaryen and Lyanna Stark’s son. He was born to be exactly where he is now.

“How is Daenerys fairing?” Ellaria asks as she stands. She walks over to the bar and helps herself to a drink.

“Better than expected,” Jon admits. “How do you even know about her or my mother?” Rhaegar’s memo didn’t mention either of them.

Oberyn taps his chin. “There are spies everywhere. The only thing that isn’t known is the identity of
the would-be father of Daenerys’s unborn child.” His eyes tell a different story. He knows who the ‘would-be’ father would’ve been. “Nevertheless, it’s a tragedy. You have my condolences.”

“Thank you.” Jon doesn’t know what else to say. Oberyn and Ellaria are too considerate, too familiar for his liking. “Was there any business you wanted to discuss?”

“Business isn’t my thing.” Oberyn says, amused. “This is purely a friendly visit. I wanted to see you with my own eyes, as well. Your parents have a love like no other. It is a blessing to see the living embodiment of that love.”

Once again, Jon is at a loss for words. The man speaks so passionately and honestly that it’s a bit overwhelming.

Ellaria laughs. “Come, my love, we are overstaying our welcome.”

Jon feels guilty now. “It’s not that you’re unwelcome, it’s just not a good time for a friendly catch-up.”

“Of course. We understand. We’ll come back another time.” Oberyn continues before Jon can interrupt, “When our friends are open to visitors. Please, tell Rhaegar we stopped by.”

“Will do,” Jon says.

He says that to everyone who asks him to inform Rhaegar of their visit but this time he’ll actually pass the message along.

The only entrance to the catacombs resides at the base of the hill inside one of the many caves. That’s where Jon finds his father; it’s where he always finds the man every night without fail.

Rhaegar stands at the mouth of the cave, his silver hair and black robes blowing in the night breeze. An ethereal fragility clings to him, reminding Jon of some dark, omnipotent being or something along those lines. He doesn’t wear tailored suits anymore nor does he keep his hair trim and his nails tidy. He’s always in black as though he’s in a constant state of mourning. His hair has grown past his shoulders to the top of his elbows, and it covers half of his face.

Somehow, despite all of that, Rhaegar manages to maintain his good looks. It’s just that he’s more terrifying than he ever was now.

“Why are you always hanging out back here?” Jon asks. He has to yell a little to talk over the wind and crashing waves.

It’s chilly out tonight. Fall is nearing its end, making way for Winter. Rhaegar doesn’t appear to notice the weather.

Rhaegar blinks. “I prefer it here.” His voice is raspy, bone-chillingly quiet. “I was born here at Summerhall. Did you know that?”

Jon shakes his head.

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“My grandfather and my uncles died in a fire intentionally caused by the former. As Summerhall burned, my mother gave birth to me outside. I used to come here as a boy and sleep beneath the stars.” Rhaegar stares up at the sky, his violet eyes twinkling with unshed tears. “I had it restored once I came into power.”
This is the first time the man has spoken about...well, anything since they’ve been here. It’s refreshing to hear his voice, to hear him reminisce. Even if the memory is a depressing one.

Apparently, both Rhaegar and Dany were born during difficult times. In a way, Jon was also born during a difficult time. He wonders what that says about them.


The way the man talks, it’s as if Lyanna is dead. But Jon understands why that is. It’s like his mother, the woman who raised him and Gendry, died in the woods that night. Now, she’s a shell of her former self. She doesn’t talk. She hasn’t spoken a word in months. She flinches when anyone tries to touch her; when men try to touch her. During the first couple of months, before the voluntary mutism took over, she would cry out for Benjen, sometimes Ned. Rhaegar used to sleep outside her bedroom, but now he spends his nights out here.

Jon isn’t sure when his father began coming out here but he started to notice about two months ago.

“Oberyn Martell and Ellaria Sand stopped by to see you and my mother,” Jon says.

Rhaegar’s eyes soften for a brief moment. “Last I heard from them they were in Astapor. Oberyn and Ellaria are always traveling.”

“They said they were there when you and my mother married.”

“Yes. They’re good friends.”

“Do you want to see them? I can have them stop by tomorrow.”

“Not while I’m this way.” Rhaegar glances into the dark cave. “Is that all?” he asks Jon.

Jon doesn’t have the energy to give a speech that will fall on deaf ears. “Yeah, that’s all.” He watches Rhaegar turn and head into the cave. “What’s even in there?”

“Nothingness,” he says as the darkness swallows him.

The great Rhaegar Targaryen lives as a cave dweller.

Their enemies will have themselves a good laugh if they ever found out about this. It’s exactly why Jon didn’t bother hiring new servants and why the few guards they have left aren’t allowed inside of the gates. There’s a servants’ quarter outside of the gates where they sleep.

Jon doesn’t want just anyone roaming around the mansion. The room where he meets with their guests is designed to act as a panic room in case of an attack. He’ll lock himself in with an intruder before he risks the lives of others.

Before Jon retires to the master’s bedroom, he stops by his mother’s bedroom. As always, Ghost is there with her. He seems to be the only company she can tolerate for extended periods.

His visits with his mother are always short. Mainly because she’s either asleep or vacant when he drops by. Tonight, she’s surprisingly awake. She’s sitting in the chair facing the large window, staring out at the beach, the waves brushing against the shore.

“Mother,” he says despite knowing she won’t reply. From experience, he knows not to approach her directly from behind. The last time he did so, she nearly broke his arm. He walks up from the side, keeping a good distance between them so that she can see him in her peripheral.
Lyanna doesn’t turn away from the window nor does she acknowledge him. Still, Jon sits down on the floor near the chair but not too close.

“I met two of your friends today,” he says, watching her side profile closely. “Oberyn Martell and Ellaria Sand. Do you remember them?”

Her face gives nothing away but her shoulders relax. That’s a good sign. Jon is relieved to see some kind of reaction out of her. He tells her about the short, peculiar visit just for something to talk about. Even though all of their conversations are one-sided these days, he won’t stop talking to her. He wants her to know he’s here.

It’s what they’ve all been doing. When Dany and Missandei aren’t training they’re in here talking to Lyanna or walking around the grounds with her. Rhaegar writes her little notes here and there. His mother keeps them in the jewelry box she keeps by the bed. Sometimes he catches her reading them, and it gives him hope.

Jon spends a half hour with his mother tonight. It’s not nearly as long as he’d like but the harsh reality is, there aren’t enough hours in the day.

After saying goodnight to his mother, he finally retires for the night.

One of the few things he has to look forward to at the end of every day is that he has a beautiful woman waiting for him. Technically, Dany isn’t waiting for him. She’s asleep. As expected.

Daenerys looks so peaceful lying there in the massive bed that’s far too big for the two of them. They always joke about the bed being perfect for an orgy and that maybe they’ll turn Summerhall into an Airbnb for swingers.

In the bathroom, the tub is already filled with water. Dany must have drawn him a bath. She’s considerate, patient, and he doesn’t deserve her. The water is cold now, and he leaves it as is because he’s too tired to bother with it. When he first saw the large tub, he pictured himself and Dany bathing together, maybe even engaging in other activities. It was a passing thought, though.

Sex has been the last thing on their minds. Well, sex with Dany is never too far from his mind, but the timing hasn’t been right.

Jon returns to the bedroom to find Dany cuddling his pillow. She seems to be drawn to his lingering scent. Not wanting to intrude on the cuteness, he takes his time getting into bed, carefully pulling the sheets back, and sliding in. His plan is executed perfectly up until the last moment. Unable to resist himself, he puts his arms around her waist and pulls her close, wedging the pillow between them.

He never thought he’d be jealous of an inanimate object.

“Jon,” Dany mumbles, her eyes fluttering open. She smiles when she sees the half of his face that isn’t shrouded by darkness.

Returning the smile, he cups her face. “Sorry for missing dinner. Again.”

“It’s alright. I’m used to it.”

Jon never wanted her to get used to it. To him, she’s just as important as business meetings and rebuilding the family, but she’s been set off to the side.

Daenerys turns her face and kisses his palm. “I didn’t mean it like that, Jon. I understand how busy you are. I know what you’re doing is important and necessary.”
“You’re important, and being with you is necessary.”

“Not in the grand scheme of things and I get that.”

Jon touches the pillow. “Can I cut in?” She lets go of the pillow, and he tosses it aside. With the pillow gone, their bodies meld together. It’s the only thing that’s felt right all day. “So, you think we should break up then?”

“A divorce seems more appropriate. It feels like we’re an old married couple.”

“How so?” Idly, he drags his hands down her back, loving how the satin gown feels against his skin. Daenerys scratches his beard. It’s thicker now, making him look much older. Apparently, she likes that. “You’re away all day working while I stay at home. Gods, I’m a sixties housewife.”

“A sixties housewife who spends her days sparring?” Her body holds the results of her training. She’s no longer soft around the edges. “How do you manage to get supper prepared on time?” he jokes.

“I make every minute count.” She kisses his nose. “You looked very handsome this morning. I think I’m developing a thing for men in suits.”

“Men or just me?”

Dany pretends to think it over. “There have been a lot of men passing through the mansion lately…” Jon grabs a handful of her ass. Her breath hitches and she bites her lower lip. “You were saying?” he asks smugly.

“I need to get on birth control,” she blurts out.

“Um…what?”

“Either that or you have to use a condom. I want to…I’ve wanted to for some time now but I’m not ready for a baby. We aren’t ready for one. So, we need protection.”

That’s a great point. It’s just that Jon wasn’t expecting it. Recovering from the initial shock, he removes his hand from her ass.

“I don’t have any condoms.”

“Honestly, I don’t want you to wear one. Missandei told me it feels better without them. She just makes Grey Worm pull out.”

“Dany, I’m going to keep it real with you. If I’m inside of you, pulling out won’t be easy. That’s too risky.”

“Then I have to get on birth control but I don’t actually know where to start.” Because they’ve never been to a hospital or visited a doctor. “Sorry…”

Jon frowns in confusion. “What are you sorry about? You’re absolutely right, we should be using protection.”

“I’m sorry that we can’t have sex, Jon.”

“It’s fine. Really.” Besides, the topic of birth control has reminded him of the night Dany lost their
Daenerys touches the waistband of his boxers. “I could use my mouth...”

Jon’s mind goes blank. “Huh?”

“My mouth, Jon,” she giggles at his dumbstruck expression.

“You don’t have to do that.” The suggestion made his cock twitch, honestly. But he can’t let her do that for him knowing that once it’s over he’ll be down for the count. “Have you ever did that before?”

“Of course not. Does that matter? I’m sure when you first...pleasured others with your mouth you had no idea what you were doing?”

Jon laughs. “It’s called eating pussy, Dany.” She hits him and he laughs harder. “I just wanted to see you blush, that’s all.”

“You can hardly see my face.”

“But I know you’re blushing.”

Dany nudges his face away, and he peppers her hand with kisses until she surrenders and allows him to kiss her. Her lips are always soft, always sweet. He’ll never grow tired of kissing her.

“I’m still sorry,” Dany whispers, their lips swollen and red. “We haven’t had sex for some time, and I know sex is the most important thing in a relationship.”

“Did Missandei tell you that?”

Sure doesn’t sound like anything Missandei would say.

“No. Viserys.”

Of fucking course.

“Did it ever occur to you that Viserys wasn’t a reliable source of information on this subject? Yeah, some people may only care about sex but everyone isn’t like that. I’m not like that.”

“So, you’re really not upset?”

Jon kisses her temple and hugs her tighter. “Nothing’s more important than being able to do this with you after a long, tiring day, Dany.”

It’s easy to forget how inexperienced and naive Dany is when it comes to relationships. She’s been through a lot but in her core, she’s still that girl who’d never been to a concert.

“Aww, that’s so romantic,” Missandei says, putting a hand over her heart. Then she ducks low and dodges a kick.

Placing her foot on the mat, Dany jumps to evade a leg swipe. “I almost said it last night.” She blocks another attack easily and delivers one of her own. “But I think it’s too soon.”
They exchange blows as they continue their discussion. Months ago, Dany would’ve been out of breath or face down on the mat if she tried to converse while fighting. Training is definitely paying off. Her arms, thighs, and legs have more definition and punches don’t hurt as much as they used to.

“If you want to tell him, you should.”

“What if he doesn’t feel the same way?”

“Jon loves you too. It’s pretty obvious.”

“You think so?” Daenerys crouches down, picks up the sparring club and raises it in time to block a high kick. “I mean, I know he cares about me but love is different.”

Missandei merciless attacks with a flurry of kicks that Daenerys manages to block with the club. But her best friend is a very agile fighter. She had to learn the hard way. Feigning a kick with her right leg, Missandei halts mid-air then kicks with her left before Dany can dodge.

A kick to the ribs is nasty. Instead of crying about it, Dany grabs Missandei’s ankle before the woman can pull her leg back, and she twists. Screaming, Missandei tries to kick with her other leg but Dany hits it with the club.

She thinks she’s won, and that’s the exact moment she loses the fight. Victory isn’t had until it’s had. Viserys always told her that.

Missandei does a move that Dany isn’t familiar with. The movement is too fast, too clean for even her eyes to see how it’s done. All she knows is that she ends up on the mat with Missandei’s thighs squeezing her head.

Daenerys pats the mat in surrender. “You have to teach me that!” she says after Missandei lets up. Sitting up, she wipes sweat from her forehead, eager for another round. “Who taught you that move?”

“No one,” Missandei smirks and extends her hand, helping Dany up. “I taught it to myself. While I trained with Arthur, he stressed the importance of creative fighting styles. It’s difficult to predict every opponent’s moves.”

“But Arthur isn’t here to teach me.” The man’s leg has healed but he walks with a limp now. If anything, it’s his pride that has yet to recover. “What about Grey Worm?”

“We have similar fighting styles. You need someone with a different approach. Maybe Jon.”

Daenerys would love to spar with Jon, though, they’d probably get distracted.

They’re preparing for a re-match when Grey Worm enters.

“I went to Ms. Lyanna’s room to see if you two were there but you were not,” Grey Worm says, his accent thick despite the years spent in Westeros.

“She’ll hate it if you called her that to her face. Just Lyanna is fine.” Daenerys smiles fondly at the memory of the first time she met Lyanna. Of course, the good memories aren’t without the bad ones. “We went to see her but Rhaegar was sitting with her. You know that’s rare these days.”

Grey Worm nods. “We have an unexpected visitor this morning. He wishes to see you.”

“Wishes to see me?” Dany asks. Well, this is a first. “Who is it?”
“Tyrion Lannister.”

The first time she saw Tywin Lannister’s youngest, she was a girl of seven. She thought the man was a child, like her, and she begged Rhaegar to let her play with him. He was kind to her whenever their families crossed paths, and always made her laugh.

It was Viserys who lifted the veil from her eyes.

“That’s the Imp,” he whispered to her. “The brains behind the family. He may look like a child to you, but he’s nearly a man.”

How could a man be shaped like that? Daenerys wondered then. She wanted to pity him, but even as a child she could see how tall he seemed in comparison to the men around him.

Tyrion has maintained that air of grandity after all these years. He sits to Jon’s left, calmly drumming his fingers on the table top. When he hears her heels clicking on the floors, he looks up and graces her with a smile.

“There she is,” Tyrion says, scooting off the chair. “I hope I didn’t disturb you.” He pulls the chair back and gestures for Dany to sit.

Daenerys looks at Jon. He nods, and she turns back to Tyrion, cordial smile in place. “You disturbed nothing. Thank you.” She sits down.

Tyrion didn’t miss the small exchange between her and Jon. But he says nothing about it. “Now that you both are here, I will explain why I am here.” Walking around the table, he sits across from Daenerys and folds his hands on the table. “An old friend called me. Although Jon is doing a fabulous job as acting head, my friend believes a helping hand couldn’t hurt.”

“Oberyn called you,” Jon says icily, sending a shiver down Dany’s spine, “and you decided to come here, and do what exactly?”

“You’re sharper than I thought you’d be. I mean no offense, by the way.”

“Why are you here? State it plainly. Beating around the bush pisses me off.”

This is a side of Jon that Dany doesn’t think she’s ever seen before. She’s seen him fight, she’s heard all manner of vile things pass his lips, and she knows what he’s like when he’s hungry; he’s a bloody nightmare. But this is new. She isn’t even sure how to describe it.

Tyrion chuckles nervously. “I’d hate to piss you off this early into the conversation. Very well. I am here to lend my services. Advising is what I do best. You two are in desperate need of it.”

Jon cracks a smile. There isn’t a hint of mirth in his dark eyes. “You don’t know me that well. You don’t really know me at all. So, I will overlook the slight. Oberyn might’ve meant good by sending you so I’ll overlook that too. But that’s as far as my leniency goes. Tell you what,” he says, leaning closer. “I’ll give you another chance to say something that isn’t a poorly concealed snub before I kick your ass out.”

Okay, Daenerys has found something she loves more than Jon in a suit. This version of Jon is way hotter.
“Forgive me. I am not here to belittle you, Jon. Can I call you Jon?”

“No.”

“Okay, I won’t call you Jon. Listen, the truth of the matter is, things are different here in the south and it isn’t your fault that you’re unaware of how we operate. I am here to help because rather you want to believe it or not, I don’t want to see this family collapse. We all owe a great deal to Rhaegar.”

Daenerys touches Jon’s trembling hand under the table. She thinks they should listen to what Tyrion has to say, but she doesn’t want to undermine Jon in front of a guest. Thankfully, Jon and she are on the same page.

Jon turns his hand over, opening it so that he can clasp Dany’s. “I will hear you out. Don’t make me regret it.”

“I make no promises.” Tyrion smiles. Getting up, he walks over to the bar and pours himself a glass of wine. Twirling the glass, he says, “First things first, from now on Daenerys should be present when you meet with business associates. You may be Rhaegar’s son and the legitimate heir but she has the look.”

“The look?” Dany asks.

Tyrion takes a sip. “The silver hair, the startling violet eyes. When people see you, they see a bloodline that dates back centuries, a dynasty that once ruled over kingdoms.”

Jon remains silent. Tyrion takes that as permission to continue.

“The southern families know Rhaegar. They know Viserys, but they don’t know you two. Not in the way that matters. My father won’t meet with either of you. His loyalty lies with Rhaegar and Rhaegar alone. But I can arrange a meeting with the Tyrells and the Martells. You will have to go to them, however.”

“I understand why that’s necessary,” Jon says. “But it’s going to take years for them to trust me enough to answer my summons.”

“Not exactly. You haven’t done anything to catch their attention.”

“You’re saying that I need to prove myself?”

“Precisely,” Tyrion lifts his glass, silently toasting before he downs the remaining wine. “Shadow my brother Jaime or Loras during their patrols. Let people see you mingling with them. Spies can make or break a reputation. Never forget that.”

This is actually great advice, Daenerys thinks. And she’s glad that Jon is listening.

“As for Daenerys, I think a chat with Margaery will do you good. I would suggest my sister, Cersei, but the only thing she cares about these days are her children. Family affairs no longer excite her. But Margaery is next in line to take over after Lady Olenna.”

That doesn’t sound right.

“I thought Loras was the heir.” Daenerys has been studying each family’s lineage to familiarize herself with the who’s who.
“He is. However, Margaery, like her grandmother, is a strategist, and a family’s strategist will always hold the most power.”

“Then that makes you the head of the Lannister family.”

Tyrion chuckles at Dany’s words. “Don’t let my father hear you say that.” He looks at Jon contemplatively. “My sources tell me that you were quite the strategist yourself in the north. Don’t you think it’s time you put your experience to use here?”

Jon sighs. “Never have the time. I’m needed here. This family is the only family with a noteworthy influence in Essos as well as Westeros. I can’t rule here and handle business there while Viserys is doing gods know what, and make time for icebreakers with everyone.”

“Rhaegar managed.”

“I’m not Rhaegar.”

“No,” Tyrion mutters, shaking his head sadly. “Your father is a rare individual. I don’t expect you to fill his shoes. No one does. However, I do believe that you’re capable of great things. Both of you.”

Daenerys doesn’t doubt that about Jon. Yet, she fails to see that about herself. “We lost many of our men during the attack. Will our allies send some of their own forces to assist us?”

“Great question,” Jon says. “We don’t have enough men to check in on our businesses, collect debts, and patrol our share of the southern territory.”

“Jaime has been working overtime to fill that absence. I’d like to rectify the problem immediately for the sake of his health.”

The news is shocking to both Dany and Jon. They had no idea Jaime was looking after things for them. Why would he do that?

Tyrion continues, “Luckily, I have a solution for that problem. His name is Daario Naharis. He’s a sellsword from Tyrosh, and he has sole control over the Second Sons. I’m sure you’ve heard of them.”

“Sellswords fight for money, not loyalty. Using them is frowned upon in the north.”

“Thank the gods we’re not in the north. They were always an uptight group of people. The Second Sons will only be a temporary solution. Your family has more men, they’re just not in the country.”

“How do you know this?”

“I make it my business to know everything about everyone.” Tyrion pours himself another drink. “With your permission, I will organize a meeting with Daario as early as tomorrow. The last thing I wanted to discuss is a tad on the intrusive side.”

Jon doesn’t like the sound of that. His previous demeanor changes in the blink of an eye. “Your advice was good and greatly appreciated, Lannister. Don’t end this meeting on a sour note.”

“My apologies, Snow/Baratheon/Targaryen, but I have to ask this.” Tyrion takes a deep breath as if he’s preparing to have his head ripped off. “Has Lyanna revealed the identity of her attacker?”

Under the table, Jon’s hold on Dany’s hand tightens to a near painful degree. “If I knew who it was, their head would’ve greeted you at the gates,” Jon says with all the hatred he can muster.
“But you have your suspicions. You don’t have to say anything. I have my suspicions as well. And I believe if this news was spread around the north you can begin to tear your enemies apart from the inside. My sources tell me that there are Stark loyalists who await the return of the true heir.”

“Where were they when my uncle lost his head?”

“Does it matter? Use them to your advantage. Let them rally to your cause.”

“Is that all?” Jon asks, no longer interested in listening now that a sore subject has been touched on.

“How is your uncle Renly? I suppose he isn’t your uncle anymore.” Tyrion shrugs. “I should probably ask Loras instead. He is rather close to the man. Anyway, that will be all for now. Shall I set up the discussed meetings?”

Jon nods. “Yes. Thank you.”

“Think nothing of it. I will send a follow up later today. Thank you both for having me.”

When Tyrion leaves, Jon exhales loudly. “Fucker actually made a lot of sense. I want to hate him because hating Lannisters is a trend up north but he makes it hard.”

“Fooker,” Dany says, grinning.

Jon frowns in confusion.

“Fook.”

“Don’t start that.” He smiles despite himself. “Maybe I should step aside and let you conduct the remainder of the meetings today.”

Daenerys flips her hair. “Well, I do have the look. Jokes aside, I don’t mind staying and lending you my noble features. I promise not to embarrass you or speak out of turn. I’ll be a good sixties housewife.” She laughs.

And she manages to get Jon to laugh. That’s a win in her book.

“Tell you what,” Jon says, standing. He motions for her to stand as well. Once she does, he picks up her chair and moves it to the head of the table, beside his chair. “With your looks and my brooding, we’ll make a great team against the forces of the angry horde.”

They take their seats. It’s as if they’re a king and queen awaiting their subjects. Daenerys doesn’t think she belongs here. Jon thinks otherwise.

“If you have anything to contribute to the conversation, don’t hesitate to say it. I don’t want arm candy or a poster child of the Targaryen family. You’re more than that.”

Gods, Dany loves him.

Jon adds, “We both know you’d make a terrible housewife, anyway. Remember when I had to show you how to work the washer and dryer?”

“There were too many buttons on that machine!”

“I had to show you how to fold the towels, too.”

“Our towels were always folded for us. I never had to do it!”
“Don’t get me started on that time you tried to bake a pie…”

“You promised you wouldn’t bring it up!”

Daenerys takes back her earlier thought. She doesn’t love this northern brute at all.

One of the best things about Pentos is its duality.

The city’s streets, buildings, and main markets have remained unchanged despite the introduction of modern technology and indoor plumbing. Gold coins are still in circulation, bartering is still a way of life for most, and there’s a whore house on every corner.

Pentos, much like the other free cities, is a remarkable gem, the perfect location for an international narcotics operation. Essos is the perfect location for any illegal activity, really.

Viserys’s family recognized that and seized the opportunity while the other, western families allowed ignorance and ingrained xenophobia to hold them back. His ancestors hailed from the east, from this foreign country.

Perhaps that’s why he always felt at home here.

Still, his heart longs for his true home, for his family. The drugs help to keep those emotions locked away. People think Viserys does drugs because it’s cool and edgy but he does them because none of the medicine he’s been prescribed works on him.

“So, you’re bipolar then?”

Blinking rapidly, Viserys’s mind returns to his body.

That’s right, he’s in one of the city’s many whorehouses, being bathed by a new recruit. Somehow, they got on the topic of mental health. He thinks the woman might’ve studied it in university before deciding that this was a better career path.

“I’m not bipolar,” he says, irritated all of a sudden. Probably because the man he wanted for tonight was already taken. Women are fine, though. His preference is beautiful people, and she fits the criteria. “How did you draw that conclusion?”

And why aren’t they fucking anymore? His cock is still hard and it’s still inside of her.

The woman, he thinks her name is Bella or maybe it’s Mara, touches the wet ends of his hair. “You’ve had several mood swings tonight. I believe you are a victim of a traumatic childhood…”

Viserys never thought of his childhood as traumatic. He never really thought his childhood was strange until he saw how Rhaegar raised Dany, Grey Worm, and Missandei.

Quite honestly, he’d suppressed a lot of things that happened while his father was alive. There are times when those memories will come flooding back, and he’ll have trouble determining if they’re real or products of his imagination.

The heartache feels real, though.
“Don’t cry,” what’s her name says, wiping his face.

Viserys grabs her hand. “What did I buy you for? To make me sad?” Rolling his eyes, he sighs, “This isn’t going to work. I’m never going to cum at this rate.”

“I can make it up to you.”

“Make it up to me by getting off my dick. Don’t worry, I’ll pay you still.”

The woman makes no more complaints.

After they dry off, he pays and offers a tip. “Skip the therapy sessions. People come here to hide from their problems not be deep throated by them. And, sweetie, those red highlights do nothing for your eyes. Try blonde next time.”

“Thank you, Viserys.”

“You’re Welcome, Shanice.”

“It’s Doreah.”

“Very well. Goodbye.”

The city is alive and loud as shit when Viserys steps out of the brothel. Pentos never sleeps. He used to adore the nightlife but it doesn’t feel like fun anymore. It’s definitely because he’s in a piss poor mood.

Feeling a tingle on the back of his neck, Viserys takes a sharp left, diverting from his intended path. Someone’s stupid enough to tail him.

Up ahead, there’s an alley. He walks down it to draw the person in and get this over with. The old him would’ve led them on a wild chase just for the hell of it. Maybe he’s just getting old. He did pass up on a yacht party the other night just to stay home and watch television.

Who knew game shows were so entertaining?

Walking to the very end of the alley, Viserys takes out his favorite pocket knife and waits in the darkness. He hears the person before he sees them. Lunging at them, he swipes swiftly, aiming for the throat. But they’re fast and light-footed.

Feeling a breeze caress his cheek, he ducks in time to avoid a blow to the head. He jabs forward, and the person delivers a precise hit to his wrist. The knife nearly falls. Annoyed, Viserys switches the knife over to his left hand, thinking the person is purposefully targeting what they believe to be his weak side.

Every swipe of his knife is met by nothingness. It’s as if he’s alone in the alley. Except that he’s not. He can’t see anyone, he can’t hear anyone, but his nose picks up on a scent that reminds him of the spice markets.

Viserys needs to lure them closer to the street, where the lamp is so that he can regain the upper hand in hand; though he never had the upper hand in this fight. And it pisses him off.

“You must have a death wish,” Viserys says, running toward the end of the alley. He can hear footsteps behind him.

Abruptly, Viserys stops at the mouth of the alley. That’s all the light he needs. He spins around, knife
raised and ready. In a matter of seconds, his back hits the brick wall, the knife is dropped and kicked aside, and his arms are pinned above his head.

“You’ve gotten slow, Viserys,” Oberyn Martell says.

The sight of the man, his scent, the weight of his body, which isn’t even touching Viserys, fills him with dizzying nostalgia. His heart drops to his stomach, down to his ass. If he sneezes right now he’ll probably shit it out.

Viserys hasn’t seen Oberyn in years, and he’s worked damn hard to continue avoiding him. This isn’t the kind of shit he needs right now. What in the fuck is this? Did the gods do this? What a bunch of cunts.

Their reunion is thankfully interrupted by the sounds of heels tapping on the brick. They both turn their heads to see Arianne walking up. She takes one look at Viserys and grimaces.

“It’s even worse than I feared,” she says, giving Viserys a once over. “He’s wearing last season Givenchy. Viserys in his right mind would never.”

Arianne knows him so well. If he had a best friend, it’d be her.

Chuckling, Oberyn releases Viserys, and steps away. “The last time I saw you, you were what? Seventeen? Eighteen?”

How dare he bring that up.

Viserys was seventeen, drunk, and stupid. He’d been harboring feelings for his brother’s friend for years like a lame cliche before he got pissy drunk one night and confessed. And like the decent man he is, Oberyn rejected him. He blacked out shortly after the confession and woke up to Rhaegar scolding him about drinking in moderation. By then, Oberyn had already left to catch his flight to the citadel to study medicine. The end.

“Why are you here?” Viserys asks Oberyn, but he purposefully looks at Arianne.

“I missed you,” Arianne says. She links their arms together. “Remember all the fun we have whenever you’re home?”

Fun equates to shoot outs, joint torturing, and the occasional shopping trips.

Arianne is a few years younger than him, but her early ascend to the throne allowed them to bump into one another on several occasions before discovering a shared love for beautiful men, danger, adventure, and their family; and a stylish ensemble of course.

They’re close. Viserys isn’t close to a lot of people.

Even still, he isn’t in the mood to deal with anyone, especially not the man he’s been pining over for practically forever. Gods, he’s out here in last season Givenchy, his ends are probably split, and he hasn’t had a manicure in months.

This is a nightmare.

“I hate to disappoint,” Viserys starts.

Arianne cuts in, “Get over yourself. You’re going out tonight. Then we’re going home. No more hiding, Viserys.”
“I’m not hiding.” He’s definitely been hiding. “I’m on vacation.”

“Even better,” Oberyn says. His voice grates on Viserys’s nerve. Bloody Martells and their accents. “You are here on vacation and we are here visiting. We will go dancing.”

Bloody Martells and their demands.

They never ask, they just say things and expect everyone to fall in line. Randomly, Viserys’s eyes wander to Oberyn’s large hands. He wishes the man would’ve choked him up against the wall.

“Fine,” Viserys says. “We will dance. Then you both will leave me be.”

Arianne tugs on his arm gently. “Never, Viserys. I will never leave you be.”

Viserys pretend as if hearing that doesn’t warm his cold, black heart a little.
Finding a dance club in Pentos is as easy as finding knock-offs on the internet.

There were so many options that they spent several minutes trying to decide on which club to try out. In the end, Arianne picked a literal hole in the wall that was filled with sweaty bodies but somehow managed to still have room for more. The clubs vicinity to the shipping docks was another undesirable trait, but majority rules. Clubs near the docks are always frequented by merchants and the occasional tourist who comes here to engage in activities that are either illegal or immoral in their country.

Viserys has never been a fan of mingling with the small folk which is why he’s always preferred the exclusivity of VIP. Unfortunately, VIP doesn’t exist in establishments such as this. He’ll just have to keep a drink handy to mellow himself out.

In contrast, Arianne and Oberyn feed off the energy around them. A person's status doesn't matter in their eyes. They judge character. They’re social creatures, unlike Viserys. His social battery will be depleted before the night is over. Nevertheless, he’ll put on a brave face tonight.

Not because he’s trying to impress Oberyn or show the man that he’s no longer a scrawny teenager with a flat ass. When Daenerys asked him if he’d ever been in love, he responded truthfully. Yes, he was in love. Past tense. However, he’s no longer in love.

That ship has sailed.

Viserys still checks Oberyn out every now and again, though. The man has aged like fine wine. Granted, he’s around Rhaegar’s age, and that’s hardly old at all, but a lot of people in their line of work have the misfortune of aging poorly. That’s why he’s serious about his skincare regime. Depression and self-loathing aren’t enough to make him neglect his skin. His nails, hair, and wardrobe are a different subject entirely.

That’s beside the point.

The point is, Oberyn is fine as hell and Viserys wouldn’t mind a tousle in the sheets with him. Or a blowjob in the bathroom stall. He isn’t fond of getting on his knees but he’ll be willing for the right person.

After finding a table near the crowded dance floor, Oberyn offers to grab drinks for everyone. When he leaves, Viserys turns to Arianne and glares at the woman.

“Thanks for the heads up!” he shouts over the high-tempo music. “You know I don’t like unexpected visitors!”

“You don’t like for your crushes to see you in last season Givenchy,” Arianne says matter-of-factly. “My uncle does not care about things like that. Also, I did text you before we boarded the jet!”

Viserys pats his pockets for his phone. “You didn’t text me!” Taking out his phone, he taps on the screen but it remains black. Oh, that’s right, he turned it off yesterday. “It must have died,” he lies, ignoring the eye roll Arianne gives him.

Among the influx of text messages and voicemails, he sees Arianne’s text.

>On my way to you. Uncle Oberyn is tagging along. Be sure to look cute! xoxo
“You owe me an apology!” Arianne says, never the one to let any kind of slander pass no matter how small. “I remain a good friend to you!”

“Fine. I’m sorry. Happy?”

“I have a way you can make it up to me, Viserys.”

Sighing, Viserys takes off his blazer and slings it on the back of his chair. It’s hot as balls in here. “For the last time, Arianne, I’m not giving you my sperm! I refuse to bring any children into this world.”

“You’re a bore. Our child would conquer this world.”

True.

“Ask me again in 7 years,” he says. “If we’re both still alive by then, I’ll hand my sperm over in a neatly wrapped cup.”

Arianne agrees to the terms.

It’s not like either of them will end up happily married in the near future or ever. They’re too bloodthirsty, unstable, and fickle. Finding a partner who can tolerate their temperaments is impossible. And they’d be terrible for one another because of how similar they are. Perhaps giving Arianne his sperm will be best. He’d hate to die without leaving a living, breathing legacy behind.

“I come bearing gifts,” Oberyn says, returning to their table with a tray of tequila shots and lime slices. “Let us toast to good health and reuniting with old friends.”

They toast.

Quickly knocking back two shots, Arianne stacks the two glasses and gets up. She finds a dance partner with ease. It’s a scraggly looking man with a long, thin beard. Definitely not Arianne’s type.

Viserys watches the pair like a hawk.

Beside him, Oberyn chuckles. “You figured it out sooner than I expected.”

“We didn’t come here to dance, I see.” Viserys sighs heavily. He should’ve known better. All of that contemplation about which club to venture to was a ruse to throw him off the scent.

“Dancing is not the main reason but it’s still on the itinerary. I’m impressed. You’re quick on the uptake. Perhaps you’d be swift-footed as well if you laid off the drugs.”

Viserys looks at Oberyn sharply. “I’m sure you have more than enough children to scold. My father is dead, I don’t need another.”

Smirking, Oberyn leans in. “But isn’t that what you want, Viserys? A daddy to keep you in check?”

Damn, he hit the nail on the head. “Is that what you aim then?” Because if that’s the case, they can kill whoever they came here to kill and then go back to his place. “Or are you all talk?”

“We shall see. In the meantime…” Oberyn stands and offers his hand. “May I have this dance?” he asks, ever charming and playful.

“I didn’t know you Martells knew how to ask for anything.”
“Only the things we really want.”

Viserys allows Oberyn to lead. A privilege he wouldn’t grant just anybody; not even during sex. That requires a great deal of trust or either a whole lot of horny. Viserys is operating on the latter emotion tonight.

They dance the Pentoshi tango, a dance that requires close proximity and flexibility, and thankfully none of the flamboyant spinning and acrobatics that are required for the Dornish tango. What they’re doing now is basically dry humping with a side step or twirl here and there. Viserys doesn’t care much for the twirling aspect, but he enjoys the strength in Oberyn’s arms when the man spins him and pulls him flush against his chest.

Viserys feels like the belle of the low-budget ball.

Oberyn presses Viserys’s back to his chest, and slides his hands down Viserys’s sides, resting them on his hips. “You’re a little stiff,” he whispers. “You don’t bottom often, do you?”

“I don’t bottom at all.”

“Hm.” Oberyn rests his chin on Viserys’s shoulder. “There are eight Westorosi here.”

Viserys pretends to be unaffected. “Eight here but thousands in the city. What of it?”

“These eight are Roose Bolton’s men.”

The man’s name is triggering. Just like that, Viserys is thrown back to the night his home was destroyed and his family shattered. In his mind’s eye, he can see Dany’s bloody gown, Arthur's injuries, and Rhaegar carrying a naked and broken Lyanna out of the woods.

His vision burns red.

Oberyn’s arms cage around him, preventing him from commencing the blood bath. “Not so fast. We need them alive.”

“Fuck that,” Viserys seethes with deep loathing. “They all die tonight.”

“This is true but before that happens, we need to know where their base of operations is here. For the past month, they’ve been traveling up and down the coast abducting young women.”

Viserys frowns. “For what purpose?”

“To fill their new brothels in Westeros. They’ve only taken the poor so naturally, the authorities have not been alerted.”

Well, that won’t do. They can't just come here and do whatever they damn well please.

“Let’s kill six and injure two,” Viserys says, continuing the dance without a hitch. “If one doesn’t talk, I’ll have another to play with.”

“Excellent. We wait for Arianne’s signal.”

And how could they ever miss a signal from lovely Arianne? She only guts a man in the middle of the dancefloor and cackles while doing it. It’s pure pandemonium after that. The remaining seven northerners rush to their companion’s aid, roughly shoving terrified club patrons out of their way.

Fools. They fell for the trap she laid. She only wanted to draw them all out.
Viserys and Oberyn pick the rest off while Arianne tells the lingering patrons to leave or die. They all choose to get the hell out of there, and she closes the doors behind them.

In the time it takes for her to do that, only two northerners remain.

Staring at his blood-drenched hands, Viserys sighs contentedly. His bones are filled with renewed purpose. Gods, he’s missed this. Rarely does he get the chance to kill when he’s in Pentos. Even better it’s the blood of his enemies that wet his hands. This, this right here, has always been the sweetest, most addictive drug.

“Do you know who I am?” Viserys asks the kneeling men, circling them slowly.

One of the men spits on the floor. “Fuck off! No one fears you or your family anymore!”

Arianne picks up a fallen chair, turns the flat surface facing her, then straddles it. She keeps a gun pointed at the northerners. “I love to watch Viserys work.” She simpers. "He’s truly a master of the art form."

“I’ve heard,” Oberyn says, pulling up a chair of his own.

Basking in the praise, Viserys sneaks up behind the man who insulted him. He grabs a fistful of the man’s hair and yanks his head back. Looking at the other man, Viserys says, “Watch closely. Everything I’m going to do to him, I’ll do to you but worse.”

Then Viserys starts with the eyelids.

A torrential downpour descends on Summerhall early that morning.

Flashes of lightning momentarily illuminate the dark sky followed by claps of roaring thunder. The last autumn storm is always the worst because it brings the cold with it. Once the storm passes winter will be here. Let the meteorologist tell it, Westeros is heading for its coldest winter in decades.

Beside him, Dany is sleeping undisturbed by the chaos outside. Jon doesn’t see how she can do it. The moment he heard the rain slapping the windows he woke with a start. Not because he’s frightened by the bad weather. His concern is mostly for his mother. She hates storms. Always has.

Her bedroom is two doors down from the master’s bedroom, meaning he can always hear her screams whenever she wakes from a nightmare. That hasn’t happened in a while now, though. Still, it never hurts to check.

Approaching her door, Jon hears the sound of his father singing quietly. There’s a small crack in the door. Peeking through it, he sees his parents sitting on the bed, a great distance between them. Their body language, however, suggests a closeness between them. Rhaegar must have come here for the same reason as Jon.

A lot may have changed about Rhaegar but one thing remains the same, and that’s his love for Lyanna.

Jon gives them their privacy. Even though he knows his mother is in good hands, there’s no chance of him going back to sleep soon, and if he returns to bed he’ll probably end up disturbing Dany’s sleep. He has a lot of documents to look over so he decides to get a headstart on that.
On his way downstairs to his office, he bumps into Grey Worm who’s leaving out of Missandei’s bedroom. Honestly, they practically share the damn bedroom at this point.

“Couldn’t sleep either?” Jon asks.

Grey Worm shakes his head. “I was going to check on Ms. …on Lyanna. I remember she doesn’t like storms.”

“Thanks for thinking about her. But Rhaegar is with her.” They fall into step beside one another and go down the stairs. “I was going to get started on the day. It’s nearing the end of the month so that means we’ll have to start collecting debts.”

In the office, Jon sits behind the large desk, a high stack of papers in front of him. Grey Worm sits on the opposite side, sorting out another stack. Neither of them is the talkative type so most of their alone time is spent in silence. Truthfully, Jon doesn’t know much about the man or Missandei. Only that Rhaegar took them in when they were children, and legally adopted them. He only knows that last bit because he came across old registration papers for Missandei and Grey Worm that showed their full legal names.

What was it like for them growing up at Dragonstone, surrounded by Westorosi? What was it like being raised by Rhaegar? Jon has heard a handful of stories from Dany, but she always talks about her big brother Rhaegar, not the role of father that he played.

“Is there a reason why Dany can sleep through the sky collapsing?” Jon jokes to break the ice.

Grey Worm keeps his eyes on the papers. “A great storm hit the city on the night she was born. When she was a girl, Arthur called her Stormborn. She’s never been afraid of thunder and lightning. I think she prefers stormy weather.”

Did Jon know his girlfriend had a badass nickname as a kid? No, but now he does.

“I take it Missandei is the same?”

“Missandei and I had other things to fear as children.” Grey Worm sets the neat stack on the desk and begins organizing another. He’s like a machine. “That was before your father saved us.”

Jon doesn’t need to ask how bad things were for them prior to Rhaegar’s interference. He’s heard stories, he’s seen the news. Dany once told him that there was a time when Grey Worm didn’t speak at all. Like Lyanna, he developed selective mutism.

“What was it like growing up at Dragonstone?”

“We were scared at first. There are stories about wealthy people coming to our country and taking children. They are not always kind.” Fortunately for them, Rhaegar and Arthur turned out to be one of the few exceptions. “Arthur used to read bedtime stories to help us sleep.”

“Arthur. The Arthur Dayne read…bedtime stories?”

Grey Worm nods, his hard features softening. “Rhaegar too. He liked to change his voice to mimic the characters. When Missandei had nightmares he would carry her on his back and show her the gardens. When I would not speak, he asked Missandei to teach him our sign language and he communicated with me that way…”

As Grey Worm lists off highlights of his childhood, Jon can’t help but burn with envy. He can’t help but feel as if he was robbed of a good childhood. Grey Worm, Missandei, and Dany got two loving,
albeit, inexperienced parents while he was left with a caring yet depressed mother and an abusive father.

Then again, his mother did her best even when she didn’t feel her best. His uncles Benjen and Renly spent a lot of time with him and his brother. They gave them fond memorable experiences. For all of his faults, his Uncle Ned was never mean to Jon and having Robb as a cousin made up for a lot of the bad in his life, too. Doesn’t matter if his proxy father was shitty. The other family in his life made up for it. Jon hates that he even has to remind himself of something like that.

Grey Worm cuts his reminiscing short, his deep frown returning. “I wanted to become strong to protect Missandei and the family that took me in. Still, I was not strong enough to protect Dragonstone, Daenerys, and Ms. Lyanna.”

“You can’t blame yourself.”

“I do blame myself. I will continue to do so until the family’s enemies are all dead. Rhaegar is your father. Your blood father. But I see him as a father too. I will die before I let him lose everything again.”

“He is your father. Blood-related or not,” Jon says in all sincerity. “And I’m not letting anyone else in my family die.”

“I am happy that we are in agreement.”

“Do you still remember the sign language you and Missandei used as children? I think it’d come in handy for us in the future.”

Grey Worm nods. “I will teach you.” He leans over and picks up more papers. “You must also learn low and high Valyrian. Missandei can teach you both.” A pause. “Daenerys can as well. She is fluent.”

The last time Daenerys tried to teach him Valyrian she nearly laughed herself to death at his poor pronunciation. His thick accent makes it hard for him to master languages. In high school, he failed Dornish with flying colors. His mother actually tried to teach a little Dornish to him when he was a child but Robert put an end to that.

"We have one more stack left," Grey Worm says.

They’ve made their way through two stacks of papers by the time the rain stops, and the sun begins to peak from the clouds. Jon dreads the signifying start of a new, stressful day. At least he has this small moment to look back on.

Later that morning, they meet with Jaime and Loras at a restaurant that has been closed for their meeting. Jon has always seen the men in passing, but he’s never actually talked to them so he only has rumors to go off of. He’d much rather get to know them himself and draw his own conclusions about them.

“Thank you for patrolling our areas,” Jon says to Jaime.

“You’ll be happy to know that things are running smoothly as far as patrols go,” Jaime replies, skimming over the menu. Finding nothing of interest, he tosses it back on the table. “We expect a
small interruption of that peace in the next couple of weeks.”

“Why is that?” Jon asks.

“Balon Greyjoy was murdered by his brother Euron about…” Jaime checks his wristwatch. “Three hours ago. Whenever someone new takes over a family, we always get a few stragglers. It’s nothing serious.”

Balon Greyjoy was always a thorn in his uncle's side but was never an actual threat. This brother of his, Euron, is said to be nothing more than a coward and a pirate with pipe dreams. Jon isn’t too concerned about the change in command. He only hopes that Theon and his sister made it out alive.

“How do you even know this?” Jon asks, ashamed by his cluelessness.

“Our spies,” Loras says. He shifts forward, giving Jon a sympathetic look. “Gods, you were really thrown into the wild blind, weren’t you?”

It’s embarrassing to admit. Then again, there’s no point in denying it. They already know. Everyone fucking knows.

“I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing,” Jon says, shrugging his shoulders.

“If it makes you feel any better neither of us knew what the fuck we were doing when we first started. Hell, sometimes I still don’t know what the fuck I’m doing. But it’s different for you. You have very large shoes to fill.”

The last thing Jon expected was for Jaime fucking Lannister to make an attempt to cheer him up. Is this even real? It has to be an attempt to get Jon to let his guard down. Any minute now Jaime is going to take out a gun and shoot him. That's Robert talking. The man loathes Jaime and his entire family. He loathes everyone who fights for the Targaryens.

Jon hates how even today the man can get in his head.

“Your family has plenty of spies.” Loras picks up a piece of bread and nibbles on it. “Just ask Rhaegar to have them report directly to you from now on.”

“My father isn’t in a helpful mood.”

Jaime raises a fine brow. “Have you ever asked him for help?”

“He knows that I don’t have any idea what I’m doing.”

“So, you haven’t asked?”

“You’re aware of what happened the night Dragonstone was attacked, right?” Jon asks. Both men nod, their expressions are remorseful. “Then you should understand why it’s not easy to talk to him about anything. He won’t help me.”

“I’ve known Rhaegar since I was a child,” Jaime says, treading carefully. “I knew him when he met and lost the love of his life. I knew him when he watched his mother die. I knew him when he had to start rebuilding his family from the ground up the same day his mother was buried. Each time, Rhaegar has been Rhaegar. Ask your father for help, Jon. He’ll help you.”

But what if the attack on Dragonstone, Dany’s miscarriage, and his mother’s rape were the last straw for Rhaegar? How much can one person take? Perhaps this time, Rhaegar truly is lost. Jon has to try,
though. It’s as if he’s drowning under the weight of his new responsibilities. He needs to put his resentment aside and just ask his father for help.

Nodding, Jon picks up his glass of water and drinks to give himself something to do. The awkward tension dissipates once Loras changes the subject.

“Three new brothels have opened in the northern territories. They’ve wasted no time throwing out Ned Stark’s laws.”

“I hear they’re raiding the Free Cities for merchandise.” Jaime clearly disapproves. “Even the Greyjoys don’t dabble in human trafficking. Well, that may change. Euron has quite a reputation.”

“They’re abducting people,” Jon asks in disbelief. Nothing should surprise him anymore but this does. His uncle is probably turning in his grave. “And forcing them to work in their brothels?”

“Yes, and they have all the resources to smuggle in and out of the country.” Loras picks up another piece of bread, spreading butter on it. “That’s the main reason why the Manderlys and the Mormonts are discontent.”

Another thing that Jon had no fucking idea about. He looks at Grey Worm, noticing the deep frown between his brows. The news about what’s happening in Essos doesn’t sit well him either.

“Is that what it takes to get them upset?” Jon asks in regards to the Manderlys and the Mormonts. “I guess what happened to my uncles and my mother isn’t serious enough.”

Loras shifts uncomfortably in his chair. “No one in the north seems to know what happened to your mother. We suspect Roose is keeping a tight lid on things. We’re not allowed to discuss the details of that night with anyone outside of our allies. So the word hasn’t really gotten out.”

“It’s more out of respect than anything,” Jaime adds. “And spies don’t just relay information or uncover secrets. They can spread false information, too.”

It’s then that Jon remembers something Tyrion mentioned the other day.

He turns to Loras. “Are you still in contact with Renly Baratheon?”

Loras nearly chokes on his bread. Next to him, Jaime chuckles and pats him on the back roughly.

“Sorry,” Jon says. “Is that supposed to be a secret?”

“That’s not it. I just wasn’t expecting the question,” Loras says. “And, I’m always wary whenever the subject of my sexuality is mentioned and/or implied. People are assholes.” He rolls his eyes.

Jon could care less about something like that. “I’ve known Renly was gay before I even knew what ‘gay’ meant. But...I loved him. I suppose I still love him. He was good to me, to my mother, and Gendry.” These days Renly is heavily invested in his political career. “That aside, you didn’t answer my question.”

Loras nods. “Renly and I are in contact still. Why do you ask?”

“I want you to tell him that his brother, Robert, raped my mother.”

Three sets of eyes widen. Jaime, Loras, and Grey Worm stare at Jon like he grew a second head right before their eyes.

“Is that true?!” Jaime asks, his lips formed in a tight line, green eyes ablaze. “Was it really Robert?!”
“My mother has yet to name her rapist but we all suspect Robert.” His eyes touch every face around the table, and every face expresses the same thing. Robert’s definitely the culprit. “I want to see how loyal the remaining Stark loyalists are.”

Jaime’s face mirrors that of a proud father—a proud older brother rather.

“I have your permission to relay this information to Renly then?” Loras wants to confirm before he breaks the rules by discussing the matter with an outsider.

The consequences for breaking the rules must be severe since everyone around here is so intent on abiding by them. Jon makes a note of it. He’ll find out what those consequences are.

“You have my permission.”

Renly bows his head in understanding. Then he resumes eating his bread. They move on to another topic as if the previous conversation never occurred.

Jaime spends a great deal of time explaining to Jon how the spy network operates.

Each family has what they like to call a Master of Whisperers who oversees the individual spies that are sent out and posted at various locations around the city. They see and hear everything, and report directly to the Master of Whisperers who then relays the information to the family’s head. The family’s head has the decision to either contain the information or spread it. Only if they’re the first to receive said information which rarely happens these days what with so many spies with different allegiances around.

Getting a spy into enemy territory is nearly impossible. For jobs like that, The Spider is employed. His little birds can travel to any territory, to any country undetected which is why the man’s rates are astronomically expensive.

“The Spider is no longer a free agent, however,” Jaime says, clearly peeved by this. “Whoever he worked for last must have paid a pretty penny to obtain his permanent loyalty…”

Last Jon heard, The Spider was employed by Viserys. But Jaime doesn’t appear to know that. Does this mean The Spider is that good at keeping his allegiance hidden? Having someone like that on his side would be helpful. Jon needs to get in touch with his slippery uncle.

“So, you deploy spies to spy on your allies?” Jon asks. Uncle Ned hated the idea of spying on the other northern families, and that’s another reason why he was blindsided by his enemies.

“Spies spy on everything,” Loras explains. “This system allows us to protect one another while also targeting our enemies. There are other gangs in the city, gangs who don’t respect the old families. We deploy spies for them mostly. And we have a couple in the north now.”

Now it’s all starting to make sense to Jon. The main southern families have their own issues to deal with inside their territories. They don’t have time to create unnecessary conflict with one another. He always thought the north operated like that, but he was sorely mistaken.

“Tyrion told me that spies can make or break a reputation,” Jon says, finally feeling relaxed enough to eat a piece of bread. Loras nearly ate the whole basket on his own. For some reason, that makes Jon think about Gendry’s bottomless pit of a stomach. He misses his idiot brother. “What did he mean by that?”

“This very moment, our spies are whispering in the ears of the major players in the city about this meeting. When they learn that we’ve sat down with Rhaegar’s alleged son, they’ll start to see you as
a key player as well. A small reputation boost can go a long way.”

Loras adds, “Think of it as a celebrity tabloid or a sports broadcast.” He alters his voice to mimic a television reporter. “This just in, notable players, the illustrious Loras Tyrell and his sidekick, Jaime Lannister…” Jaime cuts his eyes at Loras. “Have sat down with the new head of the Targaryen family! What will come of this meeting? Tune in to find out!”

To their surprise, Jon chuckles. Even Grey Worm cracks a small smile. That's two feats that seem impossible to anyone who doesn’t know them personally.

Jaime claps. “They have a sense of humor! Lovely!” Then he stands. “Maybe patrolling will be entertaining for once. Shall we?”

The meeting with Margaery isn’t actually a meeting at all. At least not in the traditional sense.

Daenerys and Missandei are treated to a much-needed spa day on the Tyrells' dime. Reluctant at first, they surrender completely once the masseuses began working their magic on their worn bodies. After the massage, the three women sip mimosas while receiving mani-pedis. Margaery picks out colors for their nails. She suggests dark purple for Missandei. For Daenerys, she suggests a shade called Ox Blood, a far cry from the pastels she prefers to wear.

According to Margaery, “In our world, appearances are everything. You’re in a position of power now, Daenerys. You must look the part.”

Following her statement, several of the spa attendants wheeled in racks of clothing at Margaery’s behest. She pre-selected pieces that she thought they’d like. Margaery is either a mind reader or a prodigy stylist because they loved every single thing she showed them. Margaery even had the foresight to get them undergarments; mostly scanty lingerie.

“Self care is extremely important,” Margaery says. They’re having lunch at a rooftop restaurant that overlooks downtown district now; in neutral territory. “The work we do isn’t always clean but who says we can’t look damn good while doing it?”

Daenerys and Missandei laugh.

It feels good to be pampered. They’ve been neglecting themselves for months, and have felt shitty because of it. Not just mentally, but physically as well.

“Thank you for this, Margaery,” Daenerys says, wishing she had a better way to express her gratitude. “We definitely needed it.”

Daenerys only wishes that Lyanna was in a mindset to indulge in a spa day as well. But she has an idea of how the woman is feeling these days. Following the miscarriage, Daenerys hated her body, she couldn’t even look at herself in the mirror without wanting to shatter the glass. Jon was helpful but there was only so much he could do when he didn’t even know what she was struggling with. She kept it from him, and she still keeps it from him, because she feels that Lyanna requires more attention and care than her. What the woman experienced is much worse.

Margaery clasps Daenerys’ hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. “Think nothing of it. You and Missandei are my precious juniors. Remember our academy days?” She smirks. “When you had a crush on Loras?”
Daenerys blushes bright red, and Missandei chortles.

“All the girls in my class had a crush on him,” Daenerys says in her defense. “Except for Missandei who was already dating Grey Worm.”

“My brother had dozens of admirers but you’re the one he took to the Winter Ball.”

That night was a lot of fun. All of the girls were jealous of Daenerys, and she was having too much fun to care. Looking back on it, Daenerys realizes that Rhaegar probably had Loras take her. Who better to take his little sister to a school dance than someone trustworthy, and capable of protecting her should the need arise? Loras’s sexual orientation was an added perk.

“We were always looking out for you, Daenerys,” Margaery says. “Even though we couldn’t reveal anything about your family. Can you forgive me for not being honest with you?”

“There’s nothing to forgive. I understand why I was left in the dark.” Daenerys raises a brow. “But you will keep me in the dark no longer.”

Margaery’s entire demeanor changes from warm and bubbly to serious. “Of course not. Whatever you want to know, you need only ask.”

Okay, Daenerys wasn’t prepared for the swift cooperation. She has nothing to ask.

Great.

“Are you familiar with Daario Naharis?” Missandei asks.

Thank the gods for her best friend. Tyrion is still working to get a hold of the elusive sellsword to schedule a meeting. Nonetheless, it doesn’t hurt to get information on the man. And maybe she can give Jon one less thing to worry about.

Margaery turns around. With only a look, she summons a woman from two tables away. She’s plain looking in a way that doesn't make her stand out which is the point. Approaching the table, the woman lowers her head, lending Margaery her ear.

“Find out whatever you can about Daario Naharis. Be swift about it.”

The woman leaves to do Margaery’s bidding.

When she’s out of sight, Margaery is back to her friendly, personable self. It’s easy to forget that she and her brother are contract killers. Missandei told Dany about Margaery and Loras assassinating a YiTish emperor and their daring escape out of the country. That was their first, solo assignment and the success of it solidified their presence among the southern families and the criminal underworld. Even Viserys recognizes them as two of the best in the assassination game.

Respect and prominence are earned, not spoon fed. Daenerys wants to know what it’ll take for her to reach Margaery’s level of influence. While she could simply ask Margaery for advice, Daenerys prefers to find her own path and travel it at her own pace. What works for Margaery may not work for her.

“How are you both doing, truly?” Margaery asks. If she’s faking her sincerity it’s hard to tell. “To lose so much on the same night. I am here if either of you wants to talk, vent, or try a more violent approach. Sparring is a great distraction.”

That’s why Daenerys and Missandei spend most of their time in the gym. They’re training, yes. But
also distracting themselves from their harsh reality. Rhaegar was their rock. He was loving and dependable. Now they hardly see him, and when they do it’s as if he’s on an entirely different plane of existence. Arthur’s absence is just as painful. The men raised them. It’s not easy being without their constant support and guidance.

Daenerys does what she does best. She fakes it. “Thank you for concern, Margaery, but we’re fine.” She smiles and quickly changes the subject. “Have you decided what you’re going to order? I think I want the salmon.”

“I was thinking the same,” Missandei says, helping to push the conversation along.

“I understand if you girls don’t want to talk about it. However, you don’t have to lie or put on a brave face for me. I was devastated when I learned of Robb’s death.” Margaery’s nostril flare as she picks up her butter knife and grips it tightly. “Then furious when I learned that he’d survived and didn’t bother to let me know.” Sighing, she releases the knife. “I had to pretend like I was fine when I wasn’t. We’re always having to do that, aren’t we? Pretend like everything is fine.”

“What else can we do?” Daenerys asks.

“Bide our time,” Missandei quietly says. Her brown eyes empty. “Keep our masks in place, play the roles we’re given, and perform them well. Then when the opportune moment presents itself, we strike.”

Margaery grins in approval. “Precisely, Missandei. Continue smiling. But never forget your pain, never forget what you’ve lost. When it’s time to seek vengeance, let the mask slip so that the last thing your enemy sees before they die is your rage.”

Daenerys clears her throat. “...is that what you’re planning with Robb Stark?” Because she gets the feeling that while she and Missandei are referring to the northern forces, Margaery is referring to a specific northerner.

“Of course not!” Margaery giggles, and it’s scary as hell. “We were never exclusive, and after the stunt he pulled, I don’t want anything to do with Robb Stark. Men exhaust me. Not in a good way, either.”

“Sorry, can’t relate.”

Dany and Margaery playfully roll their eyes at Missandei.

“My name’s Missandei and I’ve already met the love of my life,” Margaery mocks. “I actually envy you. I’m seeing someone new but they’re already getting on my nerves.”

“So, you’re really done with Robb then?” Dany asks. She can’t help her curiosity, and she never gets to take part in any juicy gossip. Also, she really misses being a normal girl.

“We were never going to work out, anyway. He’s the heir to Winterfell and I don’t want to be tied down to anyone. It’s a shame.” Margaery winks. “The sex was amazing. He isn’t as rough as I prefer but he makes up for it in other ways...”

Jon is rough.

Daenerys actually thinks Jon is rougher than he’s shown. He was always careful with her, but following the miscarriage, he’s almost afraid to touch her. Sometimes he slips up, though. Like the other night when he roughly grabbed her ass. Honestly, that’s the reason why she word vomited about birth control. He caught her off guard so she blurted out something she’d been meaning to
discuss with him for some time.

“...we once hooked up during a charity ball, in a supply closet. There was no way I was getting on that filthy floor so we did it against the wall. Good times,” Margaery says fondly.

“Can I ask you a personal question, Margaery?”

Margaery laughs at Dany. “I just told you that I let Robb Stark fuck me in a supply closet. I believe we’ve already crossed over into personal territory.”

“I suppose you’re right. I wanted to know if you were on birth control…”

One thing that Dany likes about Margaery is the woman’s insightfulness. She doesn’t have to explain the reason behind her question or worry if she came off as judgemental. Margaery fills in the blanks on her own, and she doesn't comment on what she's concluded.

“I can refer you to my supplier. Shouldn't take more than a day or two. In the meantime, may I suggest a temporary solution?”

“Please do.”

“Plan B.”

Missandei curses under her breath. “Can’t believe I never even thought about that. Well, the purchase would show up on my credit card...”

It’s not like Rhaegar will see it on the bank statement, Dany bitterly thinks. Her brother isn’t on top of things like he used to be. She can tell that Missandei has realized the same thing. Her best friend’s shoulders slump. They used to crave freedom now that they have it, they can’t fully enjoy it. Rhaegar was overbearing at times yet they never doubted his love for them.

“I can purchase a couple of Plan Bs for you girls,” Margaery says. She knows that they can practically buy whatever they want themselves now, yet she offers anyway.

They gratefully accept the offer and thank Margaery.

Daenerys is beginning to see that this meeting is an ice breaker for their future business endeavors as well as an opportunity to take a step back from the war with the north and Jon's transition to his new position. Perhaps this is why Tyrion suggested it in the first place. He wants her to have a clear head before the real work begins.

Despite the company Jaime kept, the afternoon patrol proved to be as uneventful and as mundane as it usually is. He was hoping the transfer of power in the Greyjoys' territory would send some entertainment their way. He was sadly mistaken.

The afternoon isn’t a complete loss, however.

On their way back to the restaurant to drop Jon and Grey Worm off at their car, they receive some interesting news.

The call comes through Grey Worm’s line. With Jon’s permission, he relays the message to everyone present. One of Rhaegar’s domestic business partners took advantage of the man’s absence and decided to break his contract with the Targaryen family.
In order to own an illegal business in a family’s territory, a person has to pay their respects by providing a cut of their profits. That cut can be monetary or it can be free services. A contract is drawn to bind the business owner to the agreed upon method of payment and prevent them from aligning themselves with the family’s competitors.

“Has anyone ever broken a contract with the family before?” Jon asks Grey Worm as the SUV rolls to a stop at the restaurant. No one moves to get out.

“Not since Rhaegar has been in power.”

They’re doing this because they believe Rhaegar is out of the picture for good. And it’s obvious they don’t see Jon as a threat. Up until a month ago, Rhaegar was still pulling the strings from his seat at Summerhall. But physical presence is important. People think Rhaegar was gravely injured during Dragonstone’s attack. Some even say that he’s bound to a wheelchair, and that’s why he’s been in hiding.

Jaime’s curious to know how Jon will handle the blatant disrespect. If Jon does nothing his family’s reputation will suffer greatly; more than it already has, and others will start to think they can break their contracts too.

“Take me to him,” Jon simply says, his voice far too calm for the situation.

Loras and Jaime share a look. Both are eager to see how this will play out.

The driver takes them to a small karaoke bar that a lot of university students frequent. While some drop in for the offered entertainment, a lot of them come here for the affordable ecstasy. That little shit Trystane Martell tried to bring Myrcella here on a date once and Jaime nearly broke his neck. The boy claims he had no idea about the bar’s nefarious reputation. Like hell.

“It says they’re closed,” Grey Worm says leading the way as they all walk up to the door.

With a nod from Jon, Grey Worm kicks the door in. They walk on the fallen door, entering like they own the place. A woman cleaning glasses at the bar screams at the sight of them. Ignoring her, they walk to the back of the bar. Taking the stairs down, they’re met by an armed guard blocking a door with an ‘employees only’ sign on it.

Instinctively, Loras reaches for his concealed gun but stops himself. They’re only here to observe, after all.

Before the guard can grab the gun at his hip, Grey Worm roundhouse kicks the man, sending him crashing through the wooden door. In the room, a group of middle-aged men was sitting around drinking, laughing, and smoking cigars. They were celebrating. Now they’re staring at the four intruders and the slumped body on the floor.

The man they’re here for, Ulric, sits at the head of the table, his stringy, brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, and his sunshades hanging low on the bridge of his nose. He recognizes Grey Worm, Jaime, and Loras, but not Jon. In his eyes, Jon is probably just some random foot soldier. Which is probably why Ulric just sits there as Jon disregards the other men at the table and walks straight up to him.

Jon doesn’t say a word. He just punches Ulric hard enough to send him, his sunglasses, and the chair flying. Then he fists his hands in the man’s blazer, drags him away from the table, putting him in clear view of everyone present.

Then he proceeds to beat the living daylights out of Ulric.
Honestly, Jaime doesn’t think he’s ever seen anything quite like it before. He’s seen men decapitated, burned alive, drowned, shot, and stabbed repeatedly. People don’t really use their fists anymore. Not like how Jon uses them. It’s as if a beast has been living inside of the boy all this time, and now it’s free to roam.

A feral wolf. No, a dragon. Or whatever hybrid creature the two beasts would create.

Jon growls and grunts deep in his chest as he sends punch after brutal punch flying into Ulric’s face. His fists are wet with blood, and the sight of it seems to spur him on. It’s both magnificent and horrifying. Breathing heavily, Jon straightens up. Jaime thinks that’s the end of it but then Jon starts to kick Ulric’s twitching body, cracking his ribs. One of the men at the table squirms in his seat. The other men are just as terrified yet they hide it.

Jon only stops kicking Ulric when the man’s body stops twitching.

Staggering away, he tucks a curl behind his ear with a bloody hand. Some of the blood gets on his earlobe. He doesn’t appear to notice it. He doesn’t appear to notice anything at all. Not the blood slowly oozing from Ulric’s unconscious body, not the stunned faces that watch him. Slowly, he walks over to the tiny sink against the back wall.

The only noise in the room comes from the old pipes stirring to life as water makes its way down and out of the sink’s faucet. Casually, Jon takes his time washing his hands, cleaning the gunk from under his nails. When he’s done, he dries his hands off.

Then Jon walks over to the table, picks the chair up and takes a seat. Grey Worm stands to his right side with his hands behind his back. For a brief moment, Jaime sees Rhaegar and Arthur in the boys’ place.

Glancing around, Jon touches every face with his dark, unhinged eyes. “Who’s the second in command?” he asks with his deep, northern accent.

A thin man raises his hand and gulps when Jon turns his attention on him. “I-I am, sir.”


It’s amazing how quick the men are to clap their hands and do as Jon bids. Anyone of them can take out a gun and try to kill him right where he sits. Fear prevents them from doing so.

That is what true power is.

Folding his hands on top of the table, Jon says, “Your friend over there broke his word to my father so I broke his body. I won’t be so lenient next time. Do well to remember that.” He stares at the man long and hard. Then he turns his gaze to the others. ”Now, let’s get down to business…”

Jaime and Loras smirk at one another.

The boy has a long way to go but he’s off to one hell of a start.

Daenerys is in the bathroom, admiring one of her new dresses when she hears the bedroom door open. Only Jon would enter without knocking. Excited to show off the dress and share the information she has on the Tyroshi sellsword, she hurries out to greet him.
One look at Jon’s face is all it takes for desire to pool in her belly. She hardly makes it through the threshold before he pulls her into his arms and kisses her. Gone is the tenderness and tentativeness she’s grown used to. Jon’s kiss is bruising, his strong hands are heavy on her back as they slide down to cup her ass.

Dany expects Jon to lift her and carry her to bed the way he did that first time. So, she’s pleasantly surprised when he fluidly sinks to his knees and puts her right leg over his shoulder instead. Jon moves the hem of her dress up and out of his way, revealing her lace panties. He hooks his thumb in the front of her panties, yanking them to the side.

No, ‘how are you?’ or ‘how was your day?’ or any other formality like that. Jon gets right to it. From the moment his hot tongue presses against her clit, Dany feels like she’s going to explode. It’s been so long, for starters. Then there’s the way Jon laps and sucks on her clit as if he’s never tasted anything sweeter, more delectable than her. She has to hold on to the threshold to stay in place. She curls her fingers in his hair with her other hand, bringing his face closer and he begins nibbling on her clit.

Moaning loudly, her thighs tremble and squeeze around him. The action causes Jon’s thumb to slip from her panties. Grunting, he yanks them back again, this time tearing the fabric.

“Jon, these are new!” Dany scolds despite being immensely turned on by his actions.

Jon lowers his mouth back to her pulsing heat. “I’ll buy you another pair,” he promises, his hot breath making her squirm.

Bless the gods for Jon’s upper body strength. Her left leg is placed on his other shoulder. He holds her with ease, and turns her into a writhing and moaning mess in his arms. Daenerys is near tears by the end of it.

But it isn’t the end. Not nearly.

Apparently having her orgasm once isn’t enough for Jon. He continues eating her out through her first orgasm, ignoring her body spasms and breathy pleas because they both know she really doesn’t want him to stop. Daenerys might kill Jon if he stopped now.

It’s too good, too prurient. It’s everything that she’s been needing yet still so much more than that. Jon rubs his thumb over the taut muscles at her entrance then presses in, curving the digit inside of her. She’s tight. Nearly as tight as she was the first time he touched her.

Daenerys thinks she hears Jon curse. It’s hard to hear over the sound of her own enraptured screams. Her second orgasm builds and erupts rapidly, leaving her momentarily boneless. For her sake, she hopes Missandei and Lyanna are still walking the grounds.

Jon takes her to bed then, kissing her in between a promise to pull out. Dany tells him he doesn’t have to, that she has an emergency contraception for the time being. And that’s enough for Jon. She almost tells him how badly she wants him to release inside of her, that the very thought of it drives her mad with lust.

Conception isn’t what turns her on. What Dany loves about it, is the subliminal possessiveness. She loves being able to have and feel Jon inside of her. Not just his tongue or his cock, but his seed as well. Daenerys wishes there was a way for her to possess him in a similar way.

For now, all she can do is leave passion marks on his shoulder and chest as he thrusts inside of her. She drags her nails up and down his back, staking her claim, marking what’s hers. The more she
does it, the harder and deeper Jon fucks her. So she keeps it up until they’re both aching and panting and spent. She’s only granted a short reprieve, however.

Soon enough, Jon is nudging her thighs open and sinking into her again. She isn’t sure what’s gotten into Jon but she hopes it’s here to stay.
And so it begins...

Chapter Notes

Some mentions of past non-con and psychological trauma.

Gendry regretted his decision the moment he made it, but his shame has kept him at his father’s side all this time. Perhaps even a little bit of fear. But mostly shame. As children, him, Jon, and Robb were thick as thieves, always on a new adventure, always getting their heads rung like bells by their fathers for the trouble they caused.

If Lyanna was the one to catch them she’d let them off easy, and never ratted them out.

She was so loving, so accepting of Gendry when she could’ve easily turned him away. She never made him feel like he was less than Jon. She never treated him unfairly. Nor did Benjen.

Yet when they all needed him, he left.

How can he face his brother and mother after he turned his back on them? How can he face Robb who nearly died trying to prevent him from leaving? He can’t. He can’t face anyone so he stays down in the basement, beneath Winterfell and works. He doesn’t even feel like he deserves to mourn Uncle Benjen.

Following the attack on Dragonstone, Roose Bolton held a feast at Winterfell for his men. They all drank and laughed in glee, celebrating the defeat of the Targaryens and the ‘filthy Starks’. His father was an honored guest at the feast and wished for Gendry to sit at his side as the new heir to Storm’s End - no, Winterfell.

But Gendry didn’t partake in the feast. There was nothing to celebrate. And he didn’t want to sit at the same table as the men responsible for abducting his brother, killing his uncles, and tearing his family apart.

His father’s a fool for trusting Roose. This “joint rule of Winterfell” deal is going to collapse eventually. Roose is just biding his time.

And so is Gendry.

He has dreams about murdering Ramsay Bolton, though, he’s never murdered anyone before; Jon and Robb always fought his battles.

The bastard, Ramsay, has a sick obsession with Jon, and recently his girlfriend, Myranda, has developed an obsession with Daenerys Targaryen.

The only downside of staying in the basement is that noise travels through the floor vents and the rusty pipes magnify it. Meaning he never gets to really escape anyone, unless he’s operating a loud, power tool.

Seems as if every time he’s not operating a power tool, Ramsay and Myranda fuck in the storage room directly above his work table. Their idea of dirty talk is vividly describing all the fucked up things they want to do to Jon and Daenerys.
Gendry suspects it’s Jon that Ramsay would rather fuck. As for Myranda, the woman’s jealousy is what fuels her obsession. She hates that Daenerys is said to be one of the most beautiful women in the city. Some would even argue that she is the most beautiful.

Myranda wants to carve Daenerys’s face so she won’t be beautiful anymore.

They’re both stupid if they think they can bring their fantasies to fruition. Gendry knows his brother. Next time Jon sees Ramsay, he’ll kill him on sight, and if Myranda tries to touch Daenerys, Jon will kill her too. His brother has always been for equality.

Overhead, Gendry can hear the heavy door to the storage closet opening and slam shut. Assuming it’s the psychotic couple, he goes to grab his drill.

As he’s walking back to the table, he hears an unrecognizable voice speaking with a heavy northern accent. They’re probably an Umber.

“That’s right! Renly burst in while Robert was ball’s deep in some whore down at the brothel!”

“Which brothel?” another man asks.

“The one by The Moat. Robert’s been staying there every night. I hear he fucks a new girl each night. The fat lecher!”

Gendry’s interest is piqued. He hasn’t seen his Uncle Renly in almost a year. The man calls every now and then but campaigning takes up most of his time.

“Renly was shouting and yelling up a storm! They say he even punched Robert!” The man cackles.

“Everybody’s talking about it!”

“Renly the Queer did that?! Why’d he do it?”

The cackling stops, and there’s a pregnant pause that lasts so long Gendry begins to think the men moved to another part of the storage room, out of his hearing range.

“Cause Robert raped Lyanna Stark the night of the attack…”

“Liar!”

“I swear! That’s what Renly said!”

Gendry isn’t sure how to describe what transpires next. One minute he’s crying angry tears, and then the next he’s putting his drill aside in exchange for his hammer.

Then he blacks out.

When he comes to, his hands and shirt are bloody, a man is lying face down on the muddy ground, and Robert is clutching his bleeding skull while ordering his men to grab Gendry.

Gendry does what he’s good at. He runs.

According to Margaery’s sources, Daario Naharis is the youngest captain to preside over the Second Sons. It’s a position that he obtained by less than honorable means but the exact story on that subject remains unclear.

Daario is said to be a gambler, a whoremonger, and a liar. None of those traits are particularly out of
character for the captain of a sellsword company, however.

The one thing that sets Daario apart from the others in his position is that he’s rumored to be a hopeless romantic with a preference for married women. Two employers in the past dismissed Daario for seducing their wives. A third employer even claims Daario abducted his wife after their contract ended.

“Due to Daario’s reputation, the Second Sons have been passed up by a lot of big clients,” Daenerys explains that morning over breakfast, a few hours before their scheduled meeting with Daario. “That’s the only information Margaery’s spy was able to acquire.”

Jon leans over, placing a kiss on Dany’s temple. “That’s plenty. Thank you for asking. We can figure out a way to use that to our advantage.”

“It was Missandei who asked. She’s always on top of things.”

“So is Grey Worm. We’re lucky to have them as friends and not enemies,” he chuckles.

Daenerys agrees.

She puts a slice of melon on her fork and offers it to Jon. As he opens his mouth, he glances up at her through his thick lashes. Slowly, he licks the fruit before eating it.

“Keep that up and we’ll have to return to bed,” Dany says.

“There’s a perfectly good table right here.”

“Is that an invitation?” This smaller dining room is for their own private use so it wouldn’t be improper to fuck on the table.

Jon places his napkin on his semi-empty plate, and then he slips out of his chair and kneels in front of Dany. Holding her gaze, Jon adjusts her chair so that her body is facing him. He’s only wearing a pair of black, silk pajama pants, his carved upper body on full display. The way his curls frame his face make him appear angelic, but Dany knows he’s anything but.

She was curious to know what had come over him yesterday so she asked after the third or fourth go round. Apparently, Jon beat a man within an inch of his life for offending the family, and it got him riled up.

That information should’ve repulsed Dany. If anything, it made her desire for Jon increase. She only wishes she could’ve seen him in action.

Jon slides his hands under her satin gown, the calluses on his palm causing goosebumps to rise on her flesh. “This is how I’d rather spend my day,” he says, lightly grazing her thighs with his nails.

“On your knees worshipping me?”

“There’s no other place I’d rather be…”

In a perfect world, Jon would then proceed to use his wicked tongue to unravel Dany then they’d see how sturdy the table is.

Unfortunately, a perfect world doesn’t exist. Not for them.

Grey Worm knocks on the door to signal the official start of their day. They have work to get to
before Daario arrives. There’s always work to be done.

Sighing, Jon lays his head on Dany’s lap. “I’d like to reschedule my dining reservations,” he jokes.

Dany laughs. “Of course, sir.” Jon looks up at her with dark hungry eyes. She swallows thickly. “Do you like being called ‘sir’, Jon?” Because she might like calling him that if he’ll always respond with that look.

“That’s to be explored,” Jon says. He gets up. “Let’s get this day over with.”

He offers his hand and she takes it. “Already eager to pick up where we left off, are we?” she asks knowingly.

They walk to their bedroom where their coordinated outfits for today are already laid out.

“That’ll be the only thing on my mind for the remainder of the day.”

“Mine as well. At least we’ll have something to look forward to.” She walks over to her vanity, admiring her selected jewelry for today. “What’s our game plan for the meeting with Daario?”

Jon smirks. “How do you know that I already have a plan?”

“Because I know you, Jon. I know that the cogs in your mind never stop turning regardless of if you’re pleasuring me or neck deep in paperwork.”

He’s so much like Rhaegar in that regard.

“I did come up with a plan based on the information you shared, and you’re crucial to this plan, Dany.”

Finally, an opportunity for her to truly step up.

“I’m listening,” she says.

As an extra precaution, anyone who wishes to visit Summerhall has to meet at the designated pick-up location at the required time.

At this location, all weapons and electronic devices are confiscated. The limit per group is two people, and they have to wear masks during the drive to Summerall, all the way up until they’re inside the mansion’s foyer.

For the meeting with Daario, Jon made minor changes. He had his men meet the sellsword at the airport which is an hour drive from Summerhall depending on traffic. Then he ordered them to keep Daario’s mask on until he’s in the meeting room.

Point blank, Jon doesn’t trust Daario. Perhaps it’s his ingrained prejudice toward men who fight for the highest bidder regardless of if the highest bidder is an enemy of their previous employer or not.

Loyalty means nothing to a sellsword.

Some could even question Jon’s loyalty considering his current situation. But those people can fuck right off.

“Quite the theatrics for a simple meeting, don’t you think?” Daario asks once the mask is taken off. He looks around the room and whistles. “Love what you’ve done with the place.”
Jon doesn’t like this prick and it hasn’t even been a full minute. It’s not his sarcasm or the attempt at humor that irks Jon because Jaime Lannister is like that and the man doesn’t annoy him at all, surprisingly.

It’s Daario’s face that Jon dislikes.

“Thank you for agreeing to meet with us,” Jon says, putting on a cordial facade. “May I offer you any refreshments?”


If looks could kill Daario would’ve died where he sat. Grey Worm doesn’t move an inch. He just stares at the man.

Jon walks over to the bar and pours the glass of wine, his hands trembling slightly. He can't bash the glass over the man’s head. He can't beat the shit out of everyone who pisses him off.

“Here you are,” Jon says, sitting the glass in front of Daario before returning to the opposite end of the table where Grey Worm stands to his right, silently fuming.

“The master of the estate serving me wine! I must be important.” Daario raises the glass then he takes a large sip. “Or you must really need my men.”

“Good, you already know why you’re here. Then let’s get on with it. How many men are in your ranks?”

Daario smiles down at his wine. “When you said ‘we’ earlier were you referring to yourself and the grumpy Astoporian?”

“My aunt will be joining us shortly.”

“Women of all countries love to take their time, I see.”

Jon cracks a false smile as if to agree with Daario’s ignorant statement. “Shall we continue?”

“I suppose.”

“How many men?”

“The company has 500 men in total but 350 are working a job in Qarth until next year. I have 150 to offer.”

They can definitely work with that. But the majority of the company being in Qarth does put a minor cog in his plans.

Daario finishes off his glass. “Now if you wanted all 500, you can pay me double what the other guy is paying plus the fee for the 150 and you can have all 500 without a problem.”

He’s willing to break a contract for double the money. All the reason for Jon to be wary of the sellsword and put his plan into motion.

“That won’t be necessary,” Jon says. Gesturing to the man’s empty glass, he asks, “Can I offer you another?”

“I can’t very well refuse.”
Jon refills Daario’s glass.

Yesterday, Tyrion sent over the sellsword company’s contract and Jon made a copy before forwarding the original to one of the family’s lawyers because he wanted a third set of eyes to look over the document. Within three hours of sending the contract, it was sent back, all of the concerning issues highlighted for Jon.

He’s discussing those issues with Daario now. Or at least he’s trying to. The man isn’t fond of answering questions head-on or conducting business seriously. That’s quite alright. Jon hoped Daario would be the laid-back, overconfident type.

Using the information Dany shared earlier, Jon put in a last-minute request with the family’s lawyer. The man is truly remarkable; he was able to carry out the task in under an hour. Of course, Rhaegar would only hire the best there is. Now, all Jon needs is for Dany to make her grand entrance.

Which should be about now.

“Well,” Jon says after Daario finishes his half-assed explanation about the smaller details of the contract, “I believe I’m ready to sign.”

Daario grins slyly. “Finally, the fun part.” He slides the contract over to Jon, eyeing him closely. “Once you sign and wire the fee to me, the Second Sons will be yours. Well, a portion of-”

The doors open, all three of them—Jon, Grey Worm, and Daario—watch as Missandei enters first, her outfit and hairstyle sleek and professional, her expression detached. With ease, she steps aside, allowing Daenerys to walk past her, then Missandei follows, both of their strides are confident and certain.

Dany is wearing a black, strapless gown with a high split on one side, black stilettos, and a sterling silver, dragon necklace with rubies set in the eyes, complemented by pear-shaped, ruby earrings. Her long hair is slightly tousled and her lips are painted red to complete the look.

She’s fucking gorgeous, and Jon can’t promise that he won’t fuck her on this table after this meeting is over.

By the looks of it, Daario is thinking the same exact thing. While the man slobbers over Dany, Jon quickly switches out the contract, replacing the real one with the one he had the family’s lawyer draw up. Grey Worm discreetly disposes of the original.

Daario isn’t the wiser.

“I hope I didn’t keep you waiting too long,” Dany says to Daario specifically.

“Not at all,” Daario says, his eyes never leaving Dany’s face; her body. “You arrived right on time. We’ve finished all the boring talk already.” He chuckles.

Dany smiles. She walks over to Jon who stands to greet her. “Dear nephew,” she says, kissing him on the cheek.

“Aunt,” Jon says. He kisses the corner of her mouth, unable to resist himself. If Daario notices he doesn’t say anything. “Would you care to look over the contract before I sign?”

“I trust that you’ve done a fine job of it yourself. Please, carry on. I am only here to observe.”

Even the voice Dany is using right now makes Jon want to jump her. She’s regal and dangerous, the
kind of woman that men like Daario view as a worthy challenge.

He only told her to capture Daario’s attention, to keep him distracted. But the sellsword looks as if he’s ready to get on one knee and propose to her.

Jon needs to get this meeting over with before he ends up ruining his own plan and killing this fucker. He signs the contract, and then he hands it over to Daario for the man to sign as well.

“You’re very young for an aunt,” Daario says. Glancing at the contract, he places the tip of his pen below the line Jon signed. “When Johnnie here mentioned his aunt, I expected someone...older.”

The nickname ticks Jon off but he holds his tongue.

Dany laughs whimsically. “How old do you think I am?”

“Not a day over seventeen.”

“I'll be nineteen in a few months.”

Daario signs the contract without looking, his undivided attention solely on Dany. “You’re eighteen? I suppose I should feel relieved.” Then he gives the contract to Jon to keep on file.

“Relieved?” Dany asks.

“That you’re legal.”

Jon has had enough of that. “The contract is signed,” he says, failing to mask his irritation. “I’ll wire the money to you as soon as possible. Is there anything else we need to discuss?”

“No, that will be all,” Daario says, winking at Dany before turning to Jon. “I know when I’ve overstayed my welcome. As discussed, we will start work as soon as tomorrow morning. If the check doesn’t bounce, that is.” He laughs.

Dany raises her eyebrows. “You doubt my family’s wealth, Mr. Naharis?”

“Daario is just fine, my lady.”

“Answer the question, Mr. Naharis.”

Jon smirks.

“Forgive me,” Daario is quick to say. “I meant no offense toward you or your family. It was nothing more than a bad joke.”

“If we wanted a jester, we would’ve hired one.” Dany doesn’t crack a smile, there isn’t a hint of amusement or frivolity in her voice. “You and your men will begin work tomorrow. You’re dismissed.”

Daario bows his head. “I will report tomorrow bright and early.”

Grey Worm walks Daario to the door, and orders two of his men to escort the sellsword to the airport. When the door is closed, Grey Worm glances over his shoulder and smiles a rare smile.

Missandei, Dany, and Jon follow suit.

This is a major victory for them. Finally, they have a force big enough to guard Summerhall, carry
out patrols, and when the need arises, help them fight their enemies. Now, all they have to do is wait for the perfect moment to execute the second part of Jon’s master plan.

Until then…

“I think a celebration is in order,” Jon says. He kisses the top of Dany’s head, then showers her face with kisses. “You were brilliant, Dany. Better than I could’ve imagined.”

Dany beams at him. It’s incongruous to the woman she was only moments ago. Her duality and reliability are two of the many things he loves about her. “I must admit, I went into this thinking about what Rhaegar would do. So, I channeled him.”

“How is that who you were going for?” Missandei asks. “I saw it as you simply being yourself, honestly.”

The comment seems to please Dany. She smiles to herself, accepting her best friend’s observation.

Jon feels as if he’s witnessing another phase in her evolution. When they first met she was shy and unsure of herself. Now, she’s putting ruthless mercenaries in their place without batting an eyelash. He can’t wait to see what her final form will look like.

“You mentioned a celebration, Jon?” Dany asks, hopeful.

“I had something in mind,” Jon says. But his work for today isn’t over. “First, I need to have a word with my father.”

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.

A true statement. However, what King Henry failed to mention—or perhaps he didn’t know—is that, with time, the head can learn to carry the weight of the crown.

It’s called adaptability. The human body is magnificent in that regard.

Rhaegar didn’t give Jon his phone because he could no longer handle the pressure of his position. He handed over his phone because the reception in the caves is terrible; there are other reasons but that’s the main one.

An easier solution would’ve been to simply leave the caves, but there is still work to be done down here. And with things being in the final phase, he can’t afford to step out every other minute to answer a bloody phone call.

Stretching briefly, Rhaegar bends his knees and pushes the heavy mining cart down the lit railway to where some workers wait to intercept him. Doing this every other day for the past months has benefited his physique greatly. But he hides it under robes.

After handing the task over to the workers, he walks back to grab another cart.

Movement to his right catches his attention.

“Master Rhaegar,” the older man says, bowing stiffly.

Rhaegar continues walking, the man silently trailing behind him. “Do you have good news for me, Qyburn?” he asks.

“I do.”
Halting, Rhaegar turns and faces the man, saying nothing. He allows his eyes to do all of the talking. Like everyone else around here, Qyburn flinches away from his gaze. He fears him. Everyone does. They all think he’s gone mad.

That’s because he has, though, not in the traditional sense.

Qyburn doesn’t waste another second. “I’ve finished a new batch. We now have a thousand.”

It took two months to get that many. That’s understandable, however. What they’re doing is delicate work that requires a lot of time and patience.

“Make another thousand,” Rhaegar says, walking off. He grins darkly. “I want to light the biggest fire the north has ever seen.”

“That will take another month to prepare and another month to carry out, Master Rhaegar. I believe your family is growing restless. Specifically your boy.”

“My son has an empire to run. For now, that will keep him and everyone else occupied.” Which is the other reason why Rhaegar gave Jon his phone. “Besides, my wedding anniversary is in two months. I can’t think of a better gift for my beloved.” He pauses. “I want two thousand caches in total. If you require more ingredients, I will have Arthur send them from Dorne.”

“Very well.”

Rhaegar returns to his work.

His internal clock tells him that he has another hour or so before it’s time for him to visit with Lyanna. Listening to the woman he loves scream and beg for death so that she may be with her brothers again is enough to drive anyone insane.

After the first month, Lyanna stopped wishing for death, she stopped wishing for anything. The last time Rhaegar heard her speak, it was the night she tried to abort her baby by drinking chemical substances. She was never pregnant, to begin with. Her immense fear of conceiving her rapist's child deluded her into believing she was pregnant.

Lyanna would swear she felt the baby kicking and clawing inside of her. Once she begged Rhaegar to cut it out of her, to rid her body of him.

A spider crawls into the cave and whispers into his ear, disturbing his thoughts.

They leave the lower level of the cave, going to the mouth of it, to avoid any eavesdroppers. Rhaegar is mindful to put his robes on just in case. He’d hate to reveal the game too soon.

“The Kraken is seeking a southern bride. His reasons are unknown. He has his eyes on a sand snake, a golden rose, and a nascent dragon. He plans to make an offer to each family very soon. In the north, the buck has attacked the stag and fled. It's exact whereabouts unknown. Murmurs stir in the city. The white wolf is coming into his own, but there are those who wish to challenge him. Across the waters, another dragon wets its teeth.”

Euron Greyjoy’s marriage proposal, whatever it may be, is going to get rejected by every family. No one wants a union with a shady pirate who murdered his own brother and possibly his niece and nephew. As expected, Jon is beginning to make a name for himself, and Viserys is slowly remembering who he is.

This information isn’t particularly startling.
Although, there’s one thing that actually surprises Rhaegar; which is rare. “Why did Gendry attack his father?”

“Renly Baratheon made quite the scene last night. It would appear he’s learned about Lyanna’s attack at the hands of Robert. I wonder who could’ve told him,” he says sarcastically.

Of course, it was Loras who told Renly, but he wouldn’t have done so without permission. His loyalty and respect of the laws is without question.

“Ah, I understand now.” Rhaegar smiles proudly. “Jon knows how to play the game.”

“He is your son, after all.”

Speak of the devil.

In the distance, Jon can be seen approaching the cave, his curly hair blowing in the wind, his signature frown set in place. The spider slinks back into the shadows, out of sight.

Rhaegar is happy to see that Jon looks better than he did the last time he came to the caves, but he hides that happiness behind his stoic mask. “Jon,” he greets dryly.

“I need to have a word with you. If you’re not busy.” Jon snarks.

What does Jon think about him? Rhaegar wonders. Is he disappointed? Disgusted? One of the hardest things about a plan this grand is the secrecy. Rhaegar will simply have to endure whatever negative viewpoint his son has on him. In the end, at least, Jon will know the real him.

“I have time to spare,” Rhaegar says. “What do you want?”

“Access to the family’s spies. I know you have them in your ear. But they should be in mine since I’m the one who’s actually doing something.” He stops, unsure of his harsh tone. “We’re doing the best we can but without a Master of Whisperers we’ll remain a step behind everyone else.” His expression softens considerably. “I need your help...Father”

Try as he might, Rhaegar can’t ignore an explicit cry for help, not from someone he cares about. And this is the first time Jon has addressed him that way. At least to his face.

“Do you hear that Varys?” he asks. “Jon wishes for you to report directly to him from now on.”

The spider steps out from the shadows, showing himself to a startled Jon. “I hear him loud and clear.” He smiles slyly. “What do you desire to know, Jon? My little birds can get the answer for you.”

“Everything,” Jon says, his dark eyes gleaming. “Every move my enemies make or think of making, I want to know it. If Roose Bolton takes a shit, I want to know it.”

Ah, the infamous northern charm, Rhaegar fondly thinks.

No amount of time spent in the south will change who Jon is at heart. Rhaegar wouldn’t want it any other way. Jon is also Lyanna’s son, after all.

“Of course. Would you like to hear what I know as of now?”

Jon nods.

“I will leave you to it then,” Rhaegar says.
“We’re planning a celebratory dinner tonight.” Jon glances down at his feet like a child nervously asking his parents if he can have a friend stay over for the weekend. It’s awfully endearing. “I...we’d like it if you joined us…”

Rhaegar is guilty of neglecting his children and his sister. He can’t look at them without feeling as if he’s failed them. Same with Lyanna. They all needed him, they depended on him, and yet…

Jon signs heavily. “Don’t worry about it-”

“May I bring a plus one?” Rhaegar asks, his decision made. He’s done enough hiding.

“S-sure…”

“Good. We will join you all later. Varys, I trust you will look after my son.”

Varys bows. “You have nothing to fear, Master Rhaeger.”

If Varys is stupid enough to betray them, he’ll have the honor of seeing Qyburn’s work up close and personal. The old Rhaegar killed his enemies and cleaned his hands of them. The old Rhaegar was merciful and benevolent. He’s not the man he once was.

All of his enemies will burn until only their ashes remain.

“A marriage proposal?” Out of everything Varys has told Jon so far, that’s one of the most concerning.

“The first of many,” Varys says. He’s a bald, portly man with a solemn face. Nothing how Jon imagined him. “Your aunt is beautiful, young, and from a prominent family. The only reason no one has approached her yet is that her brothers have done a fine job of keeping her off the raider. But rumors of her beauty and virtue have spread far and wide.”

A majority of the marriages in the territories are arranged for political and/or business purposes. Rarely does anyone marry for love, and those that do never have a happy ending.

Jon would use his parents as an example but their ending has yet to be written.

“Dany is off-limits,” he says, making sure Varys understands him. “She will not be given away like some broodmare. Any suitor that comes will be turned away.”

“There will be many a suitor to turn away. Perhaps you should save yourself the trouble and marry her yourself…”

Jon glares at the man. “Why would you suggest such a thing?” No one outside of their family knows about him and Dany. “You are aware that she’s my aunt? My father’s sister?”

“I am aware, yes. I am also aware that before you were taken by Roose Bolton’s men, you and your aunt enjoyed a lovely date at an ice cream parlor and then went to see a movie. I believe kisses and whispers were shared, as well.”

“How do y-” Jon stops himself from asking the obvious. “Your reputation precedes you, spider.”

Varys bows. “And so does yours, White Wolf. Worry not, I don’t intend to make an enemy out of
you. I’d hate to end up like Ulric. I hear he’ll never be able to use his legs again.”

“That’ll keep him from walking away from anymore deals then.”

“And it’ll keep others from openly offending your family. Well played.” Varys purses his lips, his thin brows furrowing. “As for the topic of marriage, Arianne Martell and Margaery Tyrell have evaded suitors for years, however, a time will come when the right man, with the right proposal, will sweep them off their feet. The same can be said for your aunt.”

“Doesn’t matter what anyone’s offering, Dany is mine.”

“Even more reason to, as the kids like to say, put a ring on it.” He chuckles, seeming quite pleased with the clever usage of the song lyrics. “What’s stopping you from securing what you have already claimed?”

They’ve been through more than most married couples already, he loves her more than he ever thought he could love after Ygritte, and they make one hell of a team and they haven’t even gotten started yet. Still, Jon doesn’t think it’s fair to force Dany into a marriage she may not want just because he fears losing her to someone possibly better.

“I will discuss it with her,” Jon says, noncommittally. “I want you to contact me with any new information you obtain, and get back to me about the things I’ve inquired about.”

He wants to see if Daario truly has 350 men in Qath, how the north is reacting to Renly’s outburst, and if Robb is still alive. His cousin hasn’t been answering any of his calls. Which isn’t strange because Robb has a habit of randomly going off the grid; it’s why he can never keep a girlfriend.

His aunt Catelyn and his cousins are safe and sound, meaning Robb is more than likely in the same boat. Still, it doesn’t hurt to check.


“You’re not concerned about the other thing I reported?” Varys asks. “About your brother…”

“Gendry ran away from home. What of it?”

“My little birds tell me he fled south…”

“If I ever see Gendry again, I’m going to kill him. Is there anything else you need?”

Varys knows as well as Jon that his words are false, but the man says nothing. He takes his leave.

Jon watches him go.

A delectable spread has been prepared for them, complete with various wines and desserts. For the first time, in a very long time, Daenerys is able to sit down for dinner with her best friends. It’s also the first time that Jon has ever joined them.

Since they’ve been at Summerhall, family dinner has never been an option what with how hectic things have been.

Watching over Lyanna was once a full-time job where they all took shifts. Then there was the upkeep of the estate, and sorting through the rubble at Dragonstone to secure whatever remained in storage units as well as ensuring the casualties received a proper burial.
Rhaegar’s swords, Dark Sister and Blackfyre, were uncovered unscathed, but the same couldn’t be said for the other valuables in his collection.

All of Dany’s rare books that she spent years procuring were destroyed, the stuffed bear Arthur won for Missandei at a carnival when they were children was singed, and there was no trace of the trinkets Grey Worm brought with him from Astapor.

“A bottle of Armand de Brignac,” Missandei remarks as she examines the gold bottle of wine. “I see we’re being fancy tonight!” She laughs.

Jon chuckles. “I asked them to send the good stuff. I guess that’s it.”

Excited, Missandei gets up to fetch the cork. “I wouldn’t call it the best but it’s up there!”

Grey Worm points at his girlfriend’s retreating form. “Be careful of that one. She can out drink all of us.”

“Is that true?” Jon asks, up for the challenge. “My cousin is like that. Arya’s a small thing so you’d never expect it but she…”

Daenerys can’t recall the last time Jon was this relaxed, or even remotely happy. Like the rest of them, he’s been stressed and downhearted for months.

Missandei returns to the table, all smiles and laughter as she uncorks the wine, spilling a bit of it on her dress.

They all laugh. The sound echoes strangely off the walls.

They’ve each lost things that can’t be replaced. Daenerys knows that the loss of materialistic items shouldn’t matter in this situation. She understands that things could’ve been worse. Yet her heartaches nonetheless.

As if sensing her sudden mood drop, Jon touches the small of her back, his conversation with Grey Worm and Missandei continuing without a hitch. “It’s called sour goat’s milk. The Free Folk drink it, and it’s the toughest shit I’ve ever had.”

“Do they sell it in the stores?” Missandei asks.

“Doubt it. Tormund used to make his own.”

Daenerys babysits her glass of wine. “How does he make it?” Since the night at Ferret’s club, she avoids heavy drinking. Here and there she enjoys a glass of wine. Sometimes to help her sleep.

“He milks a goat. At least that’s what I think.”

“So, all we need is a goat.”

Everyone looks at Grey Worm with blank expressions.

Then Grey Worm smiles.

“I make joke,” he says.

Once again, the walls of Summerhall are filled with laughter.

“Looks as if we arrived on time.”
At the sound of Rhaegar’s voice, Dany’s heart leaps out of her chest. A part of her thinks she’s imagining things, imagining a time when they were all together and happy. However, this isn’t an apparition or a trick of the mind.

Her older brother enters the dining room, his long hair combed in a ponytail that hangs down his back, allowing them to see his face for once.

And he isn’t alone.

Jon awkwardly stands. “Mother…” He rushes to Lyanna’s side but stops himself short. “I’m glad you two could make it,” he mutters.

Lyanna’s hair has grown longer as well but she keeps it neat and tucked behind her ears. No amount of pain and misery can strip her of her innate beauty and commanding presence. She’s a little smaller than she used to be, but when Daenerys looks at the woman she still sees a giant.

“What’s for dinner?” Rhaegar asks, breaking the tense silence.

“A little bit of everything,” Jon says. He gestures toward the table. “There’s roasted chicken just the way you like it. I ordered some just in case.”

Lyanna smiles, and Jon’s body relaxes. It’s as if the entire room exhales.

Family dinner is made complete now despite them being short two people. One day, Daenerys knows that they’ll be reunited again. For now, she wants to cherish this moment with those present.

“We can’t drink without a toast,” Rhaegar says from his seat at the other end of the table. “What shall we toast to?”

“A new beginning,” Grey Worm suggests.

Missandei shakes her head. “Too cheesy. Let’s toast to family.”

“How is that not cheesy?” her boyfriend asks.

Before the two can start their flirtatious banter, Rhaegar raises his glass. “Let’s toast to both. A new beginning and family. Mainly Arthur and Viserys who aren’t with us tonight but will join us in the future.”

They all raise their glasses.

“To Arthur,” Missandei says, her eyes glassy. “Though he may be the worst at board games, no one can beat him in Poker.” She laughs.

“To Arthur!” they say in unison. Lyanna raises her glass higher, her own way of voicing her cheer.


“Hear! Hear!” Rhaegar shouts.

Standing up, they all clink their glasses together. “To Viserys!”
Across the Narrow Sea, in an abandoned building somewhere in Myr, Viserys sneezes loudly.

“Someone is talking about you,” Arianne says in a sing-song voice as she dances around the room to the music in her head.

Rolling his eyes, Viserys wipes his hair away from his sticky face. “No, it’s dusty as shit in here.” He watches how Arianne’s hips sway and roll as if the woman doesn’t have any bones. “How on earth do you move like that?”

“I was born this way.”

“Weren’t we all,” he mutters.

Viserys returns to the task of skinning the Northman’s foot. The man has already passed out, but that doesn’t mean he’s going to stop. When he wakes up, the pain will still be there.

From Pentos, they traveled to Myr, following the trail of the northern invaders. They even rescued a group of women last night. That’s how Viserys got his hands on his new toy. Technically, he’s Arianne’s toy but lucky for him his friend is the sharing type.

Oberyn is making sure that the rescued women are returned to their homes safely. Something that Viserys wouldn’t have bothered to do had he been on this venture alone. The least he would’ve done was sent some of his men to do the task for him.

But Oberyn believes the women are currently in vulnerable positions, that if the wrong men recognize that they’d be taken advantage of again.

“Ugh,” Viserys groans for the third time that night. “Why does he have to be so good all the time?”

Arianne’s laughter echoes throughout the building. “Does it turn you on, Viserys?”

Oddly enough, it does turn him on.

Growing up, Viserys witnessed the ugliest side of man through his father’s actions. Then one day, his brother saved him from that nightmare. Ever since then, he’s had a thing for the archetypal knight in shining armor who had a bit of a dark side.

Oberyn fits that mold perfectly.

“Tell me it didn’t feel good to save those women.” Arianne snaps her fingers and begins the Dornish tango with her imaginary partner. She dances to calm her anxiousness; to calm her blood lust. “Tell me that when you stared into their eyes you didn’t see your adopted sister.”

Viserys’s hands still, his grip on the flaying knife eases up. Any of those women could’ve been Missandei. He saw her in all of them, and perhaps that’s why he went a little overboard with the killing.

“Missandei would never allow herself to be stolen.” Viserys tightens the handle of the blade. More skin is flayed. “She’s on the level of the Faceless Men of Braavos. And even if she somehow managed to get captured by those lowlives, we would burn these cities to the ground to find her, not wait around for someone else to do it.”

“The families of these women lack the resources. That is why we are here.”

“You and your uncle are vigilantes now?” he snorts. “I don’t even know why I agreed to tag along.
Then again, the killing is nice.”

“Because you care, Viserys. You always have.” Arianne squats beside him, breathing heavily, bronze skin glistening with sweat. “You can call Oberyn and me vigilantes if you must. The women aren’t the only ones we came here to save.”

What in the fuck does she mean bu that anyway? Who are they here to save? Surely not him. He isn’t in need of saving. No, what he needs is a line of coke and a bottle of something strong.

An incoming call spares the woman from the verbal lashing Viserys was ready to give. He hates it when people talk as if they know him.

It doesn’t matter that he’s spent countless, drunk nights in Arianne’s bed, spilling all of his secrets and insecurities during their platonic cuddle sessions.

“...the little stag is back?” Arianne speaks into the phone. “I told him that if he didn’t keep his word that I would castrate him…”

Viserys tunes her out as he simmers in his anger.

Of course, the only reason why he’s pissed off is that what Arianne said is true. No matter how hard he tries to pretend otherwise, he does care. More than he’d like. And it made him feel good, needed and relied upon when he rescued those women.

That’s what Viserys truly craves. Not the drugs, the alcohol, or the sex. Killing is fun, relaxing even. But nothing makes him more at peace than knowing that he’s needed, that he isn’t worthless and insignificant.

He felt that way when he initially returned home. The longer he stayed, the fewer drugs he did, the happier he was because he felt useful.

“Bad news,” Arianne says, sauntering up to him. “I must return to Westeros later today to deal with a runaway stag.”

“Gendry Baratheon again?”

“Yes, he has returned to my territory seeking refuge.”

Viserys scoffs. “He’s stupid enough to run to you, not once, but twice?”

“Children must learn the hard way.”

“Arianne...aren’t you no older than him?”

“I am wise beyond my years.”

“Just yesterday you pouted because we wouldn’t stop the car for sweets…”

Arianne playfully kicks him. “I will miss you, you temperamental cunt. Don’t be mad at me for too long, okay?”

“Am I ever?”

“No, and that is why I love you.” Arianne kneels down and kisses his forehead. “Oberyn will continue this journey with you. I imagine Ellaria will meet up with you two along the way.”
Viserys curses under his breath. “Way to make my dick soft!” He doesn’t hate Ellaria but he doesn’t particularly like her either. Her cheekbones are nearly as sharp as is and her ensembles are always put together well. She’s terrible. “How am I supposed to seduce Oberyn with her around?”

“If you can’t beat them, join them.”

“As if.”

“They have an open relationship, I think.” Rising to her feet, Arianne pats the face of the unconscious man to wake him. “I’m debating on sitting down with your nephew to discuss business. I hear he nearly beat a man to death.”

Despite himself, Viserys can’t mask his pride. “He’s of my blood. Did you expect him to be weak?”

“I believe that aspect of him is a contribution of his northern side.” The man doesn’t awake. Disappointed, Arianne sits on his lap. “I’ve always wanted to fuck a northerner. I hear they are beasts in bed.”

“You want a northerner? There’s one right here.”

“Too scrawny. I would eat him whole. Where is Robb Stark? Now that is the northerner I want.”

Viserys grows bored of flaying. Besides, it’s not fun when they aren’t screaming. He decides to take a break.

“Tell me more of what you’ve heard about Jon,” he says, feigning disinterest. “I worry that he’ll run our family into the ground,” he lies.

Arianne sees right through him. “You miss your family. Aww, Viserys! I will share all that I know. First, you must take me to get sweet rolls. The merchants should be out this morning!”

He’s fondly reminded of Dany and her love for ice cream.

“Fine. Let’s get you your sweet rolls.”

Somehow the night’s festivities moved from the dining room to the beach. Missandei successful drank Jon and Grey Worm under the table, and as a way to regain their honor, they challenged her to a race on the sandy shores with Daenerys serving as the referee.

Rhaegar and Lyanna sit on a large, slate boulder-like two parents watching their children play. In a way, that’s exactly what they are. Had things worked out differently for them, Lyanna would’ve raised all four of them alongside him.

By the looks of it, an actual race isn’t going to happen because they’re all young and in love. Jon whispers something in Dany’s ear, and she covers her face, giggling into her hands. Meanwhile, Grey Worm and Missandei are wrapped up in their own world.

It’s moments like these where Rhaegar can’t help but wonder how their life would be if his family was like any other normal family, their hands and money clean. As a child, he used to yearn for that reality. He wanted it more than anything.

There was never any chance at a normal life for him. Not the son of Aerys, not the prodigy child destined for greatness.

Beside him, Lyanna tilts her head back and gazes at the starry sky. He doubts she realizes how
breathtaking she is with moonlight on her skin and in her hair. Rhaegar knows how much she dislikes staring these days. But try as he might, he can’t take his eyes off her.

It isn’t until Lyanna catches him looking that he’s able to turn away.

“Sorry,” he whispers. “I was lost in thought…”

As expected, Lyanna says nothing.

The race has finally begun. Missandei takes the lead but is playfully bumped by Grey Worm who is then bested by Jon. Daenerys is too busy laughing to do her job as the referee. In the end, the three of them are laid out on the sand, not even close to the finish line.

They’re still children despite all that they’ve seen and endured. Rhaegar hates that he has to place the weight of the family’s affairs on their shoulders but they must learn how to function without him.

The new path he’s taken leads to darkness and despair. In order to avenge his family, Lyanna—everything they’ve lost, he’s prepared to die and take all of their enemies with him if need be.

Out of his peripheral, he sees Lyanna smile. These days her smiles never last for long. Soon, she’s turning away from the affectionate display put on by the pair of lovebirds, her hair shrouding her face like a dark curtain.

Rhaegar supposes it’s time for them to retire.

He hopes the four of them enjoy the remainder of their night. They won’t get another one like this in quite some time. The real work begins tomorrow.

They run into Ghost on their way back to the mansion. The enigmatic dog comes and goes as he pleases, always as quiet as his namesake. Ghost passes them, heading toward the sound of his master’s voice. Rhaegar assumes that since Lyanna is with him, the dog knows she’s safe for now. He’s an intelligent beast. Sometimes too intelligent.

Inside Lyanna’s bedroom, Rhaegar hovers by the door nervously. He’s always careful with her but whenever they’re alone in a confined space, he’s extra careful. It’s not that Lyanna fears him. Sometimes her mind just lapses back to that night in the woods.

What triggers this occurrence has yet to be identified so they all play it safe. For their own protection more than anything. Lyanna is still a force to be reckoned with, and when she’s in that headspace she’ll attack anyone within range.

“Well, goodnight,” Rhaegar quietly says.

Lyanna shakes her head. Turning around, she pulls her hair over her shoulder and points to the zipper on the back of her dress.

One of life’s timeless mysteries is a woman’s ability to zip her own dress yet struggle to unzip it.

This reminds Rhaegar of their wedding night. Instead of a zipper, Rhaegar untied the straps of Lyanna’s Dornish gown. The love hotel’s honeymoon suite was bathed in warm light, just like her bedroom is now. She was shivering back then, as well. But for an entirely different reason.

Rhaegar draws his head away at the first sight of skin. “I could grab Dany or Missandei if you require further assistance…”
Lyanna shakes her head again. She points to her open wardrobe where a stack of folded gowns sits. She wants him to undress and dress her.

Well, that’s a first.

Never the one to deny his woman anything, Rhaegar fetches the gown. He picks the one that looks easiest to put on to make the task a breeze for them both. When he faces Lyanna again, he drops the gown.

Lyanna’s completely naked, the dress pooled at her feet. Although her hair shrouds her breasts, she still covers herself. Muttering an apology, Rhaegar quickly picks up the gown. He feels like a bumbling green boy. He’s seen Lyanna’s nude body before, though, it’s been ages. They were teenagers then, still soft around the edges, but times have changed and so have their bodies.

He tries not to think about how amazing Lyanna looks. Why bother torturing himself that way?

“Here you are,” Rhaegar says, handing over the gown.

Lyanna doesn’t take it. Instead, she looks him dead in the eye as she slowly raises her arms. Swallowing thickly, Rhaegar rolls the gown up and puts it over her head, tugging it down gently. It does the rest of the work on its own.

Most of her hair gets caught in the back of the dress. Careful not to actually touch her, Rhaegar frees her hair. Their locked gazes and proximity make it hard for him to breathe. The space between them is buzzing like that tiny space between magnets before they collide.

Rhaegar fears his overwhelming emotions will get the better of him, that he’ll disrupt the tentative balance he’s spent months creating between them.

“Lyanna, I shou-”

Lyanna quiets him by putting her index finger against his lips. Dropping her hand, she turns and walks to the side of the bed, waiting for him to join her.

They lie down on different sides, their heads occupying different pillows with enough space between them for another person to fit. They simply stare at one another. Even still, the intimacy and trust are palpable.

A month ago, Lyanna couldn’t look at him without averting her gaze and she wouldn’t dare allow him to share her bed. Rhaegar hates what she’s been reduced to yet he admires her continuous stride. Lyanna falls asleep eventually, but Rhaegar continues watching over her.

What he would give for her to yell at him or insult his stupid hair again. To utter his name or anything at all.

Robert, the piece of dog shit, couldn’t bear being without Lyanna, he couldn’t stomach his loss. He thought by demeaning her that he’d regain pieces of his shattered ego, but the only thing he managed to do was bring about the north’s permanent downfall.

A million prayers and a million tears won’t be enough to still Rhaegar’s hand. He will burn them in their homes. He will burn them in their beds. He’ll burn them all just as his father tried to do before him.

“Soon,” he whispers to Lyanna, “very soon, we will dance on their ashes, my love.”
Daenerys awakes with a sharp cry that swiftly morphs into a scream. Pain pierces her lower body then shoots up her spine. Someone touches her shoulder, and she blindly slaps their hand away. Frantically she throws the sheets back and yanks up her nightgown.

Blood. There’s blood everywhere. On her thighs and legs, on the bedsheets, and her hands.
“M-my baby!” Dany cries as she stares at her bloody hands with teary eyes. “No...no...no! My baby!” She lifts her gown higher, intent on pulling out what’s left of her baby so that she may hold them in her arms just once.

A soothing and familiar voice breaks through to her. “Dany, look at me.” Gentle hands touch her face and turn her head toward theirs. “You had a nightmare...you’re in our bed and you’re safe…”

Shaking her head, Dany lifts her hands and shows Jon the blood. “I-I lost our baby again, Jon! I...

“You never lost our baby, Dany.” Jon lowers her hands to remove them from her line of sight. Then he brings their foreheads together. “Our baby was stolen from us. That wasn’t your fault. The blame doesn’t rest on your shoulders.”

Some of the blame does rest on her shoulders. She was kneed in the stomach and was too high off of milk of the poppy to register the pain or experience shock or fear over what happened. Her baby was dead and she didn’t even care at the time because she didn't even know.

Jon kisses her forehead, his lips lingering there as he speaks, “It’s only your menstrual cycle, Dany. Remember, the flow is heavier now because our bodies change whenever the hell they like. You’re okay…”

The Lannister’s Maester predicted this. He told her that she may experience an irregular cycle; her body’s way of dealing with the trauma. She’s been so stressed out these past months that she hasn’t had a cycle. Nothing more than spotting here and there and the occasional cramps. The month before last she bled like this, but it was different then.

Despite the reassurance from Jon, Daenerys is still in shock at the sight of so much blood coming from her. The only thing she can think about is the night she miscarried.

“Let’s get you cleaned up,” Jon says, moving to help her off the bed.

“I-I can see if Missandei is awake. You don’t have to burden yourself with lady problems.”

Jon snorts. “I’m not afraid of blood, Dany. And you’re my woman. I’ll take care of you.”

She’s embarrassed that he’s here to witness such a private, intimate moment. Last month when she bled, she was already in the shower. Seeing blood and water swirl down the drain gave her quite a scare, but no one was around to see it so she managed to pull herself together before Jon returned.

These sort of things are meant to be endured alone, she always thought.

While the shower runs, Jon cleans off Dany’s hands, using the kind of attention and care that many never see from him. He helps her out of her gown, folds the garment and puts it aside, then he helps her into the shower. He would’ve cleaned her thighs and the rest of her too had she not protested. Dany doesn’t think she can survive that level of embarrassment, though, she’s appreciative of him.

After the shower, Dany puts on clean pajamas; courtesy of Jon. The sheets have been changed, all traces of blood are gone. It’s almost as if she’d imagined it. Her cramps serve as a painful reminder, unfortunately.

“Can I get anything for you?” Jon asks once they’re back in bed. “I can run to the drug store and pick up some...personal items for you.”

Dany laughs. “You wouldn’t be ashamed to purchase tampons for me?”
“I’ve bought them before.”

“Have you?”

Jon nods. “For my mother. She gets sick during that time so we took care of her.” By ‘we’ he means him and his brother. “And for Ygritte. So, I wouldn’t mind getting them for you.”

“Thank you, Jon.” Dany snuggles close to him, resting her head on his bare chest. Lightly, she traces the tiny scars there. “No worries. I have plenty.”

“I can get you chocolates or ice cream.”

“Ice cream is very tempting, but I have all I need right here.”

Jon hugs her closer.

They lay there in silence for some time; Dany listening to the sound of Jon’s heartbeat, Jon caressing Dany’s arm. Moonlight from the open blinds sparsely lights the room. She tries to fall asleep. If only to get away from the memories her mind won’t allow her to forget. Her efforts are futile. She’s restless now.

“How often do you have nightmares about that night?”

Dany considers lying. They have enough to deal with as it is. But the thought of blatantly lying to Jon doesn’t feel right to her.

“Thrice a week feels like,” she confesses. He stiffens beside her, and she squeezes her arms around him, afraid he’ll pull away. “I didn’t want to worry you....”

Sighing, Jon relaxes. “I’ll always worry about you.”

“Do you still have nightmares about your capture? About...your mother...?” Dany wants to ask about herself but that feels too intrusive for some reason. “Sometimes when I look into your eyes, it’s like you’re not there, Jon.”

Jon’s silence worries her. He has a habit of emotionally closing himself off whenever the focus is on him. He and Grey Worm have that in common so Dany is used to it. Doesn’t mean she particularly likes it.

“I have nightmares almost every night. I always see my Uncle Ned. Well...his head. I have nightmares about the attack sometimes but I can’t remember all of them.”

“Why do you keep this to yourself?”

“Same reason you keep your nightmares to yourself. They’re not going to go away until our minds are at peace.”

“What will put your mind at peace?”

“I want them all dead,” Jon says darkly, sending a shiver through her. “Every last fucker involved. I want my family safe and back where they belong. You?”

Daenerys wants the same, of course. But she doubts that will put her mind at peace. “I want another chance at being a mother.” It feels strange admitting that. “I know that’s a silly thing to say because I’m so young and I have no idea how to take care of anyone, but...that’s what I want. I want that with you. Not now. But one day. It kills me to know that I may have screwed that up.”
“Dany-”

“The Maester thought a horse had kicked me in my stomach when he saw the massive bruise.” She blinks her tears away yet they continue to fall. “I...I couldn’t feel the excruciating pain until later the next day because I was sedated. What if something was damaged and I can’t conceive again?”

“Nothing was damaged. The Maester said so himself. But if you want a second opinion we can get one.”

“We’re not ready for a baby.” Not because they’re too young. They just can’t risk adding another addition to their family when the future of their family is unclear. “We must focus on restoring our house.”

Jon kisses the top of her head. As always the affectionate gesture sends warmth throughout her body. “When we’re ready to try again, we’ll at least know that we can.” He chuckles softly. “We have to continue our family line, after all.”

In so many words, Jon has confessed to wanting a child with her, to wanting a future with her. To think, there was once a time when the idea of being together unsettled him. Now he wants to create life with her.

Daenerys’s fears won’t allow her to bask in the joyous moment just yet. “Let’s say that everything is working as it should be. But what if the baby is born...well, you know?”

“Beautiful like their mother? I don’t see a problem with that at all.”

“Deformed,” she replies flatly. “There’ll be a higher risk of birth defects. If they’re born, as you say, as beautiful as me, who is to say that their mind will be sound? I couldn’t live with myself if I brought a child into this wicked world and they’re burdened with an affliction that came from us.”

“I understand your concerns, Dany. They’re legitimate and necessary to consider.”

“But?”

Jon sighs, “But does it matter how they’re born? We love each other and we’re going to love our child. Doesn’t matter how they look or if they like to torture kittens. We’ll just have to get them professional help and teach them how t-”

Dany lifts her head and stares at Jon, her violet eyes wide. “We love each other? How….when did you know?”

“Know what? That I was in love with you or that you were in love with me?” Jon smiles, and it’s a wonder she never realized his feelings until now. It’s all in his eyes. “You talked to me a lot during my recovery when you thought I couldn’t hear you. I thought it was obvious that we felt the same about each other.”

“You’ve never said it. I worried that you weren’t completely over your last love…”

“Would you believe me if I told you I was afraid?”

When thinking of words that describe Jon, ‘afraid’ never comes to mind. Everyone is afraid of something, however. Even someone as courageous as Jon.

Dany cradles Jon’s face. Parts of his face are hidden by shadows, and she doubts he can see her face at all now. “What are you afraid of, Jon?” she asks.
“I was never the best at expressing myself. Took me a while to tell Ygritte how I felt. I chose the worst time to do it, too. I don’t even know if she loved me back. She died before she could respond.”

“You believe a profession of love from you equates to death’s kiss?”

“When you put it like that I sound like the superstitious sort.”

“Not at all. We’ve both been traumatized by our pasts.” She can’t have a menstrual cycle without remembering her miscarriage, and he can’t say those three words without seeing Ygritte dying in his arms. “Let’s find another way to say it then. How about, iksan aōhon se iksā ūnuhon?”

Jon’s arms wrap around her, strong and possessive. “I have no idea what you said but sign me up.” Lifting his head from the pillow, he kisses her chin.

Dany laughs. “We need to work on your Valyrian. It means, I am yours and you are mine.”

“Iksane ahnon.”

“Iksan aōhon,” she says, slowly lowering her face to his. Over his parted lips she breathes the words into him, “se iksā ūnuhon.”

Jon repeats, “Iksan aōhon se iksā ūnuhon.”

Hearing Jon speak perfect Valyrian ignites something dark and carnal inside of her. She kisses him fervently despite knowing it can’t go far. And Jon kisses back with the same intensity.

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Thank the gods for makeup, coffee, and painkillers.

Daenerys makes good use of all three the following morning before they set off to Sunspear. Her cramps ultimately ruined a heated make out session, and a potential rump in the sheets; Jon isn’t afraid of blood and she was very aroused last night.

Unfortunately, mother nature had other plans.

Jon stayed up with her despite her protests, providing her with endless belly rubs and forehead kisses. By the time she was able to fall asleep, it was time for their day to begin.

Today they’re meeting with Arianne Martell. The bulk of the Second Sons remain at Summerhall while a handful is out patrolling their territory along with trusted men appointed by Grey Worm. Only Daario, Grey Worm, and Missandei serve as bodyguards for the meeting.

“Martells are like rattlesnakes,” Tyrion says during the drive through the countryside. “Let them be and they will not harm you. Threaten them and they will strike, hard and fast.”

Which is why they decided to travel light.

Although different in design, Sunspear has the same name as a historical castle in Dorne. Just like the Targaryens, the Martells immigrated to this country and settled in Westeros long before the city was an actual city.

About two miles out from the estate, the scenery changes from tall pines to tall palm trees that seem unaffected by the cold weather. There are no guards in sight, only farmers dressed in beige plowing the vast fields.

“They’re all armed,” Jon leans over and whispers to her. “Don’t be fooled.”
Daenerys looks out the window again, paying closer attention to the men. She can’t see any weapons yet she sees the way they stare at the passing truck. They’re prepared to kill if necessary. Nothing is ever as it seems.

No iron gates are surrounding Sunspear. Only two, mosaic pillars that depict a red sun pierced by a red spear stand on either side of a long, winding driveway that leads to the three-story villa.

Sunspear looks nothing like the typical, Westerosi house. It’s as if they’ve been transported to a tropical resort. On the right sits a moderately sized vineyard. Farther up, there’s a pit filled with red sand where two men spar with long spears. Smaller cottages are surrounding the main house, servants dressed in indigo robes bustle about, some carrying baskets, others carrying folded cloth.

Daenerys came here once when she was a young girl. Doran Martell celebrated his birthday with a great feast. Her, Missandei, and Grey Worm played with the other children while the grown-ups drank and danced. Arianne was the only child allowed to stick around and mingle with the adults. Dany never understood why that was until now.

The girl was learning. She didn’t have time for their childish games.

That night, they all snuck a bottle of Dornish wine outside and passed it around. Tyene, Doran’s niece, got so sick they thought she would die. Her aunt, Elia looked after her and gave them all a proper talking to. Now she hears that Tyene and her sisters are trained killers. She wonders if all of her childhood friends turned out that way. Perhaps they were always killers and she was too blind to see it.

An envoy awaits their arrival. Brief, formal introductions are made then he escorts them through the arched courtyard. Another pit of red sand sits in the middle of the courtyard, bigger than the one they saw previously.

Trystane Martell wrestles with an unknown man while a pretty blond girl cheers him on.

“My niece, Myrcella,” Tyrion says with a frown. “I doubt her father knows she’s here. She’s learned how to evade our spies. She’s cunning, like her mother. Thank the gods she doesn’t have her mother’s temperament.”

“Will you tell on her?” Dany teases as she watches the young couple embrace. They look genuinely happy. “I thought you’d be the cool uncle.”

“I am the cool uncle. I won’t tell a soul.”

“Better not,” Dany says.

“A champion for young love, are we?”

Unconsciously, Dany glances over at Jon who’s pretending not to listen to them. “Maybe I am.”

If Tyrion noticed anything in her demeanor, he keeps his thoughts on the matter to himself.

They pass the young couple unnoticed; they’re too busy lost in one another to notice anything else. Once they’re inside the villa, the envoy asks them to remove their shoes and he provides slippers for them.

They’re taken to a sizable room with vibrant, mosaic floors and a vaulted ceiling, ornate pillows scattered on the floor, and potted plants placed strategically around the room.
As eye-catching as the room is, nothing is more attention-grabbing than the young woman who sits on a gold throne chair. She’s wearing a purple mesh dress, her black undergarments and jeweled stomach showing underneath, and a gold face chain. Her bare, painted feet rest on top a short pile of painted skulls.

“Welcome to Sunspear,” Arianne Martell says. Gracefully she stands, her long, brown tresses falling to her hips. With measured steps, she descends the short, marble steps to where they stand before her. “You may leave us.”

The envoy bows his head, prepared to leave.

Arianne’s sharp gaze touches Daario. “Take the sellsword with you.” She looks to Jon respectfully. “I am unguarded. I’ve asked my men not to attend this meeting. Show me courtesy by doing the same.”

Tyrion steps forward. “With all due respect, Arianne, we all know you don’t need any guards protecting you.”

“And neither does the White Wolf. I only ask that the sellsword is removed to ensure any potential fight is evenly matched.” She smiles, her eyes filled with mirth. “Missandei and Grey Worm can stay. I trust that they will respect the rules.”

Jon smirks. “Sounds like you don’t trust me.”

“Why should I? Do you trust me?”

“Not at all.”

“Exactly.”

Dany touches Jon’s shoulder. “Trust must be earned.” She turns to Daario. “Mr. Naharis, we will summon you if we require you. Respect this house and its occupants.”

“As you wish, my lady,” Daario says.

The envoy and Daario leave the room. With them gone, the tension ceases. Tyrion seems impressed by Dany, and so does Arianne.

“Lovely Daenerys, it’s been too long,” Arianne says, cupping Dany’s face, kissing her on both cheeks. She smells of nutmeg and vanilla. “Are you well?”

Dany gives generic responses to Arianne’s inquiries as she’s sure the woman is privy to how things are and have been. Instead of returning to her throne, Arianne sits on the floor with them on the ornate pillows. Servants bring in trays of food and freshly squeezed juice. Refusing food is a great insult in Dornish culture. So, they all eat even though they’re riddled with nerves.

They need the Martells to recognize Jon as the new head of the Targaryen family.

“How is Doran fairing today?” Tyrion asks.

“My father is doing better. Regretfully, he will not be joining us today.”

Tyrion does a fine job of masking his disappointment. “I wish him a speedy recovery.” He picks over his food. “I’m told Euron Greyjoy paid you a visit last night.”

“You make it sound as if we fucked. Which one of your spies whispered that into your ear?”
“Does it matter?” Tyrion asks, taking a sip of wine. “Word hasn’t spread outside of southern territory. All is well.”

The punishment for spreading rumors to the unaffiliated is a permanent exile, and the offender has to cut off their thumb and gift it to the family they offended. Rhaegar came up that on his own.

Tyrion’s friendly expression falls. “I trust that you rejected his proposal...”

Through the face chain, Arianne’s nostrils are flared and her mouth is twisted in a scowl. “Do you see those skulls?” She points to the painted skulls at the foot of her throne. “One belongs to the Greyjoy who kidnapped, raped, and murdered the Lady of Sunspear. The others belong to his sons! I told him that if he did not leave his skull would join the pile. Is that answer enough for you?”

Dany remembers Jon telling her about the Martell princess whose abduction led to nightmarish months of bloodshed.

“My apologies for doubting you,” Tyrion says.

Disregarding him, Arianne takes a bite of strawberry. Dany has never seen anyone eat the fruit in such an intended sensual manner and look good while doing it. “I only agreed to meet with you because I wanted to see you up close,” she says to Jon. “You’re handsome, like your father.”

Jon flushes. Poor man still doesn’t know how to accept a compliment. “Um...thank you?”

“He’s a charmer,” Arianne laughs, and Dany has to stop herself from laughing too.

“Excuse me, but can we get down to business already?” Jon asks, irritated.

“Not a fan of foreplay I see. Are you always so eager to jump into things?” Arianne picks up another strawberry, her movements relaxed, carefree. If she can sense Jon’s annoyance she doesn’t show it. “A woman loves to be dismantled first, one piece at a time.”

Tyrion chuckles. “Difficult to tell if this is in context to sex or torture...”

“One and the same for some.” Arianne wipes her fingers clean with a napkin. “We will discuss business after I’ve determined if I like you or not,” she says to Jon. “We love Rhaegar. We do not love you. We do not know you. You can’t expect me to discuss business with you simply because you’re the son of Rhaegar.”

Dany believes that’s sensible, but she can tell Jon is frustrated by the woman’s words. Brunch meetings and catching up over cocktails isn’t his thing. She doubts the meetings in the north are operated like this. They probably get straight to the meat of the matter then depart as quickly as they can which isn’t a bad thing. However, it isn’t how things are done in the south.

Rhaegar was always away at some dinner party, lunch meeting, or weekend golfing trip. He spent time with his allies, made sure they were comfortable, well-tended to. That’s how he earned their trust. People are more willing to talk when they’re in their comfort zone.

Perhaps that’s why Jon is more prickly than usual. He’s way out of his comfort zone.

Dany speaks before Tyrion can, “It’s a beautiful day out,” she says. “How are the orange trees faring now that winter is here?”

Taking the bait, Arianne offers to show them around the grounds of the estate. Outside, breathing in the fresh air, Jon is visibly more at ease.
Walking several paces behind him and Arianne, Dany walks beside Tyrion. Grey Worm and Missandei keep a safe distance.

“I see that I’m not needed here,” Tyrion says.

“Nonsense. Without you, she would’ve never met with us.”

“She would’ve. Eventually, though, it’s hard to tell with Arianne. I must admit I can’t read her as well as others.”

“I admire her,” Dany admits. She kind of envies her, too. She wishes she would’ve known her role in all of this when she was younger.

Tyrion nods earnestly. “She’s a person worthy of admiration, I’ll give her that. One day, you will garner awe, admiration, and fear as well.”

“I doubt I have what it takes.”

“Rhaegar once thought the same. Now he’s the beloved Warden of the South.” A pause. “Forgive me, former Warden of the South, yet beloved all the same.”

“I’m nothing like Rhaegar. I’m nothing like Viserys, either.”

“Why on earth would anyone want to be like Viserys?”

The icy glare Daenerys shoots in Tyrion’s direction leaves him speechless. “Never again in my presence shall you speak my brother’s name with such contempt. Understood?”

Stiffly, Tyrion nods.

“I like you Tyrion but I love my family.” And she won’t allow anyone outside of the family to disrespect, insult, or ridicule her kin.

Holding her head high, she widens her steps, putting distance between them.

She still catches Tyrion’s muttered words.

“You’ve managed to strike fear and awe into this dwarf’s heart. You’ll conquer the city sooner than you think.”

“I can tell there’s a beast trying to claw its way out of your skin,” Arianne says as she admires a ripe orange before plucking it. “Sitting down for too long makes you anxious, you hate formalities and you hate rules. The scent of blood makes most people sick but not you.”

Jon stuffs his hands in his pocket and shrugs. “You like a mind reader or something?”

“Can you imagine how much fun that would be if I could read minds? I wouldn’t have to bother seducing anyone. I could just say what they wanted to hear. I could bend them easier, faster.”

Shifting uncomfortably, Jon glances behind him. Dany is still talking with Tyrion. From the look on her face, she isn’t enjoying the conversation. When he faces forward again, Arianne’s face is a breath away from his. He didn’t even hear her move which should be impossible considering she’s wearing bangles on her wrists and ankles.

“You want to fuck her, don’t you?” Arianne asks, catching him completely off guard. His shock
leaves him momentarily frozen like a deer caught in headlights. She grins, a predator moving in on its prey. “Ah, you already have. I can practically smell the desire on you. No worries, I won’t tell.”

She steps away from him, returning to the orange tree to inspect another harvestable.

Jon finds his voice. “You won’t tell because you fear the consequences of spreading rumors or because you don’t care?”

“Both. More so the latter.” Arianne plucks another orange and tosses it to Jon who takes his hands out of his pockets fast enough to catch it. “You didn’t try to deny your relationship with Daenerys. I respect that. In exchange, I will share a secret of my own.”

“I’m not a mind reader like you so you’ll have to tell me,” he jokes.

Arianne smirks. “Your brother is here. He traveled through the sewers again. I found him intriguing the first time he stood before me, reeking something foul. I was not so intrigued the second time.”

“What will you do with him?” Jon asks, voice empty of all emotion.

Arianne’s eyes crinkle at the corners as she smiles. “Are you familiar with the Dornish Snake Bath?”

He’s heard the horror stories of men being hung upside down and lowered into a pit of venomous snakes.

“What do you do that to everyone who crosses into your territory?”

“Only the ones who do not keep their promises. Your brother promised me weapons, he gave me nothing.”

Goddamn it, Jon bitterly thinks. His idiot brother just had to seek out one of the families for protection. When on the run it’s best to hide out in another city, alone. He’s told Gendry countless times to come up with plans that won’t backfire.

“My men think he’s a spy sent here under the guise of a helpless victim. What do you think?”

“Gendry doesn’t have the stomach for that sort of thing,” he answers truthfully. “And Robert wouldn’t trust him with something this important.”

Arianne is fond of his blunt honesty. “I suspected as much. He fainted when I threatened to castrate him. Boys like him should never stray too close to a viper’s den. You can have him if you want…”

“Not without a price I imagine.”

“Smart, handsome, with a dash of cruelty. If you weren’t already taken, I would claim you for myself.”

“Who said I’d be interested?”

Arianne laughs good-naturedly. “I like you better when you’re telling the truth, Jon. No point in entertaining what-ifs. You are in love with lovely Daenerys and my heart is only big enough for one Targaryen.” She looks over his shoulder to where the others are standing back to give them privacy. “Do a favor for me and I will hand over your brother, unharmed.”

“How do I know he isn’t already dead?”

“I suppose you’ll just have to trust me.”
“You expect blind trust from me, but I can’t have the same from you.”

“I am in a position to ask that of you. You are not in a position to ask it of me.”

Jon can’t even be upset with her for stating facts.

He lends her his ear. Her favor is a little unexpected considering the woman has a reputation for handling her problems. But Jon knows this is nothing more than a trust-building exercise; as well as a way for them to prove their capability.

The only reasons Jon agrees is because he knows his mother would be devastated to hear Gendry was tortured to death, and they need the Martells.

“Bring me back a gift,” Arianne says as she walks away, “and I will give you two gifts in return.”

The envoy returns with Daario. Then he escorts all of them back to their truck and gives Jon a piece of parchment with only a name and address scribbled on it. During the drive back to Summerhall, he fills everyone in - minus Daario - about what transpired between him and Arianne.

At least the important parts.

“Very good,” Tyrion says, reading the information Jon received from the envoy. “You can have the Second Sons take care of this matter for you. By tonight, you will have your brother and perhaps a proper meeting with Arianne.”

“I’m not sending the Second Sons,” Jon informs him. “She won’t respect me if I send someone else to do it. We’ll take care of it on our own.”

“Once again I am confused on why I am here. You two appear to be doing just fine on your own.”

“We still need to get in good with our legitimate business partners. They speak a language I’m unfamiliar with.”

“The language of the wealthy and pompous. Ah, I speak it fluently. I will arrange an overpriced dinner. We do love overpriced everything.”

Jon looks over at Dany who’s been quiet this whole time. “Are you up for a little fun tonight?” he asks, taking hold of her hand.

Tyrion watches them closely. He’s always watching them when he thinks they don’t notice.

“I must say I am eager to see if all this training has done me any good.”

Jon is eager to see the results of her hard work as well.

Some dumb fucker from gods knows where has settled in Martell territory, so close to the coastline that had they been dealing with anyone else they might’ve gone unnoticed for far longer than they have. Unfortunately for them, Arianne obsessively checks the books. When new blood moves in, she sniffs them out and offers them the same choice as the other family heads would in her position.

Pay tribute with either money or blood.

This gang chose the latter when they failed to make good on the former.
The thing about new gangs is, they lack manners and tact. They’re always moving in on someone else’s turf, distributing drugs, soliciting sex, or opening shady businesses without paying their respects to the old families. And that’s exactly why they never stick around for long.

They’re a small problem, but a problem nonetheless.

Using the cover of night, dressed in black from head to toe, the four of them infiltrate the gang’s inconspicuous hideout. Two enter through the side, and two enter through the back.

One of the guards posted by the side door is asleep while a movie plays on a miniature television that sits on a shabby, orange crate.

Jon sneaks up behind him and puts him in a chokehold. The man startles awake, kicking and flailing about. Jon covers his mouth, muffling his shouts. The man kicks over the television. Dany catches it before it can hit the pavement and give their location away. She sets it down on the ground quietly.

Once the man goes limp in the chair, Jon picks up the AK-47 that’s slung on the back of the chair and tosses it to Dany who catches it with ease. After zip tying their captive’s arms behind his back, they enter the building.

The first floor is dark aside from neon light coming from the end of the hallway. Slowly making their way toward the light, they check every corner, glancing over their shoulders haphazardly to make sure no one is sneaking up on them.

A man steps out of a random room to their left. Acting quickly, Dany butts him in the face with the gun hard enough to break his nose and bloody his mouth. He reaches for the gun at his hip. She hits him again, not giving him the chance to draw his weapon.

Stepping over his unconscious body, they continue down the hallway. Reaching the door, they stand on either side of the door’s frame, peeking into the room. The neon room is filled with topless women and men crowded around long tables, filling small baggies with cocaine. Four armed guards walk down the aisles watching the workers like hawks.

They need to draw the guards out to avoid bullets missing their mark and landing elsewhere. Jon gives the signal to Dany.

Backtracking, they fetch the man she disposed of earlier and drag him to the doorway. They toss him into the room, grabbing the attention of the guards. Like fools they all rush out to their deaths. Jon and Dany fill the four men with bullets before they realized what hit them. The workers scream and cower under the tables.

On the second floor, they can hear Missandei and Grey Worm dispatching guards as well. Leaving the workers be, they hurry up the stairs to offer backup.

Missandei kicks a man over the balcony and Grey Worm throws another over the rails to join his partner. A man rushes the two, screaming as he swings a machete. Dany shoots him dead, and Grey Worm takes the man’s machete. He cuts throw the guards stupid enough to attack them head-on while Missandei continues throwing men to their deaths.

“We need to find their leader,” Jon says to Dany.

Out of nowhere, a huge, pot-bellied man comes barreling toward them. Looks like the gang leader found them.

Pushing Dany out of the way, Jon readies himself for the attack. They crash into one another, the
force of the impact knocks them both back. Jon regains his footing swiftly and aims his gun at the man’s leg, hoping to injure, not kill him.

The damn thing jams.

“Fuck,” Jon curses, ducking to avoid a wide swipe that would’ve fucked him up. He tucks and rolls, evading another attack. Through the man’s parted legs he can see Dany straddling a man and stabbing him in the face repeatedly.

Atta girl, he proudly thinks.

Jon also sees the AK-47.

He scrambles to it, slipping through the man’s legs. The man grabs him by the back of the shirt, yanking him away from the gun. Thankfully, Dany shoves the gun to Jon in the knick of time. Turning to his back, he shoots the leader in the right kneecap. Dany saves his hide again by kicking the man in his stomach, preventing him from falling on top of Jon and smothering him.

When their leader falls, the other men drop their guns and fall to their knees, their hands raised in surrender.

Grey Worm and Missandei make quick work of zip-tying their hands. Since they surrendered they’ll have the opportunity to work as foot soldiers for the Martells.

“Is it bad that I want to kiss you right now?”

Dany smiles. There’s a splatter of blood on her cheek that she wipes away without batting an eyelash. A woman who can save his ass is always a turn on. “Work first,” she teases. “Fun later.”

“I thought this was fun.”

“Is this how our dates will look from now on?”

The remaining men as well as the workers from the bagging room line up. Grey Worm leads them out of the building, and Missandei sticks to the rear making sure no one tries to run off. Jon and Dany are left to carry the leader out. It’s one hell of a task. Doesn’t help that Jon rendered the man unconscious.

“This is what couples like us do, Dany,” Jon says, heaving a heavy breath as they throw the man into the back of an unmarked van. “We murder people together, raid warehouses, and sit through dull meetings.”

“How romantic,” she deadpans.

They climb in the back of the van, slamming the door shut behind them. Jon orders the driver to follow the van Grey Worm and Missandei are traveling in.

“Once things slow down a bit we can take a vacation,” Jon offers. He tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. “Anywhere you want to go?”

“Have you ever visited the ruins of Valyria?”

Jon chuckles. “You think that cunt Robert would’ve allowed that?”

“Then that’s where I want to go. Our family has a house in Volantis. We can start our journey there. I want you to see where our ancestors hailed from, Jon.”
“I hear there isn’t much left.”

“There’s more than you’d expect. Like the Stone People who are forever frozen in their last moments, and the remnants of the towers that once touched the sky. There’s also enough to form an idea of how they lived before the Doom.”

That’s the passionate woman he remembers from their first time sitting down for an actual conversation. Jon never wanted to see the ruins until now.

“We’ll go,” Jon promises. “As soon as all of this mess is over.”

In her eyes, he sees a hint of doubt. He can’t blame her for her dubiousness. He was the one who once told her that nothing was promised.

Arianne orders her men to take the gang’s former boss to the snake pit for a bath. None of the survivors of the gang turn her offer down. They swear fealty to House Martell. They kneel at her feet and kiss the gold ring that bears her family’s crest. When that’s over she puts them to work.

“The four of you took down their base on your own?” she asks, regarding their appearances. “I’m impressed. I can’t say that I’m surprised.”

“We brought you a gift,” Jon says, getting right to it. “You owe us two.”

Arianne grins. “Ah, beautiful Jon. Always eager to dive in. Never interested in savoring the moment.” She claps her fingers. “As promised, the first gift.”

Gendry doesn’t look like someone who’s been held prisoner. Arianne probably likes to pamper her toys before she plays with them; her sick and twisted way of making them lower their guard. Gods, she’s so much like Viserys.

Maybe that’s why she can get under Jon’s skin the way she does.

His younger brother doesn’t run to him, he doesn’t call out to him, he doesn’t do or say anything at all. Because he knows Jon. He knows Jon is doing everything in his power to keep from knocking his teeth in.

“The other gift,” Jon says.

Arianne links her arms with Gendry. She walks him over to Jon. “My Uncle Oberyn asked me to pass this along to you.” Unlinking their arms, she takes out a small, red envelope and hands it over.

Jon takes the envelope and pockets it. Without looking at Gendry, he asks Grey Worm and Missandei to take him to the van. He doesn’t watch them leave.

“I was hoping we could finally discuss business,” he says.

“Business will continue as usual. Do not fret.”

“And where will your family stand once the fighting starts?”

“Where we’ve stood for centuries.”

Jon and Dany sigh in relief.

Now if they can just get Tywin Lannister and Olenna Tyrell to sit down with them. Tyrion thinks
they need Doran’s support for whatever reason but it’s obvious that Arianne has full control over the Martell family, not her father. They need the backing of the major players.

Jon can’t help but ask. “Why did you agree to meet with us? Tywin Lannister won’t pick up the phone for me and I’m pretty sure Olenna Tyrell blocked me.”

“How have you not sat down with Tyrion, Jaime, Loras, and Margaery? Last I checked they were not in control of their families.”

“Which is why we’d prefer to meet with Lady Olenna and Tywin Lannister,” Dany says.

Arianne smiles. “What I am trying to get you two to see is that, without the consent of Tywin and Olenna, those meetings would’ve never happened. The Imp likes to believe he can move mountains. I suppose it’s fun allowing him to think that.”

Jon asks, “Wasn’t Tyrion the one who got you to meet with us?”

Arianne laughs so hard her eyes water. “Hell no! I did this to ensure our families remained on good terms.” She wipes her eyes. “Oh, and for my love, Viserys. I do adore him.”

Dany and Jon share a bewildered look.

“Well, the hour is late, and I have a new toy to play with. Goodnight!” She leaves them alone in the courtyard.

“I’m glad Viserys is gay. Could you imagine what’d happen if those two dated or even had a baby together?” Jon pretends to be disgusted.

Covering her mouth, Dany laughs. “Actually...Viserys likes women too.”

“Fuck. Well, at least she’s on our side.”

“I like her,” Dany declares. She nudges Jon’s arm. “Let’s have a look see at the top-secret envelope Oberyn Martell left for you.”

Jon forgot about that in his efforts to forget about Gendry. He isn’t ready to see his brother. He’s too hurt and angry to know what he’ll do if he hears a peep from him.

Inside the envelope is a photograph of a young couple, their smiles so big and bright it covers a majority of their faces. The man is tall, lean, and dashing in a grey suit. The woman stops short of the man’s shoulder. She’s stunning in a powder blue dress with embroidered white roses on the bodice.

Jon’s eyes sting.

“They were happy,” Dany remarks dolefully. “I’ve never seen Rhaegar smile like that.”

“I’ve never seen my mother smile with all her teeth.”

“You should show them this. Remind them of better times.”

Remind them of what they lost. Remind them of what they may never have again. He doesn’t want to risk opening old wounds.

Jon flips the picture over. There’s a date written in elegant handwriting. If this is the date the wedding took place that means their anniversary is coming up. Perhaps he’ll show it to them then. He returns the photo to the envelope.
“I don’t think anyone will be escorting us to our vehicle this time,” he says. “Let’s see ourselves out.”

While at Sunspear, Gendry thought there was nothing worse than being wined and dined by a beautiful woman who intended to kill him.

First time he met Arianne she was openly interested in him. Not romantically. She was interested in the same way collectors are interested in antiques. Just like a collector, Arianne loses interest quickly and searches for something new and exciting to entertain her. Doesn’t help if the item she once valued disappoints her.

Gendry disappointed her. She told him as much as she petted him like a puppy and spoon-fed him soup. Afterward, she whispered in his ear, her voice sultry and seductive, and said she was going to castrate him. Her laughter was the last thing he heard before fainting.

He spent the remainder of his time with her fearing for his balls; his life. He prayed his big brother would swoop in and save him like he always did.

Now that his prayers have been answered, Gendry wishes he was back with Arianne. He thought nothing was worse than being her prisoner. He was wrong.

Nothing terrifies him more than the man who’s sitting across from him right now, stone-faced and silent. Because he knows no one can hold a grudge quite like his brother.

Jon has changed from slightly intimidating yet kindhearted to intimidating as hell. The nature of his heart remains unknown. There was a time when Gendry could look in his brother’s eyes and see light, wonder, and hope. Now they’re nothing more than depthless pits.

Those dark, empty eyes fall on him and Gendry averts his gaze. He stares up at the mural on the ceiling that seems to depict souls burning in an eternal flame. He can’t look at that either. He decides to stare at his lap like the coward he is.

“The Doom of Valyria,” Jon says. His voice is deep, gravelly. “My ancestor, Daenys the Dreamer, warned her family and they fled to this country and settled in the area we know as Westeros.”

My ancestor. Gendry’s stomach burns at that. It’s like a painful reminder that they’re not related.

“I never knew about her until Dany walked me through these halls and gave me a history lesson.” Jon stares at Gendry as he speaks but Gendry won’t meet his gaze. “You know me, I only cared about Aegon and Visenya. Their swords mainly. I disregarded Rhaenys who fought alongside her siblings as well…”

“Why are you telling me this, Jon?” Gendry asks. “Are you trying to rub it in my face? You don’t have to do that. I feel bad enough as it is.”

“Think I give a fuck about how you’re feeling?” Jon is calm. Too calm. “You think it was easy learning Robert wasn’t my father, that my real father was Rhaegar Targaryen? All of this history that I never gave two-shits about suddenly mattered. Then there was the prejudice your father tried his damnedest to instill in me.”

“I’m sorry!”
Jon leans forward, his balled fist raised. Taking a deep breath, he lowers his hand. “I wondered if I’d wake up one day and lose myself, that I’d go mad like Robert said all Targaryens do,” he continues in that same, detached voice. “I began to fear that my attraction to Dany was only because of some perverted Targaryen trait. My mind was crumbling. I was confused and lost. I still struggle with my identity at times. None of this feels like it’s deserved.”

Gendry never considered any of that. He was too concerned with himself.

“I needed you, Gendry. I needed my brother. But you abandoned me, you abandoned our mother. You abandoned Robb and Uncle Benjen.”

“I didn’t know what was happening at the time! I thought they’d come for me!”

Jon chuckles humorlessly. “You truly believed Robert would do all that for you. When we were in deep shit who always pulled us out?”

Gendry doesn’t respond right away. The lump in his throat won’t allow it.

“Our mother,” Jon answers for him. “When you were sick who sat by your bed and wept and took care of you? Our mother and you rejected her.”

“I didn’t!”

“Yes, you did. She told you that nothing had changed. That you were still her son. And what did you do?”

Gendry hates the tone Jon is using. He wishes he’d yell and scream at him. Show some emotion. Anger, hatred - anything. Something that proves a small part of him still cares.

“You don’t understand what I was dealing with back then! I thought you were all my family but-”

“Blood never mattered and you know that. Do you know what Robert did to her?”

“Why do you think I attacked him and ran away? Look, Jon, I had no idea. Do you honestly believe I would’ve left had I known what he was going to do? I love her just as much as you!”

“Yet you turned your back on her.” It’s the first time Jon allows any emotion to slip into his voice. “He dragged her out to the woods-”

Gendry slams his hands on the table. “I don’t want the fucking details!” He can’t stomach it.

“And he raped her,” Jon carries on without a care for Gendry’s disposition, his voice breaking, “and had her brother murdered right in front of her and left her to pick up his brains-”

“Jon, please...please no more...” he cries.

He might as well be pleading to a wall.

“She hasn’t spoken a word in months.” Jon’s eyes begin to water yet his face remains impassive. “Loud noises frighten her. She doesn’t like to be touched or stared at. You want some kind of reward because you came running when you heard the news but you should’ve been here for her like she’s always been there for you.”

Jon scoots his chair back and gets up. Slowly he stalks toward Gendry. “I said that if I ever saw you again, I’d kill you.” Reaching Gendry, he touches the top of his bowed head.
Reluctantly, Gendry looks up at Jon. He has to blink through his tears to see him clearly. Jon touches the side of his face like he used to do when they were younger, whenever Gendry was upset about something. From that touch alone, Gendry can feel all the pain he’s caused Jon. His brother is hurt more than anything.

“Mother wouldn’t like it if I killed or hurt you,” Jon says. “But you can’t stay here. Every time I see you, I want to knock your teeth down your throat.” He gives Gendry one last, hard stare. “I’ll have Grey Worm take you wherever you want to go. Goodbye, brother.”

Gendry shatters the moment Jon’s hand leaves his face. “Jon, wait!” He grabs his brother’s arm. Jon tugs away but he doesn’t let him go. “At least let me see her...let me apologize to her and try to make this right.”

Sighing, Jon stares off to the side, refusing to meet Gendry’s eyes. “What did everyone used to call us when we were kids?”

Some of the fight is knocked out of him. “They...they called you Mini-Lyanna and I...I was Mini-Robert…” Defeated, he releases Jon. “Is she that bad?” So bad that she’d look at him and see only Robert, the man he has always favored physically?

“She’s slowly getting better. I’m not willing to risk relapse or put her in an uncomfortable position.”

“Then let me...let me work for you. I can’t go back north. I can’t be around those cunts who destroyed my family.”

“Are we only your family when it’s convenient for you, Gendry?”

“I know you’re pissed off but you know me better than that! I care about you, about our mother, and the rest of our family. I fucked up! Give me a chance to make it right. Please!”

Jon’s head tilts ever so slightly and that’s how he knows his brother is contemplating his words. “You’ve been overseeing the transport of illegal firearms into the city. You’ve been helping our enemies get weapons…”

“I did what I’ve always done. That’s my job.”

“That means you know when and where the next pick-up location will be. Right?”

Gendry hesitantly nods, already suspecting where this is going, and he isn’t going to like it.

Finally, Jon looks at him, a sly smile on his face. “Then you know what needs to be done.” He removes Gendry’s hand from his arm and walks away. “It’s time you really get your hands dirty.”

This is a true test of loyalty, and if he fucks this up, there’ll be no second chances.
Viserys is on top of the world.

Following his near-death experience in Braavos, he and Ellaria found a spa and spent the day getting pampered while Oberyn and Robb Stark helped the last of the stolen women get home safely.

How in the fuck did Robb Stark join their unusual group? Viserys will get to that later.

First, he wants to point out that finally he’s updated his wardrobe and burned all the last season garments he was shamefully wearing. Right now, he’s admiring his new Hermès shirt in the water closet’s golden-framed floor mirror. He wanted the same shirt he ruined but it’s no longer in style.

His nails are clean and manicured, his face is no longer dry enough to start a fire, and his hair—
actually, Viserys doesn’t know what's going on with his hair. Currently, he’s wearing it in a low, messy bun with bangs framing his face. He needs a haircut but his favorite hairstylist is in Pentos. He
doesn’t trust just anyone in his head. This hairstyle will have to do for now.

Outside the door loud, masculine laughter can be heard. Robb Stark’s no doubt. He and Ellaria were
playing a card game last he checked while Oberyn was feeding the miniature horse a treat. Like
Jon’s beast, Robb’s is well-trained and intelligent, though, it still sheds a lot much to Viserys’s
annoyance. He supposes it can't be helped.

Okay, back to the whole ‘near-death experience’ thing.

In the past, the warehouses they’d infiltrated were poorly undermanned. That’s because they were
only meant to serve as a temporary holding facility until the women were moved to the main
warehouse in Braavos.

Things were different this time. Truthfully speaking, they were cocky. It happens. Whatever.

Viserys was mortified to think he would die in last season designers but bless the gods. Two
miniature horses burst in, ripping off limbs and gashing throats followed closely by Robb and his
youngest sister, Arya. The odds were tilted in their favor and they won, leaving no witnesses behind.

When it was time to go their separate ways, Robb expressed his desire to return to the fold. He’s
finally ready to step up and reclaim his birthright. And it’s bloody obvious that this entire adventure
has been leading them all back to Westeros so it made sense for him to accompany them. Arya was
upset to learn she had to stay behind with her family. She craves revenge just like the rest of them.
But her older brother won in the end.

Now the four of them— five including Grey Wind— are on a yacht sailing to Dorne; to keep the
spies off their trail. Arianne will meet them there. She and her brother Trystane will be visiting for
their cousin’s birthday. From there, they'll travel to Westeros.

Viserys misses his family. He's in a place where he can face them and not feel ashamed. Plus, he's
eager to see the four upstarts in action. Arianne and Jaime have spoken highly of them. But seeing is
believing.

Anyway, tonight’s the night. He’s going to fuck Oberyn. He checks out his ass, making sure it looks
as good as he thinks it does.

Outside the bathroom, he can hear Robb’s heavy accented voice. That reminds him. He needs to let
Arianne know that he’s with her current ‘fuck’ interest. When Robb swooped in, cracking skulls like
a barbarian, shirtless and sweaty, Viserys could see what Arianne saw in him. The man looked as if
he’d been juicing during his time in hiding. She'll be happy to know that he’s bulked up a bit.

Viserys sends the text.

There’s a knock at the door. Moments later, Oberyn cracks it open, peeking inside. His eyes are
glassy. The whiskey shots have caught up with him.

“Do you know what privacy means?” Viserys asks, quickly pocketing his phone.

Oberyn steps in, eyeing Viserys suspiciously. “You left so suddenly. I was concerned...”

“Arianne took my stash with her.” She always takes his drugs and flushes them. The little shit. “And
you two wouldn’t let me buy any more. So, no worries.” He’s been clean for two weeks now. It’s
nothing to get a golden sticker for but it’s something.
“This is good. You shouldn’t corrupt your beautiful body.”

“You think my body is beautiful?” Of course, he does. Viserys has caught him staring. “I’ve been wondering. Why did you really come to Pentos?” He could’ve figured out where the women were being held on his own. He didn’t need Viserys.

“For you.”

Viserys expected the man to deflect or lie. He should’ve known better. Oberyn is honest and frank.

Leaning against the sink, he beckons Oberyn forward. The man isn’t so stubborn when he’s inebriated. Up close, Oberyn is as golden and handsome as a demi-god. He’s known to be deadly, dangerous, and unpredictable but he’s always been the opposite with those he cares for.

Oberyn touches Viserys’s face, slowly leaning in for a kiss. But he stops himself short. “Do you remember the night you confessed?” he asks quietly, his warm breath fanning Viserys’s lips.

Of all the things Viserys wants to hear right now, that isn’t even close. “I try very hard not to. Let’s not bring it up now.”

“No, I owe you an explanation, Viserys.”

“You rejected me. I would’ve rejected me too. I was young and dumb.” And his ass was flat. “No hard feelings.” He tries to pick up where they left off.

Frowning, Oberyn leans back. “I didn’t reject you. Not outright.”

“Yes, you did. I remember...” Fuck, he isn’t sure what he remembers. His memory has never been reliable. “When I woke up the next morning you were already on your way to the Citadel. You never contacted me or visited me when you were home.”

“So, you don’t remember what I told you?”

“In my defense, I was wasted.”

Oberyn’s expression is nostalgic. “I’d never heard such a heartfelt confession before. I was taken aback, truthfully. I was also smitten by you. But you were too young, Viserys.”

“You rejected me because of my age, not my flat ass?” Viserys is relieved.

Oberyn chuckles and steps away. “That wasn’t the only reason. Someone whom I care for dearly is in love with you. They have been for some time. Even though you are of age now, I cannot bring myself to betray them. I hope that you can find it in yourself to allow them to give you the love and attention you deserve.”

The man leaves Viserys there, wide-eyed and emotionally curb-stomped. He couldn’t possibly be referring to...No. No, that’s impossible.

Feeling something wet on his cheek, he touches his face, smearing the tear on his skin. He doesn’t understand where the tears are coming from. He shouldn’t be producing them, he has no reason to. Yet they fall continuously. Has he truly been blind this whole time? He always thought the best he could manage was someone who tolerated him but never loved.

And yet...

His phone vibrates in his pocket with a new text alert. He knows who it is without checking. It’s the
same person Oberyn was referring to.

Fucking Arianne.

“Is this his first time doing something like this alone?” Grey Worm asks.

They stand, out of sight, on the roof of a warehouse overlooking the docks of White Harbor, a small port town about twenty minutes outside of city limits. White Harbor's town mayor, Wyman Manderly, is one of the rumored Stark loyalists. Before their current gang system existed, the Starks helped the Manderly's fend off pirates and invaders, creating an alliance that has lasted generations.

“It’s his first time doing something like this at all,” Jon says to Grey Worm. He doesn’t take his eyes off the scene below. “Gendry was always the lookout or the getaway driver. Never the soldier.”

Grey Worm sighs anxiously. “It’s taking too long…”

Damn right it is.

A small job like this takes less than half an hour. All Gendry has to do is wait for the men to fill the 18-wheeler with the supply crates, kill them once it’s done, then steal the truck and take the back roads all the way home.

Easy.

For someone like Jon or Grey Worm, that is. Not someone inexperienced like Gendry.

“Cut him some slack,” Jon says, chuckling at the deep frown on the Grey Worm’s face. “Gendry’s one of the good ones.”

“Then why send him? I could’ve done this for you.”

“No one stays good for long. He wants in on the family. Then he’ll have to prove himself.”

Grey Worm adjusts the high-precision rifle he’s toting. “He’ll get hurt.” He pauses. “At least he’s a fast runner.”

Gendry runs from the men pursuing him, screaming at the top of his lungs, fumbling with the gun in his hands. The men don’t bother shooting him because they’re obviously entertained by the spectacle. His idiot brother is an idiot.

“That is the opposite of stealth.” Grey Worm does the closest thing to an eye roll. “We must help him.”

“There’s only four of them.” If he can’t handle four, he can’t make a difference in their war. “Gendry knows how to use a gun. He knows how to fight. He just prefers to run away from every fucking thing.”

One of the men catches up to Gendry and tackle him to the ground. Grey Worm aims his rifle, but Jon stills his hand. They won’t kill Gendry here. They’ll want to take him in for questioning. Once they remove his mask and see who he is they’ll take him straight to Robert.

That means Gendry has ample time to free himself.

As the other men are rapidly approaching, Gendry wrestles with his subduer. It ends with the other man shot in the face. Gendry stares at the dead man for too long, giving the other men their opening.
Jon curses. He aims and fires his own rifle, delivering headshots to two of the remaining three men. While the last man looks in the direction the bullets came from, Gendry shoots him dead. This time he doesn’t sit there gawking at what he’s done. He runs back to where the truck is and hops in.

“Okay, let’s get out of here,” Jon says, strapping his rifle on his back. He looks over at Grey Worm who’s smiling at him. “What?”

“I thought we weren’t supposed to help him.”

“Oh, piss off.”

Grey Worm laughs.

As one would expect, Gendry is shaken up and deathly silent when he picks them up behind the building. Wordlessly, Jon nudges him out of the driver’s seat and takes over the wheel. He still knows all the roads to take and which ones to avoid.

The three of them sit cramped in the front. If Jon told anyone that they were all brothers they’d probably call bullshit.

“Was that your first time taking a life?” Grey Worm asks Gendry.

“That I know of.” Gendry takes the offered handkerchief from Jon to wipe the blood and sweat off his face. “I’ve never seen them die. I always blacked out in the past.”

Jon kind of envies Gendry because of that. He’d love to blackout every time he pummeled someone to death to avoid a guilty conscience.

“People always say it gets easier. That killing won’t emotionally affect me the more I do it. Is that true?”

Jon shakes his head. “No, but you’ll get better at it.” He glances over at his brother. “You did good, Gendry. But the night’s not over.”

“What’s next?” Gendry asks, resigned to his new life.

“You need to take two crates to Arianne Martell. It may not be all that you promised her but it’ll put you on better terms with her.”

And it’ll give their family an extra boost in credibility.

“Do I have to go alone? She’s scary as hell!”

“I’m not intervening again. You created this problem. You fix it.”

Sleep doesn't come easy for Dany that night. How can she sleep when her loved ones are in their enemies’ territory? She wanted to go with them, but Jon wouldn’t have it. He acts as if just last week she didn’t save him more than once during their takedown of the dinky drug operation.

“The north is cold,” Jon told her before he left. “Too cold for a southern girl.”

Up there, they would do all kinds of vile things to her if she were captured. It’s hard to imagine there was a time when human trafficking was taboo in the north. With Ned Stark’s death, the true nature of his brethren revealed itself. But Dany knows there are vile people everywhere. All over the world people hurt women and girls.
Instead of lying in bed pouting about it, Dany goes for a walk outside. The thin, black shawl wrapped around her upper body is hardly enough protection against the crisp night air. But like her siblings she’s warmblooded. Arthur used to say they had fire in their veins, remnants of the magic from Old Valyria.

She misses the man dearly. Whenever he called her his little Stormborn it made her feel invincible. His departure hurt them the most. Viserys has always come and gone as he pleased. But Arthur was a constant in their lives. His sister Ashara was sick with grief at the news of Ned Stark’s death, and Arthur needed to heal in his own way so he returned to Dorne.

“Is it the moon that makes you sad?”

Blinking away tears, Daenerys sits up straighter. She can’t allow outsiders to see her this way. “Shouldn’t you be patrolling my family’s estate, Mr. Naharis.”

“My men can manage without me for a little while.”

Daenerys resumes her stroll, making a show of disregarding his existence entirely. She watches the steady push and pull of the waves on the shore. Some people say the sea calls to them, that if they stare into the depths long enough they’re filled with a sudden urge to jump in and see what secrets can be found. Of all of her time spent by the sea, she’s never felt compelled to do such a thing. It’s fire that has always spoken to her.

“Are you a religious woman, my lady?” Daario asks from behind her.

“Do you often sneak up behind women when they’re alone and follow them?”

Daario chuckles. He falls into step beside her. “Better?”

“I’d prefer it if you weren’t here at all, but yes, this is better.” Daenerys remembers the question he asked previously. “As a girl, I believed in everything. As a woman, there isn’t much I believe in. Why do you ask?”

“You always walk along the beach at night. I assumed you were paying respects to the Drowned God.”

Daenerys halts. “Your job is to look out for potential threats, not stalk me, Mr. Naharis,” she says sternly. Although his story checks out, and he didn’t lie about 350 of his men being on a job in Qarth, Dany doesn’t trust the man.

“If I am to protect you and your family I have to be mindful of my surroundings as well as my employers’ routines. I know that the Naathi-”

“Her name is Missandei. From now on you will address her and Grey Worm by name. Nothing else.”

“Forgive me,” Daario says with a smile he probably believes is charming. “I know that Missandei swims at the same time every night. I know that Grey Worm won’t retire for the evening until he’s walked the perimeter twice. Jon doesn’t leave the house once he’s in for the night but something tells me he’s always watching…”

That’s because Jon compulsively checks the security cameras.

“Jon’s mother and the wolf-dog roam the grounds at random times but they stick to the same areas. As for the master of the estate…well, I actually never see him.”
Daenerys wants to tell Daario to join the club, but he doesn’t need to know that Rhaegar’s comings and goings remain a mystery to everyone.

“Congratulations, you’re doing your job,” she deadpans. “Thank you for your hard work.”

“No need to thank me.” Daario steps up to her. Their bodies are nearly touching yet for Dany it feels as if they’re standing on opposite sides of the world. “My only wish is to keep you...and everyone else safe.”

When Jon stands this close to her she finds it hard to breathe under the weight of him. That’s how she knows what they have is real. A handsome, smooth-talker isn’t enough to sway her heart. Especially an untrustworthy one.

“I must retire,” Daenerys says, putting distance between them. “Return to your post.”

“Allow me to walk you part of the way. We’re going in the same direction.”

Daenerys allows it. A very small part of her pities the man because of the altered contract he was tricked into signing. Then again, if he does his job and never betrays them, Jon won’t have a reason to kill him and put Grey Worm in charge of the Second Sons.

“Goodnight, my lady,” Daario says as she’s walking inside. “Sweet dreams.”

“Goodnight.”

Jon doesn’t return until much later. He finds her asleep on the lounge chair in their bedroom, an open book on her lap. Daenerys stirs when he picks her up and carries her to bed.

“We all made it back in one piece,” he says.

Dany can rest easy now.

Roose Bolton sits where Eddard Stark once sat at the center of the long advisory table. The table is as old and ancient as the surviving weirwood. Some even believe it was carved from one despite being dark and harsh in color. As for the chair, no one knows of its origin or how long it’s cushioned the asses of Starks. It’s one of the north’s many mysteries.

The only thing that matters now is that for the first time in centuries a Bolton has claimed the most valuable treasure this side of The Neck. To the left of Roose sits Ramsay. The chair to his right is empty. Robert should be there but he has once again refused to attend the meeting of the families.

Roose doesn’t have to work hard to sabotage Robert. The man is doing it all by himself. He drinks and he fucks and he drinks and he fucks. Sometimes he mourns. The regret of what he did to Lyanna eats away at him. Which is expected. He raped his best friend’s sister. Killed his best friend’s brother. Sided with his best friend’s murderer over his best friend’s own family.

Then again, Robert still doesn’t know that it was Roose who beheaded Ned. Ramsay is dying to tell him. His son thinks it’ll be the final thing to break Robert.

Roose disagrees.

In his opinion, Robert isn’t broken at all. He’s been whoring and drinking himself into oblivion for years. Perhaps he never physically hurt Lyanna in the past because of Ned, but with Ned out of the way, he can now be his true, monstrous self. Robert’s a wildcard as well. They didn’t think he had
the gall to attack Dragonstone like that. Yet he did. As long as Rhaegar is alive, Robert will never let go of his hatred and his rage. Nothing will break his will.

“Some cunt is sweeping up and down the eastern coast and killing all our men and stealing our cargo!” A member of House Karstark shouts from the floor.

Once again the grumbling and discontented murmuring start back up. Jeor Mormont stands. Out of respect for the Old Bear, the others quiet down.

“Are we not stealing women and young girls from their homes?” he asks, looking around the room disdainfully. “What we’re doing in the Free Cities is a disgrace! People aren’t bloody cargo!”

That garners nods of agreement from those in his house and a few others around the room.

Smalljon Umber gets up. Despite his nickname, he’s barreled-chested and nearly as tall as his late father. “You’re right, Old Bear,” he says. “People aren’t cargo. That’s why we didn’t stock the brothels with our own girls and raided the Free Cities instead.”

Jeor growls, “That is racist!”

“How so?” Smalljon asks, feigning innocence. “We’re fucking them so it’s clearly not racist. Plus there are all kinds of girls there. Pale, dark, and even red.” He smirks. “About the same shade of red as you are now.”

Jeor is fuming, nostrils flared, eyes ablaze, and face brilliantly red. Instead of lashing out or continuing the upsetting conversation, he sits down to silently stew in anger. He refused the construction of brothels on Bear Island. In exchange, his taxes have increased. But Jeor would rather pay the price then spit on Ned Stark’s legacy.

Loyal old fool.

“Do we know who the culprit is?” Roose calmly asks.

“They never leave survivors,” Smalljon answers. “If the locals saw anything they’re not talking. We think the cunt is one of their own or someone they trust.”

“Could be Robb Stark,” Ramsay says.

The entire room goes quiet. Harald Karstark looks seconds from an aneurysm. He spends all of his free time chopping wood to strengthen himself for a final showdown that may never happen. He wants to chop off Robb Stark’s head. He’ll be lucky if he even gets to fight Robb Stark.

Any mention of the young wolf serves as a reminder that the true heir lives. Which is why Roose has given everyone explicit orders to never speak that name or the name of his siblings. Of course, Ramsay had to be the one to defy him. Openly at that.

“Robb Stark would be a stranger to them,” Roose says, keeping a tight lid on his anger. “He doesn’t speak their language. He doesn’t know their land well enough.”

Ramsay never knows when to shut up and it shows. “He’s been there for almost seven months. Long enough to familiarize himself with the people.”

“We don’t even know if Robb Stark is in Essos. He could be in Dorne or YiTi for all we know.”

Roose has sent men in search of the boy and his family. Not even a trace has been uncovered. If
they’re in a Targaryen safehouse, they’ll never find them. Rhaegar understands how valuable the Starks are, and he knows if it's his family that helps them regain power they’ll benefit greatly.

“Maybe it’s Viserys,” someone from the back says.

That seems more likely. However, Viserys isn’t the kind of person to rescue anyone from anything. For all they know, this could be anyone who gives a shit about Essos. They’ll just stop their raids for a month then start up again.

Roose opens the floor for a new topic.

Last night someone stole an incoming shipment from White Harbor. Gendry was the one who connected them to the supplier and he played a key role in scheduling the shipment time and date. Robert was stupid for not changing those plans as soon as Gendry ran away. All security footage was deleted. Even the footage from the secret cameras that only Wyman Manderly should know about. The man claims he shared the location of the cameras with Gendry because he trusted him. If that’s true then he’s to blame for the stolen shipment. Nonetheless, this is Robert’s area of expertise and his mess to clean.

“Speaking of Robert,” Wyman says with a tone that warns of where this is going. “I was hoping he would attend today and address the disgusting rumors about him.”

“Which rumors?” Ramsay asks as if he isn’t already skating on thin ice. “There are a lot where he’s concerned.”

“People are saying he raped Lyanna Stark on the night of the Dragon’s descent.” Wyman balls his fists at his sides. “Is it true?”

“Of course not,” Roose lies as naturally and easily as he inhales and exhales air. “Robert has been in love with Lyanna ever since he met her. We all know this.”

“Lyanna was never happy with him,” Galbart Glover says. “She never wanted to be his wife. I was present at their wedding ceremony in the Godswood. She cried during the entire affair.”

Ramsay snickers, “Tears of joy I bet.”

Mainly the younger men laugh at that. Most of them weren’t even born during the time Lyanna brought their enemies to heel. Lyanna could go toe to toe with the biggest of them and win. To see her forced to marry Robert was like watching a wild mare being beaten into submission.

“If Robert raped Lyanna he’ll have to answer for that,” Wyman says. “Husband or not, he had no right!”

“Lyanna Stark left Robert for a man he has been at odds with for decades.” Roose is only bending the truth a little. “She betrayed their vows. She deceived him and made him believe Jon was his son and heir. Regardless, Robert isn’t so filled with rage that he’d rape her.”

“Where is Robert then? He should be here explaining himself.”

“Robert’s whereabouts are none of your concern, Wyman. You should be concerned with yourself. Someone infiltrated and fled your territory undetected. Care to explain?”

That’s just the topic change they needed. Now the flock can focus their attention on judging the other sheep for his incompetence. The remainder of the meeting carries on like that. When the meeting is adjourned, only Roose and Ramsay are left in the great hall.
“Seems like no one has heard about Jon’s slow rise to pow-”

Without word or warning, Roose grabs the back of Ramsay’s neck and slams his head on the table.

Voice as still as the wind before a storm, he says, “I told you to never speak Robb Stark’s name. Are you trying to incite a rebellion?”

Sitting up, Ramsay flashes a bloody smile. “I was playing a game.” He quickly raises his hands to block another attack. “I wanted to see who would react!”

Roose stills his hand. “Go on…”

“There are rumors of Stark loyalists in our midst. I wanted to see who would react to the mention of Robb Stark’s name.”

“And?”

Ramsay wipes his mouth with his shirt. “Jeor Mormont was the only one to react.”

“He could’ve been simply reacting.”

“I think he’s given us reason to suspect him based on his earlier comments alone.”

Roose wants to slam Ramsay’s head on the table again. “What will you have me do? Kill him because he’s sympathetic. His own son was banished from the city for trafficking. Naturally, he detests the act.”

“Kill him because he’s a potential traitor. We can’t risk having people who are loyal to the Starks eating at our table.”

“And what will we do when he’s dead? Without White Harbor, we lose our main port and ability to smuggle into the city.”

“We can use the ports west of us.”

“And be easy pickings for the Greyjoys. They are useless on land but remain masters of the sea. We can’t fend them and the Free Folk off all while preparing for a war with the south.”

Ramsay looks the way he does before he says something that’s going to either piss Roose off or disturb him. “Give me ten good men. We can infiltrate the south and kill the remaining Targaryens. Without them, Robb Stark won’t have many supporters.”

Ah, this time he’s aiming to piss Roose off.

“You’re stupid if you think Rhaegar will be unprepared like he was last time. We must wait for them to come to us and fight them on our turf.”

“But-“

Roose holds up his hand to silence the boy. “I tasked you with finding Asha and Theon Greyjoy so that we may use them to forge an alliance with Euron. That was a week ago.” In turn, he has been brokering a deal with the insipid Walder Frey.

“The trail ran cold,” Ramsay says through gritted teeth. “I don’t have any more leads.”

“Then go look for new ones. The dragon still licks its wounds but when it’s ready to take flight again
“we’ll need stronger allies.”

“They no longer have the numbers. Their allies have deserted them. Jon can’t beat everybody to death.” He snickers. “Though I’d love to see him try.”

The boy will never learn. Roose is partially to blame for that but his son’s ignorance is due to the fact that he’s never fought in a real war before or seen the aftermath of one. He was fortunate to be born after the great war. They couldn’t go outside without seeing hellfire caused by Aerys. The Martells were picking them off with guerrilla attacks while the Lannisters and Tyrells kept the money rolling in. While the north withered, the south flourished.

If they’re to face them again, they have to be smarter, stronger, and nastier than they were back then.

Roose releases a suffering sigh. It’s rare for him to exhibit an outward show of annoyance like this but his son has brought it out of him.

“Ramsay.”

“Yes, Father?”

“Go find Asha and Theon Greyjoy. Don’t return to Winterfell until you do.” His tone leaves no room for objections.

Ramsay forcefully scoots his chair back and storms off.

“And take that psychotic bitch of yours with you.”

Roose doesn’t want her lurking about without her master holding her leash.

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Drowning out Myranda’s incessant blabbering about the little dragon bitch, Ramsay aggressively pushes her aside and walks across the room to fetch his bag. He packs swiftly and carelessly, his anger making his hands tremble.

His father acts as if he’s actually scared of that queer Rhaegar and the rest of his family. The Targaryens are finished. Everyone knows it. The only thing left to do is end them once and for all and further prove that the time of the old gods is finished. No one gives a shit that they supposedly rode dragons or that they ruled kingdoms. They’re nothing more than walking, talking abominations on borrowed time.

Myranda hugs him from behind. “Your father knows you’re smarter than him. That’s why he’s sending you away.” She drags her hands down his chest and stomach, inching close to his belt buckle. “He’s afraid of what you’re capable of.”

With bruising force, he grabs her by the wrist, stopping her advances. “I was told to bring my bitch with me. So go pack your bags.”

“I get to come too?” she asks excitedly; eager like a puppy. “We’re going to have so much fun, you and I. Do you think we can pay Jon and Daenerys a visit?”

Ramsay would much rather do that. He doesn’t care about finding the Greyjoy siblings, but his father thinks they need Euron for whatever reason.
“We’re going to hunt down the Greyjoys. This is important to my father so I have to do it.”

Myranda pouts. “But I’m dying to carve up that bitch’s face.”

All Ramsay did was mention that Daenerys was beautiful once. Just once, and that was all it took for Myranda to become obsessed. She’s never met Daenerys. Never saw her perfect half-naked body marred with burns and cuts. Never heard her screams or tasted her tears while she slept, exhausted from the torture inflicted upon her.

But Ramsay has experienced that with Jon. It was pure and special. He’s yearning to experience it all over again yet he’s stuck with this boring task.

“One day, you’ll get the chance. Now pack your things and meet me at the gates.”

Ramsay doesn’t head straight to the gates. He stops by the kennels first, needing absolute privacy. No one likes to come here because of his dogs. They have their master’s temperament.

He makes a phone call to the cutthroat he likes to keep on standby.

“I have a job for you. Kill everyone at Summerhall except for Jon Baratheon. I want you to bring him to me.”

He’ll prove to his father that they have nothing to fear from their enemies.

For Jon, the day starts the same as any other day.

His internal alarm clock goes off an hour before his actual alarm clock does. Dany clings to him when he tries to get out of bed and as always he’s a sucker for her warm embrace so he lays back down until his restlessness gets the better of him. The second time he tries to get out of bed, he manages to slip away without disturbing her sleep.

Grey Worm meets him downstairs. They go for a morning run on the beach. Depending on their moods, they’ll make it a friendly competition. Neither seems to be in the mood today.

When the sky glows pink and the first rays of the sun touch the sand, they return to their rooms. By then, Dany is wide awake. She’s already had her shower and is reading over the itinerary for the week while her hair dries. Tomorrow is the first day of debt collecting. That means while Jon and Grey Worm are out knocking on doors, Dany and Missandei will hold the meetings.

Jon knows without a doubt that they’ll do great. Probably better than he ever had.

After his shower, Jon joins Dany for breakfast in their private dining room. Because there’s never enough time in the day and they’re swamped with work they use this time to work on Jon’s Valyrian. Their entire conversation is spoken in the language. He’s making very slow progress. Still, progress is progress.

The Spider drops in to whisper secrets.

Word of Lyanna’s assault at the hands of Robert is spreading, but no one in the north has made a move yet. The Free Folk have started raiding again since their pact with the Starks is null. In the east, there have been reports of a large, smoke grey wolf with yellow eyes rampaging along the coast. Jon knows it’s Grey Wind, Robb’s dog, but the reports don’t mention anything about his cousin. He orders the Spider to turn over every stone and find Robb. He also wants to find a way to meet with Tormund.
While Dany and Missandei train, Jon pays his mother a visit.

He never knows what to expect when he goes to see her. Sometimes his father is slipping out of the door quietly and they have an awkward encounter in the hallway. Sometimes his mother is in the middle of doing one-handed pushups or she’s staring out of the window blankly.

Today, she isn’t in her room at all.

Jon finds her and Ghost in the back of the house on the cliffs. Ghost is sniffing around and Lyanna is doing fencing footwork drills; which are very useful for practicing hand to hand combat. As always her form is perfect. She's beginning to tone up again, mostly in the arms and calves. She's getting his strength back.

Not wanting to disturb her, Jon watches from afar. Her lunges and pivots are graceful as a prima ballerina’s pirouette.

“That same move cost me my title,” Rhaegar says.

Jon tears his eyes away from his mother. She wouldn’t like it if she knew they were watching her. “I wish they would’ve recorded it. I would’ve loved to see it.”

“I’m sure there’s a video of it somewhere on the internet.”

“The internet existed back then?” he jokes.

Rhaegar chuckles. “Gods, we’re not that old. Though, it feels that way at times.” He touches Jon’s shoulder gently. “There’s something I’d like to discuss with you if you have the time.”

This is the moment when Jon’s day takes a major diversion from the schedule.

His father takes him to the library where the family’s lawyer, Oswell Whent, and another man, Willem Darry, are waiting. Brief formalities are made. The men greet Jon warmly, with the same respect they show Rhaegar. He doesn’t know how to accept the attention but they don’t take offense.

“Willem is the Chief Executive of the family’s banks,” Rhaegar explains to him as they take their seats at the table. “I brought him here today to have an account opened for you. Before we can do that, we’ll need to discuss the matter of your name.”

“My name?”

“You are Jon Baratheon on paper,” Oswell says. His distaste is apparent, but it isn’t aimed at Jon. “I have acquired the necessary documents to have your last name changed to Targaryen. As for your first name-”

“What’s wrong with my first name?” Jon asks.

Willem says, “It’s a fine name. A fine name indeed. However, next to the others it falls flat.”

“What Willem means,” Rhaegar says, “is that if you wish it, you can have a more traditional Targaryen name. The choice is yours.”

What name would he even choose? He sure as shit doesn’t want to be the millionth Aegon. No offense to the conqueror or those with his namesake but Jon isn’t interested. Besides, out of the trio he always liked Visenya better.

“I want to keep my first name. My uncle named me. I won’t dishonor his memory by rejecting what
he gifted me.”

No one protests. Oswell makes the necessary changes. All he requires is two signatures from Jon. One old, one new. The pen is shaky when he tries to write a ‘T’ instead of a ‘B’ but he manages. He never thought something as simple as a name change would hold so much weight.

“How much would you like added to the account?” Willem asks Rhaegar, opening his ledger.

The amount his father gives nearly makes Jon collapse right then and there. He knows his family is insanely wealthy, but he’s never had that much money in his possession. The allowance he’s been getting is seashells and marbles in comparison.

“Now that we have that out of the way. Oswell, I am ready to modify my will.”

Jon frowns. “You don’t have to add me so soon.” He doesn’t like the idea of his father preparing for his death. “We can do it another time.”

“Had I died that night, you and your mother would’ve been left with nothing. I trust that you both would’ve been taken care of but that isn’t good enough for me. You two are my responsibility.”

“You are the head of the family now,” Oswell says. “But unless Rhaegar modifies his will, Viserys will have full control if anything were to happen to your father.”

So, the will is modified. Upon his father’s death, Jon will gain ownership of the family’s properties in Westeros, Dorne, and Essos, the banks, the businesses—everything. His mother will have enough money to live off of for another lifetime.

Jon is so overwhelmed with it all that he doesn’t speak. He just listens to three, powerful men conduct business.

“As for the other matter,” Oswell starts. He glances at Jon then back at Rhaegar as if asking for permission to continue.

Rhaegar gives his consent.

“If Lyanna files for a no-fault divorce, I can bend the rules a little and have her marriage to Robert legally recognized as void. She won’t have to be tied down by that wretched imbecile any longer.”

“How long does that usually take?”

“Months for most,” Oswell smirks. “I will only need a day or two.”

Rhaegar smiles. “You never cease to amaze me, old friend. Do whatever you must.”

"Trust me, I will."

That explains why Oswell is so good. Lawyers are shady by nature but lawyers who aren’t opposed to getting their hands dirty are a different breed entirely. With that aside, the men take the time to properly welcome Jon to the family. Willem is a kind-spoken man with beady eyes and a jolly laugh. Apparently, he was the family’s debt collector back when Aerys was in power. That means at one point he was breaking legs with bats and cutting off fingers.

Oswell fought by Rhaegar’s and Arthur’s side during the great war. With Rhaegar’s help, he eventually obtained a license to practice law. The three men are laughing and sharing stories of brighter memories when a cell phone goes off. It takes a second for Jon to realize it’s his phone.
Begrudgingly he answers. He was really enjoying their stories and seeing his father in a good mood.

Unfortunately, duty calls.

“Excuse the sudden departure,” Jon says, hurriedly getting up. “It was nice meeting you both.”

“Everything okay?” Rhaegar asks.

“That was Jaime. Some fucker is causing trouble near the border.” He pauses. “Um, sorry for the language.”

Willem chuckles heartily. “Don’t let the fancy suits fool you, boy. We were roughnecks once!”

On his way out of the library, Jon gives Tyrion a call.

“I was expecting to meet with Rhaegar’s son, not his sister,” Illyrio Mopatis, a nobleman from Pentos and one of Rhaegar’s most important clients, says.

“I apologize, Mr. Mopatis but my nephew is unavailable at the moment.” Daenerys’s smile is charming, personable. She’s regal and poise. “I would be delighted to discuss a continuation of the arrangement you have with my family.”

As expected, Illyrio just eats it up. He forgives the short-noticed change, and the meeting goes on without a hitch. Wealthy men like him are easily swayed by beautiful, well-kempt women with nobility in their veins.

Initially, Tyrion was worried when Jon informed them that he would be absent for the meetings today. He purposefully scheduled the most important clients for today so that once the debt collecting began tomorrow things could run smoothly. But his worrying was for naught.

Daenerys is a natural. She understands southern politics better than Jon and she’s comfortable around the upper class. She’s witty and knows how to keep the conversation moving. A majority of that is credited to her upbringing. Whatever she lacks in diplomacy, Missandei effortlessly fills in in a way that masks Daenerys’s shortcomings.

They’re a fine team. Not just the two, but the four of them. Jon and Grey Worm are the brawn. Daenerys and Missandei are the brains.

Tyrion’s just the funny dwarf that drinks and knows things.

The other night, one of their spies shared some news with them during family dinner. The efforts of the four upstarts have finally reached his father’s ears. His father showed no reaction to the news of them single-handedly taking down a narcotics operation in Martell territory, but Tyrion could tell he was impressed. However, it will take more than that to bring his father and Olenna to the table.

They’re old and tired. With Rhaegar they had peace and prosperity. They got to watch their children and grandchildren, as well as their money and influence, grow. In the years before Rhaegar, Tywin could have never attended a soccer game like a regular person. But now he’s at every one of Tommen’s games. He doesn’t miss Myrcella’s ballet recitals and he has the patience to deal with Joffrey’s...Joffreyness without sending him away to some distant reform school; despite his constant threats to do so.

Rhaegar gave them what Aerys couldn’t, and they believe Jon will take it all away because they don’t think he has what it takes to lead them into a war that’ll result in little to no southern casualties.
Tyrion’s personal goal is to get Jon and Daenerys to a point where they don’t have to rely on anyone. A goal like that will take years to achieve. But it’ll be worth it.

“Very good, you two,” Tyrion says after the third guest for the day has been escorted out. “Keep this up and perhaps we can end earlier than foreseen.”

Daenerys has a sip of water. All of the talking has left her throat dry. “When will we meet with our legitimate partners?”

“I was hoping to wait until Jon returned but I don’t mind repeating. There will be a gala Friday night. Lots of your legitimate partners will be in attendance. Rhaegar, like my father, hasn’t attended in years but they always send considerable donations. I think you and Jon should donate in person this year.”

“Can you prepare an outline of talking points for us? I’ll like for us to be prepared.”

“That’s a great idea. I will draw up something tonight.”

“Thank you, Tyrion.” Daenerys looks to the guard by the door. “You may bring in our next guest.”

What’s the saying for when everything goes to shit the moment things appear to be on the up and up? The moment the black mask is removed from their guests face, Tyrion loses any and all hope of the day ending on a good note.

The man is pale and objectively handsome. His hair is blacker than ravens’ wings and so is his thick beard. It’s hard to say if both of the man’s eyes are blue because one of them is covered by a leather patch. But the one eye that’s visible is as blue as clear skies. It’s almost as if the eye itself is laughing at them, though, the man’s expression is placid.

Missandei introduces the man as a merchant from Qarth but that isn’t who he really is.

“Funny,” Tyrion says, without a hint of humor in his voice, “I could’ve sworn you were Euron Greyjoy.”

At that Daenerys and Missandei frown in confusion. Of course, they wouldn’t recognize him. He’s spent most of their lives at sea, out of the public eye. It would appear that the man gave false information in order to slip through Jon’s clever security system.

“I apologize for the less than honorable tactics, Lady of Dragonstone,” Euron says, disregarding Tyrion entirely. “I wanted to prove a point.”

Daenerys’s face gives away nothing. “You risked your life by coming here uninvited just to prove a point? You’re either brave or stupid. Either way, I am uninterested in what you have to say.” She looks at the guards, silently signaling for them to take Euron away.

Good, Tyrion thinks. She shouldn’t allow something like this to go overlooked.

Before the guards can apprehend him, Euron says, “If I was able to slip in so easily what’s stopping any of your enemies from doing the same?”

Daenerys’s facial expression gives the guards pause. “From where I am sitting, you are my enemy. You come here under false pretenses and you have disrespected the rules my nephew put in place.”

“I am not an enemy. I am only a friend for now. I hope that in time I can be more than that.”
“Pardon me?” Daenerys looks over at Tyrion then she looks at Missandei. “Am I hearing him correctly?”

Tyrion sighs, “You are. He wishes to make a marriage proposal.” He cuts his eyes at the pirate. “A proposal that Arianne Martell and Margaery Tyrell have already declined.”

Euron doesn’t try to deny this. He’s far too relaxed considering the situation. “They did decline my gracious offer. I believe you are a sensible woman. Will you at least hear me out? If what I offer does not entice you then I will leave.”

Before Tyrion can order the men to take the pirate away, Daenerys grants him permission to continue.

“Thank you, my lady,” Euron says, bowing respectfully. “First, may I have a drink? Water would be fine.”

“You may not,” Tyrion says. “That would invoke guest rights. You are not a guest.”

The traditional law included food but it was modified decades ago.

Without a word, Daenerys gets up from her seat, walks over to the bar and pours the man a glass of water. Euron doesn’t mask his interest in her. He watches her like a filthy lecher.

Unfazed by his stares, Daenerys sits the glass in front of him. “Get on with it. I will give you two minutes to present your offer. Nothing more.” She walks back to her seat.

“Two minutes is more than I need. I ask for your hand in marriage and in exchange, I will do what your nephew has failed to do. I will lay waste to your enemies in the north and avenge your ancestral home.”

Tyrion doubts Euron would’ve been so bold had Jon been present. It makes him wonder if he knew Jon would be out today. But that can’t be. Even Jon didn’t know that he’d be out today. Perhaps Euron is as insane as they say.

“Is that all?” Daenerys asks, unimpressed. “What makes you think I require your help with that?”

“The men around you are weak and incompetent. The Imp,” he says with malice and contempt, “knows nothing about war. Your brothers are nothing more than whipped dogs and your nephew can’t even manage a fool-proof security system. These men cannot help you. But I can.”

The atmosphere changes, an icy chill enveloping them. Tyrion visibly shivers yet he seems to be the only one physically affected.

Daenerys’s violet eyes crystallize. “The next time you use your tongue to insult my family will be the last time you have a tongue.”

“I am only stating facts. Perhaps you should start wearing the pants and lend your dresses to—”

In the blink of an eye, Missandei is behind Euron, gripping the sides of his face to pry his mouth open, prepared to cut his tongue out. She awaits Daenerys’s command.

Tyrion panics. “You can’t,” he says to Daenerys. “The guest right is sacred!” The other families will shun them the same way they did Aerys if she goes through with this.

Euron chuckles as if he isn’t seconds from being mutilated. It’s all in Missandei’s eyes. She won’t
hesitate if Daenerys gives the order.

“The Imp is right. I have accepted a beverage under your roof, I sit in a chair in a room owned by your family. You can’t hurt me!”

“Let him go, Missandei.”

Missandei backs off and returns to Daenerys’s side.

“You need to send him away-” Tyrion clamps his mouth shut.

Daenerys glares at Tyrion for a long, agonizing second then she faces Euron. “You are absolutely right. As long as you are on my family’s property, you are protected by guest rights.” She nods to herself. “Seize him.”

Daenerys has Euron masked and taken out back. She follows her men out the door, Missandei at her side, Tyrion behind them inwardly cursing. This is bad. She’s turning out to be a bigger handful than he could’ve ever imagined. They walk a great distance. Despite that, they’re still technically on Targaryen soil. If her aim is to kill him, she’ll have to take him elsewhere. But it would be careless to kill him. Surely someone knows he came here today. If he goes missing, the Greyjoys will know who was responsible. They can’t afford any more enemies.

“Daenerys, please listen to me,” Tyrion tries to reason.

Daenerys doesn’t listen. They only stop walking when they reach a small grave in the middle of a vast field. She has Euron placed on the grave and then she unmask him.

The pirate is smiling, clearly entertained by all of this. “Did you bring me out here for me to pay respects to my future kin?” he asks.

“Read the epitaph,” she says icily.

Always in my heart. Sebastian Wendwater. There is no death date, but that doesn’t seem to be the point. Tyrion recognizes the surname, though.

“Elaine Wendwater’s husband died during a tragic plague that claimed thousands,” Daenerys says for seemingly no reason at all. “She had their two children with her so she couldn’t carry his body back to their home. So, she buried him here on my family’s land.”

Slowly, it begins to make sense to Tyrion.

Crossing her hands behind her back, Daenerys continues, “Before his tragic death, my grandfather, Aegon the Fifth, granted sole ownership of this plot of land to the family of the deceased. You stand on soil that does not belong to the Targaryen family.” She smiles. “Your guest rights mean nothing out here. The only thing that’s protecting you is my grace.”

Missandei steps forward, knife drawn.

“Now, what were you saying again about my family?” Daenerys asks.

Tyrion is ashamed for jumping to conclusions. He assumed she would do something reckless. He didn’t expect a clever power move like this. Being the one to clean up after Cersei all these years is to blame for his doubt.

Euron is dumbfounded. The only thing the pirate can do is get on his knees and beg for forgiveness.
It’s definitely a ploy. But it saves his skin.

“Thank you for your marriage proposal, Mr. Greyjoy. Regretfully, I must decline.”

The guards are ordered to return Euron to the pick-up location.

As they’re walking back to the estate, Daenerys tells Tyrion, “I value your advice, but if you ever question my actions in front of strangers again, you’ll be advising someone else.”

“I apologize,” he says sincerely. “I won’t do it again.”

“Find out how he was able to blindside us. If there’s a flaw in the system, Jon will need to know about it.”

“I’ll get right on it.”

Someone is fucking with them, and they’re doing a good job of it.

Jon, Grey Worm, Jaime, Loras, and Daario spent the better part of the day combing the streets for the intruders that killed three men from the combined forces who patrol the southern border. Their bodies were hung for all to see, getting the authorities involved.

Jaime had to bribe the cops who came sniffing around. Normally they keep their noses out of their business because they know better. But when civilians start calling things in, the cops have to show their faces. They’re lucky it wasn’t Stannis, and not his subordinates, that showed up on the scene.

No one saw a thing. Not even the damn spies who are supposed to see all. According to the Spider, none of his little birds saw anything in the north that would suggest their involvement. And the Ironborn have been keeping to themselves. Jaime and Loras think it was one of the lesser gangs in their territory. But even they doubt they’re capable of pulling a stunt like this unnoticed.

Whoever it was, they managed to send them on a wild goose chase. Jon thinks that was their plan all along.

“Do you think it was Euron?” Dany asks. She already told Jon about everything that occurred while he was out. Now they’re trying to sort through this mess together. “Perhaps he wanted to keep you away from Summerhall.”

They’re sitting in the study, at the war table, surrounded by walls of tomes and books.

“The person knew exactly when to attack. They knew how to evade our spies. Euron hasn’t been home in years.”

“How do we know for certain?”

“You’re absolutely right.” Jon picks up the glass, Kraken figurine and examines it. “He could’ve been here in hiding. Collecting all the information he needed until it was time to strike.”

Dany stares at the painted table. “Arianne told you that Gendry traveled through the sewers…”

Jon could kiss her right now. He fetches a blueprint map of the city and unrolls it. Something catches his eye.

“Or they could’ve used the catacombs,” he says.
“Either way, we now know of two possible routes our enemies can take to reach us. We should have the entrances closest to our territory guarded at all times.”

Jon makes a memo. He'll relay the information to Jaime and Loras as well.

That may solve the mystery of how their sly friend was able to slip away, but it doesn’t explain how they knew so much about the area, the spies, and the patrol routes.

“I don’t think Euron truly came here to offer anything for my hand in marriage,” Dany confesses.

“Neither do I.”

“Then why did he come?”

“He was casing the place.”

Dany frowns. “He intends to rob us?” She laughs. “I’ve heard he’s sailed all over the world, stealing vast riches and great treasures. What could we possibly have that he doesn’t already?”

Silently, Jon stares at Dany, allowing the weight of his gaze to answer her question.

Realization washes over her. She swallows thickly. “I see now. The Spider did say that he was seeking a southern bride.”

“And pirates steal what they want. They don't ask.”

The man’s marriage proposals were just his way of testing out each family’s security. From the way things are looking, their security system is the weakest.

Beneath Summerhall, in the bowels of the caves, the cutthroat Ramsay hired is thinking the same thing as Jon.

The Targaryen’s security system is the weakest he’s ever encountered.

Using the sewers, he crossed over into southern territory. From there, he used the catacombs, and they brought him all the way to the dragon’s new lair. There was a ruckus above ground earlier that day. He feared they’d discovered him somehow but he was wrong. They were running after someone else.

See, he’s clever and stealthy.

He isn’t stupid enough to attack them head-on. Best to gut them all while they’re sleeping. The cutthroat laughs to himself. Hell, maybe he can have a go at Lyanna Stark too while he’s here. What he hears, Robert broke her in real good. Wild bitches need to know their place. Robert only did what a husband’s supposed to do.

Whatever Ramsay’s paying him will pale in comparison to the accreditation he’ll receive for being the one to kill Rhaegar Targaryen. Maybe he’ll take the man’s head with him as a trophy for Robert. That’ll get him in good with the main family.

There’s a light up ahead. Green and glowing. Sticking close to the jagged cave walls, he inches closer, as quiet as kept.

Opera music is playing softly. Dark and ominous. An overture of sorts.
“You took your time,” someone says, voice deep and raspy. “We’ve been waiting for you.”

The cutthroat sees everything all at once yet it takes time for the grand picture to reveal itself to him. There’s a tall, broad shoulder man standing with his back turned to him. Long, silver-white hair hangs down his back. On the cave’s floor, there are a dozen or so caches of a green liquid that glows abnormally bright. He thought the color came from light but he was mistaken.

“When my son was captured, his mother and I used the catacombs to enter the northern territory,” the man, he now recognizes as Rhaegar Targaryen says. “I figured it’d be a matter of time before our enemies used them. Therefore, I had motion sensors and cameras installed around the perimeter…”

The cutthroat can’t take his eyes off the caches. He doesn’t know what’s in them but he knows it’s something bad. Heavy, gut-twisting dread fills him. Yet he’s rooted in that spot. Rhaegar turns and faces him.

The man's voice and appearance undergo a drastic change. “Forgive me! Where are my manners?” He sounds chipper, animated. “Can I offer you any refreshments? You’ve traveled all this way. You must be parched.”

“I-I…”

“Qyburn,” Rhaegar says, right index finger twitching. From the shadows, an elderly man in black robes emerges. “Fetch our friend a pitcher, please.”

A pitcher is fetched, its contents unknown. Why can’t he move his feet? Why can’t he run? Most importantly, what’s in those caches?

Taking the pitcher from Qyburn, Rhaegar stalks up to the cutthroat. “Tell me who sent you and why. I promise it will be over quickly.” His expression darkens. “Upset me and you will regret it.”

“No one sent me. I...I came for the glory.” Cutthroat or not he won’t betray the north for no filthy southerner. “I’m a bounty hunter. There’s a big reward for killing a Targaryen.”

“Qyburn, it appears our friend does not wish to accept my hospitality.”

“It would appear so, Master Rhaegar.”

Disappointed, Rhaegar pours the contents from the pitcher and hands it back to Qyburn. The elderly man walks away to a dark corner of the cave. The cutthroat tries to see what he’s up to but Rhaegar blocks his view. He doesn’t let the opportunity slip away. Unsheathing the blade at his hip, he aims for Rhaegar’s heart.

With unbelievable strength, the dragon grabs his wrist and crushes it. The blade falls to the ground with a clang. The cutthroat’s screams are drowned out by the haunting opera music.

“Let’s try this again,” Rhaegar says.

Qyburn returns with the pitcher, a faint green glow reflecting over the brim.

“Who sent you here to harm my family?”

The cutthroat pisses himself, a hot puddle forming at his feet. “Ramsay Bolton! I was ordered to kill everyone minus Jon Baratheon!”

“Not Baratheon,” Rhaegar corrects, loathing. “Jon is a Targaryen. He is my son. What does Ramsay
Bolton want with my son?”

“I don’t know! I swear I don’t know!”

“Did you see anything in the catacombs?” Rhaegar chuckles dryly. “Of course you didn’t. You wouldn’t have come this far if you had.” He tilts his head, his expression contemplative. He’s strikingly handsome and that makes him all the more terrifying. How can someone this exquisite be so ghastly? “I have one last question for you. Then you can be on your way.”

Does he really intend to let him go? The cutthroat absurdly thinks.

Rhaegar takes the pitcher from Qyburn. “Are you familiar with Aerion Targaryen? Aerion Brightflame, he liked to call himself.”

Gulping, the cutthroat shakes his head.

Qyburn, the sly old fox, apprehends him, forcing his hands behind his back. The cutthroat struggles, but Rhaegar’s soothing voice relaxes him oddly enough. He stands there as still as a statue, mesmerized by the man’s commanding presence.

He was foolish for coming here. So very foolish. He can see now that he never had a chance.

“Aerion believed he was a dragon in human form…”

Qyburn tilts the cutthroat’s head back, prying his mouth open with his gloved hands. As if under a spell, the cutthroat opens his mouth wider for Rhaegar, the taste of his own tears heavy on his tongue.

“…he believed that if he drank wildfire he would shed his human flesh and his dragon form would be born. Tell me, cutthroat. Have you ever wanted to be a dragon?”

The last thing the cutthroat sees before the wildfire burns down his throat, melting his insides to oblivion, are lifeless violet eyes tinged with green.
Dorne was once the southernmost country of the supercontinent of Westeros. Then a bunch of tectonic shifting and other shit that Viserys doesn’t really care about happened, separating the country. Now Dorne is literally a hop and a skip across the water; an hour and forty-five-minute trip by jet, three hours on a commercial flight.

There was once a time when House Nymeros Martell ruled Dorne. Then the revolutionary age was born, overthrowing the monarchy. Although the same thing was happening all over the world, especially in the continent that was once Westeros, things were bloodier in Dorne. Entire family lines were being decimated, anyone bearing a noble surname murdered in the streets.

It got so bad that the Martells, along with other noble families fled. Some of them set roots in Esso. The Martells went west and made the greatest city on this side of the Narrow Sea their new home. Nearly a century came and passed until it was safe for them to return to their motherland. When they did, they climbed their way back to the top, becoming the second wealthiest family in the country.

Unbowed. Unbent. Unbroken. Their house words suit them well.
Viserys remembers being captivated the first time he met a Martell. Growing up, his father was extremely overprotective, only allowing him to venture outside once, sometimes twice a day. Each time, there were guards monitoring him and breathing down his neck. One day, he snuck away from them and went to find his brother. Rhaegar was allowed to do whatever the hell he liked and Viserys envied him because of it. But he adored his older brother; he still does.

What he found in his search was a shirtless and sweaty Oberyn wrestling with an equally shirtless and sweaty Arthur while Rhaegar served as the referee. Viserys spent most of his time spying fixating on their naked chests and their skin complexions in comparison to his own, mainly Oberyn’s. Then he heard Oberyn speak. He heard his thick accent and was mesmerized.

Viserys likes to think that was the exact moment he realized he’d grow up to be different. He also used to think that was the moment he fell in love with Oberyn.

That night, he asked Rhaegar about the ‘funny talking man’ and Rhaegar took the time to explain the world to him. As interesting as the enlightening lesson was, Viserys only took one major thing from it.

Dorne was filled with beautiful people who spoke a beautiful language.

He raided the libraries at Dragonstone for every book he could find on Dornish culture. He neglected his violin and piano lessons to read up on their mythology, history, and even their music. Rhaegar encouraged him. His older brother thought it was a great thing that he was developing cultural awareness, and Arthur even tried to teach him Dornish.

Their father was a different case entirely. He feared Viserys would—honestly, he doesn’t know what his father feared. The man never needed a legitimate reason to detest anything. Aerys took all of his books on Dorne and even Essos away and burned them. Well, Viserys thought he took all of his books away. His mother saved one of them from the fire, burning herself in the process. His love for his mother quadrupled after that.

One night in particular, after reading his mother The Loves of Queen Nymeria, one of the stories in the book of collections she’d saved, he said, “If I had been born during the ages of old, I could’ve married a Dornish princess!”

Rhaella smiled at him. She had the prettiest smile. “Who is to say you can’t marry one still? Our family and the Martells have been allies for centuries. I am sure something can be done. But you must swear to me Viserys...you will always treat your wife with love and kindness.”

Viserys made the promise without recognizing the weight of his mother’s words; she didn’t want him to grow up and become his father.

Later that night, as they laid in the dark, Viserys whispered, “And what if I want to marry a Dornish prince someday...” The following silence felt as if it went on for a lifetime. Viserys thought it’d swallow him whole and suffocate him.

But his fears were put to rest when his mother replied, “Whoever you choose to love, be mindful of your promise to me.”

After Rhaella’s death, Viserys forgot about their promise or the importance of it for a long time. His adoration for Dornish culture dwindled and he found new interests. In time, he sought out nightly companions, not wives or husbands. He did not always treat them good and he sure as shit didn’t love any of them.
Viserys used to tell himself that it was Oberyn he was saving his heart for. Then he got pissy drunk and confessed to the man. His rejection further fueled his promiscuity and around the same time, he discovered his sadistic tendencies. Soon, he met Arianne. She was a pudgy little thing with cherubic features. Her parents, Doran and Mellario, brought her to Dragonstone during a meeting with Rhaegar. Daenerys and Missandei wanted Arianne to join them in their tea party, and for some time Arianne did.

Eventually, she wandered off.

The little shit, as Viserys oftentimes fondly refers to her as, ventured into the woods. To this day, he has no idea what made her do that. Nothing about the woods lining Dragonstone screams, kid-friendly fun. Then again, Arianne wasn’t a normal kid. She isn’t a normal person.

A rabid dog attacked her. Viserys saved her. Then he scolded her for being an imbecile. She cradled close to him the entire walk back to the estate, and he hated every second of it, though, he isn’t sure why.

Like his father, Viserys didn’t need a legitimate reason to detest anything.

It was a huge affair. Her parents were frantic, Daenerys and Missandei seemed to care more about the dog Viserys shot, and Rhaegar was Rhaegar; the calm, sensible voice of reason. That was the last time Viserys saw the little, imbecile princess. Honestly, he might’ve bumped into her on multiple occasions but didn’t pay her any mind. There’s a period of his life where people and moments passed him by without his knowledge.

Ten years passed when he really saw Arianne again.

She wasn’t a little princess any longer and she wasn’t pudgy, either. Silence fell over the room when she entered, wearing a form-fitting red, couture dress that accentuated her curvy frame. When the others looked at her, they saw a beautiful young woman with plump breasts, a slim waist, and goddess hips. They saw fresh meat.

Viserys saw that she was wearing Oscar de la Renta. Her sense of style has always impressed him.

Throughout the night, they shared glances from across the room. He’d feel eyes on him and when he looked up, she was always there. Men approached her from left and right, and she refused their requests for a dance. Even when it was pointed out that she was only sixteen, the requests didn’t stop.

It got so bad, Viserys felt inclined to intervene. His own sisters were fifteen at the time, and he would’ve been murderous if men double their age approached either of them the way they approached Arianne. He whisked her away to the balcony, far from the lascivious gazes and unwanted advances. They spent hours out there, talking about the most peculiar things. Most notably amongst their normal topics was her desire to be taken seriously in her new position, and not wanting the focus to always be on her physical appearance.

Per his advice, she began to hide her figure beneath loose-fitting, traditional garbs and full veils during business meetings until she was eighteen. By then, she’d made quite a name for herself without her looks so she didn’t need to worry about anyone suggesting her success was contributed solely to that.

They spent her eighteenth birthday together. Looking back on that night and all the times they’ve hung out, Viserys realizes he missed the blatant signs of Arianne’s feelings for him. Before she lost her virginity, she hinted at having an idea of who she wanted her first to be. Of course, Viserys
threatened to kill whoever it was because he didn’t like the idea of someone he saw like a little sister having sex that young. Then when she went out and fucked some random, older guy, he was so angry he didn’t talk to her for a month.

He might’ve found out who the man was and killed him, but they never discussed that.

It was Viserys she wanted, though. He wouldn’t have indulged her yet it bothers him that it took this long to notice the obvious.

On her eighteenth birthday, Arianne kept bringing up her age. Not in the usual, ‘it’s my birthday, bitch’ kind of way. She wanted him to acknowledge her entry into womanhood because she wanted him to finally see her as a potential companion. Yet again, his obliviousness proved to be undefeated.

Then right before he left Westeros following the attack on Dragonstone, he sought her out. At his lowest point, she was who he ran to. She told him that he could stay at Sunspear until he felt more like himself again, that she would care for him like she had done so many times in the past. It never occurred to him then that she was in love with him. He was a blind fool.

This entire time he’s overlooked these glaring details. But now they’re all he can think about.

Like she did all those years ago, Arianne captures everyone’s attention when she enters the room. This time she’s wearing a backless mustard dress and a simple gold headdress. They’re all gathered here at the Martell’s family estate in Dorne to celebrate Nymeria’s birthday. Yet it’s her cousin who steals the show.

Not intentionally, of course. Arianne just has that effect.

Next to Viserys, Robb whistles appreciatively, “She’s gorgeous,” he says, far too comfortably for Viserys’s liking. “All the women here are.” He gives the bellydancers and contortionists an appreciative gaze.

Among the belly dancers and contortionists, there are aerial performers, fire breathers, and a popular Dornish pop singer. Endless wine, delectable food, and countless opportunities to engage in debauchery, as well. This is Viserys’s personal heaven. He’s even wearing brand new, white Margiela pants—that make his ass look fabulous—and a vintage Versace silk shirt. Everything is perfect.

But he isn’t enjoying himself at all.

“You know,” Robb starts as they watch Oberyn and Ellaria effortlessly tango on the dance floor, “I always heard Arianne was a looker but I’d never seen her this close-up. She’s very mysterious in the north.”

Viserys glances down at his empty glass. “I need more wine,” he says, walking away quickly.

One of the performers winks at him as he’s passing. Perhaps if he finds someone to entertain him he can avoid Arianne easier. He still needs time to process everything. For the three years they’ve been friends he’s never considered being anything more than that with her. Or maybe he did but suppressed it. Gods, he doesn’t know if he’s been subconsciously in love with her this whole time and stayed close to her to wait for the opportune moment to claim what’s his or if he’s just been a dumb ass who truly believed they were only friends.
He’s certain it’s the latter.

An eruption of cheers and laughter pulls his attention to the stage. Joining in with the bellydancers is Arianne, rolling and winding her hips, fluid like water, like one of her pet snakes. Viserys watches her over the brim of his glass, noting how she’s perfectly in-sync with the beat of the song. Initially, he’s enthralled by her dancing as he always is. But soon, his thoughts take a different route.

Would she be able to move like that if she were on top of him? Could she keep up that same rhythm if he were fucking her so deeply she would be able to feel him in her stomach?

Viserys follows Arianne’s line of sight, and guess who she’s looking at? The red-headed, blue-eyed dashing prince, Robb Stark. The man isn’t hiding his interest, either. She’s going to fuck him, ruin his entire existence, and make him fall in love with her. Great.

When Viserys looks at Arianne again, she’s no longer looking at Robb. As she continues to wow the crowd and seduce Robb with her hypnotic movements, she holds Viserys’s gaze. She’s always so confident, so sure of herself, but would she break for him? Could he break her? He wonders if her moans are loud or contained, if she’s assertive or willing to submit for someone worthy of her.

Viserys is the first to look away. He focuses on the dancer who winked at him instead. He focuses on someone with zero liabilities, unlike Arianne. He and the dancer only get as far as sharing glances across the room before Viserys decides he’s had enough partying for one night. It has nothing to do with the fact Arianne and Robb are now dancing together. More like Arianne is dancing and Robb is trying to keep up.

Robb can’t handle her. Not on the dancefloor, not in the bedroom — nowhere. Once she figures that out, she’ll grow tired of him.

Viserys takes a bottle of wine off the drink table and retires to one of the guest rooms he’s staying in. To avoid ruining his clothes, he strips down to his black briefs. He sits on the edge of the bed, drinking and fuming for no apparent reason.

Why does he care so much? Arianne has flirted with people in front of him before, and he’s done the same around her. That’s how they’ve always been. However, this time is different. Because now he knows how she feels. Maybe she’s been trying to make him jealous or get his attention all these years.

Things were safer with Oberyn because Oberyn and Ellaria may seek other people for sex, but their hearts remain reserved for one another. Viserys could’ve fucked Oberyn a handful of times before the man went on another adventure. And that would’ve been the end of their affair, the end of his infatuation with the man.

But with Arianne, it’d be different. Viserys can see himself actually falling in love with her and it frightens him.

The bottle is nearly empty when she comes to his room. As always, she invites herself to his bed and makes herself comfortable. Her hair is tousled, she’s breathing heavily, and her skin is glowing. She looks freshly fucked.

“Tonight was magical,” she says, spreading her arms out on the pillows. “I danced so much the room still feels like it’s spinning.”

So, she hasn’t fucked Robb yet then?

Viserys keeps his back to her. “Why are you here, Arianne? Came for a pep talk?”
“Have I ever needed a pep talk?” She laughs. “Come here, Viserys. I miss you.”

“I just saw like you a week ago.”

“When has that ever mattered?”

“Get out, Arianne. I’m not in the mood for you tonight.”

Stubbornly, she crawls to him and hugs him from behind, settling her chin on his shoulder. He notices what he would’ve never noticed prior to realizing her feelings for him. Like the scent of her hair and the softness of her breasts on his back. “What has you so prickly? Did something happen with Oberyn?”

Sighing in frustration, Viserys nudges her away. “What part of ‘get out’ don’t you understand?”

“The entirety of it, if I’m being honest. I don’t understand why you’re kicking me out.” She moves to his side, laying down on her back, her hair hanging off the bed. “There are plenty of men and women for you to choose from if my uncle isn’t interested. So, stop being a big bab-”

Viserys wraps his hands around her neck, lifting her head off the bed. “Another word out of you and I’m going to throw you out myself!” He expects fear. This is the first time he’s done this to her, after all. What he gets are amusement and arousal. Curling his lip in disgust, he lowers his face to hers. “You’re wet right now, aren’t you?”

“See for yourself,” she challenges boldly.

“I could snap your neck,” he says, tightening his grip, watching her pretty brown eyes bulge and water. “Hide your body under the bed and no one would find you until I was long gone.”

Arianne wheezes, “You’d let this good pussy go to waste? A tragedy.” She always says the wildest shit at the most inappropriate times.

Smirking, Viserys loosens his grip, but he doesn’t remove his hand from her neck completely. Dragging his thumb down the delicate column of her throat, he runs his eyes over her body, specifically her heaving breasts. One small tug on her dress and they’ll spill out. She told him to see for himself so he takes her up on that offer. Using his free hand, he starts with her breasts, caressing them through her dress, pinching each of her nipples. He glides his hand over her flat stomach, briefly imagining how it’ll look swollen with his child someday.

His hand inches lower and lower...

Arianne tries to grab his hand, place it where she needs it to be, but Viserys chokes her again to make her behave.

“Try to rush me again and I’ll stop,” he warns.

“Asshole.”

“Slut.”

“Only for you, my love.”

Viserys has a sudden urge to kiss her. He resists. They shouldn’t be doing this right now. They’re crossing too many lines, and he doesn’t know how he feels about her yet.

He only knows that she’s fucking perfect right now, with his hands at her throat, tears in eyes, and
her legs spread for him. He was only supposed to check to see if she was really wet. Somehow, he
ends up with two fingers inside of her, curving and twisting. She’s wetter than most women would
be with the threat of death hovering over them.

Arianne knows him well, though. He could never kill her. He couldn’t even hurt her; not really. Not
physically.

“Viserys,” she moans loudly, and it sounds incredible.

A wave of possessiveness washes over him. Arianne can only moan his name from now on. Only
his hands can wrap around her throat the same time he fingers her. She can only carry his children,
bear his family name and...

The more she says his name like that, the less control he has over himself and his thoughts. She’s
going to destroy him if he lets her. Taking his hand off her throat, he covers her mouth with it to
silence her. Arianne bites his hand and laughs at the shock on his face. In turn, Viserys shoves three
of his fingers in her mouth, thinking that’ll teach her some manners. He nearly comes right then and
there when she starts to suck and bite on them.

This woman is going to end him. Viserys is painfully hard, and she seems to get wetter the longer he
fingers her. It’s the perfect combination for great sex. But it just doesn’t feel right because he knows
that’s all it’d be to him. Just great sex. To her, it’d be so much more.

It takes a majority of his mental power to pull his fingers out, even more willpower than that to
refrain from tasting her. He removes his hand from her neck. “You were wet after all,” he says,
feigning disinterest. “I suppose you’re ready for Robb Stark now. Tell him he doesn’t have to thank
me for getting you ready.”

Ever since he’s known her, he’s never, ever, seen her wear her emotions as vividly as she does right
now. He sees the exact moment his harsh words pierce her heart and shatters it.

He’s officially the shittiest human being in the world. His mother would be proud.

Arianne doesn’t yell back an insult of her own or attack him like he expects her to. With regal grace,
she sits up, smooths down her dress and her hair. She doesn’t spare him another glance, she doesn’t
let him see the tears he knows are there. She leaves out the room as quietly as she entered it.

The bedsheets and pillows smell like her. Even in her absence, he can’t escape her.

Viserys doesn’t sleep at all. A restless night is less than what he deserves. Several times he
contemplates going to her and apologizing. Knowing him, he’ll find a way to fuck up again because
that’s who he is. Self-sabotage and burn bridges are what he does best. He is his own worst enemy.

In the morning, Oberyn comes to his room to tell him that Arianne and Trystane returned to
Westeros. He found it strange that they’d leave two days ahead of their expected departure. No
accusations toward Viserys are made, but the accusations are clear in Oberyn’s eyes.

Viserys decides it’s time he breaks from the group and travels on his own from now on.

The days leading up to the gala were uneventful and rather dull for the most part.

Debt collecting wasn’t as exciting as the stories depicted. Jon supposes that’s because his family’s
reputation still holds some weight in the south regardless of Dragonstone’s destruction.
Every business he and Grey Worm went to paid them in full without hassle or complaint. If anything, they seemed happy to pay. Everything ran smoothly with the meetings held at Summerhall, as well. Daenerys and Missandei closed deals and renewed contracts as if they were riding bicycles. Gendry remained out of sight and has been working on obtaining a new shipment of weapons for the family.

All in all, the remainder of the week was next to perfect. Which is why Jon is paranoid as shit as their pulling up to the gala Friday night.

He spent hours creating a fool-proof security system, scheduling the Second Son’s new patrol routes, and enforcing Summerhall’s defenses. He even convinced his father to take his mother and Ghost to one of the family’s penthouses for the night to be on the safe side. Surprisingly, Rhaegar agreed without any fuss. Jon wanted to send some guards as well but his father said they’d only draw too much attention.

Jon understands but that doesn’t make him any less anxious.

“You’re going to get forehead wrinkles if you keep that up,” Dany says. “Tonight will be fine. Tyrion gave us great talking points, we’ve gone over them so many times we can recite them, and you look good in that tux.”

“I don’t look as good as you do in that dress.” Jon almost ripped the damn thing off earlier. “Did you have to choose that dress?”

Dany smiles knowingly. “What’s wrong with my dress?”

Her white dress hugs her frame too well at the waist, the side splits are too high, and the top sinks too low, showing off an eye full of cleavage.

“I can’t promise not to take you into a dark office and fuck you on the desk before this night is done.”

“Behave, Jon. This will be a sophisticated event attended by Westeros’s upper-echelon. If you’re going to fuck me, can we at least do it in the limo?”

Jon chuckles. “The lady gets what the lady wants.”

The annual black-tie gala is held in the ballroom of a five-star hotel downtown. Only the wealthy and prestigious are personally invited. A red carpet, reporters, and hounds of paparazzi greet them at the hotel’s entrance. Daario, and a few of the Second Son’s form a barrier around them to keep the masses off. All of the attention is a little much for Jon who’s never been the interest of the paparazzi.

Dany, on the other hand, is in her element. When someone in the crowd shouts her name, she smiles and waves. Tyrion warned Jon about this. Growing up, there was always someone trying to get a picture of Dany due to the mystery shrouding her family.

*The Targaryen Princess* was on the front page of the tabloids in loud, black letters with an up-close picture of two-year-old Dany in Rhaegar’s arms. For a time, people thought she was Rhaegar’s illegitimate daughter. Every major media outlet wanted an exclusive photoshoot with her and Rhaegar, but he refused them all. Rhaegar grew up under the public’s gaze. He didn’t want the same for Dany.

And Jon can understand why. The paparazzi are like feral dogs. One tries to nudge through their guards just to get a better picture of Dany, but Daario shoves him aside. That’s the one time Jon is thankful for the man. Because if he were to shove the paparazzi that wouldn’t be a good look to all the fancy pants people here. Tyrion also warned him not to control his temper tonight. Beating men
to death is badass in the criminal underworld but tasteless in the snobby world.

As they’re stepping inside the hotel, someone shouts, “That man with her is Rhaegar’s son and heir!” And the crowd goes bunkers. Paparazzi and reporters try to flood inside but the doors are closed to them.

“Thanks for that Tyrion,” Jon whispers. The man said he’d plant someone in the crowd to help build buzz around Jon. “At least they waited until we were inside.”

Dany laughs. “Now you see why Rhaegar doesn’t come to these things. My brother loathes the paparazzi.” Though he does an excellent job of making them think he adores them.

“Another thing him and I have in common.”

Grey Worm and Missandei meet them inside. Jon sent them ahead to scope the place out and the surrounding areas because he didn’t trust Daario to do the job properly.

“All clear,” Grey Worm informs him. He’s dressed in a black tuxedo as well.

Missandei is wearing a black slip dress, her curly hair pulled up into an elegant bun held by YiTish chopsticks that are definitely not for eating. They’re sharp enough to pierce through skin.

Tonight’s theme is Casino so there are blackjack and poker tables, a short row of slot machines, and Roulette, cocktail waiters making the rounds, and showgirls performing on stage. On their table, there are complimentary casino tokens to get them started. Along with the four of them, Loras and Margaery Tyrell, and two others, who are currently absent, are seated at the same table.

Jon orders Daario and his men to watch from the shadows and keep an eye out for any suspicious behavior. Grey Worm offers to join them but Jon really wants the man to relax for just one night.

“Our men are out there as well,” Loras says to offer some comfort. “Jaime’s on standby as usual.”

“Do you think something will happen?” Daenerys asks.

“You can never be too sure.”

Collectively, everyone in this room is worth billions, possibly more. Events like these are always targeted for heists and robberies. Even assassination attempts.

Soon, people start to come to their table to introduce themselves. They overheard that Jon was someone of importance and not just Dany’s arm candy. Of course, no one says that to him but he knows that’s what’s going on. They meet a handful of politicians. All of them hope the Targaryen family will financially support their upcoming campaign. Jon makes no promises. Meeting them makes him think of Renly but the man is nowhere in sight. Afterward, they all meet an actress who openly flirts with Grey Worm and Jon. Thankfully someone else catches her attention and she leaves before things get uncomfortable...for her.

Margaery laughs. “That woman thinks she can have anyone she wants. Her last film flopped so perhaps this is her coping mechanism.”

“She best find a new one,” Missandei threatens much to Jon’s amusement.

Dany makes no threats of her own, but he notices how she cuts her eyes at the actress.

Once the traffic around their table lessens, they begin making their own rounds. First on their list is
an investor. Using the talking points Tyrion drew up, they impress the man with their knowledge of his arrangements with Rhaegar, and their business etiquette. He promises to be in touch with them so that they can sit down together. The next two partners are about the same. Friendly, straight to the point, and brief. The talking points helped a lot. Tyrion may have written them all out but it was Dany’s suggestion, to begin with.

“Remind me to kiss you later,” Jon whispers to her as they’re heading over to the next person on their list.

“Why later? You are welcome to kiss me now.”

“With all of these eyes on us?”

Dany lifts an eyebrow. “Is that a problem? I thought we both agreed we didn’t care what people thought.”

That’s easy to say when the only people they’re around most of the time is family. But they’re swimming with the sharks now. “Can we discuss this later, Dany?” he asks. “I want to talk about it but-”

“It’s fine, Jon. I was only teasing you.” Her tone of voice and facial expression says otherwise. “I believe this is the man Tyrion warned us about. Guard up.”

Jon knows he somehow fucked that conversation up. She probably thinks he’s ashamed to show the world his love for her and that he sees her like some dirty secret. That isn’t true at all. He just doesn’t want the world in their affairs. Nothing can be done about it now, though. They have business to tend to. Later, he’ll make this right.

Unlike their previous business partners, Mr. Steward isn’t easily impressed. Shortly after formalities are exchanged, he asks if he can steal Jon and Grey Worm away for a “men only” chat. Mr. Steward, tycoon and known sexist, is the owner of this hotel as well as hundreds around the world. Tyrion told them that he wouldn’t want Dany and Missandei present.

“My wife,” Mr. Steward says, gesturing to a thin blonde woman a few tables away, “can keep you company until we get back.” He winks at Dany.

Dany’s mask is perfectly in place. Except Jon knows she’s thinking of all the ways she’d kill this man if she ever got the chance.

“I won’t be long,” Jon promises her.

As they’re walking off, Mr. Steward puts his arm over Jon’s shoulder as if they’re the best of friends. “Your aunt has a nice rack and a tight fit. She’ll need a husband soon before that body of hers loses its appeal. I have a son…”

Jon glances over at Grey Worm, both of them thinking the same thing. They’re fortunate he didn’t say this in front of Dany because she would’ve killed him and they would’ve been fucked. So much for fitting in with the pompous crowd.

“…my son would train her right…”

Or Jon might end up killing the fucker himself.

“My youngest is a nightmare,” Mrs. Steward complains, swirling the olive in her martini. “All she
does is cry. It drives me crazy. I think I need a new nanny…”

Hearing these women complain about their children are driving Dany crazy. The only reason they sat over here was that they thought they could network. But these women aren't directly involved in their husbands' work, they have no opinion in business-related matters, and they have no desire to have an opinion. All they do is spend their husbands' money, hand their children off to nannies, and drink vodka. Which is fine if that's what they want out of life. It's just not the kind of life Dany wants.

“Daenerys, isn’t it?” Mrs. Steward asks.

“Yes.” Dany looks to Missandei. “And this is my sister, Missandei.”

The women at the table stare at Missandei then they stare at Daenerys. In return, they blankly stare back at the women, daring them to speak what’s on their minds. None of the women are bold enough to do so.

“It’s nice to meet you both,” Mrs. Steward says. “I see my husband took your nephew to The Room.”

“The Room?”

“There’s a private room in the hotel where the men go to smoke cigars and complain about their wives.” Mrs. Steward laughs. “Or that’s what I think it is.”

Dany’s smile is as fake as the woman’s. She isn't sure how to respond to that so she sticks to the cliche. “Well, you know how men are.”

It's the perfect response.

The women eat it up and start bad-mouthing their husbands. One of them asks if Daenerys is married. When she tells them she isn’t, they tell her to never get married. She tells them that she won’t, but even as she says that and pretends like marriage is akin to medieval torture, a huge part of her wants that someday.

Jon doesn’t treat her like a trophy trained to sit quietly and look pretty. He respects her and values her opinion. The real thing holding them back is Jon’s shame. He thinks she doesn’t notice the way he physically distances himself from her when they’re around strangers or out in public. She thought she’d be fine with him loving her in private. She was wrong. When two people love one another the way they love each other, they want the world to know it.

“If I had her legs, I would’ve walked out of my marriage ages ago,” one of the women whispers.

They all watch as Margaery confidently strides across the ballroom, her gold gown shimmering under the fluorescent lights. She turns down a man’s advances without so much as a glance in his direction or interruption in her strut.

“Isn’t that Olenna Tyrell’s granddaughter?”

Mrs. Steward scoffs, “You mean the tart-tongued Queen of Thorns? I swear that woman has no filter-”

Margaery approaches the table. “Good evening, ladies,” she says, charming and polite as always. “May I steal these two?” she asks.
“Of course,” Mrs. Steward says, smiling so hard it looks like it hurts.

Dany and Missandei thank the women for having them and they quickly leave the table.

“Thanks for saving us,” Missandie says.

“You girls looked bored. I couldn’t just leave you there with those bitter women. This is a party. We should be having fun!”

They put their complimentary tokens to good use. Neither of them is the gambling sort so they combine their tokens and allow Margaery to use them as she likes. Watching her pretend to be a novice at gambling then turn around and beat the dealer during blackjack is actually pretty fun. She takes her winnings to the Roulette table and doubles her earnings there. Then she teaches them how to play poker by pointing out the faults in one man’s technique. Apparently, she and Loras had a big job at a casino once. While they staked out the place, she learned how to gamble.

A passing server offers them wine. Initially, Dany refuses but she changes her mind when another server passes them by. One glass can’t hurt.

Of course, it isn’t only one glass. They move from table to table, even making a pit stop at the slots, drinking wine, eating exquisite hors’ devours, and giggling like schoolgirls. Margaery helps them forget about the sexist, Mr. Steward and his miserable wife.

About an hour passes, maybe two. Dany isn’t sure. She stopped checking her phone around her third glass of wine. Margaery decides to cash in her winnings; she donates it all to charity. Dany uses that time to donate as well. Duty served.

With that done, Margery talks them into dancing.

That’s how the three of them, tipsy and carefree, end up in the middle of the ballroom, doing a three-person waltz. It starts off fine. They even look elegant and choreographed. But then it falls apart. They laugh it off, uncaring about who may be watching or judging them.

Dany was in a sour mood earlier. She feels better now. She also feels like she’s going to explode.

“I’m going to the ladies’ room. I will be back.”

“I’m coming with you,” Missandei says.

Margaery chimes in, “We’ll all go together. I need to check my hair.”

The bathroom is in the back of the ballroom, behind the stage. A temporary wall is put up to separate the area, therefore, it’s dimly lit here. Their laughter echoes off the marble walls as they walk in, humming the tune of the song that’s currently playing. Dany and Missandei walk around the corner to where the stalls are while Margaery fixes her hair in the large wall to wall mirrors. After their business is handled they join Margaery by the sinks and wash their hands.

Margaery is in the middle of a funny story when two men enter the restroom.

“Excuse me, but this is the ladies’ room,” Margaery says, voice high and chipper. “Your restroom is down the hall.”

The men aim guns at them. “Come with us quietly,” one of them says.

“No, thank you. Now scurry along.”
That pisses the men off. They run up to them, guns raised high. Missandei takes a pin from her hair, throwing it and stabbing one of the men in the eye with it. He drops to the floor cursing and screaming. The other man points his gun at Missandei but Margaery kicks it out of his hand then attacks him. She knocks him to the ground, wrapping his own tie around his throat, choking him.

Hurriedly, Dany picks up the discarded gun. She runs to the injured man who’s still on the floor. She steps on his chest to keep him still. “Who sent you?” she demands.

The sound of rushing footsteps heading toward them draws her attention to the entrance. So many men rush in that she can’t count them. She moves away from the man on the floor, Margaery gets off the dead man. The three women stand with their backs to one another, prepared to fight to the death if need be.

A tall man with a glass eye is the first to attack. Margaery delivers another high kick, her stiletto cracking his teeth and blooding his mouth. After him, two more rush forward. Dany shoots one dead and Missandei stabs one in his jugular.

“They’re trying to take us, hostage,” Margaery whispers. “So, they won’t kill us.”

That means they can kill them.

And that’s what they do at first. Any man who tries to attack ends up dead on the floor. But they can only fight them off for so long. Their defense is broken eventually. One of the henchmen grabs Dany’s arm. Margaery shoves him off and pushes Dany away to prevent another attack aimed at her. By doing so she fails to cover her own back. She’s grabbed from behind and stabbed in the neck with a syringe, her struggling made fruitless by the injected sedative.

“Margaery!” Dany yells, aiming her gun at the assailant.

She only has one bullet left, and she can’t take the shot without possibly hitting Margaery. As the unconscious woman is dragged out of the bathroom, the remaining men close in on Dany and Missandei.

“I can create an opening for you,” Missandei says. “Find Jon and Grey Worm.”

“I won’t leave you!”

“You don’t have a choice. Either they take us both or just me.”

Dany hates this. She hates it when others put themselves in harm’s way just for her sake. First Margaery and now Missandei. But she agrees. Only because she wants to save them both before they’re taken hostage. The Second Sons shouldn’t be too far. Perhaps she’ll find one of them first.

Missandei takes Dany’s hand, and they run around the corner to where the stalls are. As expected the men follow them. She opens a stall, shoves Dany in and then closes it. While they fight, Dany crawls under the stalls. It’s one of the hardest things she’s ever had to do because instead of fighting by Missandei’s side, she’s running away, abandoning her.

She’s spotted as she’s exiting the last stall and bending the corner. But Missandei prevents the man from chasing after her. Dany manages to escape the bathroom. Glancing over her shoulder, she checks to make sure no one is behind her. Something hard crashes into her, nearly knocking her on her ass. Strong hands wrap around her, preventing her from falling. Dany immediately thinks of Jon.

“Where’s the fire, my lady?” Daario asks.
Dany’s so worked up that she doesn’t push him away like she normally would. “Hurry! Missandei and Margaery are in trouble! Call the Second…” There’s something in his eyes that’s unsettling. A sense of dread overtakes her.

Daario grins sinisterly. “They won’t take Missandei, though, I can’t guarantee they won’t hurt her. He only wants you and the Tyrell girl.” He cups her chin, leaning in for a kiss “But I will be taking you for myself.”

Shock wearing off, Dany punches him in the face before their lips can meet. “Traitor,” she spits with all the hatred and disgust she can summon. She shoves him away, trying to break free from his hold. She needs to help Missandei.

Darrio squeezes his arms around her painfully. “Don’t fight it! I won’t hurt you.”

Dany hits him repeatedly, she stamps her feet down and tries to throw him off. Angrily, Daario shakes her hard enough to make her teeth rattle. Then he stabs her in the arm with a needle, pumping the same sedative used on Margery into her veins. Even as her body grows heavy, Dany fights him, her blood boiling with rage. She scratches up his face and eyes.

Then the rage in her mind quiets. Everything is dark and silent.

Pure pandemonium.

That’s what Jon and Grey Worm are met with when they step off the elevator, fresh out of their sit down with Mr. Steward. Wasting no time, they rush to see what the commotion is all about and to make sure Dany and Missandei are safe.

Screaming guests are running out of the doors, pushing and shoving each other, trampling the unfortunate one on the floors. Jon sees Loras and four Tyrell men moving through the frantic crowd and fighting off an unfamiliar foe as they try to make their way to the back of the stage.

They head in that direction.

Grey Worm yanks on Jon’s arm roughly, pointing. “Look!”

Using the chaos as a cover, Daario is slipping out the side door, an unconscious Dany in his arms. They’re running after him before Jon can fully register what’s happening.

“I don’t see Missandei!” Grey Worm shouts.

That isn’t good. Missandei wouldn’t leave Dany’s side and vice versa unless the situation was dire.

“Go look for her,” Jon orders. Because he knows if he were in Grey Worm’s shoes he wouldn’t be able to think straight until he knew Dany’s whereabouts. “I’ll take care of this fucker!”

They split up; Grey Worm rushing to where Loras is to begin his search for Missandei, Jon leaving out the same door as Daario. He ends up in a dark alley with two exits, both leading out into the street. Jon thinks fast. If he were an untrustworthy sellsword with a dumb face he’d take the street behind the hotel’s main entrance where the less traffic and eyes are. He chooses correctly.

Daario is putting Dany in the back of an unmarked SUV. Jon catches up to him right when the cunt is getting in. He fists his hands in the back of Daario’s blazer, forcefully throwing him to the ground.
Then he reaches for Dany, but the driver shoots at him. Jon ducks, and when he does, Daario attacks him. They fight on the street, throwing punches and elbows.

Abruptly the SUV peels off, leaving Daario behind. Growling, Jon grabs the sides of Daario’s head and headbutts him so hard it leaves his own ears ringing. Instead of beating the man to a bloody pulp, Jon chases after the SUV. Dany is more important than revenge right now. He runs faster than he’s ever run, pushing himself past his physical limits and beyond that. Yet, it still isn’t enough. Once the truck turns the corner, the driver accelerates and leaves Jon in the dust. His heart feels as if it’s about to explode. Not from exertion. But from pain.

They took Dany.

After all of his clever precautions and efforts to remain three steps ahead of their enemies, he failed her.

Jon’s vision burns red. He doesn’t have time to sulk. Despite the burning in his lungs and the ache in his bones, he runs back to where he left Daario. If the sellsword has any brain cells at all he would’ve hauled ass.

From the looks of it, Daario did try to haul ass, but someone caught him.

Jaime crushes Daario’s chest with his foot. “It appears I’ve caught a rat,” he says as Jon is approaching.

Out of nowhere, Loras comes running. He takes one look at Daario and jumps on him. Jaime quickly moves, not wanting to get in the way of what the sellsword has coming to him.

“Where did they take my sister?!” Loras demands, eyes ablaze.

Breathlessly, Jon says, “They took Dany too.” His lungs and chest burn but he's ready for another fight.

Loras glares at Daario. “Where are they?!” He yanks him up by the collar of his shirt. “Answer me!”

“He won’t talk that easily,” Jaime says, placing his hand on Loras’s shoulder.

They have to keep their cool. Or they’ll end up murdering him without learning a damn thing.

“We’ll find a way to open him up,” Jon promises. “He'll tell us what we need to know before the night is over.”

For the millionth time that night, Arianne checks her phone, expecting a missed call or a text from a certain someone.

Seeing nothing, she contemplates pissing on her pride and just calling him first. They were intoxicated. Things went too far. Viserys was put into a difficult position. In order to claw his way out of that position he made a crude comment and insulted her; hurt her, in order to escape.

Isn’t that how he’s always been? Mean, vindictive, and cruel.

Yet she fell in love with him anyway. Perhaps because she always saw the real Viserys. The sensitive and fiercely loyal man who would die for his family despite claiming he wouldn’t. He’d shown her his tender side in the past. Maybe she believed with time she could draw that out of him, make him realize that his entire life didn’t have to be filled with loneliness and despair.
Some people don’t want to be saved, her uncle once told her.

However, Viserys obviously wants to be saved. He just doesn’t think he deserves it. She’s wiped his tears, put her fingers down his throat to help him purge bad drugs from his body, and talked him off the ledge too many times to count. Bit by bit, he's been cleaning himself up. Viserys isn't nearly as bad as he used to be. His growth is his own accomplishment, but she helped out a great deal. She just wishes he appreciated her more.

Arianne is willing to forgive him if he genuinely apologizes. If he tries to act as if it never happened, she’ll cut him out of her life once and for all. Love isn’t enough to make her disregard her own happiness and well-being.

She checks her phone again. Just in case.

Trystane sighs. “How many times are you going to do that? You kept doing it during the movie.”

To make up for waking him up dead in the night and returning to Westeros earlier than planned, Arianne rented out a movie theater and they watched a new release of Trystane’s favorite action series. She told him Myrcella could come but her brother wanted to spend time with her; because he could tell she was sad.

He notices too much for his own good.

“I didn’t do it during the movie,” she lies. She might’ve done it a few times.

“What’s wrong, sister? You’re acting lovesick.”

“What do you know about being lovesick? You are still a child.”

"I know enough!"

Just then, her phone rings. It’s Viserys.

Arianne’s heart leaps out of her chest. Is he calling to apologize? Does he miss her? It’s rare for him to reach out first when they're not on good terms.

“Are you going to stare at it or are you going to answer?” Trystane asks, rolling his eyes. “He’s who you’ve been waiting to call, isn’t he?”

As she said, he notices too much for his own good.

Arianne answers the call, trying and failing to mask her elation. She only manages to get out a greeting before a car comes out of nowhere and rams into them from behind, throwing them off the road. Tires screech, glass shatters, and she hears a scream that sounds like her own. Her phone falls to the floor, Viserys’s concerned shouts of her name fading into the background.

When she awakes sometime later, her entire body aches, blood is dripping from a cut on her forehead, and the two guards in the front seat are dead.

Trystane is missing.

Panicking, she opens the door on her side. Her legs give out on her and she falls on the asphalt, scraping the skin on her arms and hands. Disregarding the pain, she holds on to the door, pulling herself up. The one night she decides to keep a low profile and only bring two guards along, this shit happens.
Through the broken window she sees him. Euron Greyjoy with a knife at Trystane’s throat. Her brother has a cut over his eye. Aside from that, his injuries are light. Probably because she instinctively shielded him during the crash.

Arianne knows that if she calls his bluff, her brother will die. She must tread carefully. Straightening up, she wipes the blood from her face.

“Sorry for the theatrics,” Euron chuckles. “But I know you would’ve put up one hell of a fight and I’m pressed for time, darling.”

“Let my little brother go.”

Euron glances at Trystane. Her brother is terrified but he sheds no tears, makes no cries or pleas for help. She’s taught him well. He must never show the enemy fear.

“Come quietly and I’ll let him live.”

“Give me your word.” The word of a filthy Greyjoy means shit to her but she can’t agree to his terms without some kind of reassurance. “Promise me that you will let my little brother leave this place unharmed.”

“You have my word.” He removes the knife from Trystane’s throat and nudges the boy forward. “Run, little lamb,” he says.

Frowning, Trystane looks at his sister.

“Run Trystane,” she tells him. “Don’t look back.” He opens his mouth to protest. He likes to think of himself as her protector despite her being his. “Go, home Trystane!” she shouts in Dornish.

Reverting to their mother’s tongue lets him understand how serious she is. Trystane runs away. Arianne watches him go, holding her breath the entire time. She doesn’t feel a semblance of peace until he disappears out of sight.

“I am a man of my word,” Euron says, walking up to her. “Consider that your wedding gift from me.”

Arianne spits on the ground. “Eat shit and die, Greyjoy!” She’d rather have a hysterectomy than marry him. “I will never be yours!”

“Euron laughs and it makes her skin crawl. “You and I are going to have a lot of fun together, Princess.” He touches the ends of her hair. “You, me, and my other brides…”

Nothing works on Daario.

Not Loras’s beatings. Not Jon punching him hard enough to split his own knuckles. Not Rhaegar’s menacing threats that unhinged everyone else in the room. Absolutely nothing.

Every second that passes, Jon’s patience dwindles. Several times, his father and Jaime had to stop him from beating Daario to death. Right now, he’s sitting with his mother in the room where Missandei is resting. He has no choice but to keep his voice down in here. Grey Worm found Missandei in the ladies’ room, badly beaten but still fighting. He finished off the remaining men then carried her out of the hotel. The closest and safest location was the penthouse where Jon had sent his parents and Ghost. So, that’s where they all retreated to.
They called an underground doctor to see to Missandei’s injuries. The doctor told them that had they left her injuries unattended to for longer than a couple of hours, she would’ve succumbed to them. After hearing that, Grey Worm was inconsolable and murderous. The only person who could make him see reason and not kill Daario on the spot was Rhaegar.

Rhaegar asked Jaime to take Grey Worm out for some fresh air. Then his father made a phone call to a man by the name of Qyburn, requesting that he brings a special gift for their stubborn hostage.

The mysterious gift has yet to arrive. Although he’s curious to know what it is, Jon is too antsy. “I can’t sit around doing nothing,” he mutters to himself. He glances at his mother. She’s been watching over Missandei the same way she used to watch over him and his brother when they were sick. “I’ll be back.”

Lyanna frowns deeply.

“I won’t try to kill him again. We need to figure out where they took Dany and Margaery. I understand what’s at stake.”

That doesn’t put her worries to rest, but she doesn’t try to stop him. When they first arrived at the penthouse, he could tell that they’d interrupted what appeared to be a romantic candlelight dinner between his parents.

To say it was awkward is an understatement.

Everyone else is in the den, minus Jaime and Grey Worm. Loras is on the phone with someone, shouting out orders. Jon never thought the man could get this riled up. It’s expected, though. His sister is in danger, and if Jon has learned anything about the southern families, it’s their unyielding loyalty to their family.

“Has he said anything?” Jon asks his father.

Rhaegar continues staring out the skyscraper window, his expression calm and serene. “He hasn’t spoken a word. The man used to fight in the pits as a boy. He won’t crack easily.” His father smiles, and Jon’s stomach twists into knots. “But he will crack.”

“Um…” Jon is nervous all of a sudden. Has his father always been this terrifying? “They were taken three hours ago. They could be anywhere…” Anything can be happening to them; to Dany.

“We will find them and bring them home. You have my word, son.”

That puts Jon at ease a little, helps his mind clear.

Suddenly, the door to the penthouse opens and slams. Jon assumes it’s the man, Qyburn, with his father’s request. Both he and his father are pleasantly surprised to see that it’s someone they least expected. Viserys strides in, dark bags under his red, puffy eyes, silver hair tousled, and his hands trembling at his sides. There is no greeting. No warm hugs. No heartwarming reunion.

He just glances around the room and quietly asks, “Where is he?”

They take him to the room where they’re keeping Daario tied to a chair. His left eye is swollen shut and his face is bruised. When he hears them come in, the sellsword holds up his head and smiles smugly.

“Leave us,” Viserys says, not taking his emotionless eyes off Daario. “Give me half an hour. He’ll be
singing like a bird by then."

Rhaegar puts his hand on Jon’s back. “Come. Your uncle will take over from here.”

A part of Jon wants to stay and watch, but he doesn’t want to disturb his uncle’s work.
Unexpected Twists

In his haste, Viserys left his travel-sized torture kit back at his hotel in Dorne. Fortunately, there was a tool kit in the penthouse.

Power drills, hammers, and screws are lovely stand-ins. In retrospect, half an hour was an overestimation on Viserys’s behalf. He could’ve requested eleven minutes and forty seconds precisely had he known that’s how long it’d take to make Daario sing. He thought the man would be a tough customer, and he actually was, it’s just that Viserys isn’t in the best of moods tonight.

“Let me get this straight,” Viserys laughs dryly. “You and Patchy the Pirate actually believed you could pull this preposterous plan off? Are you an idiot?”

Coughing up blood, Daario rasps, “Euron...he already has them…”

“But we’ll rescue them from this nightmarish wedding in Qarth. Why Qarth again?”

“Polygamy is legal there. He can have three…” He wheezes, coughing up more blood. “He can have them all as wives.”

Viserys hums thoughtfully. “After the wedding, he plans to consummate...no, rape them, impregnate them, and keep them on his shabby ship, sailing around the world, until they birthed his heirs. Am I missing anything?”

Daario loses consciousness.

There’s a lot of blood leaking from the holes Viserys drilled in the bottom of the man’s feet, after all. Cursing, he grabs the first aid kit, cleans the man’s wounds and then bandages them. Taking a small vail from his pocket, he removes the cork and waves it under Daario’s nostrils.

The sellsword jerks awake, gasping hard and crying. “N-no more!” he begs.

“Your tears and your pain matter to me the way an ant on the sidewalk matters.” Viserys picks up the power drill, pressing it to Daario’s temple. “Shall I pick your brain the medieval way instead?”

Daario continues to sing.

As it turns out, the man has been in partnership with Euron for six years. During that time they only did petty jobs like sacking port cities in the east. It was Euron who came up with the grand scheme to abduct three heiresses and steal their inheritance via marriage. Once Daario saw Dany, he “fell in love” and decided to double-cross Euron.

“I could’ve saved your sister...with me, she could’ve had a choice...always.”

Viserys rolls his eyes. He doesn’t have time for this delusional shit. “Is Tyrion in on it?” he asks. “He was the one who got you in the door, wasn’t he?”

“The Imp...he had no part in it. We got lucky.”

Viserys turns on the drill.

Daario flinches away, wetting himself for the second time that night. “I swear to you! He unwittingly gave us our opening!”
Allowing Tyrion to advise Dany and Jon was a bad move from the start. Why would Rhaegar allow that? Tyrion isn’t the man he once was. Not after what Tywin had done to his wife. 

“That’s an alpaca rug you just soiled,” Viserys says in disgust. “Do you know what happens to untrained dogs who wrong their masters and try to steal things that don’t belong to them?”

Daario screams. “You’re fucking insane!” He struggles futilely, trying to break free. “I’ve given you everything!”

“Yes, I am insane, and you, you piss ant, are equally so. You have to be if you thought you and that scam pirate would get away with this.” Viserys fists Daario’s hair, yanking his head back. “Had it only been Margaery, I would’ve stayed in my hotel room, drinking and despairing. The Tyrells would’ve taken care of it on their own. But no, you two also went after my little sister and my Arianne!”

Viserys sets the drill directly on top of Daario’s right eye. Then he powers it on. The man’s anguished screams do nothing to quell Viserys’s anger. He wants more. More blood, more pain. He restrains himself, though.

“Last question. Refuse to answer and I will shove this drill up your ass. How is he transporting them to Qarth?”

Daario’s crying and speaking incoherently, blood and saliva dripping. “Silence...h-his ship!”

“Good doggy.” Viserys pets Daario’s head. He thinks about shoving the drill up his ass regardless but decides against it.

Outside the room, Jon’s face is ghostly pale and Rhaegar looks surprisingly relaxed. That’s peculiar. His older brother used to be squeamish. Torture, in any form, and even listening to torture used to sicken him. Looks like Rhaegar’s darker side has reared its lovely head. About fucking time.

“He’s all yours,” Viserys says to Jon.

Jon hesitates at the threshold. Probably because the smell of piss is so strong. But he doesn’t cower away. Good to know his nephew has an iron stomach.

“I’ve sent Loras and his men to search the docks,” Rhaegar says. “And our contacts in the east are on high alert.”

“Where’s Missandei?”

Rhaegar reaches out to touch his arm, and Viserys jerks away. He won’t fall for that ‘Midas touch’ bullshit. His brother has an annoying talent for comforting people with his touch alone. Viserys doesn’t want any fucking comfort.

“She’s resting.”

Viserys walks down the long hallway, opening each door he passes. He needs to see her for himself to know for certain she’s alive and well.

“Viserys, you’re going to disturb her rest,” Rhaegar says, hot on his heels. “Calm down and let me fill you in on everything.”
“I’d rather not have your watered-down version of events, brother.”

There’s a light on in the room further down the hall. Viserys goes there. First, he sees Lyanna sitting in a chair by the bed and then he sees Missandei laying there all battered up.

“Who was it?” Viserys asks, his voice cracking. “Who did that to her?”

“Some of Daario’s men.”

“I should’ve rammed that power drill up his ass. Goddammit!”

Lyanna puts her finger over her mouth, and makes a face that clearly says, “Not so fucking loud, you cunt.”

The way Rhaegar spoke of Lyanna the last time they talked on the phone, she was highly unlikely to fully recover. That’s not what Viserys sees. She’s still the same firecracker, split ends and all. She reminds him of his mother, actually. Nothing his father ever did was enough to break her. She cried, went days without speaking, struggled with night terrors and every little nasty thing trauma dumps on people. But Rhaella remained fierce. Lyanna is no different.

“Come, brother,” Rhaegar says. “We have work to do.”

Viserys walks away, his hands shaking. He’s restless and anxious. “Where are the men who did that to Missandei? I’m going to flay them alive.”

“Missandei killed a good bit. Grey Worm killed the rest.”

Good. That’s a good thing. Bad, because he wishes he could’ve killed them himself. But it’s good news overall. Still, Viserys needs something to do. He needs someone to kill. He needs to get the girls back before that low-budget pirate carries out his twisted plan. Margaery will marry whomever she likes. Dany is obviously going to marry Jon. And the only babies Arianne will be having are his. Not some tacky little, dingy, ill-bred pirate.

“They took her too,” Viserys says quietly. His brother knows who he’s referring to. “I...I called her to fix things and...” He balls his fists. “The last thing I heard was her scream...”

“Arianne is strong, brother. You know that.”

“Did you know she was in love with me?”

“...everyone knew.”

Viserys is undoubtedly the dumbest fuck on the entire planet. Before his thoughts can spiral out of control, Rhaegar shares the master rescue plan he’s already come up with.

First things first. They’ll murder some people and rescue the girls. After that, Viserys can...fuck he doesn’t even know right now. He’ll just focus on what he does best.

Killing.

"I always hated your stupid face,” Jon says, walking around the beaten man. “I gotta’ say. I like what my uncle did to it.”
There’s a bloody, ghastly hole where Daario’s eye once was, the tip of his nose was sliced off, and his hands are nailed to the chair. This, Jon thinks, is far better than anything he could’ve done to the man.

While Viserys interrogated and tortured Daario, he and his father listened outside the door. Every piece of information he shared, they relayed to their contacts in Westeros, as well as Essos. The first sight of Euron’s ship or any suspicious activity they’ll be alerted. But they’re not going to sit around waiting for that. His father has already secured them swift passage to their destination.

“So, you see, I don’t have enough time to kick you when you’re down.” Jon takes out his phone, opening his email to find a copy of the contract. “Actually, I lied. I do have time to kick you when you’re down.”

He shows Daario the screen. It’s too bright and the man flinches away.

“Oh, my bad.” Jon feigns sincerity. “Allow me to read it for you.” He clears his throat. “I, Daario Naharis, hereby swear to forfeit my control over the mercenary company, the Second Sons, as well as my life, upon my betrayal of the Targaryen family and those affiliated.”

Daario struggles to lift his head. “I...those are not my words…”

“Nope. But this is your signature.” Jon pushes the phone in his face, getting blood on the screen. He’s enjoying this more than he should. Torturing and humiliating people is Viserys’s expertise, not his. Still, he kind of likes its. “Thank you for proving yourself to be the untrustworthy fucker we all knew you were.”

“My men will never follow you...you’re an outsider.”

“Grey Worm isn’t, though. While you’ve been drooling over Dany and being a scheming piece of shit, he’s been running drills with your men, eating with them, talking to them. They talk about you a lot. About all the times you’ve cheated them out of their cut or lost them work because of your womanizing ways. Your men haven’t been your men for a long time.”

The bulk of the men who attacked the gala were Greyjoy men; the kraken tattoos on their neck gave them away. Since Daario royally fucked up on this job; a job he hasn’t even paid them for yet, they won’t be sad to see him gone.

“Dany would’ve never been yours,” Jon says, adding salt to the wound. “Ever. Because she’s mine. She always has been. She always will be.”

Daario frowns. At least it looks like he’s frowning. It’s hard to tell. “She’s your-”

“My aunt, I know. She’s also the love of my life. Your first mistake was thinking you could ever be with her.”

“Kill me. I...I’m ready to die.”

“Die?” Jon frowns in confusion. “This instance? You’re not going to die right now. You’re not going to die for some time. We need you alive to make sure you’re telling the truth.”

“Look at me! Would I lie after everything he’s done to me?!”

“Well, you’re a liar. That’s what liars do.” Jon knows the man is telling the truth. It’s just so much fun making him suffer a little longer. ”Summon the remaining Second Sons. Tell them you have important news to announce…”
“Don’t fight it! I won’t hurt you.”

Daenerys awakes sharply, cursing and swinging her arms wildly, still trying to fight off the treacherous sellsword so that she can get back to Missandei. But her fists only connect with the air and Daario is nowhere to be found.

“Bad dream,” a woman with a distinctive accent whispers to her. Soothing hands pet her hair. “Soon, you will get to fight for real.”

That voice. She’d recognize it anywhere.

Dany lifts her head from Arianne’s lap. Her movement causes the chains on the woman’s wrists to clink. She sees damp wooden floors covered in heaps of hay, and thick, iron chains around her ankle. Panicking, she touches the heavy padlock, attempting to take it off.

Another familiar voice is heard, “We need the key.”

“Margaery?” Dany sits up. Her head is light and stuffy all at once, her vision blurs. She can only make out Margaery’s outline.

“Careful,” Margaery says. “They gave us tranquilizers. It’ll take a while to fully wear off.”

The second the woman says that Dany’s body succumbs to its exhaustion and she falls back down to Arianne’s lap. She’s grateful for the cushion because that impact would’ve further disoriented her. There are so many questions she wants to ask, so many answers she needs to know.

For starters, where are they? Where is Daario? She hopes he’s rotting somewhere. Why did he capture all three of them? Has he revealed his plan? If so, what is his plan?

In time, she learns everything she needs to know. While she waits for the drugs to burn out of her system, Arianne and Margaery give her the rundown.

Euron, not Daario, is the mastermind behind their abduction. The pirate intends to marry them all to fulfill a lifelong goal of having a piece of each main family in Westeros. If anything were to happen to Jon, Loras, and Arianne their children by Euron would sit at the head of each family. Euron told Arianne that he’ll anchor his ship in Slaver’s Bay and they’ll travel by plane the rest of the way to Qarth where he can legally marry them all at once.

His overconfidence can mean one of two things: he’s certain his plan will work because he’s thought it through countless times and has a solid Plan B or he’s an even bigger dumbass than they already think he is.

Later, a guard enters, looking every bit like the reaving and murdering pirate stereotype. Tall, stocky frame, bald-headed, and gap-toothed, and the silver caps in his mouth have seen better days. He doesn’t make his purpose known. He just leans against the door watching them.

Perhaps that’s his purpose. To watch them.

Casually, Arianne stretches her arms above her head, her breasts rising scandalously. “I’m bored,” she purrs. “How long until we dock?”

The guard sneers at her.

“Cat got your tongue?”
He opens his mouth revealing the absence of his tongue.

“Ah, I see,” Arianne laughs, undeterred. “I like the silent and menacing type.” Slowly, she rises with poise and control. Ever so slightly, she begins to roll her hips. “Will you keep me entertained?”

Under different circumstances, Dany would’ve taken the time to marvel at Arianne’s movements. The way she exudes sex appeal with only faint rolls of her hips and the occasional semi-lift of her dress, that reveals next to nothing, is mesmerizing. But Dany has to keep her attention on the guard.

Initially, he seems unfazed.

The longer he watches Arianne, the more apparent his lust is. The guard leaves his post by the door. Arianne beckons him closer. She holds his gaze as she slides down the straps of her dress. That small action seals the deal. He literally pounces on her, and she laughs like she’s drunk. Then she strangles him with her chains. He tries to fight back but Margaery breaks his left hand and Dany breaks the right. His screams die in his throat.

Arianne shoves his lifeless corpse off and quickly pulls the straps of her dress up. “Men,” is all she says.

They take his keys and free themselves from their chains. They expect another guard to be outside the door but they’re met by nothing more than a dark, narrow corridor. Margaery watches the front, Arianne watches the rear, and Dany is in the middle, prepared to offer back up for whoever is attacked first.

It’s quiet. Far too quiet.

Reaching the end of the corridor, they can see silver light seeping under the door. It more than likely leads to the deck. That means there are definitely men out there, and they’ll have to fight their way off this ship.

Margaery takes a deep breath. She tightens her hold on the chains she brought as a weapon. Then she opens the door, and they flood in behind her, fighting stances at the ready.

Nothing.

There’s absolutely nothing out there. No evil henchmen, no scary pirate captain, not even a talking parrot. It’s so unbelievable that they just stand there, waiting for something to happen.

In the end, nothing does happen.

The ship is docked at a small port town. In the distance, they can see lights from a small town and hear faint music playing. Their shoes were taken from them for whatever reason so they have to walk on the dirt and pebbled littered roads to one of the establishments lining the docks.

“We must be careful,” Margaery says. “Anyone of these establishments can be a pirate den.”

Arianne frowns. “I think this entire place is a pirate den,” she says. “If we can find a phone and figure out where we are we can send for help.”

“Wait,” Dany says, halting her steps. “I need to cover my hair. We can’t risk drawing attention to ourselves. For all we know Euron and his crew are visiting some brothel here.”

Arianne tears off a wide piece of fabric from the hem of her dress, and Dany covers her hair with it. There isn’t much they can do in terms of disguises. They look as if they escaped a pirate’s boat and
are now seeking refuge. But nothing can be done about it.

The first establishment they pass is indeed a brothel. Scantily clad women are standing outside and leaning out of the windows, beckoning patrons with promises of a good time. There’s a high chance Euron is there so they walk further down the row to a small pub. As soon as the rickety swinging doors creak open, everyone in the pub turns their heads to see who the newcomers are.

There isn’t a woman in sight aside from the barmaid who looks like she’s on death’s doorstep. They approach the bar warily, conscious of the many eyes watching them closely.

It could be from curiosity, Dany reassures herself. Hundreds of strangers pass through here daily but those strangers fit a certain mold. A mold that they don’t fit into. Out of the three, Dany has the most distinctive features. She keeps her head low to avoid making eye contact with anyone. That doesn't mean her guard is down.

“Good evening,” Arianne greets the barmaid. “We are in need of assistance.”

“You Dornish?” the barmaid asks, not looking up from the same rusty mug she’s been cleaning with a rag since they walked in.

“I am.”

“We accept Dornish currency. Drinks are one coin each.”

Translation: she isn’t helping them with a damn thing until they purchase a drink.

But they don’t have any money on them.

Margaery approaches a random man’s table, her usual patience and politeness gone. “Buy drinks for my friends and me.”

The man looks her up and down, appraising her. He decides she’s worth it. He buys a drink for each of them and tries to linger once the transaction is over.

“Go over there and wait for me,” Margaery orders.

Surprisingly, the man obeys.

With him out of earshot, Arianne tries again with the barmaid who is more agreeable now. She informs them that they’re on the island of Lys. There’s one landline in a twenty-mile radius and it’s in the pub. It costs ten coins to use.

“Allow me to use the landline and I will make sure you are paid substantially,” Arianne promises.

The barmaid smiles. “You think I’m stupid enough to agree to that?”

“I am Arianne Nymeros Martell,” she whispers for only the barmaid to hear. “If you are familiar with that name then you know why it is in your best interest to show me where the fucking landline is.”

Dany and Margaery smirk at the stunned expression on the barmaid’s face.

“Landline is behind the bar. You can only use it for-“ She gulps. “Use it for as long as you like.”

“Wonderful. Thank you.”

While Arianne uses the phone, Dany and Margaery keep their eyes on the door and their
surroundings. Things are going too smoothly, which is why they shouldn’t let their guard down. They get a few glances here and there — Margaery’s guy is staring hard — but aside from that, no one pays them any mind.

Unfortunately, just when things look as if they’re really going to be that simple, everything goes to shit. It all happens so fast that Dany isn’t sure the precise moment all hell broke loose in the shabby pub. But she thinks it started right after Arianne’s call ended.

The woman was in the middle of trying to explain to them the current situation when Margaery’s guy came back for his prize. The man picked Margaery up and tried to carry her to the backrooms. Of course, Margaery fought him off. Then when he backhanded her, that only pissed her off so she killed him. Apparently, the man’s brother was in one of the back rooms so when he heard his brother shouting for him before Margaery snapped his neck, he and his crew ran out. His crew of eight men.

Easy, right?

Initially, it is easy. They break bottles on the table and gash throats, they use the wood from broken chairs to beat and batter their opponents. But then more men keep coming from the back rooms. As it turns out, the pub and the other establishments are connected underground. The brothel they avoided earlier included.

With no other immediate option, Dany removes the cloth from her hair and strangles a man with it from behind. She kicks the back of his kneecaps, forcing him to kneel. He dies just like that.

“That’s one of the Captain’s brides!” someone shouts. “They’re all here! They escape-“

Arianne throws a knife she stole from a dead body, lodging it in the man’s throat. But it’s too late. They’ve been discovered.

“We need to leave!” Margaery shouts as she hits a man in the groin with a broken table leg. When he bends over to clutch himself, she cracks his skull.

Dany grabs Arianne, putting an end to her wild clobbering of a man long dead. “Come, Arianne. It’s time to retreat!”

Arianne snaps out of her blind rage. They, along with Margaery, rush to the swinging doors. The door is blocked. They turn around, seeking another exit they may have overlooked. What they find is more men blocking their path. They’re surrounded.

“If they take us back, we’ll be forced into marriage, forced to bear Euron’s children,” Margaery says. “Slavery,” she emphasizes.

Shaking her head, Dany says, “Zaldrīzes buzdarī ıkos daor.” She glances at both women. “A dragon is not a slave.”

Dany’s words are a ray of light in the unbearable darkness. The odds are against them, even if they make it out of those doors freedom isn’t guaranteed. But Dany motivates them to keep fighting.

Arianne squares her shoulders, holding her head proudly. “Unbowed. Unbent. Unbroken. That is how I have lived. That is how I will die.”

“Well,” Margaery says, readying herself for an attack, “us Tyrells are lacking in the cool sayings department but I’m no one’s fucking doormat!”
She lunges at the closest man, Dany, and Arianne following behind her. They’d rather die fighting than be sentenced to the fate Euron means to shove them into. This time, the fight is nastier and bloodier because this time they’re fighting for more than just survival.

One man attempts to knee Dany in the stomach and she blocks it. Never again, she thinks to herself. Fisting her hand in the man’s long, auburn beard, she slams his head on a table, repeatedly. He takes a knife out of his back pocket, and she snatches it from him and slits his throat with it. Stepping on his corpse, she rushes her next victim. She runs up to every man in her path, slashing and gutting.

Two men corner Margaery, trying to rip at her dress. She fights them off but it’s to no avail. They overpower her. Dany and Arianne run to her aid, but they have their own battles to fight. Men attack them at every turn. Thankfully, help arrives.

A spine chilling growl signals the arrival of a great beast that rushes in from the back rooms. It darts across the room swiftly, ripping and tearing at the flesh of Margaery’s attackers.

“Grey Wind!” Margaery exclaims in a mixture of shock and relief.

Soon, the pirates’ attention is on the frantic yelling and gunfire coming from the below the pub. One by one, their back up enters. First, Jon, quickly followed by Robb, Loras, and Oberyn and his daughters; three of the infamous Sand Snakes.

Of course, the very best is saved for last.

Dany was beyond happy to see Jon, but seeing Viserys run in, looking pissed off after going so long without seeing or hearing from him- words can’t describe the feeling. Someone runs up behind Viserys, attempting to stab him in the back. Her older brother turns around, shoots the attacker in the head, then kills two more approaching assailants.

Then the true blood bath begins.

Jon makes his way over to her. There’s no time for loving embraces or kisses. He only tosses her a loaded gun that’s already cocked and ready. They take turns covering one another as they, along with the others, plow through the fodder.

Margaery, Loras, and Robb clear a path to the door. Arianne, Viserys, and her family run around the place killing and laughing like psychos. Amidst all that, Grey Wind is still feasting on the men he killed.

It’s a massacre.

After a while, the pirates stop running to their deaths. If Euron has any men left, they’re not showing themselves. Now the only thing blocking the door is a pile of bodies. The barmaid peeks her head over the bar and meekly asks them all to leave, so they leave.

But not before Arianne promises to send the woman a check to cover her promised payment as well as the damages.

“And that was how we defeated the evil pirates!”

Missandei laughs and winces a little. “Sounds fun. I wish I could’ve been there.”

“There will be plenty more pub brawls I’m sure.” Dany fluffs her best friend’s pillow, fretting over the woman like a worried mother. “Would you like to hear more of the story or are you ready to
rest?"

“You already know which one I’m choosing.”

Dany laughs. “Of course.” She returns to her seat beside the bed. “We have Rhaegar to thank for the success of the rescue mission…”

Rhaegar’s plan was simple. So simple that in retrospect it never should’ve worked. But sometimes those are the kind of plans that work best.

A seasoned pirate like Euron is prone to obsessively listen in on the coast guard’s radio channel. By pulling a few strings, Rhaegar had a false signal sent through the station to make Euron believe the coast guards were heavily patrolling the Narrow Sea. To avoid a run-in with the pestering coast guards, any decent pirate would find the closest dock to lay low.

“Varys’s little birds were waiting at every major dock,” Dany explains. As soon as they saw Silence they were ordered to report it, and then watch to see what Euron would do next. “Had things went that way, it would’ve taken them longer to get there.”

“Still, how did they get there so fast?”

“As soon as he made land in Lys, Euron called Daario. By then Jon and the others were already in Dorne, waiting.”

Like the obedient dog Viserys turned him into, Daario answered the phone and kept the conversation going long enough for them to slip a device on his cellphone and pinpoint Euron’s exact location.

“So, they were already in Lys when Arianne called her uncle,” Dany explains. She remembers when Jon first told her the story when they were returning home. She wore the same expression Missandei is wearing now; utter disbelief. “They searched Euron’s ship for us but all they found was a man with his neck snapped.”

Missandei smirks. “The guard Arianne seduced.”

“The very one.”

“There’s one last thing that confuses me. Why would Euron call Daario? Didn’t he know the man was captured?”

Dany frowns. “You know, I was confused about that part as well. I asked Jon but he didn’t know either.”

“...you don’t think Euron intended to be captured, do you? He could be planning something major.”

“There’s nothing to fear, Missandei. Viserys is in charge of looking after our prisoners.”

Missandei sighs in relief. That’s all she needs to hear.

There’s a quiet knock at the door. Seconds later, a bouquet of sunflowers is pushed through the small opening. Dany and Missandei laugh. There’s no need to guess who this is.

“You’re turning her room into a garden, Grey Worm.”

There are potted sunflowers all over her desk and floors. They’re Missandei’s favorite flower so naturally, her boyfriend went overboard.
“I will stop buying them when Missandei says so.” Grey Worm hands the bouquet to his girlfriend and kisses the top of her head. “I’m sorry for interrupting.”

Dany shakes her head. “It’s fine. I was just finishing up the story. I should get going.”

Grey Worm has to run night drills with the Second Sons in an hour so she’ll give the couple their privacy. She promises to visit with Missandei again soon. The way things have been going she may end up falling asleep in here for the second night in a row.

Things have been strange ever since they returned to Westeros. During the short journey home, Jon was extremely affectionate and unabashed with his love for her. But now she hardly sees him and when she does their conversations are brief. Jon spends most of his time with Robb. The two are always hidden away in some office, probably making war plans. Granted, Jon hasn’t seen his cousin in months. For all she knows they’re just catching up.

Still, she doesn’t like this drift between them. Even if it has only been two days. It’s not like she was bloody abducted and almost forced to marry a madman and bear his child. It’s not like she needs to be comforted after that traumatic experience. Nope. She is just fine.

Dany doesn’t bother retiring to their bedroom. She doesn’t want to lie in bed alone right now. She considers going to the basement to see what body part Viserys has taken from their prisoners this time. Daario will more than likely die from his injuries in the next day or two. Euron still has a long ways to go. The man has shared a lot of interesting information with them. Her brother always knows how to make a person sing.

Ghost and Grey Wind are running on the beach, carefree and wild. She sits on the large boulder and watches them play with one another. Even they can express how much they miss one another.

“I thought I’d find you out here,” Jon says from behind her.

Dany doesn’t turn to face him. “Am I that predictable?” she quietly asks.

“I just know you like it out here.”

A heavy silence comes and goes. Dany almost breaks and looks at him, but she remains strong.

Jon sighs. “My father and I have been talking and…” He sounds nervous. “After everything that’s happened and the countless suitors who’ve been trying to vy for your hand in marriage, we think it’ll be easier if you were married to someone who would not only do right by you but someone who will benefit the family greatly...”

Dany can’t believe her ears. Does this jerk truly intend to sell her off like some broodmare to the highest bidder? And Rhaegar agreed to this? The fucking nerve. Furious tears fill her eyes. She turns around, hair whipping in her face and tears blowing in the wind. She expects to find him, standing there with a dumb and remorseful look on his face.

Instead, Jon is on one knee holding a small, black box. “We both agreed that I’m the best fit,” he says. “But the final decision is yours. Will you marry me, Dany?”

“You’re...you’re not selling me off to some random horse lord in the east?” That was one of her many suitors who was turned away at the door. “You want to marry me?”

Jon chuckles. “You’re the only person I want to marry. You’re the only person I want to be with.”

The only coherent thought Dany has right now is that she’s so happy this isn’t being recorded.
Because she’s crying and she probably looks ridiculous. At first, she doesn’t even answer Jon. She just jumps in his arms and cries on his shoulder.

All this time she thought he was pushing away from her. Perhaps he's just been busy arranging this surprise proposal. She feels terrible for jumping to conclusions.

“Is that a yes?”

And her brilliant response is, “Of fucking course, it’s a ‘yes’, you idiot!”

Jon kisses her. It’s wet and messy and perfect. Her hands are trembling so bad when he tries to put her ring on, but he manages in the end. It’s a beautiful ring with a sterling silver infinity band and a princess cut diamond that isn’t too grand, and far from meager. Just the way Dany prefers her jewelry.

As Jon is helping her stand, Dany is startled by sudden loud applause and cheers. She peeks behind Jon, finally taking everything in. Everyone witnessed Jon’s proposal; and Dany’s embarrassing, initial reaction. Everyone as in, Viserys, Rhaegar and Lyanna, Grey Worm and Missandei, and Robb.

“You don’t mind your cousin seeing us like this?” she whispers nervously. She remembers Jon telling her that Robb found the idea of them together weird. “He saw us kiss…”

“Lots of people will see us kiss at the wedding. And I already talked to Robb. My happiness is more important to him than anything else.”

Well, that explains all of their secret meetings in the office.

Dany’s eyes widen. “We won’t have a private wedding at some remote location? We won’t...marry in secret?”

“Not if you don’t want that.”

She doesn’t. She wants the world to know that Jon is hers and that she is his, and now she knows he wants the same thing. He isn't ashamed of her.

“When you were taken,” Jon starts, his voice earnest and so full of adoration, “all I could think about was our last interaction and how I didn’t kiss you because people were watching. I’ll never make the same mistake again, Dany. You have my word.”

Jon seals the promise with a kiss. All of Dany’s doubts and fears vanish. Everything that's happened over the past couple of days seems insignificant.

As much as she wants to find have some privacy with her boyfriend — no, fiancé, she also wants to celebrate this major milestone with her family. Besides, they’ll have plenty of alone time in the near future. She can't wait to begin this new journey in their lives.

The morning following their return to Westeros from Lys, Jon sought Rhaegar out and asked for Dany’s hand in marriage. Rhaegar was genuinely shocked. He expected the two to marry eventually but he didn’t think either of them was ready for that big step now. For starters, they’re in the middle of gathering forces for war, building a dynasty of their own, and strengthening alliances. Also, winter isn’t the ideal season for a wedding.
But the timing doesn’t always have to be right, he supposes.

Before he and Lyanna got married, the conflict between the territories was already at a boiling point. War was inevitable. Them running away together only sped things up. Despite the world collapsing around them, it felt right to marry right then and there.

That’s why when Jon came to him, honest and unabashed about his feelings toward Dany, Rhaegar was more than happy to give his blessing. When the love is real there’s no point in waiting.

To celebrate Jon and Dany’s engagement, they had a grand dinner. Now they’re in the parlor, drinking, and dancing. Well, the guests of honor are slow dancing by the record player as if they’re already an old married couple. Grey Worm and Missandei are cuddling on a lounge chair. Robb and Viserys were in the corner talking (possibly about the two prisoners who are being held in the basement). But neither are here any longer. They already retired for the evening.

While the rescue mission was being carried out, Rhaegar had Qyburn move his work to the catacombs beneath Dragonstone. He can’t risk the young wolf discovering his plan so soon. But he won’t think about any of that now. Tonight is for celebrating.

“There’s a lot of work to be done,” Rhaegar says to Lyanna as they watch the young people from afar. “We only have three days to plan the wedding and honeymoon.” It shouldn’t be too difficult. They’re wealthy, after all. “I could hire someone to do it all but I thought we could plan it ourselves. Together…”

Lyanna doesn’t take her eyes off Jon and Dany. But she nods at his suggestion, expressing her agreement to help him plan the wedding.

He can tell that there’s a lot on her mind. When Jon told her that he wanted to propose to Dany, Lyanna was ecstatic. Yet there was a hint of sadness in her eyes. Rhaegar supposes the same sadness was in his eyes.

Young love rarely prevails in their world.

“Are you ready to call it a night?” Rhaegar asks Lyanna after a while.

Grey Worm has taken Missandei to her room. She still needs time to fully recover, and that requires lots of sleep. The only ones who don’t seem tired are Jon and Dany. Rhaegar doubts they even notice how the party has fizzled out because they only see one another.

It’s truly a beautiful thing.

“I have something for you,” Rhaegar says once they’re in Lyanna’s bedroom. “Jon gave it to me after I gave him my blessing.” Sitting next to her on the bed, he takes the photo out of his pocket. “He said that he was going to wait until our anniversary but he changed his mind.”

Hesitantly, Lyanna takes the picture from him.

A whirlwind of emotions pass through her, each one playing out clearly on her face. Surprise is the first emotion; this is the only picture of them together that still exists. It’s strange to see them like this, young, carefree, and ridiculously happy. The next emotion is joy. She covers her mouth and laughs, her eyes twinkling.

Rhaegar’s heart flutters. Gods, he hasn’t heard the sound of her pure laughter in so long. But he knows it won’t last. He tries to prepare himself for the emotion that comes next. It does him no good. His heart still aches when he sees the tears form in her eyes.
“I’m sorry,” he quickly says, taking the picture. “I didn’t mean to make you sad.” He sits the picture on the nightstand, turning away from her. “Please, forgive me.”

The mattress shifts every so slightly. It’s the only warning Rhaegar gets. The first time in—gods, he doesn’t know how long — Lyanna hugs him. She presses her head in the crook of his neck, filling his nostrils with the fragrant scent of her hair; fresh wildflowers. Her arms are warm and secure around him.

Several seconds tick by. Rhaegar holds his breath, afraid that any wrong movement will shatter this moment. Then he hears it. A tiny croak followed by the clearing of her throat.

“I...I’m not sad,” Lyanna says, voice raspy and thin. “I’ve just missed you so much.”

Rhaegar holds her close to him. The tightness in his chest loosens, he can breathe without constraints. “I’ve missed you too, Lyanna.”

Lyanna doesn’t recoil away from his touch. She doesn't tremble or flinch. Instead, she leans into it. “Can...can we stay like this for a while?” she asks, needing to savor the moment.

“We can stay like this for as long as you like, Lyanna.”

“Forever, then?” she asks, voice small. "You’ll hold on to me forever?"

“Yes, forever.” And whatever comes after that.

He will never let her go.

Viserys, of the House Targaryen, third of his name, King of the Stylish, the Bisexuals, and the Nice Asses, Lord of the Universe, and protector of his loved ones, is a coward.

But not in the way one thinks.

He’ll go to war with anyone over his family, he’s stared death in the face countless times and told it to “fuck off”, and he’s always throwing himself into life-threatening situations. So, Viserys isn’t scared of tangible shit like that. The thing that frightens Viserys is whatever emotion he felt when he heard Arianne’s ear-splitting scream over the phone.

It was visceral, it was gut-twisting. It was fucking raw.

Torturing Daario and Euron, killing all those men at that pub back in Lys — all of that was a distraction for him. But now his distractions are gone. He has to pussy up and face his fears. Back when he was young, insecure about his flat ass, and still trying to sort out his sexuality, Viserys had the balls to confess to Oberyn. Now, he’s a little older, he knows himself, and he knows without a doubt that he has a great ass. So there’s no reason for him to keep avoiding Arianne.

After they left Lys, he stayed away from her. Her family was there to comfort her and see after her. She didn’t need him. That’s what he told himself. But he knew better. He was being a coward, per usual.

Viserys slips away from the charming engagement party and takes a trip to Sunspear. He isn’t drunk. The drugs he bought before he left Dorne were flushed down the toilet because his guilt wouldn’t allow him to use them. He is going to her completely sober.

Is he of sound mind? Gods, is he ever?
With the help of a friend on the inside, Viserys doesn’t have to deal with being pestered by the guards. Best friend or not, they don’t take kindly to people showing up at the estate unannounced to pay a visit to their precious princess. His friend takes him to Arianne’s chambers and leaves him with a warning.

“Hurt my niece again and I will never forgive you.”

Viserys refrains from replying with a snappy remark. He’s grateful for Oberyn’s help so he simply gives the man his word. Funny, two weeks ago he wanted the man to fuck him cross-eyed but now he wants to fuck his niece cross-eyed.

Life is weird like that.

Arianne is fresh out of a bath from the smell of it. The scent of rose oil greets him at the arched door. Mesh, purple curtains surround her large bed, only allowing him to make out only the outline of her towel drying the ends of her hair.

“Oberyn is not the master of this house,” she says, clearly irritated. “He had no right to allow you entry.”

“Are you saying you don’t want me here?”

“I am saying that a guest should not allow another guest entry without the homeowner’s permission. He’s spent too much time around you. He’s forgotten his manners.”

Viserys opens the curtains near the edge of the bed. “Then you’re saying that I’m ill-mannered?” He kicks his slippers off (she didn’t throw away his customized pair) and gets on the bed.

Arianne rolls her eyes, and instead of looking irritated she looks sexy as hell. “What do you want, Viserys?”

“I wanted to see you.”

“Viserys hates this ‘walking on eggshells’ bullshit, but he doesn’t want to fuck this up. He crawls up to her, noticing the way her hands still on the towel and her breath hitches. “How are you feeling?” he asks.

Frowning, Arianne sets the towel aside. “...what?”

“Well, you were bloody kidnapped and almost forced into a sham marriage like two days ago. Then you had to fight in that raggedy ass pub.” He stops himself. “So, naturally I’m concerned for your um..well being.”

Arianne leans forward, and he tries really, really, hard to keep his eyes face level. She tugs on his nose.

“Fucking hell, Arianne!” he shouts, jerking back. “If I get a bruise, I’m going to-”

“I thought you were one of the Faceless Men sent here to kill me.” She puts the dagger back under her pillow. “You scared me. You never inquire about how I’m feeling.”

That’s right. Viserys has never asked her how she was feeling, he’s never asked about her day, her life, or how she’s handling the weight of her responsibilities. But she always asks him those
questions. He’s been a shitty friend to her this entire time and yet…

“I’m sorry, Arianne.” The words pour out of him. They taste foreign on his tongue. “I was an ass to you that night in Dorne and I’m sorry.”

Arianne reaches for her dagger again.

Sighing in exasperation, Viserys pulls on his own face. “See! I’m not a bloody Faceless Man!” He brought this on himself. It’s his own fault for never being the first to apologize or apologize without prompting. “I came here to tell you that, and because we need to talk…”

“I already know what you’re going to say. Listen, Viserys, I’ve always known you’ve never felt the same about me and-”

Okay, Viserys really tried not to be himself but he hates being cut off like that, and she knows it. He grabs her ankle and jerks her forward, bringing their bodies together. He puts his hand around her neck; a gentle warning.

“Interrupt me again and I’m going to bend you over my knee.”

She gets in his face, smiling. “Threatening me with a good time, are we?”

“Good time for me. You, hardly. You won’t be able to use your legs when I’m done with you.”

“Legs? I don’t need them.”

She’s insane, and he loves it.

Viserys is tempted. If choking turns her on then spanking will as well. Fucking is a good alternative to talking, too. However, he didn’t come here for that. Well, not entirely.

“Back to what I was going to say.” Viserys puts space between them so that he can think clearly. He spent hours trying to figure out the right words. In the end, he just says what feels right. “I don’t know if I’m in love with you. I only know that the very thought of you not being in my life upsets me the same way cheap clothes do. So, do you want to be my girlfriend and we figure this dating shit out together?”

Arianne, the ruthless head of the Martell family, squeals happily. “Yes!” She hugs him and kisses his cheek. Then she plays with his belt buckle. “We must consummate our new relationship.” She whispers something else to him in Dornish while she bites on his ear.

Viserys has never wanted anyone as badly as he wants her right now. Still… “First, I have a gift for you.”

“A gift? Already?”

The gift is waiting for them in her throne room; something else his friend helped him with. As it turns out, Oberyn makes for one hell of a wingman.

“We got all the information we were going to get out of him,” Viserys says as he removes the mask off her gift. “So, he’s all yours. I figured you’d want to be the one to finish him off and add another skull to your collection.”

Slowly, Arianne circles around Euron. The pirate is missing all the fingers on one hand yet there is still enough left to play with. “Can we do it together?” she asks.
“I can’t think of anything more romantic than that.”
The Original Ice & Fire

Chapter Notes

tw; mentions of past non-con and attempted suicide.

“Your son and your sister are building a name for themselves. Your adopted children continue to impress. You should be proud.”

Tywin, calculating and ruthless head of the Lannister family, is a tall, slender man with wide shoulders, and a daunting stature. His green eyes are flecked with gold and greed. In terms of wealth and prestige, he’s equally tied with Lady Olenna. However, Tywin’s viciousness makes him their most powerful ally.

Rhaegar plays with the gold pendulum on the man’s desk. “I am very proud of them all,” he says.

Tywin glares at the swinging ball. “You are doing that on purpose, aren’t you?”

Of course, he is. Getting under Tywin’s skin is always so fun. The man’s a grump with a low tolerance for anything he deems pesky. But he tends to allow Rhaegar to get away with a lot. Probably because he thinks of himself as Rhaegar’s surrogate father. And allowing the man to believe that is how Rhaegar has managed to retain him as an ally.

“If you hate it so much why keep it on your desk?” Rhaegar asks.

“It was a gift.”

From one of his grandchildren, no doubt.

The stern and unforgiving man has a soft spot for his children’s children. He roared and threatened to disinherit Jaime and Cersei when their first child was born. They’ll have twenty more children before he actually does anything about it. It’s not incest Tywin despises. Not particularly. He just hates not being able to marry Cersei off for his own personal gain.

Sighing heavily, Tywin removes the device from his desk. “Did you come here to tick me off? That’s my family’s job.”

Rhaegar’s playful mask slips. The smell of corroding skin fills his nostrils, and he can hear the cutthroat’s screams crystal clear. His eye twitches.

“Where are we right now?” Tywin calmly asks.

“Your office. Downtown.”

“What do you see?”

“Flesh melting.” Rhaegar snaps himself out of it. He straightens up in his chair, clearing his throat. “Perhaps I am going mad.”

Tywin scoffs. “Everyone’s a little mad. Now, what did you do?”
“I made someone drink wildfire…”

He might as well told Tywin that he jaywalked. The man’s face remains passive, bored even.

“Do you regret it?” he asks.

“Not at all. He was going to kill my family.” He’d do it again if he had to. It’s just that, he never knew he was capable of such a thing.

“Did you enjoy it?”

“Not particularly. The smell...I don’t think I’ll ever forget the smell of melting skin.”

“You won’t. I can still smell the men your father burned. Did it arouse you?”

Rhaegar grimaces. “Heavens no.”

Tywin visibly relaxes. “Then you have nothing to fear. Your father would visit your mother after he burned people…”

After killing the cutthroat, Rhaegar did visit Lyanna but not because he was aroused. He needed an anchor, and she’d always been his anchor. The truth is, Rhaegar felt absolutely nothing as he watched the cutthroat die. That was what worried him.

“You are having second thoughts, is that it?” Tywin all but rolls his eyes in irritation. “What have I always told you? Never formulate a plan you don’t have the stomach to see to the end.”

“What I do, I do for justice and vengeance. Fire and blood,” Rhaegar says, each word far-reaching like ripples in a pond. “That’s the price for what my enemies have done. I will settle for nothing less.”

“Good,” Tywin says sternly, pleased by his conviction. “Show them what happens when the north rides on the south!”

In truth, Tywin and Olenna hope to claim the damaged property in the north once Rhaegar’s leveled the place. Their northern competitors will be obliterated and they’ll have an opportunity to expand their businesses. As for the Martells...well, Elia is the one helping Arthur procure the ingredients for the wildfire. Without the north’s smuggling empire in the way, the Martells can finally dominate the market.

In order to remain in their good graces, Rhaegar discovered a way to make everyone happy. Something his father never considered doing. The main issues are his alliance with Robb Stark and his relationship with Jon and Lyanna.

“They’ll hate me,” Rhaegar says. “And I made a blood contract with Robb Stark.”

“You will make them see why this is necessary. As for Robb Stark, his family will be avenged, his enemies massacred. His mother and siblings will be far out of harm’s reach. There’s nothing for him to whine about. But If the young wolf is unhappy an arrangement can be made. The Starks have always been rich but never wealthy. Not our wealthy. This will be their chance to create a true dynasty. He’d be a fool to pass this up.”

From his experiences, Robb is a sensible young man. It’ll take some persuasion, but in the end, he’ll do what’s best for his family. Rhaegar may have to bend him a little. But Lyanna and Jon are different.
“Your son and his mother have no reason to pity the north anymore. Use what they’ve lost to draw them to your cause.”

“Manipulate them?” Rhaegar asks, appalled. “Give them more reason to hate me? I refuse.”

Tywin gives him a flat look. “I’m not one of your blind admirers, Rhaegar. I know you well. You are manipulative and you enjoy playing puppet master. “

“Not with my loved ones.”

“Your father, then? For all his depravity, you still loved him. Loved the man he once was. Yet, you’d been planning to kill him long before Jaime told you of his plan.” Tywin’s smirk is reminiscent of a fox. “I even suspect you’d planned to make Jaime do it for you. You were going to use his affection for Rhaella–”

Rhaegar cuts in, “That was different and you know it.”

“Of course.” A pause. “What about the game you’re playing now? Sending Arthur to visit Ashara in Dorne when you knew Oberyn and Ellaria would be returning from their excursion eventually. You knew if they couldn’t reach you they’d seek out Viserys. Just like you knew Oberyn would enlist Arianne’s aid to bring your brother into the fray.”

“Viserys tends to be extremely stubborn when I tell him to clean up his act. He’s more receptive to Arianne’s interventions. She understands him.” And Oberyn was there for added motivation. “Is it wrong to want my little brother healthy?”

Tywin ignores the question. “And the upstarts. What’s your aim with them?”

They’re the future of the family. When he’s gone they’ll need to know how to stand on their own. The only thing he did was give Jon his phone, consequently setting things into motion. All of their accomplishments are their own to claim. No one else can take credit.

Tywin nods in approval. “I feared that strategic mind of yours had crumbled that night Jaime brought you all to the Rock. I see my worrying was for naught.”

“I am a bit rusty actually,” he lies.

“I suppose that explains why you were allowing Tyrion to advise them. He’s not what he once was. He hasn’t been for some time.”

“And whose fault is that?” Tywin did try to bribe an exotic dancer - who genuinely loved Tyrion - into rejecting his son’s marriage proposal. “Does he still think she’s in Volantis living it up with some pool boy?”

“Yes. But does he know that she refused the bribe and I had Gregor make her disappear permanently? No. And he never will.”

Whenever Rhaegar starts to think that perhaps Tywin isn’t so despicable, he’s proven wrong. “I see now why it’s easy for you to suggest that I manipulate Jon and Lyanna. It comes naturally to you.”

“Tyrion would’ve left with her. He would’ve never come back. His place is here. With his family.” Tywin waves his hand dismissively. “Enough of that. Why let Oberyn send Tyrion?”

“People perform better when they’re being watched. My children needed the added motivation. Tyrion served that purpose.”
Tywin graces Rhaegar with an expression he rarely grants his own children. There’s pride in his eyes. “You should’ve been my son,” he says as though it were a dark secret. “Aerys never appreciated what he had.”

“Had I been born your son I would’ve ended up killing you.” Rhaegar stands, having had enough of the man for one day. “I’ll leave you to your work.”

“You’ve yet to share your plans for Robert Baratheon. Surely you won’t grant him a swift death.”

Rhaegar’s gut twist with sickening anger. “Robert,” he seethes. The man’s name tastes bitter on his tongue. “Is not mine to kill. I will lay him at Lyanna’s feet for her to do what she pleases with him. I will not deny her vengeance.”

“Aren’t you the romantic,” Tywin says sarcastically.

“Good day, Old Lion. I have a wedding to plan.”

“A wedding I’ve yet to receive an invitation to.”

“I believe that means you’re not invited. I could be wrong, though.”

“Get out!”

The first time Lyanna came to the shores of Summerhall there was no mansion, only ruin.

Her and Rhaegar camped out here that night to see the Red Sword, a comet that appears once every century. When he invited her, she assumed he only wanted to get her alone so that he could do what all the stupid boys his age were doing with their girlfriends. So, she was on high alert all night, prepared to tear him a new one if he tried anything.

Growing up around mannish boys, Lyanna got her fair share of stories. She never wanted to be a story for some jerk to share with his friends. Imagine her surprise when Rhaegar spent a majority of the night blabbering about the comet and quoting astronomy facts off the top of the head. Rhaegar was a nerd hiding in a jock’s clothing all along. Not once did he try to kiss her or slip his hand down her shirt.

Lyanna ended up initiating what transpired.

That night, she allowed Rhaegar to see and touch what no one else had ever seen or touched. He ruined her that night. For anything and anyone. Because after experiencing a love like his, nothing else could compare.

Lyanna used to fantasize about that night, and the other nights they shared, during her imprisonment.

That’s what it was with Robert. Imprisonment, not marriage.

Marriage was waking up to sweet notes on her husband’s pillow whenever he had to step out. Marriage was never-ending smiles and laughter despite the chaos surrounding them. Those memories were her escape. That and her boys. For a long time, she couldn’t think of them or her first love without remembering what Robert did to her.

All of her happy moments with Rhaegar, Jon, and Gendry were tainted. Sleeping didn’t help. Robert owned her thoughts, her dreams, her actions, her body. She couldn’t escape him. Everywhere she turned she saw Robert’s face, she saw the woods, her bloody fingers clawing at the muddy ground,
and Benjen’s mangled corpse. She attacked anyone who touched her, thinking it was him. Several times Jon and Rhaegar fell victim to her fury.

After each episode, she expected to wake up alone and abandoned because who wanted to put up with someone like her. But she was proved wrong every single time. One day it’d be Jon or Dany asleep in the chair by her bed. Some days Grey Worm and Missandei would be sitting by the door. Most times it was Rhaegar sleeping on the floor beside her bed.

Their love and support felt unmerited. She felt undeserving. Worthless. Filthy. Useless. Every vile thing under the sun. Some days she wished she could peel off her skin, be reborn into a being rid of this world, its hardships and pain. Death. It was death she sought.

Not anymore. She no longer rejects the love she’s given. Now she allows their love to suffocate her because she does deserve it. She deserves every bit of it.

Lyanna isn’t sure when she decided that enough was enough. That she’d no longer put herself down for something out of her control or hate her very existence. She just woke up one morning and felt like bathing in blood.

Not just Robert’s.

But all those traitorous sons of bitches.

In the meantime, Lyanna wants to punch something. More specifically she wants to punch someone. She wants to feel flesh, bone, and blood on her knuckles. But the best she can get at the moment is a punching bag.

The gym on the estate looks and smells like it wasn’t a part of the mansion’s original design. The painted, vaulted ceilings are trimmed with gold baroque, and the walls are paneled and polished dark wood. The only gym-like things about the room are the black, matted floors and the equipment.

To get her adrenaline pumping, Lyanna jump ropes. Each time the cable hits the mat, vicious images flood her mind. Gnarled branches reaching toward the night sky, blue eyes tinged with malice, spit on dirty fingers, blood on her thighs-

Lyanna throws the jump rope aside and moves to the punching bag.

For the longest, she wondered where Jon got his bad temper from. It was as if he was born angry. She thought the gods had cursed their child with Robert’s likeness as part of one of their twisted games. But no. Jon got his temper from her.

Ours is the Fury. That’s what Robert always boasted to her. She’ll show that fucker real fury.

Lyanna never much cared for senseless bloodshed. She preferred fair fights. If an opponent was weaker than her, she’d knock them clean out to avoid a drawn-out ass beating. And if they refused to stay down then well, that was their funeral. Sadism and torture was never her thing. Exceptions can be made, though.

Sometimes she pictures herself being the aggressor in that situation. How would that sack of shit like it if she dragged him to the woods, his head and ears ringing, his brother unconscious on the ground? How would he like it if she then made him watch the destruction of his lover’s ancestral home while she degraded him? She doubts he’d like being beaten, ridiculed, stripped of his clothing - his choice.

Lyanna punches the bag hard enough to rattle the chain. She could never do that to a person. Not even scum like Robert.
With a frustrated cry, Lyanna kicks the punching bag, knocking it on the floor. She curses under her breath. She has to pick the damn thing up and put it back on. It doesn’t take her as long as she thought it would. That means she’s getting her strength back.

That’s enough for now, she decides. She has to get a handle on her rage and frustration or she’s going to end up going north and finding Robert herself. Her revenge will come. Rhaegar has promised her during the nights he thought she was asleep.

They’ll dance on their enemies ashes, he promised.

Something tells her he doesn’t mean that figuratively either. As long as he leaves Robert for her, she could care less about how the others die. She loved Ned. She did. But Benjen has always been her favorite brother. And they took him from her. She’ll never forgive them for that.

Lyanna returns to her bedroom to shower and get ready for the long day ahead. She’s never planned a wedding before. Her own wedding, the one that matters, was planned by Ellaria and Oberyn. She at least knows what her son likes and dislikes, and she knows he’ll be open for whatever Dany wants.

Stepping out of the shower, she doesn’t immediately grab her towel. She walks over to the foggy mirror, clearing it with her hand. When was the last time she actually looked at herself? There’s still pale scars on her knuckles from when she punched a mirror all those months ago because she couldn’t stomach the sight of herself.

Lyanna doesn’t like to think about how she picked up a shard of broken mirror and tried to open her wrists. She hates Jon had to see her like that. He took the glass from her, cutting himself in the process, and held her while she cried. They cried together. That’s in the past, she tells herself. She no longer prays for the angel of death to come for her.

Aside from her eyebrows that need a good plucking and her split-ends that Viserys won’t shut up about, she doesn’t look nearly as bad as she thought. Lyanna pushes her damp hair over her shoulders, righting herself. Apprehensively, she caresses her collarbone with the tips of her fingers, gradually building enough courage to ghost her hand over her chest and then her breasts, shivering loudly from the sensation. Her eyes flutter shut as she succumbs to her touch.

What started as a curious experiment is now an exploration—no, a rediscovery of self.

Proceeding the downward journey with her right hand, Lyanna simultaneously traces her finger over her ear, moving from her earlobe to her neck, to the line of her jaw and the curve of her chin. As she brushes her fingers over her parted lips, her other hand glides over the smooth plane of her stomach, her belly button, and beyond that. Hearing herself moan is the equivalent of being doused in a bucket of cold water. It’s enough to pull her out of that moment. Lyanna blushes scarlet as if she were actually caught in the act of self-pleasuring.

She grabs her towel, securing it around herself, and leaves the bathroom. Ghost is laying on the floor by her bed. He lifts his head and stares at her. She wonders if he’s being judgy. Or maybe she’s just embarrassed.

“Mind your business, Ghost,” she mutters.

Yeah, she’s definitely just feeling embarrassed. What for? Touching herself? It’s her body, she can touch it if she wants. Then again, it hasn’t felt like her body for a long time.

Lyanna wishes to change that.
Prior to leaving Summerhall, Rhaegar sat down with Jon and Dany to get an idea of their expectations for their wedding. As expected, Jon wants whatever Dany wants and Dany wants all the fixings. Everything from an opulent venue, a live orchestra, and roses imported from Essos; among other things. It’s almost as if she’s been planning her dream wedding since she was a little girl.

That’s because she has been. Rhaegar remembers finding a picturebook Dany and Missandei made were they were ten about the joint wedding they would have someday. Back then, his sister wanted to marry a kind and handsome knight. He likes to think her prayers have been answered. Kind of.

“My apologies, but the museum is booked until next year,” the head manager at the art museum says. “This upcoming Saturday is too short of notice. You both have to understand that my hands are tied.”

“Your hands are tied?” Rhaegar asks. Beside him, Lyanna sighs. But Rhaegar promised to behave today so he will. “I think an exception can be made.”

Normally in situations like these, Arthur is with him and whenever someone isn’t willing to comply, Rhaegar steps out and allows his right hand to convince them. But his right hand isn’t here and Lyanna has already asked him not to threaten anyone today.

The manager stands his ground. “I know who you are, sir. I know of your wealth and prominence. Regretfully, I must inform you that neither is enough to make me change my mind. You cannot book a wedding here for Saturday. Please, try again next year.”

“You can make that decision because you’re in charge.” Rhaegar nods in understanding. He takes out his phone. “Excuse me for one moment.” He makes a call.

Lyanna shakes her head at the museum manager. “You should’ve just let him have his way.”

For years, the museum has been on the brink of closure due to donations and interests in the classical arts dwindling with the rise of the nearby contemporary art museum. Meaning that purchasing the museum takes all of five minutes.

Rhaegar ends the call, smiling at the stunned manager. “I am now in charge of this museum.” After the wedding, he’ll see if Dany wants ownership of it since she loves it so much. Or he’ll sell it. “Now, if you’d like to keep your job, I’ll need you to cancel whatever event is scheduled for Saturday and book my sister’s wedding.”

“I-I…” the man stutters.

“Yes, sir! I’ll get on it immediately!”

“Very good. Please, enjoy the remainder of your day.” Rhaegar stands, extending his hand to Lyanna.

Rolling her eyes, she takes it. “You’re an ass,” she tells him as they’re walking out of the door. Though she tries to hide it, he can see her smile.

Next on their list is the infamous symphony orchestra based in the city. Procuring them for the wedding isn’t a hassle because Viserys’s former violin instructor is the current concertmaster. The woman is more than happy to play for Jon and Dany on their special day. He and Lyanna sit down with her to choose the setlist for the ceremony.
After that, they meet with the caterer to pick the best courses for the menu. Guests will have three options to choose from. Speaking of guests, Rhaegar has to figure out how to mix and mingle their legitimate partners with their felonious partners. He figures it shouldn’t be too hard. The line between them is rather thin.

“All that talk about food has made me hungry,” Lyanna says as they’re driving away from the restaurant.

Every time she speaks, Rhaegar’s heart does a somersault. Even when she’s calling him an ass or pretending to dislike his power moves. “I can make a u-turn and we can eat at the restaurant. Louis makes a delectable frittata.”

“I just want a cheeseburger or something.”

Rhaegar makes a face. “Like at a fast food place?”

“Careful, your elitism is showing. Yes, at a fast food place.” Lyanna looks out the car’s window. She points at a place on her right. “I haven’t had a burger from there in forever. Can we go?”

Of course, he isn’t going to tell her no. Even if he’s not a fan of fast food. The drive-thru line is long so they go inside much to his horror. Rhaegar looks so out of place in the bright, tacky place with his Burberry trench coat and overall regalness. Despite being equally stylish in her designer outfit, Lyanna fits in well here. Probably because she isn’t a snob like him.

Lyanna laughs, linking their arms together and dragging him up to the counter. “You act as if I’m torturing you.”

“It feels like you are.”

“I see where Viserys gets his snootiness from.”

“Please don’t ever tell him about this.” His brother will roast him to kingdom come if he finds out he stepped foot inside a fast-food joint. “I don’t even know what to get.”

Lyanna orders for him. As she does so, the cashier fumbles over the order because the young man is too busy gawking at her. Which isn’t a surprise. Lyanna’s gorgeous and has a natural charm that draws people in. She’s also glowing today. The woman doesn’t even notice the effect she has on the poor lad or her general effect on the people fortunate enough to know her personally. And even though Rhaegar knows the cashier doesn’t have a chance in seven hells, he still puts his arms around Lyanna’s waist to show him and everyone else in this crummy place that she’s taken.

She glances over at him and smiles, and Rhaegar falls in love all over again. Like a brainwashed idiot, he hands over his credit card without question when she tells him to pay for the food.

“Sorry, sir, but we don’t accept gold cards here.”

Rhaegar frowns, taking his card back. He takes a bill out of his wallet. “Here you are.

The cashier doesn’t take it. “I can’t break that,” he says. “Do you have something smaller?”

“Something smaller?”

Lyanna snatches his wallet from him, sifting through the cards. She picks the one he rarely uses. “Try this one, please,” she tells the cashier.
The cashier accepts the card and charges it. While they wait for their food to be brought out to them - he had no idea they did that at fast-food restaurants - Lyanna makes fun of him for being a pompous rich boy.

“This right here,” she says, pointing to the napkin dispenser on their table, “is where us commoners get our paper napkins from to use to wipe off our peasant hands. And this red stuff is called ketchup.”

“Very funny, Lyanna. If I recall, you grew up in a mansion, too. Your family has been around for as long as mine.”

“Whatever riches my family had are gone now.” She stares down at her lap. “Just like my family.”

Rhaegar panics because he’s certain he’s dampened the good mood she was in. But Lyanna speaks again.

“But Robb is back,” she says, gracing Rhaegar with a sincere smile. “I’ve missed him. I know Jon is happy to have his cousin at his wedding. I wish Gendry could be there, too. The three of them have been close since they were boys, and I...I really miss my son, Rhaegar.”

“Lyanna-”

“No, it’s fine. I understand Gendry made the choice he thought was right. I just hope he’s doing okay.”

He wants to tell her the truth. That Gendry has been staying in southern territory for about two weeks now, providing the Second Sons with weapons and keeping a low profile. Jon will tell her in due time, though. It isn’t Rhaegar’s secret to share. Perhaps he’ll make a suggestion to Jon. That's as far as his pestering will go.

Their food is brought out. Rhaegar has to admit that it smells edible, though it may not look it. Lyanna further teases him by showing him how to properly hold his burger.

“Us smallfolk don’t use forks and knives. We get by with just our hands.”

“You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?” Rhaegar picks up the burger, taking a small bite. “This...is actually good.”

“Their fries are better. Here.” She offers him a french fry.

Without thinking, Rhaegar eats it from her hand. The taste of the fry is lost on him, his full attention on Lyanna’s face, mainly the faint blush that spreads across it. Feeding a person is such an intimate act.

“May I have another?” Rhaegar asks.

Lyanna swallows hard. “Eat your own fries,” she says. She’s flustered, that much is obvious.

Rhaegar can’t resist teasing her. “Yours taste better.”

“Piss off.”

“Language, Lyanna. There are children here.”

“You’re irritating.”
“You love me.”

“Doesn’t mean I have to tolerate you.” Lyanna curses under her breath. She didn’t want to admit that so easily. “You tricked me.”

Rhaegar smiles innocently. “I have no idea what you’re referring to.” He takes another bite of his burger, chewing dramatically. “This is divine. What do they put in these?”

“Human meat.”

Rhaegar chokes, and Lyanna laughs at him.

The fast-food pitstop wasn’t a bad idea after all. He enjoyed his food, though, if Viserys catches wind of this, he’ll tell his brother that he hated every minute of it, and he has no intentions of coming here ever again.

Afterward, they don’t immediately return to the car and head to their next destination. It’s a nice day out. Lyanna suggests they walk for a bit. She hasn’t left Summerhall since they moved there so he’s happy to indulge her. While Lyanna takes in every shop they walk by, Rhaegar watches her. She regards everything with sensible consideration, never quick to pass judgment. If Lyanna dislikes something it’s because she’s taken the time to pick apart its flaws and determine if they’re the kind of flaws she can do with or not.

She’s expressive, too. Her nose wrinkles and her eyebrows pinch together when she disapproves of something. She chews on her lip when she’s in deep thought. Her ears perk up when she sees something that interests. Like when they pass a small flower shop.

Lyanna, wild and fearless, has an affection for flowers and cheesy romance novels that one would find at a thrift store, its pages worn and stale.

“Where are you going?” Lyanna asks.

Rhaegar backtracks to the flower shop. “To buy flowers for my lady.”

“You don’t have to.”

“I want to.”

Rhaegar purchases two dozen blue roses and carries them for her because in retrospect he might’ve overdone it. But it doesn’t matter because Lyanna is pleased. She removes a single rose from the bouquet and sniffs it. As they continue their walk, she twirls it in her hand absently.

The next thing that catches Lyanna’s eye is unanticipated. She stops in front of a salon, staring at her reflection in the glass. Rhaegar is briefly reminded of darker times. He knows exactly what Lyanna is thinking right now as she touches the ends of her hair. She’s thinking about how Robert dragged her by her hair...

“Do you want to drop in?” he asks. “I’m sure they accept walk-ins.”

“We don’t have time. You have to take the boys to get fitted and I need to meet with the girls.”

“That isn’t for another two hours. We have more than enough time.”

The salon does accept walk-ins, but they’re booked for the day. Of course, that means nothing to Rhaegar. He works his magic (no, he doesn’t buy the salon) and gets Lyanna’s appointment
scheduled for the same day. She hardly has to wait at all. Not wanting to hover or come off like a clingy and overprotective ‘kind-of-sort-of-boyfriend but not really’, he waits in the lounge and entertains himself with a tabloid magazine.

Once again, Viserys, Loras, and Margaery are the talk of the town. According to the article, his brother is dating an actress, Loras is sleeping with a married man, and Margaery has had plastic surgery to hide her true age from the world. Apparently, she’s forty-two. Who would’ve known?

Rhaegar snorts.

The public eats this kind of stuff up because they have no idea what it’s truly like for them, and they hate the unknown. He can only imagine what the tabloids will say once they catch wind of Jon and Dany’s wedding.

Oddly enough, incest isn’t illegal in Westeros. It’s one of those things where society’s opinion of the matter prevents people from engaging in it rather than there being a written law. Outside of their world, Jon and Dany will be the subject of ridicule and unjustifiable hatred. Luckily for them, nothing else really exists outside of their world.

What’s the opinion of sheep to a dragon? Ash.

During his wait, several people make passes at him. One woman asks him if he’s open to grabbing drinks with her later, a man hits on him, and an elderly woman tries to set him up with her granddaughter. Well, at least he’s still got it. He politely declines them all.

To pass the time, Rhaegar plays Cyvasse on his phone. It feels as if hours have passed when they’re finished with Lyanna. He almost doesn’t recognize her.

Lyanna has always had long hair so it’s strange to see her hair hanging a breadth above her shoulders. Insecurely, she tucks a strand behind her ear, waiting for him to say something, anything.

“Is that your wife?” the elderly woman from earlier asks. Because Rhaegar told her he was married. “Wow, she’s a beauty!”

Rhaegar finds his voice. “She is,” he says, unable to take his eyes off Lyanna. He gets up and walks over to her, fighting his urge to cup her face and kiss her. “You look amazing, Lyanna.”

“Thank you.” Lyanna frets with the ends of her hair. “It feels...weird. But I’ll get used to it.” She averts her gaze nervously. “Do you really like it?”

“I love it,” he says. What the hell, he decides. He cups her face and kisses her forehead sweetly, much to the elderly woman’s delight. The woman cheers.

“A friend of yours?” Lyanna asks, hugging him.

They walk out of the salon, still embracing. “You know me, always making new friends.”

A top bridal boutique is closed to the public for Daenerys’s private fitting. Since they’re pressed for time, final decisions, alterations, and whatever else is necessary has to be completed today. Missandei and Dany are sitting down with the boutique’s owner, overlooking the woman’s winter collection, when Lyanna arrives.

The girls’ reaction to her appearance is similar to Rhaegar’s. Seconds of dumbfoundedness passes followed by realization. Then they’re running up to her, bouncing on their heels and grinning from
ear to ear. Their excitement is contagious. Lyanna can’t contain her smile.

“Your haircut is gorgeous, Lyanna,” Missandei says.

Dany nods in agreement. “It’s very posh. It’ll look great with the dress we picked out for you!”

“You two picked out a dress for me?”

Again, the girls stare at her, eyes wide, mouths agape. Oh, that’s right. She hasn’t spoken a word to either of them in months. How should she proceed? Should she do a happy dance and say, “Ta-da! I’m back” or revert back to mutism and pretend she never spoke at all. She doesn’t want this to be a big deal, and she knows that’s probably unfair of her because to them it is a big deal.

“It’s good to hear your voice again,” Dany says. Short and sincere. “Would you like to see the dress?”

Missandei adds, “We made sure to grab both colors so you could pick which one you preferred.”

These girls. It’s as if they can read her better than she previously assumed. Lyanna is grateful for them. Not only for their understanding but their consideration when it came to choosing her dress for the wedding. The mother of the groom has a certain standard to uphold, and this dress fits the part. It’s a dreamy and, dare she say, romantic, selection. Extremely flattering dress with a fitted bodice, deep v-neckline and a floor-length tulle skirt. The figure-skimming design is beautifully suspended by spaghetti straps. She has a choice between champagne and periwinkle.

Lyanna decides on the latter. The designer takes her measurements. Small alterations are requested before the dress is sent to the back for modifications. With that out of the way, she focuses on helping Dany find the perfect dress.

So far, Dany has tried on four dresses. She hasn’t been a fan of any of them. Every time the designer promises that the next dress she brings Dany will be the dress, she disappoints.

It’s not that the dresses are bad, it’s just that Dany has an idea in her head and they don’t live up to that.

“I want to look majestic,” Dany explains, “but I don’t want to be over the top. Does that make sense?”

The designer, Melina, nods vigorously. “I know exactly what you are looking for. I have the perfect dress!”

The three of them watch her leave, each wearing a skeptical expression. Melina returns with a heavy dress bag. She hangs it, unzips it, and reveals a fluffy mess of a dress that has an intricately jeweled bodice. One look at the dress and Lyanna knows Dany isn’t going to like it, but the girl goes to try it on anyway. She’s a good sport. Not a bridezilla at all. As expected.

Missandei’s phone rings. “Sorry, I need to take this. Do you mind giving Dany a hand?”

“Not at all,” Lyanna says.

From outside the door of the dressing room, Lyanna can hear Dany’s mumbled curses and snide remarks about the dress. Smiling to herself, she knocks quietly. Fumbling and the swishing of fabric can be heard followed by more curses.

Dany opens the door, parts of the dress peeking out. “Ah, Missandei, this fucking dress-” She sees
Lyanna and blushes bright red. “Oh! Sorry!”

Lyanna scoffs, and enters the dressing room, shoving the tulle out of her face. She closes the door behind herself. “What were you saying about the fucking dress? That it’s big as shit and makes you look like a cupcake?”

Covering her mouth, Dany laughs. “Yes, that’s exactly what I was going to say.”

With a little effort, they maneuver over to the mirror. The dressing room isn’t even small. It’s a moderate size. It’s the dress that takes up all the space. They stare at Dany’s reflection in the mirror, mostly how tiny the top of her is compared to the poofy lower half. Lyanna pulls a face and Dany does the same.

“I look like a cupcake.”

“At least you’re a pretty cupcake,” Lyanna says to cheer her up. “We can follow you around all day, holding your skirts for you so you can walk.”

Dany laughs. Her entire face lights up like a star when she does. “Thank you, Lyanna. But this dress is not for me.” She sighs. “I doubt I’ll find my dream dress in one day.”

“You never know. If we don’t find it here we can try somewhere else.”

Turning away from the mirror, Dany extends a hand. When Lyanna takes it, she squeezes. “I’ve really missed you, Lyanna. Does Jon know?”

“Not yet. I kind of want to surprise him at the wedding.”

“I won’t tell him then.”

“Thank you, Daenerys.”

“Dany,” she corrects. “You’re my family. You can call me Dany.”

Lyanna smiles. “You’re right. We are family. You’ll be my daughter-in-law very soon.”

That makes Dany’s face even brighter if that’s possible. Her aura is blinding. To be near her is akin to standing near the sun. It’s overwhelming yet addicting. Lyanna can see why Jon fell face first.

They sit on the bench in the dressing room, hands linked.

“You know, I used to watch a lot of wedding films,” Dany admits bashfully. “The mother-in-laws rarely liked their son’s brides. I’m happy I don’t have a monster-in-law.” She glances away. “Was...was my mother kind to you?”

“I only met Rhaella once. She was very kind to me.”

That brings Dany some comfort. “What was it like meeting her?” she asks.

“Intimidating at first. Rhaegar introduced me to her once when Aerys was out of town on business. He wanted me to see the truth about his parentage.”

“You didn’t know before then?”

“There were whispers. I never entertained them.”
“Why was it intimidating?”

Because Rhaella was astonishingly beautiful with an air of regalness around her. Meeting her felt like meeting with an actual queen who governs, not a kingdom or realm, but the world. Her eyes were colder than Aerys whenever she wasn’t smiling. Aerys fancied himself a living, breathing dragon but was nothing more than a lizard in comparison to Rhaella.

“Then why did she allow him to abuse her?” Dany asks, bewildered.

“Rhaella was fiercely protective of her children. She did what she believed she needed to do to ensure their safety.”

Dany lowers her head. “I wish I could’ve known her,” she quietly says. “Even though she won’t be at my wedding, I know she’ll be there in spirit. I know she lives on inside me and my brothers.”

“She does. I see her in you most of all.”

It’s true. Dany is a queen in her own right, and she won’t be confined or forced to hide her brilliance from the world. She’ll receive the love, respect, and fear Rhaella deserved. Lyanna is sure of it. From her shell, she watched Dany blossom into the woman she is today. She feels proud.

“I’m very happy that you and Jon found one another,” Lyanna says. She kisses the back of Dany’s hand. “I’m fortunate to have you as a daughter.”

Dany’s hug is bruising but welcome. Even if the fucking dress gets in the way.

They leave the dressing room to find the designer so that they can try another dress, one with less fabric preferably. When they exit the hallway, they can hear laughter and excited chattering. Dany perks up at the sight of Arianne and Margery who are in the middle of talking to Missandei about something. Lyanna thinks she might’ve heard the words “bachelorette party” mentioned.

“What are you two doing here?” Dany asks, pleasantly surprised.

“You didn’t think we’d miss your special moment, did you?” Margaery asks. “What kind of bridesmaids do you take us for?”

“Bridesmaids?” Dany looks at Missandei. “You sneak!”

Missandei shrugs, quite pleased with herself. “Well, you always said you wanted bridesmaids and since you’ve made new friends, I decided to use my power as maid of honor to make it happen.”

Before Dany can express her appreciation for her best friend, Arianne steps up to her, her nose scrunched as she examines the gown. “Who put you in this? Were they for real?” Then she glances over Dany’s shoulder, looking at Lyanna. “Who’s the babe?”

Lyanna blushes. Inwardly, she’s thinking about how the girl reminds her so much of Ellaria when she first met her. “Hi, nice to meet you. I’m Jon’s mother, Lyanna.”

Margaery’s and Arianne’s mouths drop. “His mother?” they ask simultaneously.

“You look like you could be his sister!” Margaery says.

That starts a string of compliments from each girl, making Lyanna feel giddy and flustered. They’re all so nice and genuine and she’s still a little raw so it’s a bit much. Thankfully, the designer returns and their attention is aimed at the woman instead.
Arianne and Margaery, in so many ways, insult the woman’s choice of the dress. According to Margaery, Dany is too short for a dress like that. Arianne flat out calls the dress ugly. Then they make Dany sit down and relax while all of them search the racks themselves for dresses they think she’d like. That way Dany doesn’t have to stress so much. It also adds a fun spin to the whole ordeal by allowing her to rank the dresses they present.

Lyanna can tell Dany is enjoying herself. For years, Missandei and Grey Worm were her only friends. She probably didn’t think she’d have bridesmaids or friends who knew the truth about her family and accepted her still. But she does.

A few blocks from the bridal boutique, the men of the family are at the tailor getting their measurements taken. Since it’s last minute, Rhaegar hired six tailors to cater to each of them. He’s sparing no expense for the wedding. Actually, he rarely spares expenses for anything, especially when it comes to his family.

Jon, Robb, Gendry, and Grey Worm are one room over with their tailors. They’re laughing and joking like rowdy children; minus Grey Worm. He barely hears his voice. He hears Robb mostly. The young wolf is the charmer of the bunch. Jon is the one who makes the snarky remarks here and there. Gendry, the poor lad, is the butt of every joke.

Rhaegar was surprised to see Gendry here when he arrived, but it makes sense for Jon to want him at his wedding. Jon plans to ask Lyanna first, of course. But he wants Gendry to have a tux just in case. It’s perfect, honestly. Lyanna misses Gendry so she’ll love to see him. Rhaegar didn't even have to butt in.

“I bet Grey Worm is dying to get away from them,” Viserys says, watching the tailor stitch the seam of his pants, waiting for him to prickle his skin just a little so he can reprimand him. This isn’t their usual tailor. Naturally, Viserys had complaints. “They’re too loud for his liking.”

“I don’t think Grey Worm minds it that much. He's never really been around any boys his age.”

Viserys glances over at Rhaegar, at his bare chest. They’re both shirtless. “Are you juicing too?” he asks, frowning.

“Juicing?”

“Steroids. You’re fucking ripped now.”

Rhaegar chuckles. “No, I’m not doing steroids.”

Pushing those carts of wildfire through the catacombs and the occasional weight lifting is to thank for his muscle gain. Physically, he’s healthier than he’s ever been, his physique is in peak condition. Even during his competitive fencing years, he wasn’t this fit.

“Gods if you weren’t my brother,” Viserys says. “I’d make you my sugar daddy.” He considers it. “Then again, all the better that you're my brother. We could still set up an arrangement.”

“We definitely could.”

They share a look. Then burst into laughter.

The tailors’ eyes widen but they know better than to make a comment or openly express their opinions. Rhaegar and Viserys have a running gag where they discuss inappropriate things around strangers just to mess with them. It’s good fun.
“Too bad you’re semi-straight,” Viserys says.

“Semi-straight?”

“You’re not a flaming hetero, Rhaegar. You’d let a guy finger your ass with a finger or two.”

“Who says I haven’t already?”

Viserys laughs, clapping his hands. “Oooh, I’ve missed this Rhaegar! Where has he been?”

“He’s always been around.”

“Things are good with you and Lyanna, aren’t they? That’s why you’re in such a good mood.”

Dammit. Is he being that obvious? Granted, there has been a noticeable spring in his step. He was humming a tune when he first came in. The entire drive over here, he was smiling like an idiot all because Lyanna kissed his cheek when they departed. But he isn’t the only one behaving love drunk.

Rhaegar checks the tailor’s progress on his pants. “Which Martell won your favor in the end, brother?” he asks, turning the tables.

“Touché.”

“So, who?”

“Guess.”

“Arianne.”

Viserys rolls his eyes. “How do you do that?” he asks irately. “If the family ever goes on a trivia game show you’re leading the team.”

“Can you imagine us on Trivia Westerosi? We’d dominate.”

“Nobody would have a chance,” Viserys says, imagining it clearly. "Your perceptiveness, Dany and Missadandei’s knowledge of history, Grey Worm’s mathematical prowess, Jon and Lyanna’s...whatever the fuck they have, and my nice ass. Ugh, we'd be unstoppable.”

Rhaegar smiles. “I’ve missed you, little brother.”

“I know. I’m the life of the party. How could you not?” Viserys steps down from the platform once the tailor is done. “Speaking of parties, Missandei and I want to throw them joint bachelor parties for tomorrow night. We found a nightclub to host it.”

Loud, blaring music, sweaty bodies, drinking, dancing, and other forms of debauchery. Not the ideal setting for Lyanna these days. Of course, it’s about Dany and Jon but if everyone is to enjoy themselves, considerations have to be made. Which is why he has forbidden fireworks at the wedding ceremony to be on the safe side.

Rhaegar is going to suggest an alternative when Viserys speaks again.

“Since you and Lyanna are in your eighties,” he jokes, though, it’s hard to tell if he’s joking, “you two could stay at home. Alone. Maybe resume your interrupted dinner…”

“Is your new relationship to thank for your newfound thoughtfulness?”
Viserys sucks his teeth. “Thoughtfulness? I don’t want you old fucks ruining the vibe, that’s all. I plan on dry humping my girlfriend on the dancefloor. It’s not for the decrepits’ eyes.”

Like Lyanna, Viserys has his own dictionary, and Rhaegar owns a copy. In Viserys’s language that translates to, I love you, big brother and I want you and the woman you love to have a quiet evening while I’m off somewhere dry humping my girlfriend on the dancefloor.

“Thank you, Viserys.”

Viserys pretending not to hear him.

The eve of the wedding started with final arrangements and errands. They secured a DJ for the reception, booked the honeymoon, and stopped by the museum to make sure the decorations were coming along nicely; they are.

None of the guests have declined the invitation. Short notice isn’t enough for them to miss, not only a Targaryen wedding but a wedding between aunt and nephew. Humans have a peculiar obsession with taboos. They’ll persecute the act until they’re blue in the face yet if given the chance to see it up close and personal they’ll leap on the opportunity.

Lyanna suspects Rhaegar is just waiting for someone to say anything negative against Jon and Dany. Truthfully, she’s waiting for it too. She hasn’t slugged someone in a long time.

The second part of the day was entertaining, to say the least.

Dany, her maid of honor, and the bridesmaid swept through the mansion like a tropical storm during their pre-game. They spent hours trying on different outfits, doing their hair, makeup, dancing, and complimenting and touching each other’s breasts. Yes, they spent a great deal of time doing that. Not that Lyanna has any problems with it. Eventually, they all headed to the nightclub in a party bus, dressed like supermodels. She kind of wanted to take pictures of them because they were so pretty.

No one’s home except for her, Rhaegar, and the dogs.

Lyanna takes the dogs outside for a walk; she also needs the fresh air. Once it dawned on her that they would be home alone, her mind traveled to places she didn’t want it to. Perhaps she did but was too ashamed to let the thoughts manifest. Ashamed of what exactly? She has no idea. These days the smallest things make her want to sink into the floor and disappear.

Ghost and Grey Wind are fond of the beach, she’s noticed. As they run in the sand, their tails wag so fast they’re like grey and white blurs. Lyanna admires the scenery beyond them, one of the caves catching her eye. She tries to venture inside but the dogs balk at the opening, refusing to enter.

Their tails are straight as rods, their playfulness gone. A chilling breeze blows, a foul stench from the cave wafting to her nose. Her heart is a pebble in a tin can, rapping against her chest. Whining, Ghost nudges her with his snout and Grey Wind growls lowly. She’s been around them long enough to trust their instincts. She retreats.

Lyanna goes inside, leaving the dogs to their own devices.

“I was on my way to you,” Rhaegar says. He must see the lingering trepidation on her face because he crosses the room quickly. “Is something wrong?” he asks.

“No, I’m fine. Just been a long day.”
Rhaegar opens his arms and she’s stunned by how quickly she falls into them.

“Lyanna, you’re shaking. Are you sure everything is okay?”

“It’s cold outside.” That’s only half the reason.

Rhaegar walks her to the den where the fireplace is lit. “Says the Stark. I thought your lot were born with ice in your veins.”

“I’ve been in the south for too long.”

They sit on the rug in front of the crackling fire. Rhaegar holds her hands near the flame to warm her up. The way the fire curls and flicks unnerves her. Fire is unpredictable, untamed. Yet Rhaegar sits so close to it without apprehension or fear.

“Do you think you’re fireproof?” she asks teasingly. “What was the name of your ancestor who thought he’d become a dragon if he drank wildfire?”

Had she blinked, she would’ve missed the change in Rhaegar’s eyes, the stiffness of his shoulders. He returns to himself so fast she thinks she only imagined it.

“Aerion Brightflame. Some called him Aerion the Monstrous.”

“Why the Monstrous?”

“It’d take hours to list all of his atrocities. Are you sure that’s how you want to spend our evening?”

Lyanna’s mind ventures back to that place. Not the dark place. No, the bothersome place. She looks at Rhaegar’s hand; the unblemished skin, the veins, and the strength of them.

“I want all the gory details!” Lyanna says, feigning interest.

Over dinner, Rhaegar tells her stories about his prick of an ancestor and Lyanna tries really hard not to think about him touching her naked body with his hands. But it’s damn near impossible. Every time he punctuates his words with a gesture or reaches for his water or his utensils, she’s honing in on his hands.

Gods, what’s wrong with her? They’re only hands.

Strong hands that could probably crush a melon.

Or someone’s windpipe.

Lyanna would like to see that.

“Do you care for any dessert?” Rhaegar asks.

“Actually, I’m really tired. I think it’s time I retire for the night.”

Rhaegar looks at her the way he does when he knows she’s full of shit. Knowing the intuitive asshole he’s probably noticed her staring at his hands all night, too. Sometimes she wishes he was as stupid as his hair.

“I won’t hold you up then,” Rhaegar says, eyeing her with suspicion. “Goodnight, Lyanna.”

“Goodnight.”
Safety isn’t found in her bedroom.

If anything, the thoughts are unrelenting, her privacy giving them the freedom to expand and evolve. Lyanna paces the floor, weighing the ups and downs of what she’s considering. There aren’t many of the latter. Her mind finds a way, though.

What if she thinks she’s fine but she isn’t? Her mind and her heart may want this, but is her body ready? There were moments in the past when she thought she was fine. She thought she was immune to things that once triggered her. She was wrong.

Lyanna contemplates in the shower. She contemplates it as she holds up the satin and lace nightgown she let Dany talk her into buying. Treat yourself, is what Dany told her. That’s the only reason she puts it on. She’s treating herself.

In bed, Lyanna tosses and turns. The side where Rhaegar sleeps smells like him. She’ll lay on his pillow until the scent of him irks her; stimulates her. Then she'll move back to her side. Ten minutes later, she’s back on his side, spooning his pillow or burying her face into it or putting it between her knees. She does the same routine over and over again until it drives her crazy. Throwing the comforter back, Lyanna gets out of bed.

She opens the door to her bedroom and sees a shirtless Rhaegar standing there with his hand raised, prepared to knock. That first time she hugged him the other night, she knew he felt different, more solid, sturdy. Now she can see why. Her body does want this after all if its reaction to his sculpted chest and stomach are anything to go by.

He glances at her new gown then back to her face, his eyes searching. She wants him to initiate but she knows he won’t, not this time. Uncertainty hangs over them. He isn’t sure if the reciprocated tension between them is real or if he’s projecting his own desires.

So, Lyanna does what she did the night the Red Sword streaked across the sky. Except for this time, her hands aren’t sweaty and shaky when they glide up Rhaegar’s arms and shoulders to twine around his neck, and when he picks her up and carries her to bed, there’s no fear that he’ll stumble over something and drop her. His arms are strong, unwavering.

Though a lot has changed the most important things haven’t. Rhaegar’s kisses are still dizzying, his hands gentle yet firm when it's required. His love hasn’t changed, not in the slightest. Rhaegar listens to her body. He knows where to kiss her, knows which parts of her aches for him most. That doesn’t mean he neglects the other parts. He dotes on each section, even areas one wouldn’t think to kiss. His hands — gods, his hands— touch every inch of her, searing her flesh, burning out every trace and memory of his vile touch.

That’s what this is. A cleansing. Fire is purifying, after all.

Gradually, bit by bit, Lyanna’s body begins to feel like her own again. It moves, reacts, and sounds the way she wants it to. Rhaegar takes nothing for himself. Not physically. Pleasing her is his only aim, his only reward. Although Lyanna is known for her giving nature, she doesn’t mind taking tonight.
It’s hard to believe that it’s been less than a year since Daenerys and Missandei were almost turned away at the door by a bouncer during their first club outing. If that humiliating rebuff wasn’t enough to deter them from ever venturing to a club again, what transpired that night surely did.

Well, not entirely.

Because here they are, bypassing the long, winding line that’s wrapped around the block, and walking up to the VIP door. They aren’t alone this time. Arianne and Margaery are walking alongside them, the four of them surefooted and confident. When the bouncer sees them approaching, he lifts the velvet rope without hesitation, even going so far as to bow his head as they pass.

Dany and Missandei share a smile.

The party is well underway. So many people have come out to celebrate with them, though, Dany doubts half of them know Jon or even her. People enjoy a fun time and that’s what this is. Party favors, champagne, and finger food await them in their private booth. The men are somewhere around here; they have their own booth directly across from theirs. They all got ready in a hotel suite near the club instead of at Summerhall.

They stay long enough to pop open a bottle of champagne, make a toast, and drink. A majority of their night is spent on the dance floor, dancing scandalously on each other.

During the party bus ride over, they had shots. Lots of shots. Dany will probably regret it in the morning, but right now, she’s brimming with euphoria, every cell in her body tingling with bliss. Missandei is in front of her, arms on her shoulders as they sing along to the mashup that’s playing, and Margaery is behind her, hands at her waist. Arianne is behind Margaery, doing gods know what. Whatever it is, it has Margaery laughing like she’s drunk.

Oh, that’s right. She is drunk. They all are. It’s incredible.

Dany has lost count of how many songs that have played. In her mind, it feels as if one, long song has been playing since they got here. Then a slow, hypnotic track starts, the neon lights switching from multi-colored to red. The club’s entire atmosphere changes from amped to mellow.

Feeling suddenly weightless, Dany tilts her head back, resting it on Margaery’s shoulder. That’s when she sees him, watching her from the balcony with hungry dark eyes.

The same time she notices Jon, her companions notice their own admirers. But Dany doesn’t focus too closely on their reactions. She only has eyes for him. The way Jon is staring at her reminds her of the day he rushed home to her after he beat a man within an inch of his life. Jon looks as if he wants to devour her whole.

Not that she blames him. Not to brag or anything but she looks damn good tonight.

The little black dress she’s wearing fits her snug, hugging her waist, her hips, and ass. Her hair is parted down the middle, her curls teased and tousled to give her a windblown look. She knows the red light bathing her skin only enhances her beauty, makes her downright sexy. Irresistible.

Dany wonders what he’s thinking this instance. She has a few ideas but she’d love to know his exact thoughts. She supposes she’ll find out tomorrow during their honeymoon.
Once the song ends, the mood reverts back to upbeat and high tempo, the DJ’s transition is flawless. They take that time to return to their booth to snack and hydrate. Missandei puts a small veil on Dany so everyone knows she’s the bride-to-be. Her bridesmaids wear cute sashes in her honor. Pictures are taken, more champagne is drunk. Across from their booth, they can see Jon and his gang laughing and popping bottles.

Good times all around.

Dancing in the VIP booth is somehow more exciting than it was on the dancefloor. Dany thinks that’s because they have more room to move around and their audience is bigger. Things are fine initially when the only attention they’re getting is cheers from the crowd. Of course, everyone doesn’t know how to behave. So many men send drinks to them, sometimes with their phone numbers written on napkins. For obvious reasons, they don’t touch any of the drinks. Once it’s realized that sending drinks are pointless, their fans try to enter the VIP booth.

Thank the gods for their security detail tonight.

Still, it’s an inconvenience because soon a restroom break will be necessary, and Dany knows how this will playout. They’ll step out of the booth, security will escort them to the restroom but the men find a way to get close and the moment they do, they’ll have a bone broken, and that’ll cause a fuss.

Dany doesn’t want there to be a fuss tonight. She just wants to have fun with her friends and continue making eyes with her fiancé from across the room. She looks over to where Jon was moments ago to do just that but he’s no longer there.

“Our knights have arrived!” Margaery suddenly says.

Sure enough, their knights come to the rescue. Jon, Robb, Viserys, and Loras enter their booth and make themselves comfortable. When Jon sits beside Dany, he puts his hand on the small of her back, his touch light, casual, yet impactful. The heat from his touch spreads throughout her. The scent of his cologne makes her head dizzy. She leans into him, feeling his solid frame.

Someone, she isn’t sure who because the sound of her heart thudding in her chest blots out all sound, inquires about Gendry’s whereabouts.

“Someone caught his eye,” Jon says, his own eyes on Dany’s profile. He leans over and Dany tenses. “Are you trying to make me take you back to the hotel and fuck you, Dany?” he whispers into her ear.

Dany smirks. “I’ve hardly done anything tonight yet you’re riled up.”

“You wore that dress. That was more than enough.”

Every time he speaks, warm puffs of air tickle her ear, the ruggedness of his accent making goosebumps rise on her arms; makes her clit throb.

Dany needs a distraction. They’ve abstained from sex ever since he proposed. It was her idea. Retrospectively, it was a dumb idea. Still, they only have less than a day left. They might as well hold out. The others break off into their own private bubbles as if they can sense the sexual tension between Jon and Dany. They feed off of it.

Grey Worm and Missandei think their secret kisses go unnoticed while Arianne is boldly sitting on Viserys’s lap backward, grinding to the beat of the current song playing. Off in the corner, Robb and Margaery are talking; flirting. Loras excuses himself to find his own fun. It doesn’t take him long.
When Dany looks over at Jon to see what he’s up to, their eyes meet. His eyes are actually grey she’s realized some time ago. Only in the sunlight, though. Even artificial lighting does nothing to brighten them. Currently, his eyes look obsidian, like dragon glass.

Jon glances at her painted lips then back to her eyes. “Are you having fun?” he asks.

He’s drunk. She can tell by how he blinks owlishly at her and by the glassiness of his eyes. His breath also smells like whiskey. She loves it when he's whiskey drunk. Whiskey drunk Jon has hedonistic tendencies.

“I am. Are you?”

“More than I expected I would. Viserys and Robb keep things entertaining.”

“At least we know our families will get along.”

“Seems that way.”

Progressively, their party companions begin to trickle out in pairs. The first to leave are Robb and Margaery. Robb tells Jon that they’ll be right back. No one believes them. Next, are Grey Worm and Missandei who return to the dance floor. Surprisingly, Viserys and Arianne stick around for a while. Probably because they don’t care about modesty. Dany finds herself staring at them longer than socially acceptable, especially considering it’s her brother who’s tongue fucking and groping Arianne.

Jon watches her watching them. “Is that turning you on?” he asks, amused. “Wow, Dany. I thought I was the only relative who got you that way.”

“You’re watching too, aren’t you?” She looks away when Viserys’s hand slips into Arianne’s skirt. That’s enough voyeurism for one night.

“Hard not to watch two attractive people kissing like that.”

An eyebrow quirks. “You find Viserys attractive?” Jealous is absent in regard to Arianne. Viserys, too. Perhaps that’s a testament of how far they’ve come. He can find a million people attractive but by her side, he’ll remain. Always.

Jon says nothing. He doesn’t have to. His face confirms it.

Something about that turns Dany on immensely. “About that room you booked for the night…”

To an onlooker, they probably make quite the pair. The bride-to-be leaving the club with the handsome stranger she’s known for all of fifteen minutes, her last act of singledom before she’s bound by monogamy. Dany jokes about it with Jon on their way to the hotel that’s only a few blocks away.

“Does the handsome stranger have a name?” she asks, in the mood for a little roleplay.

“Aegon.” Jon quietly chuckles. “And the bride to be?”

Dany smiles. “Rhaenys.” She knows Jon had a crush on Visenya as a boy but Aegon the Conqueror loved his younger sister Rhaenys the most.

As they’re walking into the hotel’s lobby, Jon says, “I could be wrong but it sounds like we’re related.”
“What gave it away? Our Valyrian names?”

They step on the elevator, the doors slowly closing. Taking her hand, Jon pulls her close to him, and she circles her arms around his neck, enjoying the attention his other hand is giving to her backside.

“Could be the names,” Jon says, the depth of his voice, the raspiness of it, making her nipples harden. “Or the fact that I really want to fuck you right now.”

Dany laughs and so does Jon. It’s great that they can joke about things like that now. She thinks them both being drunk helps too.

They barely make it to the room.

Jon, ever the heavyweight between the two where drinking is involved, kisses her and squeezes her ass roughly, all while unlocking the door with the keycard. Stumbling into the dark room, Jon kicks the door behind them close, blindly switching on the lights; he loves to see her when they have sex. Dany quickly bites his neck, his earlobe, and his bottom lip. That earns her a smack on the ass and a low grunt in her ear.

Jon attempts to pick her up, but Dany puts her hand on his chest, shoving him against the door. Dragging her hand down his chest, she sinks to her knees, holding his gaze. He cups the side of her face, rubbing her jaw with his thumb affectionately. She sucks on the tip of his middle finger, a prelude to what’s to come.

“Dany,” he rasps her name as she kisses and palms his bulge through his pants. “Shit,” he curses after she unzips his pants and takes his cock out.

Despite her inexperience in this area, Dany knows that she wants to make Jon feel good, she wants to taste and consume him any and every way. So, she fists his cock with that goal in mind. Another perk about drunk Jon is that he’s more vocal. In so many ways, he tells her how he likes it; slow and tight strokes with extra attention to the head. Whenever she does something he finds exceptionally pleasing he gives her hair a tug, and it drives her mad with lust.

There aren’t any teasing licks or drawn-out buildup or any other hesitancy. Jon holds her by the neck, his hands on either side, his thumbs firm behind her ears as he fucks her mouth in the most loving and tender way imaginable. He pulls out here and there so that she can breathe, and cleans the spit and pre-cum from her chin occasionally. Forever the perfect gentleman.

Dany is torn between closing her eyes and succumbing to the strangely arousing sensation of her throat being stretched or keeping her eyes open and watching the way Jon is staring down at her. The latter option is what she goes with. She can almost imagine how she looks with her white veil on, pretty red lips smudged, his thick cock between her teeth.

Jon grows restless. As always he has to be closer to her, feel more of her, and their current positions only allow so much. They help one another out of their clothes with messy kisses and lingering touches thrown in. Jon wishes to return the favor, and any other time Dany would be more than willing to let him, but she wants him desperately.

“Later,” she promises, guiding him up her body and between her legs.

The room’s spinning, and at times there are two Jons moving inside of her simultaneously, groaning her name. She has to blink rapidly to correct her vision. Eventually, Dany has to close her eyes altogether. By doing so she’s allowed to simply feel. Drunk sex is fun. At least for them, it is. Jon says and does a lot of things that’d make her blush if she were sober. The kind of things she’s too
flustered to repeat even while drunk.

And the things he does…

At one point, Jon sits up, folds her legs back and literally fucks her into the mattress. Dany hears herself encouraging him, urging him to fuck her harder, deeper. She scratches the supple flesh of his ass, digging her nails into his skin like claws. He fucks her through her orgasm, her thighs trembling in his hold. She can feel herself clenching around him. His movements stutter and he curses. He comes with her name on his lips.

Every time he releases inside of her a tiny part of her hopes the seed will persevere and sow and blossom in her womb. Then she remembers the birth control, among other things, and her hope is shattered. One day, she tells herself. One day they’ll have their own family.

Dany is one blink away from clocking out for the night when Jon speaks and his words sober her up.

“I love you, Dany,” he says, brushing her hair away from her face. He cradles her head, gazing at her as though she were a rare treasure he’d discovered in a desolate place. “I love you so much.”

If Dany could talk right now she isn’t even sure what she’d say. Yes, she loves Jon too. More than life itself but the pure emotion in his voice, his eyes, and his touch—it leaves her speechless. It feels as if her heart is lodged in her throat. She thinks of what Jon told her about his past love, how the woman tragically died in his arms seconds after he confessed his love. Ever since then, those three words have felt like death’s kiss for him.

Jon continues, “We made up our own way to say it, I know. But even then it didn’t feel right for you not to know how much I love, appreciate, and value you for all that you do. I can never thank you enough for always standing in my corner for…” His voice cracks and Dany’s eyes water. “For looking after my mother. You barely knew her yet you wept for her and cared for her even while you were grieving our baby. Without you, I don’t think I could’ve carried the weight of everything on my own.”

Dany wipes his tears, and he clasps her hand kissing her knuckles. “I can’t wait to be your husband, Dany,” he says, smiling. “I wish we could get married right now.” He glances at the veil that has somehow managed to stay on. “You’re already dressed for the occasion.”

They laugh, both teary-eyed and sniffling.

“We’ll wait,” Jon says, kissing her forehead, lingering there. “As I’ve told you, I want the world to know you’re mine and that I’m yours.”

Dany kisses him, transferring the things she can’t express verbally to him through the action.

The morning after was hectic.

Dany’s bridesmaids came for her early in the morning to get her sober and rejuvenated for the big day. Jon was a little peeved about that because he wasn’t ready for them to part ways. But he’ll see her again soon. Not long afterward, Jon’s groomsmen and Viserys came for him. A majority of their morning was spent scrambling around like chickens with their heads cut off, trying to finish up last-minute tasks and shed the remnants of their outing.

Gendry and Grey Worm were the only sober ones. The former is underage and should’ve never been allowed in the club in the first place, and he also isn’t a heavy drinker. Neither is the latter. He likes to keep a level head at all times. So, they were in charge of helping the rest of them recover from
their hangovers. After leaving the barbershop, they headed over to the venue where Rhaegar was waiting with their tuxes, shoes, and accessories.

Jon tried to set up something between his mother and Gendry, but one thing after another happened. He didn’t have longer than a minute to actually think let alone sit down with his mother. He hasn’t even seen her. He figures she’s helping Dany. So, he decided to keep Gendry out of the actual ceremony and wait until the reception to tell his mother. He regrets waiting until the last minute.

“I think the tailor messed up my order,” Grey Worm says. They’re the only ones in the temporary dressing room now. “The blazer is supposed to be black, not burgundy.”

“That blazer is customized for the best man.”

“Then it is Robb’s?”

“No, it’s yours.” Jon takes out the lapel pin he had made for the occasion. The pin matches the one he’s wearing. “Robb’s been my best friend ever since we were kids. Naturally, it would be him. But I wanted it to be you, Grey Worm.”

Grey Worm stares at the silver, three-headed dragon Jon pinned on his lapel. “Why? Won’t Robb be mad?” he asks.

“I already talked to him,” Jon says. “I told him about how you’ve had my back from the start of all this, how you looked after my mother when you didn’t have to, and how loyal you are. Robb agrees that no one else deserves the honor more than you.”

From the moment they met, Grey Worm has always been guarded with his emotions, rarely giving a glimpse of what he’s thinking or how he’s feeling. So, Jon is caught off guard when Grey Worm hugs him. He takes a second to reciprocate.

“Thanks for everything, brother,” Jon says, patting Grey Worm on the back.

As they’re stepping away from each other, they hear the door opening. Jon turns around to see his mother. He smiles at the sight of her. The first thing he notices is how radiant she looks. It's as if all the bad that’s ever happened to her was washed away, giving her a clean slate.

“I hope I’m not interrupting anything,” she says.

Jon feels as if he’s had the wind knocked out of him. Reflexively, he grabs Grey Worm’s arm to steady himself. The man is just as stunned as him. Lyanna’s smile is the same smile she wore when she married his father. All teeth and blinding. She walks toward him and Jon meets her halfway but stops himself short. He wants to ask if it’s fine to hug her. Lyanna doesn’t give him the chance. She pulls him into her arms tightly. Jon’s fortunate for her strength because he doubts he would’ve been able to stay upright on his own.

“I’m happy,” Jon mumbles, burying his nose in her hair. “How...when...” Fuck, he doesn’t even know what to say or how to word it. “I’m happy.” He decides. “I’m so happy to have you back.”

“Mother,” Jon mumbles, burying his nose in her hair. “How...when...” Fuck, he doesn’t even know what to say or how to word it. “I’m happy.” He decides. “I’m so happy to have you back.”

“I’m happy to be back.” She squeezes him one final time before leaning back to give him a good look. “I’m sorry, Jon. I’m sorry it took me so long.”

Shaking his head, Jon hugs her again. “You have nothing to be sorry about. However long you needed, that’s how long I would’ve waited.”

He doesn’t want to let her go. But he’s suffocating her so he has to.
When they step apart, his mother hugs Grey Worm next, whispering her thanks for all that he’s done. This, Jon thinks, is the greatest gift. Today doesn’t seem real. It’s too perfect. His mother has found her voice again, Grey Worm is his best man, Robb is here, and he’s going to be marrying the love of his life in less than an hour.

There’s only one thing missing.

“Mother, there’s something I need to tell you…”

Every media outlet in the city will be covering their wedding and Dany made sure that she, along with her girls, are looking their best.

For her bridesmaids, Dany chose burgundy, off the shoulder gowns with a sweetheart cut and a tasteful side split. Missandei’s gown is the same color and material but the haltered top of her dress is lace with beaded gems woven in. In their bouquets, peach Juliet roses are the centerpiece, with pieces of red astilbe, seeded eucalyptus, and hanging pepperberry added in.

Those flowers, along with red velvet roses, are in Dany’s bouquet as well. She wanted to incorporate the colors of her family’s crest while maintaining the wholesomeness and purity of a wedding.

After hours of searching and a near breakdown, Dany found her dress. Actually, Missandei found her dress in a magazine where the piece was featured, and they found a dress similar to it in the third boutique they ventured to. It took nothing for the designer to make a couple of alterations; add a few original details to avoid blatant plagiarism.

Her dress is white, not cream, off-white, or ivory, but white. The dress’s design is influenced by traditional Meereenese clothing. It's sleeveless and semi blackless, with a plunging neckline, and thin pairs of velvet ribbons tied around the waist. The billowy tulle is embroidered with blossoms that have small crystals threaded into the leaves and petals so that every time Dany makes the slightest movement, she sparkles. To top the dress off, Dany chose a long, two-tier veil trimmed with the same design as her dress. It’s currently hanging up on the other side of the dressing room.

All of the guests have been seated, she learns from the Usher. That means that soon, the ceremony will begin. Dany still needs help putting her veil on. Missandei should be on her way back now. Several times, Dany has to stop herself from pacing, chewing on her lip, or twisting her fingers in the dress’s fabric. It’s not that she’s having cold feet or that she’s afraid. Dany is just so excited.

The door to her dressing room opens, but it isn’t Missandei who steps in.

“Viserys.” Dany smiles at her brother. He looks handsome in his black tuxedo with the family sigil pinned on his right lapel.

Viserys gives her a brief once over, astonishment breaking on his face. “Wow,” he says breathlessly. “Dany, you look stunning.”

“Thank you. That’s a huge compliment coming from you,” she laughs.

The way her brother looks at her, with a hint of sadness in his gaze, worries her. Perhaps he’s experiencing what most brothers experience on their little sister’s wedding day. She expected this from Rhaegar, not Viserys who has always masked his emotions.

“Except,” Viserys starts, frowning, “something is missing…”

Turning around, Dany examines herself in the mirror. Everything appears fine to her. Well, not
everything. “I still need to put my veil—” Her eyes widen.

Very carefully, Viserys places a silver, diamond-encrusted tiara on her head. “There we go,” he whispers. “It fits you perfectly.”

“Is this…?”

“Mother’s crown,” he says. “I’ve kept it in my personal vault for years. I know you don’t have anything of hers. Rhaegar and I have our memories of her so I suppose it’s only fair that you have this.”

Dany told herself that she wouldn’t cry today because her makeup is phenomenal and she cried enough last night with Jon yet here she is crying. She hugs Viserys and cries harder when he hugs her back.

“I hope your mascara is waterproof, Dany.”

“That’s a requirement for weddings I think,” she says, sniffling.

Viserys chuckles. “Even still, no more tears.” He ends the embrace but keeps one arm around her waist. “Mother would be proud and happy to know you’re marrying because of love, not because of some idiotic prophecy, not to a man who’ll hurt you.” He dries her eyes. “She smiles down on us today, sister. I know it.”

“As do I.”

The bridal party’s entrance song is nearly done. With Viserys’s help, Dany gets her veil and shoes on. He escorts her from the dressing room to where Rhaegar is waiting to walk her down the aisle. The moment Rhaegar sees her, he’s a mess.

“Is that mother’s crown? Oh gods,” he murmurs, fighting back tears. “Dany…”

Viserys and Dany roll their eyes as if they weren’t just crying messes moments ago. “Relax, Rhaegar,” Viserys says. “Dany isn’t crying so you shouldn’t be either. There are cameras here. Pull yourself together.”

“Of course,” Rhaegar says, blinking away his tears. “I won’t allow the paparazzi to plaster pictures of me crying on every tabloid.” He looks over at Dany again. “But our baby sister is absolutely gorgeous and she’s wearing mother’s crown and…”

“So I need to walk her down the aisle instead?” Viserys asks, feigning annoyance much to Dany’s delight.

It’s fun teasing Rhaegar.

“No, I will walk her down the aisle.” Rhaegar links his arms with Dany and they step forward, standing in the doorway. He conceals his emotions with ease. “Are you ready, Dany?”

From where they are, she can see the guests seated on either side of the great hall, cased artifacts and classical paintings lining the walls, flowers, and lights hanging from the painted domed ceilings, and the raised altar where the bridal party, the priest, and her groom awaits.

When she sees Gendry standing with Robb, she knows that Lyanna was reunited with her son, and it makes her smile. It also means that Arianne and Gendry walked in together and the thought of the poor boy squirming the entire time makes her laugh a little. Jon already told her that he wanted Grey
Worm to be his best man still it warms her heart to see Grey Worm wearing the customized blazer so proudly as he stands next to Jon.

Then she sees Jon.

Her fiancé, her literal partner in crime, the love of her life, and soulmate. It’s as if their minds are linked because the moment she looks at him, he glances up and their eyes meet. He smiles at her.

“Yes,” she tells Rhaegar, “I’m ready.”

The orchestra gets their cue, and they begin to perform a rendition of the traditional Westerosi bridal symphony. All of the guests rise, and they walk in.

“Marvelous ceremony, Mr. Targaryen. Marvelous, indeed. Is it true that the bride and groom are related?”

“Aunt and nephew,” Rhaegar answers. Before the reporter can ask another question, he points to the woman standing next to him with her pad and pen at the ready. “Your turn, Miss. One question only,” he reminds her.

The woman adjusts her glasses, giving Rhaegar a pensive look. “Did you just say that they were aunt and nephew? Does-”

“Only one question and the answer to your question is yes. As I’ve already said countless times, Jon and Daenerys are related. They are aunt and nephew. My sister and my son. Now, does anyone have any questions unrelated to their blood relation? I would like to return to the reception.”

To keep the flesh-eating journalists and paparazzi out of the reception, Rhaegar agreed to hold a press conference outside on the steps of the museum following the ceremony. Also, he chose one magazine to feature the wedding, with a photoshoot of the bride and groom, their wedding party, and the three Targaryen siblings included. They’ll be on the front page of next month’s issue. The extra attention to the details of the wedding should give the masses something to obsess over for at least a year.

“Is the groom’s mother the dark-haired woman you arrived with this morning?” another reporter asks.

Rhaegar’s expression is blank. “Did you take pictures of us?” he asks calmly.

The reporter gulps, trying to hide his camera behind his back. “N-no. You forbade any unauthorized photos.”

With only a glance at the guard to his right, the reporter’s camera is seized. The man attempts to put up a fight but rethinks his decision when the guard towers over him. They have explicit orders not to harm anyone today. At least not while witnesses are around.

“I will have the film investigated,” Rhaegar says. “If you abided by the rules, I will have it returned to you as soon as possible.” He claps his hands together. “Well, since no one actually has anything to ask me, I will be leaving now.”

The reporters shout out questions, trying to be louder than one another, and he tunes them all out. When they make moves to follow him into the museum, his guards close the heavy doors in their faces, drowning out their frantic inquiries. The museum's manager is waiting for him by the coat check.
“Sir, a word, please.”

Rhaegar would sigh but that would be an outward show of exasperation and he prefers not to reveal that side to an employer.

“Yes, Mr. Hughes.”

“A number of guests are dancing barefoot.”

“A number of the guests are Dornish, Mr. Hughes. Are you unfamiliar with Dornish customs?”

They don’t wear shoes indoors. Of course, that applies mainly to residential areas, but their tango is performed better without shoes. Everyone knows that.

“Customs aside,” Mr. Hughes says, distaste clear on his face, “it’s uncivil-”

Rhaegar places his hand on the man’s shoulder, his touch as light as a feather yet the weight of his presence makes it feels as if he’s gripping the man with bruising force. “Sounds to me like you’re about to say something that’s going to upset me and offend our guests, Mr. Hughes.”

A cold sweat breaks out on the man’s forehead, he swallows thickly. “I meant no offense.”

“I highly doubt that.” Rhaegar can hear joyous cheers and laughter coming from the reception. He needs to wrap this up. “Mr. Hughes, you are dismissed. Permanently. I will see that you are escorted to your car.”

Rhaegar leaves Mr. Hughes to his men. Reaching the hall where the reception is being held, he sees several pairs of shoes neatly lined up against the wall. The Martells dominate the dance floor as usual with Ellaria and Oberyn leading. Dany and Jon are smack in the middle of it all, happier than he’s ever seen them.

“There you are,” Lyanna says, walking up. “I was worried I would have to save you from the reporters.”

Rhaegar can’t look at her without thinking about how he made love to her all night or how he made her cum with his mouth so many times she, as well as his tongue, were numb.

“My knight,” he teases, taking her by the hand and heading to the dance floor. “I see our friends haven’t lost their edge at all.”

Lyanna looks over at Ellaria and Oberyn and smiles. “No, not at all.” She looks to another couple across the room. “But, Viserys and Arianne are giving them a run for their money.”

His brother and Arianne have drawn a crowd around them. They enjoy the attention by the looks of it, and he’s glad they’re keeping things tasteful. The two make a good pair. Perhaps, they’ll be wed next.

Their friends see them approaching and end their dance. Unsurprisingly, Ellaria barely bats an eyelash in his direction and goes straight to Lyanna. The two women became fast friends when he introduced Lyanna to his group of troublemakers all those years ago. With a strength incongruous to her slim frame, Ellaria hugs Lyanna tight, lifting her feet off the floor, spinning her around.

Lyanna laughs. “Ellaria, you haven’t aged a day!” she says once she’s back on her feet. “The years have been good to you.”
“They have.” Ellaria smiles sadly, her brown eyes watery. “We will speak nothing of how the past years have treated you. Moving forward, you will have endless happiness.” She kisses Lyanna’s cheek. “Come. We will dance.”

“Don’t try to steal her away again,” Rhaegar says as they’re heading to the dance floor.

Ellaria waves him off. “Please, Rhaegar. I could steal Lyanna from you by simply breathing!”

“My love has missed Lyanna greatly. As I’ve missed you.” Oberyn pats Rhaegar on the back. “It is good to see you back on your feet.”

Rhaegar watches Ellaria spin Lyanna around effortlessly. The women are all laughs and smiles, the same way they always were whenever he saw them together. “I’ve missed you, as well. I’m sorry we weren’t available when you both came to see us.”

“Think nothing of it.”

“Will you two stay for the war?”

“Will there be a war? From what my sister tells me, you don’t intend to give our enemies a fighting chance.”

They will have a fighting chance. Where’s the fun in not giving them one? Nothing will be more enjoyable than allowing his enemies to believe hope exists just to rip it away from them in the blink of an eye.

Rhaegar catches the way Oberyn is staring at someone over his shoulder. He knows that expression well. Someone has caught his friend’s eyes. Glancing back, he sees Loras Tyrell looking as if his prayers have been answered. And they probably have been answered. Viserys wasn’t the only one with a crush on Oberyn. Everywhere Oberyn goes, someone falls in love with him.

“I will leave you to it then,” Rhaegar says, chuckling.

“We will talk later.” Oberyn picks up two glasses of champagne from a passing server’s tray. “We have much to discuss.”

Then he heads over to where Loras is.

Rhaegar is thinking about joining Ellaria and Lyanna on the dance floor since the song has changed to something that’s more group-friendly but one of Tywin’s men come for him. The Old Lion would like a word.

For the reception, Dany changed into a simple white slip dress with a stringed back and a shorter version of her veil from earlier. Her hair is flowing down her back now, and her mother’s crown is still nestled on her head.

Jon removed his tuxedo blazer some time ago; him and his groomsmen. Following Arianne, Missandei and Margaery kicked their heels off by the door. Dany would’ve done the same but they still have to do the father/daughter dance and she doesn’t want to have to stand on Rhaegar’s shoes the entire time. At least with heels, their height difference isn’t that significant.

Afterward, her heels are coming off. Her friends look so carefree as they dance with their partners. In fact, everyone appears to be having the time of their lives. The DJ understands the crowd. Well, at least the dancing crowd. He doesn’t only play popular western songs. He plays Dornish pop and
tango, as well as music from Essos.

Dany hasn’t heard one song that doesn’t make her want to dance. Since she and Jon arrived all they’ve done is dance. They’re supposed to mingle with their guests eventually and before they leave for their honeymoon Rhaegar has a surprise for them.

“Is it bad that I’m ready to be alone with you?” Jon asks, reading her mind. “I wish we had more than three days for our honeymoon.”

“You promised me we’d go to Valyria one day.”

“I did and we will.”

“That can be our real honeymoon then. The one we’re taking can be a retreat. We deserve a vacation, I think.”

“Deal.” Jon seals it with a kiss.

When the priest pronounced them man and wife they kissed for so long, Rhaegar had the orchestra begin the recessional music to signify the end of the ceremony and the exit of the bridal party. Dany was embarrassed when she remembered the room was full of people. She nearly loses herself in the kiss this time around, but the DJ makes an announcement for the father/daughter dance to begin.

“I suppose I can let someone else have your attention for a little while,” Jon says.

“I’ll be all yours soon enough.”

Everyone minus the bride clears the dance floor while the guests who were sitting stand to watch. Per tradition, Dany faces the stage, her back to the crowd as she waits for Rhaegar.

“You are so beautiful, Stormborn.”

Gods, Dany is already crying before she turns around and sees Arthur there.

He’s as handsome and dapper as he’s always been even with the slight scars on the side of his face. If anything they enhance his natural good looks. His time in Dorne has been good to him. He’s tanner and recognizably happier. She no longer sees a beaten and ashamed man. She sees the man who used to read her bedtime stories and kiss her booboos. The man she’s missed most of all.

“Rhaegar said you wouldn’t be able to make it,” Dany cries, falling into his arms.

Arthur pets her hair and holds her by the small of her back. “I wouldn’t miss your big day for the world.”

Their dance isn’t a dance at all. Dany cries on Arthur’s chest while they sway to the music. After receiving her mother’s crown, she didn’t think her heart could handle another surprise, and she was right. This is so fulfilling, so satisfying that all she can do is cry tears of joy.

Eventually, other fathers and daughters join them on the dance floor starting with Rhaegar and Missandei. Most notably is, Jaime and Myrcella, and Oberyn stands in for his brother, Doran, and dances with Arianne. Because Dany knows she hasn’t been the only one missing Arthur, she allows Missandei to switch with her, and she ends the dance with Rhaegar.


Rhaegar kisses her temple. “Anything for you.”
Arthur did not come alone. With him is his sister, Ashara Dayne, Elia Martell, and an unknown young girl who appears to be around the same age as Jon. The young girl is obviously related to the Daynes. Her tan skin and purple eyes are distinctive. Yet there’s something else about her appearance that stands out. Something that a lot of people wouldn’t notice.

“Ellaria,” Lyanna says, tapping the woman on the shoulder to get her attention. “Who is that young girl with Ashara and Elia?”

“Who does she look like?” Ellaria asks. She always does this when she isn’t in a place to reveal certain information.

Who does she look like? Beautiful Ashara at first glance. But at a second glance…

Lyanna’s heart drop. “Ned,” she whispers. “She’s...she’s Ned’s, isn’t she?” She’s already walking toward the three, her feet moving on their own.

Ellaria stops her. She takes her by the arm, taking her to a far corner of the room for privacy. Everyone is too busy watching the father/daughter dance to notice them. From where they are, Lyanna can still see the girl.

“Did he know?” Lyanna asks since it’s obvious Ellaria knows way more than she’s offering. “Did he know that Ashara was pregnant with his child?”

“Ashara kept it from him after he told her he was arranged to be married to Catelyn Tully. It broke Ashara’s heart. In time, she healed. Elia helped her. News of Ned’s death broke it again.”

Lyanna isn’t sure what to think or how to react to the news. She just stands there, staring at the girl. At the child her brother had no idea about. The child he made with the woman he loved. She remembers she threw that in his face after she begged him not to make her marry Robert and he told her his hands were tied. She told him he should understand where she was coming from because in Brandon’s place he would have to marry Catelyn and they all knew he was in love with Ashara.

“Sacrifices are what the family is built on,” Ned told her.

Afterward, Lyanna cursed him and blacked his eye. It did her no good as she was married to Robert the following day.

Ellaria stands in front of her, blocking her view of Ashara’s daughter. “Lyanna, there is nothing to be done,” she says.

“Robb is here,” she says numbly. “He’s a sharp boy. He’ll see what I saw.”

“You only saw what you saw because you knew Ned when he was young and capable of smiling. And you were there when he and Ashara were together. Robb has no knowledge of that.”

She’s absolutely right. As sharp as he is, Robb’s mind won’t connect the dots as hers did. Besides, she always suspected something. Immediately after the war’s aftermath, Ashara and Elia returned to Dorne. They’ve always hated Westeros, but it was obvious their departure was due to more than dislike of the city.

“I won’t say anything,” Lyanna says after some time. “I know what it’s like to carry a secret like that inside me.”
“You did it to protect your son’s life. Ashara does it to protect her daughter’s heart. She intended to tell her but then Ned was brutally murdered.”

To learn the father you never knew about was beheaded by his own men would be devastating.

They remain in the corner for a while longer, giving Lyanna time to pull herself together. She has to fight the strong urge to be close to the girl and get to know her. Her heart goes out for Ashara and her daughter. But she knows she’d only bring them misery if she slipped up and said something she wasn’t supposed to. It’s best she keep her distance.

Soon, Jon, Gendry, and Robb find her. The boys want a family picture with just the four of them for a keepsake. Prior to the wedding, the four of them spent a good deal of time crying and laughing. Seeing them all together again was more than she could’ve hoped for on this day.

As they’re on their way to the where the photographer is set up, she overhears Robb and Gendry talking about how gorgeous Ashara’s daughter is.

*Gods, not again.*

“You should ask her for a dance,” Robb says to Gendry. “Margaery and I are back together and she’ll ring my head like a bell if I dance with anyone else.” He chuckles.

Lyanna sighs in relief.

With all of their guests serving as witnesses, Rhaegar unveiled the swords Blackfyre and Dark Sister. They are the only remaining swords historically owned by their family. In the days of old, swords were passed down generations so he wanted to continue that tradition starting with Jon and Dany.

He formally gifted Blackfyre to Jon and Dark Sister to Dany, signifying their reign over the family. In time, they will pass down the swords to their children and so on. Through them, the Targaryen name will live on. A matching pair of silver fealty rings carrying the family’s sigil is given to them, as well.

After Rhaegar’s presentation, the reception starts back up again. Some of the guests have left already, but there are some who are still dancing.

“I know you two are ready to catch your flight,” Rhaegar says, putting his hands on both of their backs, ushering them out of the reception hall. “But there’s one last thing.”

Rhaegar takes them to the back of the museum to a smaller room with dark mahogany walls and floors, large, gold-framed oil paintings hanging on the wall, and a single ottoman in the middle of the floor.

Arianne Martell, Olenna Tyrell, and Tywin Lannister are waiting for them. The Queen of Thorns is the first to approach while Rhaegar silently watches from afar.

“You two have done well,” she says, nodding. “You have my gratitude for helping Loras bring Margaery back. You have my respect for rebuilding your family’s reputation.” She takes Dany’s hand first, the one that holds the fealty ring. She kisses the ring. Then she kisses Jon’s ring.

“Highgarden is with you, your graces.”

Jon and Dany share a look of bewilderment and astonishment. They aren’t granted a moment of contemplation or celebration because Tywin approaches them next.
The man is every bit of intimidating as Jon has heard. Yet he doesn’t flinch at the sight of him. Tywin stares him down, sizing him up, and Jon does the same. In the end, Tywin deems him worthy. He takes Dany’s hand, kissing her ring. Then he kisses Jon’s ring.

“Casterly Rock is yours, your graces. I look forward to sitting down with you both in the near future.”

“We look forward to it as well,” Jon says.

When Arianne approaches them, the mood isn’t as serious. She grins at them and it breaks the tension. “As you already know, Sunspear will back you in whatever endeavor you two take.”

Arianne takes Dany’s hand, rubbing her knuckles playfully before kissing her ring. She does the same to Jon. The respective heads of each main family wish them a safe flight and promise to be in touch soon. The moment lasted no longer than five minutes yet it stays with Jon and Dany for the remainder of their time at the reception.

Due to the length of a flight from Westeros to Mereen, they spend the night in Pentos in Viserys’s two-story, sandstone villa. First thing in the morning, they’ll fly to Mereen where they’ll be for the next three days.

Jon has never been to the city. He’s never really been to Essos aside from a trip to Braavos as a child that he hardly remembers and his short time in Lys. Dany can’t wait to show him all the things and places she fell in love with during family visits to Mereen. She’s dying to show him the pyramid. She talked about it the entire flight to Pentos, and he listened with apt interest.

Once they’re at the villa, they put their bags down in the guest room they’ll be sleeping in and decide to have a look around.

Unsurprisingly, the place is spotless from top to bottom. Her brother is a bit of a neat freak. And the decorations are minimalistic and chic; he also hates clutter. On the back of the villa lies a courtyard filled with lemon trees because they’re Dany’s favorite and Viserys gets homesick a lot. He has little touches around the villa that reminds him of each of them. But nothing that will ruin the theme of the place.

“How does Viserys keep the walls so white?” Jon asks.

“I think he has the walls painted every six months.” Dany laughs at Jon’s eye roll. “I bet there’s a torture chamber in the basement.”

“Would this be his home without a torture chamber?”

Like children sneaking downstairs to have a peek at their Christmas presents, they hurriedly make their way to where they believe the basement to be. Dany isn’t sure when they found humor and intrigue in these sorts of things. She supposes it comes with the lifestyle. They find a red door at the end of a long hallway. It stands out against the stark white walls and floors.

“That definitely leads to a torture chamber,” Jon says.

Actually, the door leads to something neither of them expected.

“Is this what Viserys meant when he asked us to say ‘hello’ to his children for him?”

Inside the massive room, the villa’s theme of all white everything and sparse furniture remains.
Except, in this case, sparse furniture is necessary. The entirety of the floor is covered in thick, ballistic glass. Beneath the glass is crystal blue water where two sharks are swimming.

“Balerion and Meraxes,” Dany says watching the sharks. “I thought he kept them elsewhere.”

“How does he keep them fed?”

“They can swim through a tunnel and get their own food. But I think they prefer what he feeds them. That’s why they always return.”

 Despite the deadly predators under their feet, the room has a tranquil quality about it. There are two chaise lounge chairs on either side of the room. Instead of opting for one of them, they lay on the glass, on their stomachs, mesmerized by the sharks. They didn’t really rest during the flight because they were still high off the energy from the reception, Rhaegar’s gifts, and the main families’ proclamations of loyalty.

“Do you think Viserys has ever fucked anyone in here?” Jon asks, the blue from the tank reflecting on his skin.

“I mean, I would fuck in here all the time so I know he does. Is that your way of telling me you want to fuck me in here, Jon?”

“Could be.”

Dany is tired. But she isn’t too tired to get fucked on top of a shark tank.

All day, she imagined them ripping each other’s clothes off the first chance they got. That doesn’t happen, and that’s fine. She pulls her dress off over her head, tossing it to some random place in the room. Straddling him, she leans down and kisses him, slow and lazy.

As they kiss, they take turns removing an article of clothing from Jon; his shirt, his pants, and then his briefs. Dany bites on his neck while he sucks on one nipple and teases the other. She kisses down his neck and his chest and tries to go lower but Jon stops her.

“You promised me,” he reminds her.

Dany moves to lie down but Jon has other plans. He lifts her up and places her on his waiting tongue. With nothing to hold on to, she leans forward, settling the flat of her hands on the glass as Jon’s tongue unravels her from inside out. Usually, he goes straight for her clit, eager to send her over the edge and bring her ecstasy.

However, this time, he licks up her juices and savors them, shoving his tongue in as far as it can go to claim whatever’s left inside of her. By the time his attention is on her clit, it’s throbbing and sensitive. Moaning loudly, she lays her face down on the floor, her breathy cries of his name making the glass foggy.

Jon is always merciless when he eats her out. He gives her no reprieve. When she tries to squirm away, he holds her prisoner, one strong arm around her waist, his hand on her ass to keep her in place. No, there is no mercy for her. Not even after she orgasms and she’s crying and quivering. He only returns to his earlier action. He licks her clean, not leaving a trace then works to repeat the cycle.

When he’s done, he lifts her again, this time sitting her on his cock. No other preparation is necessary. She takes him in with ease yet there’s still tightness and some resistance. For several moments, neither of them do anything. They just linger there, basking in one another.
Through hooded eyes, Dany gazes at Jon; her husband. And he gazes back at her, dark eyes swirling with something akin to veneration. Below them, the sharks swim serenely.

Dany makes the first move. All she does is roll her hips with the slightest of effort and that’s all it takes to obliterate the delicate atmosphere. The next time she rolls her hips, Jon meets her with a thrust upward that hits her sweet spot and allows her to feel him in her stomach.

The deeper he goes, the wetter she becomes. The sounds of their skin slapping and their collective moans echo off the pristine walls. Sitting up, Jon cups her breasts and licks the sweat from her neck. She curls her fingers in his hair, using the strands as leverage as she rides him. She knows he’s close when she feels his cock twitch inside of her.

Jon isn’t the only merciless one. Dany tightens her walls around him and rides harder, pulling on his hair and moaning loudly in his ear because she knows it drives him crazy.

“Fuck, Dany!” he growls as he comes inside of her.

Dany continues rolling her hips until he’s whining and begging her to stop.

“Are you trying to kill me?” Jon asks.

“Perhaps.”

Jon eases out of her and gently lays her down on her back. “I can’t think of a better way to go out.” He kisses down her stomach.

Then he cleans up the mess he made. They don’t get much sleep that night.
Chapter Notes

As I’ve said on twitter, there is no Jonerys in this chapter but we will catch up with them next chapter. This chapter is for all of the homophobes out there :) enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Deep in his thoughts, Viserys rests his back against the front door, barely registering his girlfriend unbuttoning his shirt and peeling it off. He can feel her licking and biting down his toned abdomen but his brain isn’t registering the pleasurable sensations as it normally would.

Viserys’s thoughts are somewhere else entirely.

They left the reception half an hour ago yet he’s still there. Throughout the night—the day really—Rhaegar was behaving stranger than usual. How exactly was he behaving strangely? Viserys doesn't know how to explain it. He only knows that Rhaegar wasn’t behaving like Rhaegar.

That isn’t to suggest that his brother was murdered and his face was stolen by one of the Faceless Men. Viserys would know. He’s crossed paths with them before. They aren’t as stealthy as they like to think. Something always gives them away. A failure to perfectly mimic a person’s walk, a person's nervous ticks, or the bulge in their pants.

Most men have dick prints. Hard or soft. The shit is unmistakable. Rhaegar is one of those men. His brother’s bulge was intact so that’s how Viserys knows it was really him walking around like he owned the place.

Well, of course, Rhaegar does own the place.

“What is it, my love?” Arianne asks, her words slurred and sultry, her accent heavier than usual because of all the champagne she’s had. She’s on her knees, mouthing at his erection through his pants. “What troubles you?”

Viserys wants to fuck her against the wall and fall asleep inside of her like he’s done countless times since the consummation of their new relationship. But he can’t fuck her while he’s distracted. She isn’t just anybody. She’s important to him.

Sighing, he cups her face, caressing her jaw with his thumbs. “I want to fuck you cross-eyed but I can’t until I unscramble this mess in my brain.”

Arianne clasps his left hand and kisses it. “Let’s unscramble it together.”

They stumble over to den of the penthouse to the large, circular couch. Viserys is slightly buzzed and Arianne is flat out drunk. Idly she rubs her arms and legs while he tells her about everything he noticed during the ceremony and the wedding. To her credit, she’s listening quietly and fighting back her arousal as best she can for him. He adores her and makes a mental note to reward her with good dick and cuddles afterward.

“...then Rhaegar and Tywin met in one of the back rooms. Which isn’t weird but Rhaegar wouldn’t miss a second of their big day for business. He just wouldn’t.” Viserys drags his fingers through his
hair, shaking his head. “Then a creepy looking old guy came to speak with him.”

“Creepy like how? Hanging around playgrounds or digging up graves creepy?”

“Definitely the grave-digging sort. Rhaegar loathes pedophiles.”

“As he should.”

“Exactly. Like who wouldn’t?” He’s off subject. They always do this. “Okay, but back to the possible necrophile. He rolled up to the wedding dressed in these unflattering black robes looking as if he hadn’t slept in fuck knows when, and Rhaegar just drops everything to speak with him.”

Arianne’s hand slips under her dress. “Perhaps he’s a new business associate. Some business can’t be ignored, love.”

“I suppose. But then there was your aunt. He spoke with her too.”

Eyes fluttering open, Arianne’s hand stills. “My aunt Elia?”

Viserys leans closer, watching her face like a hawk. “Did you have another aunt there, my sweet?” Something about her change in demeanor tugs at his instincts. His eyes narrow. “I thought she and Ashara hated Westeros. Would they truly come all this way for a wedding?”

“Haven’t you heard?” Arianne asks, words no longer slurried. “Elia and Ashara have asked Arthur to father their child. Perhaps he wanted to share the news with his best friend.”

Glancing down the length of her body, Viserys touches her hip, slowly inching up her dress. “Now,” he says, voice seductively low, “does that sound like the kind of shit I’d believe?” He lifts her hand from her thigh and brings it up to his mouth. “Let’s try that again.”

Her fingers are still wet. While she gets her lie straight, Viserys licks them clean, savoring the delectable taste of her nectar.

The thing is, Arianne is pretty damn good at keeping a low profile, masking her emotions, and playing things cool...when she’s sober. Which is fine because she only gets drunk around people she trusts. She knows she isn’t in any danger around Viserys.

Of course that all depends on how she proceeds.

Viserys hates being lied to. He hates it more than knock offs and uncoordinated outfits. His trust in people is fragile as it is. If Arianne lies to him, he’ll walk out and never look back.

His chest tightens, his heart thrums nervously under his cool facade. He prays she doesn’t let him down.

“Viserys,” Arianne starts, closing her eyes briefly. When she opens them again, they’re as hard as stone. “I cannot say.”

“So, you do know what’s going on with Rhaegar yet you refuse to tell me?”

“I have no other choice.”

“You?” Viserys asks, raising his voice. “The bloody Princess of Sunspear has no choice?! Since when?”

“Since Rhaegar put Aegon’s sword at my throat!”
Viserys’s anger deserts him, leaving as quickly as it came. “Rhaegar made you swear before Blackfyre? Holy shit…” This is serious. Very serious.

“Not just me. All of us.” Eyes falling shut, she starts feeling herself up again. “It was magical. Beautiful Rhaegar, so dark and gloomy, summoned us to the catacombs beneath the ruins of Dragonstone…” She drags her black, stiletto nails down the column of her neck, aroused by the memory. “He made us bow at his feet. When he touched my neck with Aegon’s sword, the cold steel made goosebumps break on my flesh…it made me wet.” She laughs.

Desire churns in Viserys’s belly, heat blossoming up his spine. The image she paints unfolds before his eyes, and he can see it so clearly.

Rhaegar, sick with grief and rage, making the most important and powerful people in the city bow to him the same way he did eighteen years ago during the secret meeting he held immediately after his meeting with Eddard Stark. He can see his brother towering over the other family heads. He can see them gazing up at him in awe and wonder, fear and disquietude.

“We sliced our thumbs on Blackfyre,” Arianne says, words raspy, breathy as her hands find their way between her parted thighs. “We put our blood into the fire and swore not to share what transpired thereafter…”

“Shit,” Viserys groans at the sight of her. “Don’t rush. Draw it out…”

Arianne fingers herself slowly, curving her fingers gently. “Rhaegar will behead me and feed me to the fire if I tell you anything else,” she moans. Her brown eyes brighten as if the idea excites her.

She’s perfect.

Viserys brushes hair away from her face. “Say nothing more.” He won’t make an oathbreaker out of her. “I will speak to him on my own.” He kisses her forehead. “Get up. I want you to ride my face.”

Arianne doesn’t need to be told twice.

“You’re a hateful bitch!” Robert shook her until her teeth rattled. Then he started tearing at her clothes. “You owe me a child! And you’ll give me!”

*When he was done, he stood over her. “Maybe if I mark you proper, you’ll understand your place better…”*

Gasping sharply, Lyanna jerks awake, trembling and crying.

It’s been weeks since she’s dreamed of what actually took place that night. Mostly it’s been bits and pieces, sometimes memories and other times exaggerations. Each time leaves her feeling the same way.

She expects there to be arms around her, comforting words in her ear, but she’s met with nothingness. The side of the bed where Rhaegar sleeps is warm so that’s a good sign. She assumes he’s in the bathroom.

When she’s able to shake herself out of it, she looks at the bathroom door. There isn’t any light creeping through the cracks and no sounds coming from within. That means Rhaegar isn’t in the room at all.

Lyanna has to give herself a pep talk just to get out of the bed. She isn’t going to step down and be
met with wet dirt instead of hardwood floors. The woods aren’t waiting for her outside that door; Robert isn’t waiting for her. She’s in her bedroom at Summerhall.

Beyond that door, down the stairs, Robb and Gendry are passed out on the couches. Missandei, Grey Worm, and Arthur are down the hall. Ellaria and Oberyn are in the guest room on the first floor because they spent well into the night catching up with each other. Ghost and Grey Wind are somewhere lurking about. And Rhaegar is around here as well.

She’s safe. She’s surrounded by friends and family.

Taking a deep breath, Lyanna gets out of bed and leaves the room. Finding Rhaegar takes some time. She isn’t as familiar with Summerhall and she has no idea where Rhaegar spends most of his time. Well, that’s not true. She’s overheard mentions of the caves. The same caves that gave Ghost and Grey Wind a fright.

As she’s heading to the patio she hears voices coming from one of the many doors lining the hallway. The first voice is Rhaegar’s. She assumes the second belongs to Arthur but the closer she draws to the doors, she decides that was a wrong assumption.

“...you don’t have the grit,” the second voice says, voice cold and bone-chilling. “I ruled over all and all cowered in my presence.”

“They loathed you!” Rhaegar responds hotly. “There was no love, no admiration—nothing!”

The person laughs and the sound of it chills Lyanna down to the marrow of her bones. She thinks of retreating but she’s frozen in place.

“What is the opinion of sheep to a dragon?” asks the voice.

“Ash,” Rhaegar replies.

Lyanna mistakenly bumps into the door. It doesn’t open thankfully. She can hear movement from the other side. Soon, the door is opening and Rhaegar is standing there, eyes vacant and terrifying. When he realizes it’s her, he blinks the look away, and he’s her Rhaegar again.

“Is everything okay?” he asks.

Lyanna tries to peek around him to see who the other person is but Rhaegar’s broadness blocks her view.

“I...I just had a nightmare. You weren’t there when I woke up and I just wanted...I needed…”

No further explanation is necessary. Rhaegar gathers her up in his arms. He doesn’t close the door to the study behind him. Over his shoulder Lyanna can see inside. No one is there.

In the bedroom, Rhaegar lays her on top of him and he cradles her and pets her hair. He always makes her feel safe and cherished. Yet none of his dotings is enough to stop her from shaking.

“Was it that nightmare again?” he asks, kissing her temple.

Lyanna nods. But that isn’t why she’s shaking. “Rhaegar, who were you talking to?” She can feel him stiffen under her.

“That’s not something you want the answer to, Lyanna.”

“I asked, didn’t I?”
Rhaegar chuckles. His hand lowers from her hair to the small of her back. “You’re shivering like a mouse yet you speak like a wolf. My Lyanna.”

The hand that was on her back is now cupping her backside, pressing her close to his groin. He kisses her, and any questions she might’ve had seem irrelevant now. Her body’s desire for his touch nearly outweighs her desire for answers. Unfortunately for him, Lyanna isn’t a doe-eyed girl anymore. She knows the power he holds.

“You promised me to never do that, Rhaegar.”

Rhaegar blinks innocently. “Do what?” He tries to kiss her again.

Lyanna nudges his face away. “Manipulate me. Play head games with me like you do with others.”

“Lyanna, I would never do that to you.” He sounds so genuine and sincere. If he’s lying she can’t tell. “I gave you my word years ago. My word is unchanged.”

“Then what are you doing now? I asked you a question I’ve yet to receive an answer to.”

“I just wanted to kiss you. I apologize.”

“Who were you talking to?”

Rhaegar is thinking of a way to weasel his way out of this. She can just tell. He hates to feel cornered. He hates being interrogated. She doesn’t want to put him in a difficult position. She doesn’t want to create a rift between them after everything they’ve been through.

“Will you tell me one day?” Lyanna asks instead. “Can you promise me that you’ll tell me some other time? That you won’t always keep me in the dark?”

That gives Rhaegar some relief. “I will tell you when I figure out the best way to tell you. I promise, Lyanna.”

Because Lyanna can’t help herself she asks, “Is that why you never told me about Ned and Ashara’s daughter? You haven’t figured out the best way to tell me I have a niece in Dorne.”

Calm and level-headed Rhaegar has returned. If her sudden accusation catches him off guard, he doesn’t show it. “That wasn’t my secret to share. Ashara made us swear to keep quiet on the matter.”

“How many times have we told each other secretive information anyway? Especially if it involved us?”

“What good would knowing have done, Lyanna?”

“I—” Lyanna closes her mouth. Fuck him. He has a point. “I deserved…” She stops herself again.

She didn’t deserve to know jack shit. That’s Ashara’s daughter; Ashara’s business. Ashara has the right to decide who knows that information. Had Ned not caught Lyanna, she would’ve never told him she was carrying Rhaegar’s baby. Even when he did catch her, she told him it wasn’t his business, that he should piss off. She’s being a hypocrite right now.

“I am sorry, Lyanna. I know your intentions are good and that you’d like to be in Amulya’s life but Ashara doesn’t want her daughter to know her father or his family.”

“Amulya. That’s her name? It’s very pretty.”
“It means priceless.”

Lyanna doesn’t move away from Rhaegar’s touch or kiss this time. She falls into him and him into her. She asks him to promise her that he won’t keep things from her moving forward, that he’ll inform her of anything that directly involves her or her family.

Rhaegar keeps his mouth occupied throughout the night, and it isn't until she’s boneless and thoroughly fucked, seconds from a dreamless slumber, that she realizes he never promised her a thing.

After a certain point, all of the whores began to look the same to Robert. They all look like her.

He’s fucked so many that he’s lost count, not that he’s ever kept count. They’re just vacant spaces that need to be occupied. Once their purpose has been fulfilled, he casts them aside and finds a new space. It’s been like this since he was a young man, barrel-chested and fearless.

Prior to his marriage to Lyanna, Ned made him swear he’d be faithful to his sister, that he’d do right by her. For a short time, Robert kept his word. He stayed far away from brothels, pubs, and any other den of temptation. After they wed, he made attempts to woo Lyanna the right way, to earn her trust and access to her body. But the stubborn woman rejected him at every turn.

Except for that one time.

One night she sought him out. She fucked him as though she were in love with him and it made him fall harder for her. For that short time, she was his, only his.

He was reminded of the first time he watched her through her bedroom window when she was on the cusp of womanhood. His intention was to look away once she started to undress, but he didn’t. He likes to think he was the first man to ever see her nude, and that gave him dominion over her.

Lyanna was meant for him. The gods made her for him. No one else.

Before her father even agreed to their union, Robert kept an eye on her. Back then, he thought the greatest threat to his relationship with Lyanna was that bitch Ellaria Sand. It was if the woman appeared overnight, out of thin air. He couldn’t turn around without seeing them together.

At the beach, at the mall, and even at Winterfell having bloody sleepovers every other weekend. Somehow that Dornish girl of low birth and no decency charmed the cold-hearted Starks, even Rickard Stark himself. Brandon had the gall to address her as his little sister, too. It felt like they were mocking Robert.

How could they not see what he saw? That Dornish bitch was trying to steal what was his. At least that’s what he thought at the time.

Ellaria caught him one night. She caught him staring through Lyanna’s window and she gave him a venomous look before shutting the curtains on him. After that, he spent weeks plotting her demise. He fantasized about killing her and comforting Lyanna in her grief.

The only thing that kept Robert from killing Ellaria was Oberyn Martell.

Everyone in the city knew who held the Red Viper’s heart. Not only had that bitch weaseled her way into the Stark’s lives, but she also managed to make one of the deadliest fuckers in the world fall in love with her.
She’s a witch. No one can convince Robert otherwise.

Had he touched a strand of curly hair on her head, Oberyn would’ve hunted him to the end of the world and beyond. Nothing would’ve stood in the way of his vengeance. Robert had to think of a way to kill her without anyone knowing it was him.

He almost smothered her as she slept beside Lyanna during one of their sleepovers but Benjen caught him lurking by his sister's bedroom door and since then the fucker hated his guts. Benjen kept a close eye on Lyanna and Ellaria from that moment on, making it harder for Robert to get to Ellaria.

All of his time spent worrying about Ellaria, Robert was blind to the true threat.

Robert will never forget that night he saw them together. Lyanna had snuck out and he followed her. He just wanted to make sure she was safe, that’s it. Then Rhaegar showed up. Robert’s vision bled red as he watched them kiss and embrace, their love as apparent as the moon in the sky. He was so angry he could do nothing but stand there, fuming.

He knew Brandon could be a hothead so he told Brandon that Rhaegar assaulted Lyanna, that Lyanna was forced to run away with him despite her letter saying it was her own decision. Because of his lie, Brandon and Rickard went to Aerys to demand justice. They died because of him. Ned cried on Robert’s shoulder and he comforted him.

Ashara, that bitch, saw right through his schemes, but Robert kept Ned occupied so Ashara couldn’t get in his head. She was poison. Ned would've abandoned his duties for that woman, but Robert prevented that. He kept Ned on the path he wanted him on.

Gods, Robert tried to kill Rhaegar on the Trident the day of the war’s last battle. The opposing sides met up for an old-fashioned brawl. No guns and knives were allowed. Just wooden bats and fists. That’s one tradition that everyone upholds.

Rhaegar was majestic that day. He cut through their men like piss in the snow.

Still, nothing was greater than Robert’s hatred and his rage. He barreled down the hill, attacking Rhaegar head-on. To his credit, the dragon prince fought valiantly. He even got a few good punches in. The kind of punches that Robert has never forgotten. One even left his right eye shut for a full week.

Yet, Robert prevailed. He crushed Rhaegar’s chest with his bat and intended to hit him again to land the killing blow, but Arthur Dayne intervened. Had it not been for Ned and their men having his back, Arthur would’ve killed him on that day. He’d never seen the man that enraged and bloodthirsty before. Arthur killed eight of their men with his bare hands while protecting Rhaegar.

Everyone loses their shit over fucking Rhaegar. He hates how much people adore him.

Despite his failure to kill Rhaegar, Robert left the Trident victoriously. Afterward, he rushed to see Lyanna, to share the news. But someone had told her that Rhaegar died during the brawl (for a while it was assumed that he did) and Lyanna was so distraught that she fainted and was out cold for two whole days.

Robert ordered everyone to keep their mouths shut on the matter. He planned to allow her to think Rhaegar was really dead so she’d hurry up and get over him. But Benjen told her the truth. He used to deliver letters from Rhaegar, Ellaria, and Oberyn to Lyanna during the war until Ned stopped him and sent him away. That's why Benjen was hardly home. He hated his brother for what he put Lyanna through.
Robert should've killed Benjen a long time ago.

When Jon was born, Robert felt victorious again. The boy was strong, healthy, and beautiful. He loved him. He loved him so much. Every time Jon accomplished something, no matter how small, he saw it as his own achievement.

Looking back on those years, Robert should've known better.

The way Lyanna cared for Jon was the way a woman cares for a child that was born out of love. There had never been any love between them. Granted, she cared for Gendry too and treated him far better than she ever needed to, but it wasn’t the same.

Jon picked up fencing quickly. They even called him a prodigy. He favored things Robert never had interest for like books, swords, and music. He forbade Lyanna from signing him up for singing lessons when it became apparent that the boy could hold a tune. He forbade her from teaching him Dornish, the same language Ellaria had taught her. Gods, and when she shared the poetry Oberyn used to send her with Jon, he burned it. Her forbade anything that was a homage to those southern cunts and what good did it do?

Jon remained Rhaegar's son. Robert didn’t want to believe what his eyes always saw. He wanted so badly for Jon to be his son. He cried tears of sadness when he learned the truth.

“Everyone’s saying you raped your wife,” his new whore for the day says. She’s one of the few who can speak the common tongue. “Is that true?”

“Husbands can’t rape their wives.”

Robert would’ve invoked his marital rights sooner had it not been for Ned. All things considered, he should’ve done it anyway. It was Ned who deceived him most of all. That cunt told him Lyanna was a virgin, that she never allowed Rhaegar anything more than a kiss. That whole time he knew she carried Rhaegar’s wretched spawn, and he didn’t tell him.

“Bend over,” Robert tells the woman. “I’ve heard enough out of you.”

As she’s bending over, the door is opened, startling her. She hurriedly covers herself with the covers. Their unwanted visitor smirks.

“I’ve never met a modest woman in this line of work,” Roose Bolton says, inviting himself into the room and closing the door behind him.

Cursing under his breath, Robert pulls the sheet up over his naked lower half. “Closed doors mean privacy, you twat! Fucking knock next time!”

“Hopefully there won’t be a next time. I believe it’s time your whoremongering came to an end, Robert.”

Robert hates this fucker. Always has. He opens his mouth, an insult on the tip of his tongue. A newspaper is thrown at him and he barely catches it. “What the fuck is this?”

“Can you not read?”

Ignoring him, Robert mutters a string of curses and flips the newspaper over. “I’m paying you by the hour so get to work,” he tells the whore. When she doesn’t move fast enough. He grabs her up with one hand and forces her head under the sheets. “Suck,” he orders.
Roose, the sick fuck, just stands there casually, waiting for Robert to read the paper. On the front page there’s a picture of a bride and groom standing on the steps of the Westerosi Art Museum. Robert doesn’t have to read the headline or the article underneath the picture.

“That son of a bitch should’ve been aborted! I should’ve taken him out back and murdered him and made his whore mother watch!” He glares at the bride, hatred filling his veins. “Their sister must be a witch like that Dornish whore, Ellaria…”

“Turn the page over,” Roose calmly says.

Reluctantly, Robert flips the page. “Cunt,” he spits at the sight of Rhaegar. “They told us he was a whipped dog. He doesn’t look whipped to me.” No, he looks stronger, healthier.

“He’s sending us a message. We need to reply.”

“Fuck him and his message. I broke him when I broke Lyanna!”

There isn’t a single picture of her in the paper so that means she’s yet to recover. And she never will. He ruined her good.

“Which is more terrifying, a well put together Targaryen or a broken one?” Roose doesn’t raise his voice but it’s clear that he’s at his wit’s end. “Euron Greyjoy is dead. We took over Pyke in less than a day but we can’t hold it forever as long as Theon and Asha live. Now the dragon stirs in the south. We must strike again.”

“All this talk about those bloody fuckers has made my dick soft.” Robert shoves the whore off him and she falls to the floor. He doesn’t spare her a glance. “You owe me a new one. Take this one and bring me another!”

Roose walks over to the woman and helps her to her feet. “Careful, Robert. There’s nothing scarier than a woman scorned.” He walks to the door, holding the woman to his side as though he cares for her.

As if.

“Since when did you give a fuck about a whore’s feelings?”

“When Rhaegar Targaryen finally comes for your blood, I won’t stand in his way.”

Roose slams the door behind him.

“Good!” Robert bellows loud enough to shake the room. “When that bastard comes for me I’ll be ready! I’ll kill anyone who stands in my way!”

Picking up the newspaper, he rips it to shreds. Instead of going out for a new vacant space to fill, he goes to the gun range to practice his aim. He won’t bother with a fight this time. He’ll just kill that silver-haired cunt on sight, his offspring too. Then he’ll bring Gendry and Lyanna back here where they belong.

“How am I supposed to focus if you’re laying over there like that?”

Smirking, Margaery raises her bare ass and wiggles it in the air. “Am I distracting you?” she asks innocently. “My apologies, Lord Stark. I could cover up if you’d prefer…”

“There’s no point in doing that. I’ll just uncover you again soon enough.”
They laugh.

Robb never thought they’d laugh together again. For lack of a better word, he was a downright asshole to her by allowing her to believe he was dead for days. Even then, she had to learn from one of her family’s spies and not him. Of course, she chewed him out for that and even threatened to never speak to him again.

Yet here they are at Highgarden, plotting revenge in between makeup sex.

It was never his intention to deceive Margaery. Robb just has tunnel vision when it comes to most things. Since his father’s murder, he’s been doing everything he can to get his family’s home back. Even while he was in Braavos, he was training and learning all he could from the local gang leaders there on how to regain power and maintain it.

Margaery is important to him. She always has been ever since they met at that charity ball a year ago and had sex in a supply closet. He’d never met anyone quite like her. He was used to modest and sweet girls; a little boring and homie even. Then Margaery literally strutted into his life, gorgeous, confident, and sexually liberated.

It’s just that his family is more important to him right now, and Margaery understands that. She understands him.

“What’s your next move?” Margaery asks, getting up from the couch and walking across the room to where he’s seated at the painted table. She rests her chin on his shoulder, circling her arms around his neck.

She always makes him feel like a king.

“I need to get in contact with Tormund. He’ll sniff out the supposed Stark loyalists for me. I also need to find Theon and Asha. We’ll need Pyke.”

They can invade the north from the western shore. It’ll be easier to infiltrate via White Harbour but as of now, the Manderlys are loyal to the Boltons.

“I would offer Loras and I’s services but we don’t specialize in hunts.”

Robb’s jaw clenches. “My uncle Benjen was a great hunter…”

Margaery keeps him on task. “There are other options. Arthur Dayne is Rhaegar’s best man. He can find a needle in a haystack as big as the world.”

Speaking of Arthur Dayne. "What’s up with him and Rhaegar?” he asks, thinking of a moment from the reception. “They’re awfully close…”

“They grew up together like you and Jon. Of course, they’re close.”

“Not in that way.”

“Does it matter?” Margaery moves from behind him to his side, bringing them face to face. Her eyes bore into his. “If they were secretly fucking what difference would it make?”

“Well, I doubt my aunt would be happy about that,” he chuckles.

“I disagree. Your aunt seems like an open-minded woman. But what do I know?” Before he can say anything else on the irrelevant matter, she says, “Arianne and Viserys are the second best at tracking
people down. We can all leave tonight.”

Robb has heard stories about Arianne and Viserys, or the ‘southern bloodhounds’ as they’re sometimes called, tracking down people that have been under the radar for years in less than a day. He never considered them because he didn’t want things to be awkward. He was interested in sleeping with Arianne like a week ago. Something he decides to share with Margaery before it comes back to bite him in the ass.

Once again, Margaery remains undisturbed. “I thought about fucking her too. She’s beautiful and alluring. We weren’t together. So, it doesn’t matter.” She straightens up, perky breasts looking tantalizing. “I’ll give Viserys a call. You need to call Jon and Daenerys.”

“I don’t want to disturb them.”

“We will have to trespass into northern territory. Our wardens need to be made aware. It’s a courtesy, Robb.”

Of course. Robb has to remember that he’s in their territory, using their resources. He has to be respectful.

“I kind of want to ask my aunt to join us…”

“Lyanna’s good at hunting?” Margaery asks, intrigued.

“Who do you think taught Benjen? I just don’t want to throw her back out there if she isn’t ready.”

“You should ask her before deciding that for her. For all that we know she’s dying to get back out there.”

Robb pulls Margaery down to his lap. “What would I do without you, Margaery?”

“Rule the north with some other pretty girl by your side, I imagine.”

“True. But she wouldn’t be like you.”

Smiling, Margaery kisses him softly. “Darling, there’s no one in the world like me.”

After Dany and Jon headed to the airport for their honeymoon, Arthur was hogged by Missandei and Grey Worm which was perfectly fine and expected. They missed him just as much as anyone.

Rhaegar used that time to speak with Elia about their wildfire manufacturing business.

Well, it’s not really a business. It’s just been the major project they’ve been working on for months now. Usually, Elia is busy overseeing her family’s Dornish affairs but she took a break from that because she owed Rhaegar a favor.

A favor that he honestly never thought he’d have to redeem. He had no intentions of ever doing so, either. What he did for Elia, he would’ve done for any of his friends without hesitation. And as it turned out, her parents didn’t care that she was a lesbian so their whole fake engagement plot was useless anyway.

Elia knew that as the family’s remaining, available heir she’d have to marry a man and bear his children to secure a new business alliance for them. Especially since Oberyn had no interest in sitting still long enough to be directly involved with the family. But all of her worryings was for naught.
The Martells always find a way to prevail, but never at the cost of their children’s freedom.

With the information Elia shared and the news from Qyburn, he’s certain his plan will be ready the day before the expected due date. Now Rhaegar has to figure out a way to rescue the women who were taken from their homes in Essos. He doesn’t want them anywhere near the north when he starts wreaking havoc.

Overall, it’s great news. But with that news came the re-emergence of an old friend.

“He’s back,” Rhaegar tells Arthur in the privacy of his bedroom; a room he’s hardly been in. “He hasn’t spoken to me in so long. Why is he back now?”

Arthur frowns deeply. “There are a number of possible triggers. When was the last time he spoke to you?”

“The night Lyanna told me what Robert did to her...”

The memory of it makes bile rise in his throat. She cut her wrists with a shard of glass and Jon found her. While Jon slept like the dead beside her, Rhaegar sat on the floor. He begged Lyanna to tell him what happened or just to give him a name. A single name is all he needed.Nearly an hour passed. He began to lose hope. But then Lyanna spoke, and she didn’t stop until Rhaegar knew every last gruesome detail.

What happened after that remains blurry. Rhaegar only remembers standing on the beach, staring lifelessly at the dark waters. Then he found his way to the catacombs beneath Dragonstone, to his father’s portrait.

A single tear falls down Rhaegar’s face. “I gathered the main families the next night and shared my plan. You were there.”

Arthur sits on the bed beside Rhaegar, neither are fazed by their proximity. “Even with his voice inside your head, you came up with the plan to only burn the north, mainly their ancestral homes and the lands surrounding them. Aerys would’ve burned the entire city, Rhaegar. You are not his puppet.”

“I still feel like I’m being lenient,” he confesses. “Only their ancestral lands seems too mild. I want to wipe the north off the map. I want to rewrite history. Future generations will know nothing of the Boltons, the Umbers, or the rest of them.”

“Now you’re talking like your father.”

Rhaegar snaps his head in Arthur’s direction. Had it been Qyburn the man would’ve flinched away, but Arthur stares him down.

Arthur continues, “I told you that if you went too far into the abyss I wouldn’t hesitate to cut you down. I meant that. I won’t see you spiral into madness.”

“What makes you think you can stop it?”

“I’ve stopped it before. Lyanna and I did together. We’ll do it again.”

“I haven’t told her yet.”

Arthur curses under his breath. “What are you waiting for?” He doesn’t need an answer. He figures it out. “You know she has the power to talk you down. Is that what it is?”
Lyanna could possibly approve of his plan but he can’t risk it. If she truly hates the idea, he knows he won’t be able to go through with it, and he really wants to go through with it.

“Rhaegar,” Arthur says and Rhaegar is reminded of how much he’s missed having the man by his side. “Aerys has no power over you. You proved that when you killed him.”

“I wish I could silence him forever.”

There is one way he could but Rhaegar won’t take that route just yet.

“We’ll figure out a way. I really think you should tell Lyanna about this. Let us help you, Rhaegar.”

“I don’t want to frighten her. I don’t want her to look at me and see a potential threat.”

“I understand your fears. But remember, there aren’t that many mad Targaryens. Gods, I can count them all on one hand honestly. And are you mad or are you a product of your environment? Same with Viserys.”

“You always know exactly what to say, dear friend.” Rhaegar smiles. “Now, let’s hear about your stay in Dorne. Not the business aspect, either.”

Arthur knows an intended subject change when he hears it. “For starters, Elia stayed on my ass. She wouldn’t allow any sulking or whining. She helped me get back into shape…”

Downstairs in the den, everyone is waiting for them. Everyone as in, Viserys, Arianne, Robb, Margaery, Lyanna, and Gendry. Missandei and Grey Worm are out on a date; the couple was in need of some alone time for a change.

For a second, Rhaegar assumes they all overheard his conversation with Arthur but then he reminds himself that his bedroom is soundproof to keep eavesdroppers out. He supposes it’s just his guilt getting to him.

“About time,” Viserys says, sucking his teeth. “I was sure you two were fucking up there as long as you took.”

From the way everyone’s looking at them they were thinking the same thing. Arianne and Margaery are grinning at one another, Robb appears to be in deep thought, but not in a negative way, Gendry looks sickly pale, and Lyanna looks...intrigued? Rhaegar raises an eyebrow at that.

Arthur chuckles. “Is it strange for two old friends to spend two hours in a bedroom together?” He nods. “Yeah, I could have worded that better…”

Rhaegar sighs heavily. “Yeah, you could’ve.”

“No one cares,” Viserys says, standing up. He glances at Lyanna. “Oh, she might…”

“I’m only upset that I didn’t get to watch,” Lyanna says.

And that earns her a million cool points with Viserys. He grins at her. “New haircut slays, and she’s open to good ole gay sex. Rhaegar, marry this woman!” A short pause. “Marry her again! This instance!”

“Can we please change the subject?” Gendry asks, face incredibly red. “I don’t want to hear about my mother doing anything like that with her gay boyfriend.”
Rhaegar opens his mouth to correct Gendry, but Robb speaks.

“We need Theon and Asha Greyjoy. I’ve already talked with Jon. He and Dany approved the mission. Arianne, Viserys, and Margaery have already agreed to join me.” Robb levels a look at Rhaegar. “My aunt Lyanna has agreed as well.”

Everyone is waiting for Rhaegar’s reaction, he just knows it. What do they expect? Lyanna is her own person. He doesn’t control her. If she believes she’s ready for a job like this, that’s her decision. That still won’t stop him from worrying, though.

“I’ll join them,” Arthur says, taking the words out of Rhaegar’s mouth. “Extra backup can never hurt.”

“We think you and Rhaegar should serve as the extraction team in case things get too hot,” Viserys says. “The five of us will do fine. I already have an idea of where they are. This will be an easy job.”

An easy job. There is no such thing.

Rhaegar and Lyanna’s eyes meet. She wants this badly. She wants to prove she’s capable again. He won’t deprive her of this. Even if he’ll slowly lose his mind every second she’s in the north.

“If Jon and Dany approved then there’s nothing more for me to say.”

Every single person in the room gives Rhaegar a flat look. Of course, as long as he lives, he’ll have the final say-so on every major decision. He is no longer warden in name yet he stills holds all of the power.

Rhaegar smirks. “My apologies. You all have my approval as well. Tell me, what do you need from Arthur and me.”

Never in a million years would he have thought that Viserys and Robb would get along as well as they do. They’re complete opposites. Perhaps that’s why. The plan they came up with is impressive and logical. Unexpected things are sure to happen but at least they know that if the plan fails it wasn’t due to poor foresight.

The last anyone has seen or heard, Asha and Theon were last sighted in White Harbour trying to board a ship to Myr.

“Ramsay Bolton intercepted them and he’s been chasing them all around the northern territory,” Arianne says, reading the information off her phone. “My sources also tell me that Theon was injured badly during the altercation which means the two are slowed down. I think they’re remaining in one place for the time being.”

“But where could they hide? They don’t know the lands that well.” Gendry says. “If I were them, I’d stay low in the sewers.”

“Theon knows a good bit,” Robb says as he stares off into space; a sign that he’s scheming. “Jon and I used to bring him along on jobs. With Theon’s knowledge of the north and Asha’s survival skills, they can send Ramsay on a wild goose chase for months. But, with Theon being injured they’re in deep shit.”

Lyanna clears her throat, and everyone looks at her. Instinctively, Rhaegar tries to move to her side, to protect her from all of the eyes but he stops himself. Lyanna isn’t a porcelain doll. She can handle this on her own.
“Theon’s injured,” Lyanna says for clarification. “That leaves Asha with two, realistic options. She can either leave her brother and flee on her own or she can find somewhere safe for them both. Somewhere familiar. We all know of Asha. She isn’t leaving Theon behind. So she definitely went with the second option.”

Rhaegar and Arthur share a look. They’ve already figured it out.

Next are Viserys and Arianne who smile at one another. Then they face Lyanna and she returns their smile.

“They’re on Pyke,” Robb says, face lighting up. “They know the island better than the Boltons. Even with their lands occupied, they can hide under the enemy’s nose.”

Lyanna nods. “We need a map of the island. I bet they’re no further than ten miles from their home. They’ve been on the run since their father was murdered. Theon’s injured and they’re probably losing hope. People tend to stray too close to home when that happens. This is around the time they’re usually caught. We need to act quickly or Ramsay will snatch them up first.”

Gods, Rhaegar loves her. He’s sure to tell her while everyone else is off preparing to leave. He informed Missandei and Grey Worm so that they can join the extraction team if need be.

Lyanna is excited, that much is apparent. He sits on the bed watching her comb through her closet for something stealthy and tight-fitting to wear so that she can easily run and fight. Pray as he might for a fight not to happen he knows better. People will die tonight. He just hopes it isn’t anyone on their side.

“I doubt Robb told Jon that you would be tagging along,” he says just for something to say.

“I’m happy he didn’t because they would be on a flight back by now if he had. I want them to enjoy their honeymoon.” Lyanna takes out a black, long-sleeve turtleneck and grimaces at it. “We’re all going to be matching aren’t we?”

Rhaegar laughs. “Black turtlenecks are peak assassin attire.”

“How do you feel about this?” she asks, facing him. “Tell me the truth.” She walks over to the bed and sits down next to him the same way Arthur did earlier.

He doesn’t deserve them, he thinks. Most people live their whole lives deeply loved by only one person. Not him. He was somehow fortunate enough to have two people who love him unconditionally.

“It doesn’t matter how I feel, Lyanna. I want this for you.”

“You don’t want me to go do you?”

“I don’t want you to get hurt. I don’t want to lose you again.”

Lyanna touches the side of his face tenderly. “I will be fine, Rhaegar. Did you forget all the times I’ve kicked your ass?” She laughs.

“I will never forget.”

“Besides, if something does happen to me I will at least know you’ll be left in good hands,” she teases.
Groaning, Rhaegar pulls her into his arms. “Why does everyone think Arthur and I have something going on?”

“Well, you two did raise children together, Rhaegar. You don’t experience what you two have experienced together and not develop some kind of feelings for one another. I’m not saying you two have to have sex and let me watch and possibly join but—”

“Lyanna, you’re terrible,” he jokes. Then he hugs her close to him, cradling the back of her head. “I love you so much.”

“Hey, everything will be okay.” Lyanna pulls away so that he can see her face. “We still have that house in Dorne when all of this is over. You promised me a window garden that you’d build on your own. I want that garden, Rhaegar. I want the ending that was stolen from us.”

“We’ll have it. I promise.”

It feels like everywhere they turn they see them.

Jon and Daenerys Targaryen, heirs to the Targaryen fortune. The aunt and nephew who unknowingly fell in love. Some people are calling it a modern-day love story. Others are saying the same thing Ramsay has been saying ever since he saw the front page of today’s paper.

“It’s fucking disgusting. Downright atrocious. I can’t believe they were allowed to do that.” Ramsay stares at Jon’s picture, at the smile on his face. “Jon should’ve been the bride.” Sneering, he licks his lips. “See how pretty he is?”

Myranda ignores him. Frantically, her eyes scan over the article. “Daenerys is an ethereal beauty in her show-stopping gown,” she reads. "She’s a true beauty...makeup wasn’t necessary with skin like hers.” She crumbles the paper and screams. “I want to kill that bitch!”

“You’ll get your chance,” Ramsay promises half-heartedly.

In truth, it’s his fault Myranda is like this. He gets a kick out of comparing her to other women and tearing down her self-esteem. That’s how he knows she’ll never leave or betray him. He’s trained her to seek only him for reassurance, safety, and pleasure. She really is like the dogs her father raises.

“How long do we have to wait around for them?” Myranda asks impatiently. “Asha and her brother are boring. I want to hunt Daenerys. Did you hear what they’ve been saying about her? That she’s a strong fighter like Jon…”

Ramsay tunes her out.

The cut-throat he sent hasn’t gotten back to him in weeks. It’s safe to assume he’s dead. The only thing is, Ramsay has no idea who did the deed. Was it a random foot soldier? A southern family member? Or Jon himself? If Jon had killed him, he would’ve known that it was Ramsay who sent the man. Yet there have been no moves made against him in retaliation.

Movement out of his peripheral catches his attention. He and Myranda are in their car up the street from the motel on Pyke they believe Asha and Theon are hiding out in. And their assumption is correct. They spot Asha avoiding the front of the motel and heading around back.

Myranda squeals in delight. “There’s Asha!” She’s already getting out of the car, her excitement hard to contain. “I’ll grab her!”
Then she’s off. Ramsay is right behind her. Entering the dark alley, they quiet their steps and press against the wall, keeping low. As they’re bending the corner, someone dashes toward them and attacks without a single warning.

Whoever the cunt is they’re as light as a feather, female, and fast. They smell strongly of nutmeg and vanilla. If he listens closely he can hear their bracelets clinking together. But that takes too much concentration so he focuses on their movements alone. Ramsay ducks in time to avoid a kick to the face, but Myranda isn’t so lucky. That same kick lands on the side of her face, knocking her to the ground hard. Ramsay reaches down to pull her up and as he does, their attacker takes off running after Asha in a gold blur.

“After them!” Ramsay shouts at Myranda.

Thankfully, Asha doesn’t go with the attacker without a fight, allowing them to catch up. Under the light of the street lamps, Ramsay can see the person clearly.

“Who’s this bitch?” Myranda asks loud enough for the woman to hear.

“I’m THAT bitch,” the woman laughs, her Dornish accent strong. “Step up and I’ll kindly introduce myself!”

That sets Myranda off. She rushes the woman.

Now, Ramsay knows that Myranda isn’t the best when it comes to hand-to-hand combat. She’s better with long-range assaults and fighting dirty, mostly. The ass whooping she receives is downright embarrassing. Even for him.

The Dornish woman is only playing with Myranda, too. She’s avoiding her attacks and laughing while doing so. It's as if she's dancing, not fighting. Ramsay has no choice but to intervene. While the woman has Myranda in a chokehold, he tries to hit her in the back of the head.

“Touch my girlfriend,” someone says from behind him, “and I will flay you and wear your skin as a three-piece suit.”

Ramsay grins. Now he’s really excited. “Viserys Targaryen in the flesh. What brings you to Pyke?” In person, the man is just as pretty as Jon. He licks his lips.

Their first encounter is short-lived, unfortunately.

Asha shouts out an order and seconds later, a smoke bomb is shot at them.

Fucking Theon was hiding out on the roof. Everyone scatters in different directions. Viserys and the woman Ramsay assumes is Arianne Martell, run after Asha while he’s left dragging Myranda by the arm away from the smoke. They decide to run after Theon instead since he’s the weakest at the moment.

Myranda, the single-minded bitch, won’t stop asking about Arianne. “Who was she?” she screams, humiliated and furious. “Who was that Dornish woman?”

Ramsay gets a sick idea. “I didn’t notice her at first because she used to wear a full veil whenever she left Sunspear. I understand why now.” He rushes up the outdoor stairs of the motel, smiling sinisterly. “She really is as beautiful as they say. I see why she and Daenerys are good friends…”

A long second passes. Then it happens.
Myranda snaps. She shrieks so loud his eardrum nearly explodes.

“T’m going to murder both of those bitches!”

“Let’s get Theon first. Then they’re all yours.”

As expected, Asha is hard to catch.

The woman has a reputation on the land and seas as being a true ironborn through and through, and it shows. They chase her throughout the small port town, in and out of narrow alleys, on low rooftops, and inside shabby quarters.

Arianne catches up to Asha every now and then and they scuffle and exchange insults. The Martells and the Greyjoys still loathe one another after all of these years. Nothing has changed. When Arianne starts to curse in her mother’s tongue, that’s how Viserys knows the next time the women collide, his girlfriend is going to end up killing Asha.

Viserys decides to call in their backup. Because if the most level-headed one between them is losing her cool, there’s no hope for him either. Because he’s already thinking of the many ways he’d open Asha up and put her organs on display.

They need someone who won’t get pissed off and ruin the entire mission. They’re chasing Asha down a deserted area near the shore when that backup arrives.

Lyanna who has been hot on their trail this whole time runs in from the side. Asha sees her coming and moves out of the way to avoid being tackled to the pavement, but she underestimates Lyanna’s ability to regain her footing quickly.

Lyanna grabs the back of Asha’s hoodie, yanking her roughly. “We’re not here to hurt you.”

Not hearing any of it, Asha punches Lyanna in the face.

“Fuck that,” Lyanna says. She roughly headbutts Asha, not once, but twice.

Okay, perhaps Viserys chose the wrong person. At least now he sees where Jon got his barbaric tendencies from.

Asha stumbles back and removes the knife from her pocket. In turn, Lyanna takes out her own knife, expertly flipping and twirling it in her hand. The women stare each other down, sizing the other up.

“You’re Lyanna Stark,” Asha says, moving to a fighting stance. “I’ve always wanted to see if you were as tough as they claim.”

“What’s stopping you?”

Smirking, Asha makes the first move. She lunges at Lyanna, swiping her blade, aiming for the woman’s face. Lyanna is fluid and flexible like water. She bends here and spins there, making quick and measured jabs with her knife as she does so. It’s obvious that she isn’t aiming to kill Asha. The same can’t be said about Asha.

Every time their blades clash, the sound grates like nails on a chalkboard. At one point, Asha gets too cocky because she doesn’t seem to realize that this is just sport to Lyanna. She gets too close and suffers for it. Lyanna cuts her cheek so quickly it takes a while for the blood to ooze out.

Viserys has to hand it to his brother. He chose well with this one. Just as he has chose well with his
Throughout the fight, Arianne has been discreetly stalking around the women like a lioness waiting to attack its prey. The plan hasn’t changed. They’re going to grab Asha at all costs. Robb and Margaery are in charge of obtaining Theon.

Speak of the devil. Robb speaks through the earpiece in all of their ears, informing him that he’s found Theon. Asha hears it and misinterprets the information. She believes her brother is in danger.

Lyanna is moving in for the “kill” when the woman scoops up dirt in her hands and blows it in Lyanna’s face to temporarily blind her. When Arianne moves in to attack, Asha flings her knife at her and takes off running to save her brother.

Using her own spit, Lyanna quickly cleans her eyes; fucking barbarian. Then she chases Asha, running fast as though she were one of the miniature horses. Viserys is equally disturbed and amazed by her. Thankfully, Arianne’s reflexes are phenomenal. She caught the knife Asha threw at her and concealed it in her bra.

He’s surrounded by badass women. Lucky him.

They follow after Lyanna.

The longer this takes, the more respect Asha earns from all of them. She’s not a weak opponent by a long shot. But if any of them were actually trying to kill her she would’ve never made it this far.

Asha slips into the backdoor of a brothel. How does he know its a brothel? Well, he’s Viserys Targaryen. Tits and ass don’t have to be hanging out the windows for him to know a brothel when he sees one. Instead of running to the back door, they run to the front and peek inside through the thin curtain on the door.

It’s definitely a brothel.

“I know some of these men,” Lyanna whispers. “Most of them appear to be from the north.”

“Shit.” Viserys takes a deep breath. “I can’t believe I’m actually saying this but I think we should retreat.”

Viserys thinks about what Rhaegar told him before they departed. His brother wants them all back in one piece. That’s it. If they fail to obtain Asha and Theon he made a vague threat about sinking Pyke to the bottom of the sea. That way no one will have control over it. Not them or their enemies. The more he thinks about it, Rhaegar is starting to scare the shit out of him.

In a good way.

“How far away is Robb?” Arianne asks. “He has our exact location. Have him and Margaery meet us here.”

“Robb is already on his way,” Lyanna informs them, checking the smartwatch on her wrist. “Still, Viserys is right. We should-”

“Hold up,” Viserys says, smiling. “You just said I was right. I love hearing that. Please tell me again.”

The look on Lyanna’s face lets him know his joke isn’t appreciated. Better yet, his joke hasn’t even
been registered. Someone inside the brothel has caught her eye. Viserys and Arianne follow her line
of sight but they don’t see anyone they recognize. When Lyanna’s eyes begin to water and her body
starts to tremble and her breaths become harsh and erratic, Viserys has an idea of what’s happening.

“What is it, Lyanna?” Viserys asks her patiently. He was the one who used to dry his mother’s tears
most of the times. He knows how to handle situations like these. “Which one do you remember from
that night?”

“The one in the leather jacket. Seated at the table by the wall.” Lyanna’s nostrils flare. “He killed my
brother. He killed Benjen…”

“Let’s go have a chat with him then,” Viserys says, removing the guns from his shoulder holster.

Arianne removes the knife from her bra. "Yes, let's introduce ourselves,” she says.

There is no talking involved. Not initially. When Lyanna enters the brothel, most of the men don’t
even recognize her at first. With hurried steps, she walks straight to the table by the wall, interrupting
the man’s joke about some woman he just fucked. He sees Lyanna up close and his eyes widen in
recognition.

“Lyan-"

Lyanna picks up a glass bottle from the table, breaks it on the edge, and stabs him in the face with it.
Repeatedly. Carving up chunks of his face, splattering blood and pieces of flesh everywhere. She
doesn’t blink. She doesn’t squirm. She doesn’t make a sound aside from her heavy breathing. When
she’s done, the man’s face is barely recognizable and his friends are left staring at the pieces of him
on the floor.

A stunned silence falls over the brothel. Working girls peek out of the doors, some of the patrons
stare so hard lit cigarettes fall from their mouths and drinks spill on their shirts.

Slowly, Lyanna turns her gaze to the other men at the table. There’s blood on her face and stillness in
her eyes. Without warning, she lunges at one of them next, killing him in the same way. Someone
tries to leave the brothel and Arianne drags them away from the door and kills them.

The funny thing is, in this particular brothel guns are banned to avoid murders on the premises. It’s
not good for them to kill each other over petty disputes. The lack of guns has lessened the number of
brothel deaths.

Viserys has always thought it was a stupid rule. Tonight he’s being proven right.

Eventually, Robb and Margaery show up. They must’ve used Theon to lure Asha out and get her to
come with them. Viserys didn’t even catch their arrival. He’s too busy watching Lyanna butcher
another man with the broken beer bottle.

“P-please, Lyanna… please Robb,” one of the men begs, half of his face missing. “We’re unarmed!
Have mercy!”

Lyanna stops herself. “Mercy,” she says, voice barely above a whisper. Her eyes begin to water
again and the bloody bottle slips out of her hand when she realizes what she’s done. “Mercy. You
want mercy…” Staggering to her feet, she touches the side of her head and squeezes. “Gods, what
am I doing?” she whispers to herself.

Fuck, Viserys thinks. Perhaps she isn’t cut out for this, after all. He may have to finish the job for
her. He doesn't mind.
Everyone waits on bated breath for what she’ll do next. Robb, Margaery, Arianne, and Viserys. They all wait.

“You want mercy,” Lyanna says, dropping her hands to her side. “Where was your mercy for my family? For my brothers?” She looks over at Robb then she looks over at the women who are still watching from their rooms. “Where was your mercy for the women and girls you stole from their homes?” Lyanna takes out a gun, shoots the man in the head then turns her gun on another man. “There’s your mercy.” She kills him next. “Death is the only mercy I have. It's the only mercy I'm willing to give...”

Viserys kills the man closest to him without hesitation. Robb catches another man who tries to run outside and slits his throat and watches him die, without an ounce of sympathy. Margaery and Arianne go from table to table, slaughtering. Naturally, the men try to fight back, though, it’s futile.

Lyanna breaks bottle after bottle and disfigure the men who cross her. She makes them all look the same way Benjen looked when she saw him last. Viserys contemplates taking a toy for him and Arianne to play with later, but there’s something satisfying about what they’re doing.

This is for Dragonstone, Viserys tells himself as he guts a man. It’s for their maestar, it's for all of their soldiers they lost in the wreckage, it's for Dany's unborn child, Benjen, Lyanna, and all that they’ve lost. It's a bloody massacre led by the honorable Starks, no less. Viserys can tell Robb is enjoying this change. He enjoys not having to choose the higher ground all the time.

No one, aside from the workers, is allowed to leave.

When it’s over, Lyanna gets up and simply walks away, blood covering her hands and face. Arianne and Margaery follow her to make sure no one’s outside.

Robb goes through the back rooms, collecting the women to get them someplace safe. The same man who murdered defenseless men, his own men, is considerate enough to see to the women. That further proves there are two sides to every coin. That in order to lead, one must have a side of ruthlessness.

They find some men hiding in the closets and they kill all except one.

“What family do you belong to?” Robb asks the man.

“The Umbers,” the man says, refusing to meet Robb’s gaze.

Robb touches the man’s chin and lifts his head so that their eyes are level. “Tell Smalljon that I’m back. Tell him and all the other fucking traitors that winter has come and it brings death with it.” He steps away from the man. “Run along.”

The man runs out of the brothel without looking back.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Please tell me what you think. If you hated it lol just find a new story to read :)
The news of Robb Stark’s return spreads throughout the north overnight, garnering a mixed response.

A majority of the inhabitants are wary, afraid of the young wolf’s revenge. Word of his return wasn’t the only thing that reached their ears. Everyone’s talking about what Lyanna Stark did that night on Pyke. They fear the she-wolf’s vengeance most of all. The others, those who’ve yet to publicly reveal themselves make secret toasts to their true Warden’s health, and await the day he comes to take back what belongs to him by birthright.

Those same men and women leave their homes under the cover of night and travel through the northern crypts, that isn’t as deep as the city’s catacombs but are enough to conceal them from prying eyes. Through there they travel north, to the real north, where Tormund Giantsbane waits for them.

A defeated Ramsay and Myranda try to return to Winterfell but Roose turns them away at the gates. His orders were very clear. Their failure to obtain the Greyjoy siblings has cost the north a major piece in this war. For that, they are sent on a job meant for one of the lesser families, pushing them further away from their true prizes.

Roose uses the information the sole survivor of the Pyke Massacre shared to his advantage.

“They butchered unarmed men.” Roose said during the summons that was held the morning after the incident. “Their own men begged for mercy and they butchered them. Grief has sickenened their minds. They won’t stop until every single traitor is dead. Doesn’t matter if you turncoat and surrender. Your blood will wet their hands. Our only chance at survival is to kill them first!”

Any man who entertained the idea of betraying him entertained the thought no longer after that. At least those who aren’t already involved in the plot to support Robb’s claim.

Immediately following that, Roose sent a message of his own to the southern border, and he had Smalljon Umber deliver it. The message served as the official start to the city’s third gang war. Eleven guards in charge of patrolling the northernmost post of the southern border were decapitated, their heads left outside to rot.

Rhaegar walked down the line, examining each head carefully. Most of the men were from the Second Sons while the rest made up the few survivors of Dragonstone’s fall. Their lost hurt most of all. Reaching the end of the line, he turned to face those in attendance.

Robb, Grey Worm, Viserys, and Arthur awaited his order so they were startled when a grim smile broke across his face as he began to laugh. Out of the group, Robb was the most disturbed by this reaction. Following Robb was Viserys, strangely enough. The younger brother visibly shuddered from the sound of Rhaegar’s maniacal laughter.

“It would be terribly rude if we didn’t respond,” Rhaegar said, ending his laughter. Somberly, he knelt down and touched the head of a man who’d been fighting for their family for nearly a decade. “Arthur.”

“Yes, Rhaegar.”
“Fly us over the northern border.”

What transpired after that provides differing stories from those who watched from the northern side of the border. To an onlooker who just so happened to look out of their window, they saw two madmen burning the streets up for no good reason. Now, if that onlooker happened to be drunk or senile with questionable vision they would’ve believed they saw two silver-haired, madmen riding on the back of a dragon, smiling as the great beast breathed fire down on the unsuspecting men below.

Roose and his men saw it for what it was. A pissed off Rhaegar and an equally pissed off Viserys burned the men patrolling their border alive with flamethrowers until only their charred corpses remained.

For the eleven men Smalljon killed, Rhaegar and Viserys killed eighteen.

Roose has yet to reply to their response.

“I can see my family has been busy while I was away,” Jon says once Varys finishes the recap. “Would say I hate Dany and I missed it but our honeymoon was very enjoyable.”

They fucked every single chance they got, made new happy memories, and took a load of pictures that Dany plans to put in a scrapbook soon. They didn't want to leave but they also missed their family. Jon never realized how clingy they both were when it came to their kin until they were in Meereen.

After the dinner, Jon received a call from Varys. The man implored him to meet for a private meeting. That's what they were doing now. Meeting privately. Aside from the men Jon has nearby just in case The Spider decides to make a stupid decision. He’s also wearing a tracking device as an extra precaution.

They’re at the family’s opium warehouse beneath a popular bakery, two blocks from Tyrell territory.

“Is that all you have to say about it?” Varys asks, disturbed. “Your father and mother are displaying early signs of madness. The former more than the latter. I find this concerning. Must I remind you of your grandfather.”

Now, this is the sort of thing that pisses Jon off.

The whole Targaryen Madness belief is a load of rubbish. Their family is like any other family, minus the incest. There are sane and insane people in every family. People label them as mad because they embrace their darker impulses occasionally.

As for his mother, the woman is happier than he’s ever seen her. Her smiles come easy and they reach her eyes. She isn't bashful with her affection for his father, she doesn’t flinch from his touch, she embraces him and the rest of them with unabashed love.

If killing northern scum makes her that way then Jon will start lining them up for her on a daily basis.

“Tell me, Spider,” he says, his tone laced with a warning, “if you were raped and humiliated, and watched your brother die in front of you, what would you do to the men responsible?”

Varys realizes his mistakes far too late. “I meant no offense-”

Jon steps up to the man, staring down at him. “My mother can carve up the faces of every last one of
those sons of bitches.” In fact, he’ll gladly help her do it. “My father and uncle simply retaliated. That’s what people do during war, if you didn’t know.”

“They burned men alive.”

“Men? No, they’re less than that. They’re trafficking women and girls. They can rot!”

“What if I were to tell you that the family’s enemies won’t always be the only victims of your father’s retaliation?”

That seems like an odd question to ask of Jon all of a sudden. Which means the man has a purpose behind the question. Is that why he asked Jon to meet him outside of the estate, alone? Because he has information to relay; the kind of information that Rhaegar wouldn’t want Jon to know? If that’s the case, that puts Jon in a tough position, and he doesn’t like it.

Varys believes Jon’s silence is a sign that he’s getting through to him. He proceeds, “I do not dismiss what your family has gone through. Even young Daenerys’s spiral is understandable.”

Jon raises his eyebrow at that. “Her spiral?” he asks.

“I have noticed concerning things about her,” he says, facial expression grave. “There is something in the way she stares off into space sometimes. The same way her father used to. She even seems to have developed Viserys’s interest in sadism.”

The man is referring to Dany’s frequent visits to where they were holding Daario Naaharis before he died from his injuries. She would spend hours down there watching Viserys work, sometimes, she confided in Jon, she even participated. Daario planned to abduct her and subjugate her to his twisted idea of love. His men nearly killed Missandei. Dany got her own revenge on the man. What’s wrong with that? Absolutely nothing.

Perhaps his opinion on the matter means he’s just as insane as everyone else, and what of it? As long as they’re not going out of their way to terrorize innocent people, they can burn, torture, and eradicate their enemies all they like. No one is going to stop them. Anyone who tries can burn too. Even the Spider.

Smirking, Jon says, “Sounds to me as if you’ve forgotten your job, Spider. You are in charge of relaying information and our enemies’ secrets. Now, if the job no longer tickles your fancy you can go off and use that psychology degree you’re so eager to use.”

Varys sighs, “I never intended—”

“You are not here to discern my family’s mental stability.” His voice and the emptiness in his eyes leaves no room for objection. “Especially not my wife’s. Understood?”

“I understand, Master Jon.”

“The information about my father that you’re trying so hard to share, is that something he made you swear to keep secret?”

“He put Aegon’s sword at my throat.”

Jon blinks. “The fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“It’s an ancient practice done by your family and it’s only used under extreme circumstances. If I
were to ever betray your father, my death would be a long and painful one.”

“Yet you’re willing to risk that fate…”

“To protect innocent lives, yes. I once believed your father was of sound mind. I no longer believe that.”

All of that sounds like a good enough reason for Varys to go back on his word to his father. The thing is, Jon doesn’t believe him for one second. Maybe he’s just biased. Maybe he just doesn’t trust a person who makes a living off sticking their noses in other people’s business. Maybe it’s both.

Jon slowly nods. “So, you’re telling me that you are privy to a dark plot, a plot that has the potential to risk innocent lives because now my father is displaying signs of madness?”

“Precisely.”

“It never occurred to you from the very start that this plot had the potential to risk innocent lives regardless of my father’s newfound madness or whatever you’re calling it?”

Varys once again realizes he’s fucked up. “I...at the time, I believed he would avoid innocents.”

“So, you never knew for sure?” Jon doesn’t wait for the man to answer. It’s all over his face. “You know what I think? I think you’re just trying to create a rift between my father and I-”

“I swear to you that Rhaegar is planning something majo-”

“I also think,” Jon interrupts, “that you’re working for the enemy.” He doesn’t really think that. He just wants to scare the man. “What better way to put an end to the Targaryen reign than to pit them against each other?”

Varys drops to his knees, prostrating himself at Jon’s feet. “Forgive me. I swear those are not my intentions. I came to you because I believed you would be able to talk your father out of his plan. The city has suffered enough.”

“You think I give a fuck about this city? Or the north?” Jon squats down so that the man can hear him better. He doesn’t want the wind to sweep his words away. “You think my father is scary? I will cut off pieces of you and feed them to Ghost and make you watch him eat. Do your job, Varys. Nothing more, nothing less. Or I will find someone to replace you.”

The Spider promises to never bring up the topic again.

After dismissing him, Jon orders the man who serves directly under Grey Worm to follow Varys and keep a close eye on him.

Quite frankly, Jon wishes Varys would’ve never spoken a word of his father’s supposed plot to him. Too many problems have arisen from the mere mention, and if Jon is careless, he can potentially disrupt the harmonious balance that exists in his family.

From his observations, his father is typically a levelheaded man. However, there’s a darker side of the man that’s impulsive and downright terrifying.

If he mentions what Varys told him, his father will do one of two things in response. Reveal his “plot” or tiptoe around the matter entirely and run circles around Jon until he’s dizzy, and that’ll piss Jon the fuck off. After making Jon forget what he even wanted to talk about, Rhaegar will find Varys and kill him.
If it turns out Varys is a double-crossing snake, Jon won’t give a rat’s ass. But if Varys genuinely cares about protecting innocent lives...well Jon will care a little more if he’s killed.

The bright side of all this is that Jon knows that his father will protect the family at all costs so they’re not at risk. Because of that, he decides to keep quiet about the incident with Varys for now. At least he won’t mention it to anyone else outside of Dany.

Jon has to trust his father. He has to think of the good of his family above all else. Right now, they need to stick together and relocate.

Summerhall won’t always be safe. Roose Bolton will retaliate soon. The storm that’s been brewing for months is finally here.

The implementation of tracking devices is old in their family.

Apparently, Rhaegar and Arthur used to keep them hidden on their children at all times; in Dany’s and Missandei’s jewelry or their hair barrettes, and in Grey Worm’s favorite sports watch. Even Viserys had one placed on him until he eventually discovered and destroyed it.

As they aged, placing the devices on them became difficult and oftentimes intrusive. They used them mostly for when they made trips out of the country. In hindsight, they should’ve never stopped using them. But when you’re at the top, you get comfortable, cocky.

Dany learned about the sneaky yet wise behavior of her proxy parents when she suggested that they all wear tracking devices from here on out. Now everyone in their family is wearing one.

She wishes she would’ve thought of it sooner. Watching Jon’s black dot blink and move across the electronic map gives her a sense of security. She knows he’s driving up the long dirt road to the estate. She knows he’s safe. If the dot disappears that means the person either removed it - they’d have to cut it out - or the person is dead.

With a full view of the map, she can see the other colored dots in various places around the estate. Rhaegar, Arthur, and Lyanna are in the parlor. Last she checked they were all drinking and reminiscing about the short-lived good ole days. Grey Worm is sparring with Robb, Missandei is walking with Grey Wind and Ghost on the beach, Viserys is at Sunspear again, and Gendry is working in the basement.

Dany continues watching Jon’s dot until he’s walking through the doors of their bedroom and into her arms.

“Were you watching the entire time?” Jon chuckles, holding her close to him as if they haven’t seen each other in weeks.

“Not the entire time. I had a drink with the seasoned warriors earlier.”

Arthur made a comment about how he, Rhaegar, and Lyanna have fought this fight before - a comment that wasn’t meant to sound arrogant. But Robb and Viserys, who are terrible together, started to tease them anyway. Until further notice, the trio will be referred to as the “seasoned warriors” and nothing else.

Jon walks them over to the bed. Instead of sitting on it they sit on the rug in front. “We’re lucky to have them on our side. I heard so many stories about my father and Arthur growing up. And my mother.”
“Is my hero,” Dany says proudly. “Viserys told me about Pyke.”

“The Spider told me as well.”

“What else did our little friend tell you.”

They already knew about the north’s first strike and their family’s response, though, not about the burning. Rhaegar only told them, “Fire and blood.”

“Well,” Dany says, undisturbed by the news, “when you play with fire you get burned.”

“My thoughts exactly. But Varys believes we’re all mad. Well, everyone minus me.”

Dany has to laugh at that. “Has he forgotten about all of your ‘hulk smash’ moments?”

Jon tries not to laugh at the joke but he fails miserably. “Seems that way.” He shakes his head at his wife, a ghost of a smile playing at the corners of his lips. “This is serious, Dany. Our enemies were burned alive.”

“Shall we send flowers to the Boltons?”

Now they’re both laughing.

Having a morbid sense of humor seems mandatory in this family. She isn’t sure when it developed between them. Perhaps it happened sometime during their honeymoon.

This is war. War is dirty. It’s unforgiving and unfair. In a way, war is like everyday life. Death hangs over their heads every waking moment, they’re constantly met with obstacles, they overcome, they fail, and the cycle repeats. And just like in life, it’s killed or be killed. Their enemies won’t mourn or pity them if they were to die.

Dany sits on Jon’s lap, circling her arms around his neck. He holds her by the waist.

“Is that all?” she asks. Because if it is, she’d like to fuck her husband on the floor and cuddle on the Alpaca rug afterward.

Jon’s expression falls. “Not even half of it.”

No, not nearly half of it as it turns out. Like one of his little birds so often do, Varys sang a great many of songs. Songs that Jon wasn’t too keen on hearing. In a way, Dany understands why that is. She learned the hard way that some things are better off left in the dark. Still, this poses an issue for them, for their family.

“Is my brother truly plotting?”

“When is he ever not plotting?”

“Good point.” Sighing, she lays her head on Jon’s shoulder, the weight of this newfound information overbearing. “I trust Rhaegar. Even after I discovered his deceit, I still trusted him with my life. Family has always come first for him.”

“I had a similar thought when Varys told me.”

“So, we’re in agreement then?”

Jon nods. She can feel his chin brushing the side of her face, the hairs of his thick beard tickling her
Dany smiles. “And how will we know if he’s a fucking traitor or not?”

“Very funny,” he says, chuckling. “I gave him a scare so he’ll be looking to jump ship soon. That is if he’s actually a traitor. If he’s loyal he’ll continue with his daily activities.”

“We have a possible traitor in our midst, we need to draw up our next battle plans, and find a new place to stay as soon as possible.” Dany closes her eyes and imagines they’re back in Meereen touring the pyramid and listening to the local children sing songs as they pass. “I wish we could burn them all tonight and be done with it.”

Jon rests his chin on the top of her head, idly petting her hair. “Me too. What’s stopping us?”

“No dragons.” Dany laughs. She loves how Jon’s chest rumbles when he laughs. “If you could ride any dragon of old, which would you choose?”

“You already know which one.”

“Of course. The dragon your girlfriend rode,” she says sarcastically.

“Visenya would probably deem me unworthy.”

“Probably.” Dany doubts that. Jon has the blood of the dragon, he has fire in his veins.

“She’d like you, though.”

“I like to think so.” Dany sits up. All of their talk about plotting and war has dampened her arousal. She’s anxious to get this war over with now. The sooner, the better. “We should catch Robb before he sneaks off to Highgarden. We need to plan our next strategy. I want us to hit harder this time.”

“Yeah, Visenya would’ve loved you.”

After two months of being clean, Viserys is craving. He just wants—no, he just needs one line. That’s it. He just needs to snort one line of coke to clear his mind. The source of his distress is a mixture of things. For instance, there’s his deeply rooted fear of losing his family and Arianne. Especially Arianne. He’s never cared for anyone the way he cares about her. Ever.

Shit’s starting to pop off, and that’s the exact moment when loved ones are killed. Nightly, he has vivid nightmares of her dying. Sometimes she’s in the place of his mother in those nightmares, dying on the birthing bed, reaching out with a bloody hand to her newborn child just to hold them once. Other times, she’s killed by a faceless enemy, throat slashed right before his eyes.

Aside from the nightmares and worrying over Arianne, who is more than capable of protecting herself, Viserys is worried about Rhaegar. There is something seriously wrong with his brother. To say Rhaegar isn’t behaving like himself is the understatement of the fucking century. No one else seems to notice it. Viserys sure hopes he’s wrong.

Something tells him he isn’t.

He really just needs a little coke right now. Maybe even some pills. Something to mellow him out. Yeah, he doesn’t need anything like cocaine. He needs pot. No, pot will make him tired and he can’t afford to be high as shit and lethargic if their enemies attack. Coke keeps him alert. He’s taken down so many warehouses while jacked up off coke, killed so many people, tore down so many
operations, suppressed so many bad memories off coke alone.

Gods, he needs it.

Under the table, Arianne touches his twitching thigh. “Should we leave?” she asks, skimming over
the menu. “We can eat somewhere else if you want.”

That’s right. This is date night. Viserys rented out a private room at this restaurant for them and
showed up at Sunspear with his trunk filled with red roses for her - romantic shit. She’s wearing a
little black, Prada dress, and a diamond choker. She’s perfection incarnate, and here he is jonesing
hard.

Shaking his head, Viserys takes a sip of water. “It’s fine,” he says, tone unintentionally clipped.

Arianne sits the menu down. “Viserys, look at me.”

Reluctantly, Viserys looks at her.

“Talk to me,” she says, pleading with her pretty brown eyes.

“I...there’s nothing to talk about.” He laughs it off. “We could talk about how good you look,
though.”

“You’re feening, aren’t you?”

Viserys nearly cracks. Abruptly, he pushes his chair back. “I’m going to go freshen up. Order for
me. You know what I like.” He takes a crack at light humor. “I hope this place knows how to use the
proper spices, unlike that other place we went to.”

Arianne doesn’t let him leave. “Empty your pockets,” she says.

“I don’t have any on me.” He wishes he did.

“Empty your pockets,” she repeats sternly.

She won’t say it a third time.

Viserys empties all of his pockets. There isn’t even a piece of lint in sight. Of course, there isn’t. This
is a new Balmain suit for fuck’s sake.

“May I leave?” he asks, irritated.

“Will you come back?”

She knows him so well. It’s actually scary.

When he doesn’t answer, Arianne stands. “You will not ditch me here. Take me home!”

Viserys agrees to take her home. During the drive, she stares at him, loudly. He turns the radio up to
get rid of the awkward silence but she turns it back down. When he tries to touch it again, she
smacks his hand away.

“Don’t turn it up while I’m trying to talk to you!” she says.

“You haven’t said a word since we got in the car!”
Arianne opens the glove department, finding nothing. Then she checks the center console, finding only chapstick, Gucci shades, and a gun.

“Sweetie, I’ve been doing coke since I was sixteen. You think I’m dumb enough to hide it in either of those places?”

“Then bend over and let me check up your ass.”

Viserys laughs. “You’re fucking insane!”

“Are you using again, Viserys? Do not lie to me.”

“No, I’m not using again.” Viserys tightens his hand on the steering wheel. “But I really want to,” he admits quietly. “I can taste it on my gums. I...I need it, Ari.”

“You don’t need it. You never needed it.”

“You don’t know what it’s like inside my head.”

“No, I don’t. But I still know you don’t need it. What you need to do is face whatever fear you have. Stop running away. If this is about Rhaegar, go talk to him. You live under the same roof. There’s no excuse.”

Viserys knows that. He does. It’s just that Rhaegar is hard to approach these days. He just needs to stop being such a baby and do what needs to be done. Fuck his trauma, fuck his nightmares, and fuck his addiction. He can’t allow it to control his life.

He thinks all of this whilst still jonesing for coke.

“I’m staying with you tonight,” Arianne says, turning the radio up. “You can’t come to bed until you speak to your brother.”

“Have you forgotten who you’re talking to?”

“Have you forgotten how good this pussy is? Continue to run from your problems and you will never have me again. I do not lay with weak men.”

That turns Viserys on oddly enough. Yet he hides it.

“I could kick your ass out of my car.” He glances over at her dress. “Though it wouldn’t take too long for someone to pick you up.”

“We both know you’re not going to do that.” She turns the radio up louder, drowning out any response he might’ve made. “Now, quiet. I like this song.”

Damn, she owns his ass.

Again, Viserys is turned on.

First things first, however. He needs to talk to his brother so his girlfriend won’t dump him. Then when he’s back in her good graces, he’ll fuck her boneless to remind her that he owns her ass too.

It’s a rare sight to behold.

But it’s a sight Rhaegar has seen before. Only once, however. A blushing, drunk Lyanna is tripping
over her words, laughing at every little thing, and trying to teach Arthur Dayne, a native of Dorne, how to do the Dornish tango. Because drunk Lyanna has somehow forgotten who they are.

“Okay, Arthur,” Lyanna says, northern accent thick and damn near incomprehensible. She stops suddenly. “I actually have a friend named Arthur!” She laughs, her eyes crinkling. “You look like him too. But my Arthur knows how to tango very well even for his size.”

Playing along, Arthur smirks. “I am told I have a twin running around out there.”

Swaying slightly, Lyanna puts a hand over her mouth, and whispers, “Who’s the bloke over there with the dumb hair?” She doesn’t whisper it at all.

Rhaegar is happy to know that even in a world where they didn’t know one another, Lyanna would still think his hair was stupid. He sits on the lounge chair across the room, observing. Seeing Lyanna carefree like this is fulfilling.

Just a couple of nights ago, she returned to him covered from head to toe in blood. After a long shower, she pushed him down on the bed, climbed on top of him, and literally rode him to sun up. There are still scratches and bite marks on his chest. It was fucking biblical.

“That’s my best friend, Rhaegar. Would you like for me to introduce you?” Arthur is enjoying this far too much.

“Rhay-garr?” Lyanna snorts loudly. “What kind of bloody name is Rhay-garr?”

“He’s from Valyria.”

“Oooh.” She looks like a child almost, her mouth forming a tiny ‘o’ and her eyes wide. “Like the dragon lords of old? Suppose that explains the name.” She thinks for a moment. “It’s not a bad name…”

Arthur stifles a laugh. “Would you like to meet him?”

Lyanna smoothes down her hair and tucks a strand behind her ear, reminding Rhaegar of the girl who finally agreed to go on a date with him. “I don’t want him to be alone all night. So we can go have a chat with him.”

Even while drunk she likes to act unaffected.

“Rhaegar,” Arthur says, smiling from ear to ear, “meet my new friend, Lyanna.”

Standing, Rhaegar extends his hand. “Lovely to meet you, Lyanna.”

Lyanna stares at his hand for a long second. Then she gives it a firm shake. She looks at his eyes, blinking hard. “Are those your real eyes?” she asks, moving closer, getting in his face.

“They are.” Rhaegar struggles not to laugh. She’s so adorable, and adorable isn’t a word one would use to describe Lyanna Stark. “Do you like them?”

“They’re okay.” Lyanna continues to stare despite that, her eyes filling with recognition. “This is going to sound strange but I have this feeling like I’ve met you before. Did...did we used to date?” She covers her mouth. “Gods, this is embarrassing! I swear to you that I’m not the sort of woman to forget the faces of the people she’s dated!”

Arthur is near tears now.
Rhaegar nudges him in the side. He smiles at Lyanna. “What if I told you that we used to be married?”

“Horseshit! I’d never marry a pretty boy!”

Now Arthur is bent over, dying with laughter. It’s hilarious because Lyanna told him long ago that she would never go out with a pretty boy yet she did.

“So you think I’m pretty?” Rhaegar asks.

Shrugging lazily, Lyanna sways again. She leans into Rhaegar, grasping hold of his arms. “On second thought, I can see myself marrying you.” Shamelessly, she squeezes his bicep and drags her other hand down his solid chest. “Husband, how about you take me to bed?”

That would’ve been sexy if it weren’t for the slurring of her words and her wobbly stance. He wishes he could record this and show it to her once she’s sobered up. She’ll never believe she was behaving this way without any visual proof.

“Yes, I think it’s time you slept, Lyanna,” Rhaegar says. “You’re going to feel terrible in the morning.”


“He has his moments,” Arthur chuckles.

“Okay,” Rhaegar says, playfully rolling his eyes at the man. “Come, Lyanna. It’s time we retired for the night. You also need water.”

For once, Lyanna is compliant. At least for a little while. She drinks the water he gives her, and bats her eyelashes at him and even tries to wink. Rhaegar loves her but even has to admit how ridiculous she looks trying to wink. She never could wink.

Once she finishes her glass, she challenges him to an arm wrestling match. She wants to see if his arms are just for show or if he’s as strong as he looks. Inebriation does nothing to hinder Lyanna. Even still, Rhaegar may look like a pretty boy in the face but he isn’t one. He beats her twice, and that earns him a dance with her.

They slow dance in the quiet, dark kitchen to whatever tune is playing inside of Lyanna’s head. In here, being close like this, he can feel the weight of her sorrow.

“We should get married again,” Lyanna whispers. “You said we used to be married. Let’s do it again.”

She can’t know how badly Rhaegar wants that.

“You don’t even remember how our first marriage ended, Lyanna.”

“Doesn’t matter. Feels like...feels like we were in love. Feels like we still are.” She steps on his foot as she falls into him.

The sound of light snoring reaches his ears. Raising his brows, he looks down at her to make sure he isn’t imagining things. Sure enough, Lyanna is out cold. In a bit of a daze, he just stands there for a while holding her against him. Then he chuckles to himself.
As he’s carrying her down the hall to her bedroom, he sees Viserys leaning against the wall near his bedroom. One look at his brother is all he needs to know why he’s here and not still on his date with Arianne.

“Is she alright?” Viserys asks, pushing himself off the wall.

“She just had too much to drink. Let me put her in bed then I’ll be back out.” Rhaegar notices the bags under Viserys’s eyes, the way his hands twitch. “Don’t leave, brother. It will only take a minute or so.”

Viserys nods.

Rhaegar removes Lyanna’s sweater and pants so that she doesn’t overheat in her sleep. After tucking her in, he gets pain killers from the medicine cabinet and leaves a couple on her nightstand just in case.

“How was date night?” Rhaegar asks Viserys when he steps out into the hallway. “I hope it went well.”

Saying nothing, Viserys walks down the hall to Rhaegar’s bedroom, and waits for his brother to unlock the door. Ah, so it’s going to be one of those conversations, Rhaegar thinks. He unlocks the door and lets Viserys in first. Closing the door behind them, he leans against the door.

“What would you like to discuss, Viserys?”

“Seeing you now makes me feel as if I only imagined it all.”

Rhaegar, for once, has no idea what Viserys is talking about. That’s intriguing. It’s sometimes fun to be completely caught off guard. “Contrary to what everyone believes, I’m not a mind reader. You will have to be transparent, brother.”

In the dull light, the haggard lines of Viserys’s face are more noticeable. His brother looks as if he’s aged in a matter of minutes. “When I looked in your eyes the other night...the night we burned those men, I saw father’s eyes.”

Their father speaks to Rhaegar now, but he doesn’t listen. “If you found my orders unethical, you should’ve said something then.”

“Unethical?” Viserys sucks his teeth. “I piss on the north. I care nothing for them. Burning them is like burning last season clothing. What bothered me was you, Rhaegar. You were different. You weren’t yourself, and you haven’t been since I got back.”

No, Rhaegar hasn’t been himself for far longer than that. One could argue that the moment he killed his father, the man invaded his mind. Rhaegar has kept him contained all of this time. But he’s losing the fight.

Viserys stuffs his trembling hands in his pockets. “I always thought out of the three of us, I was the one who inherited the most from our father, but it was you all of this time. Wasn’t it?”

“Perhaps.”

“All of my years awaiting my spiral into madness was a waste then. I won’t count myself lucky yet. I’m still young.”

“Viserys, do you honestly believe that I am capable of the atrocities our father committed?”
“Of course not.”

“Then what’s the real problem?” Rhaegar figures it out quickly. “Are you upset that I haven’t shared any of my plans with you?”

“Partially.” Viserys sighs heavily. “Seriously, I’m worried about you Rhaegar. I’d hate to see you become the man who tormented our mother for years. I swear it, I will kill you before I allow that to happen.”

“At least I know you and Arthur will stop me before I go off the deep end.” Rhaegar smiles warmly at his brother. He should’ve known Viserys would eventually overthink himself into a near nervous breakdown. He’s upset with himself for not intervening sooner, but he’s been distracted. It isn’t too late to rectify the situation. “Would you like to see what I’ve been up to in the caves?”

In truth, he should’ve told Viserys from the start. For all of his brother’s faults, he has never betrayed the family, and he’s never betrayed Rhaegar’s trust.

“About fucking time,” Viserys says. “Please tell me that you’ve cooked up something special for our enemies.”

“I’ll allow you to be the judge of that.”

In the end, after the long drive to Dragontone’s ruins and a trip to the catacombs below, Viserys deems Rhaegar’s overall plan bloody brilliant.

During their short time at Summerhall, they grew attached to their second home, but they don’t want a Dragonstone repeat. They’ve already lost one ancestral home. They won’t lose another. Surprising no one, it is Ghost and Grey Wind who mourn their departure the most. Their home is the true north yet there’s something about the southern beaches.

While their cars are being packed and the others are saying their goodbyes, Jon and Robb take their loyal companions to the beach for one last walk. On that walk, the cousins make a promise to one another.

“We’ll bring them back once I’ve retaken the north,” Robb says, the rising sun at his back, the rays making his hair burn bright red. “We’ll unite the north and the south and rule the city together.” He extends his arm to Jon.

Jon clasps Robb’s forearm and vice versa.

Roughly, Robb yanks Jon closer, his blue eyes wide. “And if I fall-”

“Don’t talk like that,” Jon quickly says.

“We have to face reality, Jon. War isn’t child’s play. People are going to die. I might be one of them. Or you.” Robb smiles and it’s all pretty white, straight teeth. “If I do, I want you and Dany to have Winterfell until Arya is old enough to run things on her own. She has grit. Like Aunt Lyanna. She’ll do good. When she’s older.”

Jon nods stiffly. “You have my word, Robb.”

Robb hugs him tightly, and for a moment it feels as if he’s foreseen his own death and is putting his affairs in order. But Jon realizes that’s just his own fear talking. Robb is only doing what smart people do before they run off to battle.
A lot happens in the weeks that follow.

The Targaryens own several homes, penthouses, and apartment complexes in Westeros. But none of those places are suitable enough to serve as a wartime base of operations. They could easily board with one of their allies. Highgarden, Casterly Rock, and Sunspear are large enough to accommodate them all.

But Rhaegar hates the idea of imposing on anyone. So, they opt for a nomadic living arrangement for the time being. They don’t stay anywhere longer than a couple of days. Which works out perfectly because they hardly have any downtime anyway.

For her debut, Dany oversees the retaking of Pyke alongside her brothers.

The three remaining, pureblood Targaryens storm through the island with Second Sons at their backs, Grey Worm and Missandei flanking them. On the opposite side of the island, Jon, Robb, Theon, and Asha infiltrate the Greyjoy’s estate that shares the same name as the island.

Lyanna and Arthur fly overhead, providing back up. By back up that means to say Lyanna is shooting men down from the sky with a mounted machine gun.

Flushing out the Bolton men takes half a day. This time their enemies aren’t unharmed. They don’t cower and beg for mercy. It’s a bloody battle. A great start to a bloody war.

At one point during the fight, Dany finds men holed up in a small house. The house is surrounded. She has Missandei with her, and fifteen of the Second Sons coming in from all sides. Even if one of the men inside managed to kill her, they wouldn’t make it out alive.

“Surrender!” Dany shouts to them. “Surrender or die! Those are your only options!”

Those are the only options Asha and Theon are granting. This is why they’re all here. To win back the siblings’ rightful seat of power. In turn, they will aid them in the war and allow the Second Sons who are still in Essos to board their ships and come to Westeros.

“What is dead may never die!” the men yell back along with insults and other demeaning words.

Dany knows that the men are proud so she tries on more time. “Think of your families, your children if you have them! Do you wish to never see their faces again?”

“Fuck off, you cunt!” One of the men fires a shotgun out of the window, hitting no one. “If you’re going to kill us then come in and do it already!” His goal is just to goad them.

Is that what they think? That Dany is going to order one of the Second Sons to kick the door down so that they can have one final hoorah before they’re all slaughtered? An honorable death is what they’re after. But an honorable death wasn’t an option.

One of the Second Sons comes forward and hands Dany a flamethrower. The small home was made of shabby, old wood. It doesn’t take long for it to burn. The men inside claw at the door and scream and beg for the mercy they previously refused.

Why would Dany risk the lives of her men when this route is much easier? She’s a commander now. She has to consider things like this. Even though burning men alive is considered mad and cruel, she feels no remorse. Because if it had been her or Missandei in that house they would’ve done much worse to them.
What is Dead May Never Die, the Greyjoys say. Yet every last man in that house died. At least the Targaryens chose a motto that they’re capable of living up to.

The woman who was always and only referred to as “the little sister” to anyone who didn’t know her earns a new title on that day. A title she cares nothing for; Aegon with Tits.

To their northern enemies, she’s just another crazed abomination like her brothers and her father. To everyone else in the criminal underworld, she’s a shining beacon of kindness with a touch of ruthlessness; a fine queen.

At the same time, Dany is steadily building her reputation, Jon and Robb are solidifying their reputations as well.

Little birds sing songs of the Young Wolf and the White Wolf fighting with their vicious beasts at their heels. They sweep through warehouse after warehouse, slowly dismantling the northern smuggling and trafficking trades. No one truly knows how they’re capable of knowing the exact moment to hit. Some believe there’s someone on the inside feeding them information.

To draw out the traitor, Roose begins to spread false information to see who’ll take the bait. A tactic that Robb and Jon presented to Ned once, but he refused.

Expecting something like this, Robb told Tormund to let Wyman and Jeor know to be wary of the information they’re given. The old men are seasoned, though. They avoid Roose’s traps with ease and continue supporting Robb’s cause in secret.

As the southern forces continue to bear down on the north, Tormund and the Free Folk run raids throughout the territory, crippling them.

Being attacked from both sides pushes Roose over the edge, and finally, the man snaps. Up until this point, his responses to Rhaegar were mild. He didn’t want to stir the pot too much and wake the dragon. No more, Roose decides.

The day Roose stops toying with them is a dark day for the south.

Five of their main business are simultaneously bombed, killing everyone inside, even civilians. Before they can react to the news, a large number of northern forces storm the southern border. Some of those fighting with the north are members of the Second Sons.

So, it would seem.

In truth, they’re Faceless Men hired by Roose. That is how Grey Worm and Loras are deceived. Jon is the first to notice Grey Worm’s flickering dot on the electronic map. Him, Missandei, and Dany rush to the man’s location while the rest of the family defends the territory.

One of the Faceless Men stabbed Grey Worm in the back six times and left him in an alley to bleed out. There they find Loras beside him, drowning in his own blood. To save Loras, Jon has to hold his throat until a medic arrives. Dany covers Missandei as the woman drags Grey Worm to the awaiting van that takes him to a Maester. Dany stays with Jon and is there to comfort Margaery when the woman and Robb eventually arrive with the medic.

Using the mayhem from the bombs as a cover, the intruders go from neighborhood to neighborhood killing. They spill over into Martell territory.

Viserys, who was already at the Water Gardens with Arianne, fights alongside the Martell forces. They operate like guerilla soldiers, throwing grenades and smoke bombs from the roofs, using the
smoke as a cover as they move through silently slitting throats.

Arianne stands a foot shorter than most of her soldiers yet she looks taller than them all as she shouts orders and makes her own kills.

After the medic does what he can for Loras and takes him away to Highgarden for further assistance, Margaery, Jon, Robb, and Dany join the fight. They help Jaime and the Lannister forces remove the remaining northern filth from their streets.

Civilian's die in the crossfire. It can’t be helped.

Three surviving Faceless Men try to flee once they realize that enough reinforcements have arrived. The assassins have a reputation for being immune to all forms of interrogation. So, Margaery slits their throats the same way they slit Loras’s throat except she cuts deep down to the bone, killing them instantly.

When it’s over, Jon has all of their bodies collected, every last one of their enemies. That same day, they put the bodies in helicopters and drop them over Winterfell at Roose Bolton’s feet.

The Raining of Bodies is what that moment is forever known as in the north.

The following day, Rhaegar is invited to the Westeros Police Department to meet with the Chief of Police, Stannis Baratheon. He declines the invitation. After what happened to Grey Worm, he isn’t in the mood for pleasantries and false politeness.

“If you ignore him, he’ll come to you,” Jon says to his father. They’re standing outside of Grey Worm’s room waiting for the Maester to give them an update. “Those bombs killed forty people. Thirty more bodies fell from the sky.”

“If Stannis Baratheon knocks on my door, I will kill him,” is all Rhaegar says on that matter. He continues pacing again, his right index finger twitching. “Hear me now, Jon. If your brother succumbs to his wounds, the north won’t survive the night.”

Not once does it occur to him that his father has the means to obliterate the entire north overnight.

They had to lock Viserys in his room for a few hours for him to cool down. He wanted to go straight to Winterfell after hearing about Grey Worm. Later, after his anger stifled to a silent rage, Arianne took him with her. Missandei hasn’t shed a tear. She hasn’t said a thing. And that, Jon thinks, is the scariest thing about Missandei’s rage. It’s unsuspecting and unpredictable.

The Maester steps out with good news, however. Missandei and Dany return just in time.

“He will survive,” the Maester informs them. “But he is out of this fight.”

None of them care about that last part. Grey Worm will live. It’s the only thing they care about. They all go in to sit with him. Jon watches his father watching Grey Worm, he notices how the man’s right index finger won’t stop twitching.

It’s in that moment that Jon realizes that there’s a strong possibility that Robb will be ruling over a graveyard by the end of this.

They don’t want to move Grey Worm too much while he’s healing so, for now, they’re staying in a two-story mansion in the countryside. In comparison to Summerhall, it’s a plain, modest abode. Then again, a lot of things could be described that way when compared to Summerhall.
Aside from the constant fighting, Jon has been keeping up with Varys. The man hasn’t done anything suspicious outside of his normal work. But that doesn’t mean he’ll stop watching him. Funny how the man claims to care so much about innocent lives but has shown no remorse for the people who died in the bombings.

People grieve in their own way, it’s true. But Jon thinks the Spider is up to no good. The man is just good at hiding it. Now, Jon could easily just kill him and replace him. People always think they’re irreplaceable. Tyrion once was revered as the cleverest man in the city, and they replaced him with themselves. They’re doing a fine job so far.

Daario probably thought he was irreplaceable but Grey Worm proved him wrong. When his brother fell, the Second Sons fought harder once they heard the news. They’re already loyal to him because he’s a good leader, and he doesn’t cheat them out of their money like their old leader did.

Varys isn’t the one sneaking into impossible places and gathering information. His little birds are. They’re irreplaceable. Varys isn’t.

Jon won’t act impulsively, though. He’s just pissed off about what happened yesterday. Grey Worm could’ve died. He promised him that no one else in his family would die and he intends to keep that promise.

While Dany’s in the shower, Jon watches all the dots on the map closely, in a near-obsessive manner. Missandei and Arthur are sitting with Grey Worm. His mother and father are in their room; he doesn’t want to think about what they could possibly be doing, though it isn’t hard, their dots are covering each other.

Jon pulls a face.

Robb is still at Highgarden. They learned Loras will live but he may never speak again. Jon hates that. Loras is one of the good ones. Viserys is in the Shadow City; a gambling den in Martell territory, and Gendry, his little mole brother, is moving underground.

Suddenly, Ghost gets up and walks over to the bathroom door. Seconds later, Dany is stepping out with damp hair and only a towel covering her. Ghost bombards her with attention.

“Ghost!” she laughs, nudging him away. “What’s gotten into you lately?”

That’s another strange thing that’s been happening. For the past week, Ghost has been clingy toward Dany. They assume it’s because he misses Summerhall and he can sense everyone’s distress.

Ghost bumps Dany’s stomach with his snout, his tail wagging excitedly.

Dany pets him behind the ears. “Can you hear my stomach growling?”

“Food’s on its way,” Jon says, closing out the electronic map on his phone. He gets off the bed. “You smell nice.”

“Showers,” Dany says sarcastically, “I hear that’s what they’re for. Could be wrong.”


And Ghost wiggles in between them, nudging Jon away from her. That’s the first time he’s ever done anything like that.

They both look at each other in shock.
Instinctively, Dany touches her stomach. “Do you think...?”

“Do I think what? That Ghost is being a cockblocker? Yes, I do.”

“I’m serious, Jon.” But she’s laughing. Maybe because she isn’t sure how else to respond to the peculiar situation. “I know this is going to sound far fetched but I...do you think he can sense something growing inside of me?”

“Dany, I told you not to stay up watching those shitty supernatural romance films with my mother.”

“We both know that Ghost and Grey Wind aren’t normal dogs. They aren’t dogs at all.”

“Ghost isn’t a walking baby detector.” Jon knows they’re joking but they’re also being serious, too. Dany is truly starting to believe that Ghost’s odd behavior is because he can tell she’s pregnant. “Okay, let’s go get a pregnancy test. That’ll settle this.”


Jon knows her better than that. She’ll obsess over it for days until she knows for certain. “I don’t think it’d hurt to check. Ghost has saved our asses countless times. Let’s trust his instincts.”

“Okay, let me get dressed!”

It’s as if he told her he was taking her to a library filled with rare books by the way she’s smiling to herself and hurriedly getting dressed. For her sake, Jon hopes she is pregnant. He knows how badly she wants this, and he can’t deny how badly he wants to create life with her again.

They take one of their wedding gifts from Viserys out to the city; a Lykan Hypersport. He got them a matching pair, one black, and one red. Jon hasn’t gotten the chance to actually enjoy it so he takes the long way out of the countryside.

“Any drug store is fine,” Dany says anxiously.

Jon stops at the first one they come across.

It feels strange walking into a brightly lit drug store after so many years of having everything he wanted obtained for him by one of their foot soldiers. The rookies who are trying to prove themselves run all the errands. The cashier gives them an odd look. Maybe because Jon’s wearing a black dress shirt and slacks, and Dany’s idea of “a quick run to the store” attire is a creme, satin slip dress, and a diamond tennis bracelet. Her hair is pulled up into a messy bun.

They look like the stereotypical obnoxious rich kids.

Dany doesn’t notice the cashier’s staring. She’s scanning the shelves of pregnancy tests. Beside her, Jon holds out a basket as she tosses several boxes in.

“There’s ice cream back there,” Jon tells her.

Of course, Dany can’t resist. As their items are being rung up, the cashier continues to stare at them. Before Jon can ask the man what his issue is, Dany picks up a tabloid and shows it to him. Photos from their wedding are still circling around. Rhaegar warned them that they’d be the talk of the town for at least a year.

It goes to show how closed off they are from the rest of the world. They’ve been so busy with the
war that they've missed all the media buzz surrounding their marriage.

“The Scandal That’s Sweeping The Nation,” the tabloid’s cover reads.

Snickering, Dany places the magazine on the counter. “We’d like to add this as well.”

Now that the cashier is certain that they’re the famous incest couple, his entire demeanor changes. He’s as rude as he can be to them without being blatant about it. And, Jon really wants him to be blatant about it so he’ll have cause to knock his teeth in.

Their total is given. Jon pays and tells the man to keep the change. Grabbing the bags, Jon has a staredown with the man, daring him to say anything.

Dany kisses him on the cheek, “Let’s go, husband,” she says. “I’m dying to have lots of incestual sex with my nephew tonight.”

The man is fuming red now. They leave the store, laughing loudly, and they laugh about it all the way home.

Back in their bedroom, Jon waits outside the bathroom while Dany takes the tests. Out of the dozen they got, she only takes two. Jon knows the results when she cracks the door open and stares at him with red, puffy eyes.

Shaking her head, she smiles sadly. “Ghost isn’t a baby detector. You were right.”

This is one of those moments where Jon hates that he was right. He pulls her into his arms and holds her while she cries. He thinks she’s more upset that she allowed herself to get her hopes up more than anything. Honestly, they both got their hopes up. He’s sure to tell her that she isn’t alone in that regard.

“It’s for the best,” Dany says. “I don’t want to sit this fight out and I’ll hate to put our unborn child in harm’s way.”

Jon wonders if it’s just too early for the pregnancy tests to pick up anything. But he doesn’t voice it. He doesn’t want her to get her hopes up again just for them to be dashed away.

“We have plenty of time to have a baby, Dany.”

“I know.”

After dinner, they sit in bed eating ice cream and reading about what the smallfolk are saying about their marriage. They have a good laugh about it.

It’s simple really.

Gendry is tired of standing on the sidelines while Robb and Jon get all of the glory. He never much cared for things like glory and status. His idea of a good life was one where he could have peace and quiet and an endless supply of materials for weapon crafting and reupholstering. That’s it.

But then Gendry met a girl. Okay, he’s met a lot of girls during his short time on this earth. For all of his reclusiveness and general avoidance of people, he’s never had trouble talking to girls. A lot of people find him handsome, and he likes to think that he’s handsome, too.
As far as his dating life goes, it’s non-existent. Good looks don’t always make up for a dull personality. At least not for him. Robb is charming, personable, and brave. Jon has a wicked sense of humor, he’s a good fighter, and he’s a gentleman. On top of that, they’re both unfairly handsome. All the girls used to lose their shit over them. None of them did that for Gendry.

Now, Gendry has a girl that actually likes him. They danced at Jon and Dany’s wedding. He was afraid to ask her at first but Robb was a good wingman that night. Amulya Dayne was the prettiest girl at the wedding hands down. And Gendry was the only person, aside from family, that she danced with.

Him! She picked him!

They danced and talked all night. They even exchanged phone numbers. He has texted her every chance he’s got, and they’ve talked on the phone sometimes. She’s been hearing about the war and worries about him. Everyone is talking about Jon, Robb, and Dany mostly. They even have cool nicknames.

Young Wolf. White Wolf. Dragon Queen.

Gendry wants Amulya to hear heroic tales about him, too. He wants a cool nickname. Something like the Young Stag.

“That sounds stupid,” he mutters himself.

The way Gendry sees it, if he can come up with a good battle strategy, Jon will let him lead the next fight or at least let him be present for it. Every fight, his brother tells him to stay out of it. He doesn’t want Gendry to get hurt or worse killed.

Checking the time on his phone, he makes a mental note. He’s been in the catacombs for two hours, and it feels as if he’s made zero progress. That means if they were to infiltrate the north this way, they’d have to use motorcycles or some other form of transportation small enough to move through the tunnels.

They’ll need the element of surprise. Using the catacombs will give them that advantage.

Once the bricks change color from brown to black, he knows he’s beneath Dragonstone. The last time he tried to come anywhere near the estate in the past, there were iron gates closing off the tunnels from all sides. Those gates are nowhere in sight.

It strikes Gendry as odd but he thinks nothing of it. He doesn’t begin to rethink his decision of traveling this way until a foul stench reaches his nose. It’s indescribable, the stench. Strong enough to make his eyes water.

Bending the corner, he comes across two mining carts holding glass caches. Seeing the glowing, green liquid, he stops dead in his tracks. Gendry has seen something like this before. Instead of green, it was blue. A lot of the newer bombs are infused with the liquid. But that doesn’t explain the smell. He’s been around bombs all his life. He knows how they smell.

This smell is something else entirely.

The same time he discovers the source of the stench, he learns that he isn’t alone. When he first sees Rhaegar, the fear that was building up in him settles. Because every time he’s been around Rhaegar the man has been nothing but kind to him, even when his mother isn’t around. But then he sees the heap of melted corpses at Rhaegar’s feet and that fear returns. Gendry never knew that melted eyeballs looked that way, like eggs frying. He clutches his stomach and bends over.
“Roose sent them to spy on us,” Rhaegar says without turning to face Gendry. “Any secrets they obtained, they will take to their graves.”

Rhaegar sounds different. Or maybe Gendry is just so in shock that his hearing is impaired. He stares at the carts, at the caches they contain. That’s right. He does know what that is. There’s an arm’s dealer in Norvos who tried to sell it to him once.

“W-what are you going to do with that wildfire?” Gendry asks. He has no idea where he got the courage from. Every ounce of survival instinct he owns is telling him to get the hell out of there.

Wordlessly, Rhaegar steps away from the corpses. “You shouldn’t be down here,” he says in a voice that isn’t his own. “Do you know that you’re trespassing?”

“I’m sorry. I-I just wanted-”

Rhaegar stands before him and it’s as if Gendry is staring at someone else. “Has anyone ever told you how much you favor your father? I’m sure they have.” His hatred is as clear as day even in the dimly lit space.

“I won’t tell anyone. Not Jon. Not my mother. No one!”

At the mention of his brother and mother, Rhaegar blinks hard and winces as if he’s suffering from a sudden migraine. His behavior terrifies Gendry further. It’s like the man is battling an unseen force, something inside of him.

For no apparent reason outside of fear and a need to survive, Gendry does the dumbest thing he has ever done in his life. He tries to punch Rhaegar Targaryen in the face.

Rhaegar grabs the fist Gendry throws at him, and without any force or noticeable strength, he calmly lowers Gendry’s hand back the boy’s side.

“That wasn’t very wise, Gendry,” Rhaegar quietly says. His voice has returned and he looks like himself again.

Gendry gulps. “They don’t call me Gendry the Wise.” His heart is trapped in his throat. He’s never been more afraid in his life.

Rhaegar is going to kill him. Gendry can see it in his eyes. He can see the thought process as if it were laid out before him. The man will kill him and find a way to blame it on their enemies so his mother and Jon won’t know the truth. He already knows what lie he’ll feed them and how he’ll get rid of Gendry’s remains.

Gendry glances at the wildfire. Then back at Rhaegar.

No, he’ll shoot him instead. It’s more believable if he has a body to show them.

He is stupid. So fucking stupid for coming down here. He’s going to die a dumb virgin. Bloody hell.

“Go, Gendry,” Rhaegar says, stepping away from him. When Gendry doesn’t budge, he roars, “Go!” His voice carries throughout the tunnels, echoing off the brick.

Gendry runs all the way back to where his mother and brother are, and through broken words and tears, he tells them everything.

The cat’s out of the bag.
Rhaegar is verbally assaulted the second he walks through their bedroom door. Lyanna is rightfully furious with him. For starters, he kept the whole wildfire plot from her, he plans to obliterate her girlhood home, and he seriously contemplated killing her son. He could argue that it was Aerys who wanted it done, but he can’t deny that he thought about it too.

Besides, using the “my dead father told me to do it” schtick as an excuse feels forced. Even though his dead father did tell him to do it. But Rhaegar couldn’t do it. He couldn’t do that to Lyanna. So, he risked Gendry running north and warning them of his plan because he couldn’t bear breaking her heart. He tries to explain that to her.

She isn’t having it.

“You piece of shit!” Lyanna screams, shoving him against the wall. “You were going to kill my boy! I will kill you for my children!”

“I know that, Lya-”

Lyanna slaps him hard enough to split his lip open. Feeling remorseful, she backs away from him and balls her fists at her sides. “I shouldn’t have done that,” she says, crying. “I’m pissed at you but I shouldn’t hit you.”

“It’s well deserved.”

“No, because I wouldn’t want you to hit me. I’m sorry for that.” She’s trembling, she’s so angry. “Gendry...you scared him. He’s still scared. He doesn’t even want to be here anymore. Not that I blame him.”

Rhaegar can’t stand to see her hurting like this. He reaches for her and she backs further away. “I should have told you about the wildfire,” he says.

“Why didn’t you?” Lyanna raises her hand in warning. “Don’t toy with me, Rhaegar. No more secrets. Tell me everything or I swear, I’m leaving for good. I spent my life with a man who tried to control me. I won’t be with one who can’t be open with me. That’s a form of control too, you know. You only want me to know certain things. That’s not fair!”

It never even occurred to him that was a form of control. He feels sick. The last thing he wants is for her to see any hint of Robert in him. But he brought this on himself with all of his plotting and secret-keeping and determining what information she could and couldn't handle.

Rhaegar comes clean. About everything from the full wildfire plot, its origins, and his reasons for hiding it from her. By the end of it, she’s sitting on the floor, halfway covering her ears. He sits across from her and waits.

“We will dance on their ashes,” she whispers, startling him.

“You...heard that?”

Lyanna nods. “I thought you were going to burn our enemies, not the whole damn place,” she says numbly.

“Are you against it?”

“I...I need time to think about everything. And I know we don’t have time but if I can just have a day. That’s more than enough time to decide if I want to see my family’s ancestral lands blown up!”
“I’m sor-”

“Fuck you!” Lyanna wants to hit him again but she won’t. She closes her eyes and tilts her head back, taking a deep breath. “Who were you talking to that night in your study, Rhaegar?”

If he lies to her again after everything he’ll lose her.

“Aerys.”

Lyanna’s eyes snap open and she looks at him. “Your father?” He nods and she starts crying again. “How long has he been...talking to you?”

“Since I killed him.”

“But you managed to keep him quiet all these years?” She’s trying to be hopeful for him; for them. “He would’ve wanted you to burn this whole city, the world, but you, you’re just targeting the north.”

“I know you’re trying to find good in me, Lyanna, but...” Rhaegar shakes his head. He’s a monster. It’s time she sees that. “He’s a part of me. I can’t get rid of him.”

“You’re stronger than him. You always have been.”

Rhaegar searches her face for a hint of fear, disgust even. He only finds sadness and concern, love and pain. How can she feel those things for him after what he’s done and what he plans to do? He thought she’d be afraid of him and that she’d hate him. Perhaps it’s too soon to say. He is startled when she hugs him. So startled that it takes a while for him to return the embrace. Lyanna touches his head gently as if she’s trying to quiet the storm of madness there.

“I love you, Rhaegar,” she says and he can hear her heart breaking with every word. “I want to help you through this. I want to stand with you against him and I intend to...”

Rhaegar knows where this is going, doesn’t make the journey any less painful. “But?”

“I can’t stay here with you when Gendry needs me. My children come first, before any man, before anyone.”

“I understand, Lyanna.”

“This isn’t me saying I’m leaving for good, Rhaegar. Just give me time to make sure he’s okay and...and I’ll come back. I’m not leaving you to Aerys. We’ll fight him together.”

Rhaegar doesn’t want to let her go. They’re squeezing each other to a painful degree.

“I have to go,” she says.

“I know.”

Neither of them wants to be the first to let go. The panic begins to set in. This is so much like the last time they said their goodbyes. Rhaegar promised Lyanna it was only temporary, that once the war was over, he’d come for her. Now here they are again, making a similar promise to one another.

Rhaegar mumbles apologies and begs her to stay even though he knows she must leave. Her children come first. He doesn’t think he could love her as much as he does if she were any other way.

Lyanna ends the embrace. She tears herself away from him, and it’s like ripping a band-aid off a
wound. They’re both left raw and vulnerable. Hurriedly, she rushes out of the room without looking back.

Arthur comes for him after some time has passed, informing him that Lyanna and Gendry have just left for one of their condos in the city. Jon sent several cars filled with men to accompany them. His best friend also tells him that Robb Stark is there.

“Does he know?” Rhaegar asks listlessly.

“He knows.”

The drive to the condo is uneventful, and in a way, that’s how Lyanna should’ve known that something bad was going to happen.

There had been warning signs all day long, honestly. Nothing too obvious. Just the innate things like an uneasy feeling, random goosebumps, and a metaphorical dark cloud hovering above. Lyanna shoved the negative thoughts aside best she could and blamed it all on the war.

Grey Wind had been acting strange all day, too. All week really. She couldn’t walk anywhere without him hovering around her. She expected that sort of behavior from Ghost, but he was too busy following Dany around. All throughout the day, she kept slipping into these depressive moods. Memories from the last war kept popping up. When she noticed the date, that’s when she realized the source of some of the oddities.

It’s a week before her and Rhaegar’s wedding anniversary. Around this same time, the great war was already underway. How strange for another war to be happening around the same time.

Lyanna genuinely thought the day couldn’t get worse after Gendry came running to her with the news. Then Rhaegar told her about his mental struggle with his dead father. Even then, she truly believed, like an idiot, that the day was done with her, that her heart had suffered enough, that her stress levels wouldn’t go up another notch until at least tomorrow.

When she saw the car driving in front of them get hit with a rocket-propelled grenade, she knew how wrong she was. Their driver swerved off the road to avoid colliding with the car in front of them but they lost control of the wheel once a car pulled up on the side of them and started shooting.

They were grateful for the bulletproof windows but they did no good in the grand scheme of things. Their car still ran off the road, the second car was still hit with a grenade like the first car, and they were still ambushed by far too many men to fight alone.

Lyanna still fought. She still shoved Gendry behind her and fought for as long and as hard as she could. But those fuckers knew better than to go toe to toe with her. The cowards used chloroform.

She only knows they did the same to Gendry because she watched it through heavy-lidded eyes. What they did to them after that was lost on her.

Sometime later she wakes up in her bedroom.

Her bedroom at Winterfell.

It’s just as it was the day she left to live with Robert. She cries when she sees the photo of her and Benjen on the nightstand.

They are not happy tears.
Hearing heavy footsteps approaching, she closes her eyes and pretends to sleep because whatever they gave her while she slept prevents her from moving anything but her head. The door is opened and she just knows it’s Robert. He doesn’t walk in, he just peeks his head in from the sound of it.

“How far along is she?” he asks someone.

Lyanna’s heart squeezes in her chest.

“Three weeks exact,” Maester Luwin says. Hearing his voice again after so many years fills her with a mixture of emotions. All good. But that doesn’t change how terrified she is. “The babe could’ve been lost during your men’s reckless attac-”

“It should’ve been lost,” Robert says through gritted teeth. He’s speaking in what he thinks is a quiet voice as not to wake her. “I want his spawn out of her immediately. And don’t tell me it’s too early. I know strong tonics that exist for that exact purpose, Maestar. Find one and give it to her.”

Maester Luwin is quiet, a sign of his disapproval.

“This instance!” Robert barks.

Lyanna hears someone walk away. She knows it’s Maester Luwin leaving to do Robert’s bidding. It’s like the day she discovered she was pregnant with Jon all over again. She’s alone and scared. Except for this time, no one is here to protect her from Robert’s wrath.

That means Lyanna will have to fight for herself and this child’s life all on her own. She’s up for the challenge.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Comments are appreciated! Also, I think this story will have 30 chapters exact.
“You’re a fucking liar,” Robb says from his place at the opposite end of the table, his blue, hardened eyes focused solely on the man he’s addressing. “You told me no harm would come to my family yet you’ve been plotting to destroy the north this entire time!”

On Rhaegar’s left, Tywin shifts in his chair, a sign of his building vexation. The man isn’t fond of the way Robb is talking to Rhaegar, he isn’t fond of how the young wolf has been talking to them all. In attendance aside from the three of them are, Olenna, Arianne, and Jon.

His son sits to his right, quietly fuming. Rhaegar is waiting for him to lash out and attack him, similar to how his mother did. But Jon hasn’t said or done anything alarming.

Yet.

“Your mother and siblings are in Braavos in one of our safe houses,” Rhaegar reminds him with an added emphasis on their precise location because he wants Robb to remember who it was that saved his family and kept them safe. “They won’t even hear the north collapse.”

Robb slams his fists on the table. It’s a rare sight, seeing him blow up like this. “You son of a bitch!”

“Careful.” Rhaegar drops any and all pretense of amity. “Insult my mother again, even vaguely, and you won’t live to see the destruction of the north.”

“He didn’t mean it like that,” Jon says gruffly. “He’s pissed. Rightfully so. You’ve been lying to us all.”

“I haven’t lied.”

“But you kept this from us.” Sucking his teeth, Jon says, “You were doing this right under my nose and I had no idea. Did you intend to ever tell us?”

Tilting his head to the side, Rhaegar contemplates his next words. His actions must come off as anything but careful consideration because Robb’s anger flares up again. He abruptly stands, knocking his chair on the floor. Outside the door, one of the dogs growls. More than likely Grey Wind. They’re linked to their master’s emotions, it would appear.

Fascinating, Rhaegar thinks. He once read an old text about warging. But that was during the time of the magic that allegedly existed in their world. He’s thinking of how splendid and peculiar such a thing is all while Robb is calling him every name under the bleeding sun.

It’s not that Rhaegar is intentionally tuning the boy out. This is just how his mind works. He’ll tune back in when Robb is ready to have a civil discussion. Among those in the room, no one knows this better than Tywin. The man knows Rhaegar is only half-listening to the insults. He knows that Rhaegar’s disregard will only further piss Robb off and there’ll be no end to this.
So, the old lion intervenes.

“Are you finished with your tantrum?” Tywin asks Robb.

Having his justifiable rage be labeled that way knocks some of the anger out of the boy. Regardless of his emotions, he’s in the presence of some of the most powerful people in the world. He himself is on his way to being recognized as one of those individuals. Despite what has transpired, Rhaegar still believes that Robb Stark is vital to the north’s restoration.

To be frank, Rhaegar is rather fond of Robb. He likes the relationship Jon and Robb have, and he appreciates Robb for accepting Grey Worm so easily. That doesn’t mean he’ll coddle him, though. This is still business. And one way or the other, Robb will need to learn how to conduct business with them. Even Arianne, the niece of his best friend, had to learn the hard way. No one gets an easy pass.

Olenna finally speaks. “I was wondering the same.” Her expression is bored, and knowing Olenna, she is bored. This is nothing more than another dull business meeting to her. “What does any of that matter now? We intend to level the north. Do you intend to stop us?”

Robb is at a loss for words.

Rhaegar pities the boy. Truly, he does. He remembers his first meeting with Olenna and Tywin. It was then that he finally understood why his mother kept postponing Aerys’s assassination. See, they’d been planning on getting rid of his father for years. Every time Rhaegar wanted to move forward with their plan, his mother told him that he wasn’t ready, that he didn’t have what it took to take over the family yet.

“With your father out of the way, Tywin will sink his claws in you, Olenna her thorns,” his mother said to him, “and they’ll control this family through you. I would rather suffer your father for eternity than see our family fall apart...”

Even after killing his father, Rhaegar still wasn’t ready. But he endured. Robb must do the same.

“Per our alliance, I made sure no caches of wildfire were placed beneath Winterfell,” Rhaegar says. “Your ancestral home and the surrounding lands are safe. Highly populated civilian areas are safe. Only our enemies will fall.”

“But some civilians will die from the impact?”

Rhaegar stares at Robb. What kind of question is that? This is war. Civilians are always at risk.

Robb balls his fist, his jaw clenching. “You’re asking me, the heir of Winterfell, to standby while my territory is partially decimated? Morals aside, what will there be left for me to rule over? Do you expect men to follow me when they learn that I allowed you to destroy our lands?”

“With your enemies and their land gone,” Arianne says, smirking, “you can easily rebuild. The north will be what you make it. Think of it as a necessary evil.”

Before Robb can turn Arianne’s words over, Tywin adds, “No one will betray your family ever again. You’ll have the southern families backing you and with the new business opportunities, you’ll keep your men happy and wealthy. Something your father failed to do.”

They’re getting to him.

Slowly they’re chipping away at his exterior. On the inside, Robb is the same as all of them. He’s
willing to do anything for his family’s well-being. He’s gotten a taste of the luxury they have and he wants a piece of it, too. Rhaegar has seen it in his eyes before.

The lovely Queen of Thorns is the one who adds the icing to the cake.

“You can marry Margaery,” she says.

Tywin and Arianne smile. Jon’s eyes widen. Rhaegar and Olenna watch Robb’s face closely.

“Who says I want to marry Margaery?” Robb tries to hold on to his stubborn pride. He wants them to think he’s as honorable as his father but if that were the case, he’d be dead already.

Robb is a survivor. Honor means nothing to a survivor.

Olenna gives Robb a flat look. She doesn’t even entertain his question. “North and South can be united through marriage. No one will challenge your rule.” A pause. “Our rule.”

Even though Robb doesn’t agree to the terms then and there, they all know the deal is sealed. His enemies will be wiped out, his family restored to power, ample land to rebuild on, more opportunities for vast riches to be obtained, and the hand of one of the cities most desirable women in marriage. A woman who just so happens to be one he's already romantically involved with.

The death of a couple hundred worthless men and a few civilians is beginning to look like a cheap price to pay.

Feeling defeated, Robb picks his chair up and slumps down in it, the weight of the truth and his responsibilities crashing down on him.

They’re not completely heartless. Even Tywin refrains from kicking the boy while he’s down.

“Give him time to mull it over,” Tywin says, pushing his chair back. “He’s a smart boy. I am confident that he will make the right choice for his family.”

Olenna and Arianne leave with Tywin, no parting words to spare.

“Console your cousin,” Rhaegar whispers to his son. “Afterward, come find me.”

“Oh, I intend to,” Jon promises darkly.

This is all Gendry’s fault and no one can tell him otherwise. In his foolhardy attempt to show off for a girl way out of his league, he stumbled across something he should’ve never stumbled across.

He can still see those melted bodies at Rhaegar’s feet. He can still smell their flesh.

How can a man as beloved and kind as Rhaegar do a thing like that to a person? His mother and brother always spoke so highly of the man. There were even times when Gendry saw firsthand how good the man was. Now he’s beginning to wonder if it was all an act.

Still, Gendry felt bad about his mother choosing to leave with him. He assured her that he’d be fine on his own. But she wouldn’t have it. She was devastated when they left the house though she tried to hide it.

That’s his mother. Always putting him and his brother over everything else, even the man she loves.
Gendry used to fantasize about being in situations that would give him the opportunity to do that for her. Yet every single time he's had a chance to protect her, he failed.

He deserted her the night Dragonstone was attacked, and he did nothing while she fought off their abductors.

Useless. He’s so fucking useless and undeserving of her.

Robert’s sitting by Gendry’s bedside without an ounce of paternal concern on his face. They’re in Robb’s bedroom; the heir’s bedroom. Being here makes Gendry sick to his stomach. This is not their home, these are not their things. Ned was his father’s best friend yet the man is willing to help a traitor usurp him, he’s willing to parade around here like he earned the right to do so.

“You love your mother, boy?” Robert asks in contempt. “You love her more than the woman who birthed you?”

Gendry doesn’t even know the woman who birthed him. She gave him up. He always thought it was because of him, but no, it was his father. She saw the man in him and couldn’t stomach the sight. It makes Gendry wonder if perhaps he’d raped her too.

“The day she brought you to the house,” Robert says, staring off into a random corner of the room. “I nearly kicked you out the door. I didn’t want to raise you. I didn’t want a bastard under my roof out of respect for my wife.”

It’s not surprising that his father thought to do that. Doesn’t mean it hurts any less to know how meaningless his existence was to this man.

Continuing, Robert returns his gaze to Gendry’s face, his eyes softening. “But Lyanna exhibited one of her few redeeming qualities on that day. She took you in. I fought her on it but she fought harder. I never regretted her decision...”

“Is this your idea of a heart to heart?” Gendry asks.

As quickly as flipping a switch, Robert’s eyes crystalize. “I never regretted her decision,” he repeats, “until I learned you’ve been supplying the bloody Targaryens with weapons! My boy working for those incestuous abominations!” Spit flies out of his mouth and his eyes bulge. “I should’ve taken you out back that day your whore mother brought you in and put you down!”

“Why didn’t you?!” Gendry shouts back, sitting up quickly. He gets in the man’s face, his own rage clouding his judgment. “I’d rather be dead than be the son of a fucking rapist!”

Robert backhands him. Instead of crying as he would’ve as a child, Gendry hits him back. He punches him square in the face, the same way he tried to punch Rhaegar. The fact that the hit connects startles them both. Hitting his father feels good. Better than he could’ve imagined. Gendry tries for another hit, but Robert’s shock wears off fast. He grabs Gendry by the neck, slamming him on the mattress.

Gendry struggles and screams out curses.

“You love your mother,” Robert says over his screams, “and you’d do anything for her, right?”

Gendry stops fighting. He listens.

“You were with them for a good bit. Tell me what they’re planning. I know that prick Rhaegar is planning something.”
“I don’t know anything.”

“You heard about what I did to your mother that night at Dragonstone, didn’t you? That’s why you attacked me that day.”

Gendry grits his teeth, hatred, and disgust filling him all over again. How could he ever believe that a monster like this ever loved or cared about him? They’re nothing but objects to him. All of them. Everyone he’s ever interacted with. They’re just something to own and mistreat as much as he likes. The fucker has what’s coming to him, Gendry thinks. He hopes Rhaegar does to his father what he did those men in the catacombs.

“I don’t know anything,” Gendry says again, turning away from the man.

Robert shifts forward, whispering, “I’ll do it to her again,” he warns, ”and make you watch if you don’t tell me what you know.”

“You’re sick!”

“Do you think I’m bluffing, boy? All I’m asking for is one piece of information, something that’ll give me the upper hand with that Rhaegar cunt. Do that or I swear by the gods, I will drag her in here and break her again!”

Gendry doesn’t doubt the man for a second. Even still, he can’t reveal the wildfire plot. He can’t risk the lives of everyone by being careless. His father only wants some information. It doesn’t have to be Rhaegar’s plot. He just needs to give him something in order to keep his mother safe.

“Jon kept me in the basement most of the time,” he says. “He told me I had to earn my place in the family so I don’t know what they’re planning.”

Robert huffs loudly and gets up to fetch Lyanna. He thinks Gendry’s lying.

“I only know that Rhaegar made her wear a tracker! He likes to keep tabs on her so he put one on her months ago!”

“Did he put one on you, too?”

If Gendry reveals that he also has a tracker on him, Jon won’t be able to know where they are. “Rhaegar doesn’t care about me enough to do that. He only put one on my mother.”

“Where is the tracker?”

“Mother mentioned it being in her arm. I don’t know which one!”

Gendry’s spent most of his life terrified of his father so it doesn’t occur to Robert that he may be lying. It would seem that years of being the harmless idiot is paying off.

“I’ll figure it out,” Robert promises. “Listen to me well, boy. Every time you act out or try to escape, your mother will pay for it in blood.”

Gendry understands why he’s here now. It has nothing to do with his father’s love for him. He’s nothing more than leverage to use against his mother.

Warily, Lyanna eyes the steam billowing from the cup in Maester Luwin’s hand. She can smell the mint and honey. Her stomach turns, and for a moment she wonders if the barely developed babe in her belly is afraid as much as she is.
That’s silly, she tells herself. The baby is barely a baby at all now. Still, it’s hers, it’s Rhaegar’s. Having another baby with Rhaegar crossed her mind briefly in the past, but she never lingered on the thought. Now that she carries his child, she knows without a doubt that she wants it.

Maester Luwin sits the hot cup on the bedside table. “Let’s allow it to cool down first,” he says as if he’s referring to a regular cup of tea and not a natural abortifacient.

This was the same man who counseled her during her pregnancy with Jon. He took care of her family and her children dutifully for years. Tonight, he’s acting on the orders of their enemy.

Lyanna can move her arms now but she hasn’t made it known. The moment he tries to bring that cup up to her lips, she’s going to throw the hot liquid in his face and bludgeon him to death with the table lamp. She’s played the plan over and over inside her head so many times, it feels as if she’s already done it. She loves the man, she does, but for her child, she’ll kill him and anyone else who tries to take this baby from her.

“You don’t have to worry, Lyanna,” the Maester quietly says. “I am not here to harm you or your babe.”

“The moon tea suggests otherwise.”

“I have been loyal to your family for decades. I do not intend to break faith after all this time. I have only done what was needed in order to survive long enough to see Lady Catelyn, Robb, and his siblings returned.”

Lyanna glances at the cup. She watches the smoke float up and disappear. “Are you telling me that’s not moon tea?”

“Chamomile with an added ingredient that will trigger your menstrual cycle. Men tend to be ignorant when it comes to a woman’s body. Robert won’t know the difference between that and an aborted pregnancy.”

Even Rhaegar with all of his intelligence, open-mindedness, and general awareness would think the same. The idiot probably doesn’t even know she’s pregnant or has considered the possibility. Neither did she. They’re too old to be blindsided by these sorts of things. In their defense, they were too overjoyed by being physically and emotionally reunited to use their fucking brains.

“Maester Luwin,” Lyanna says slowly, making sure he hears her well, “if that turns out to be moon tea and my baby dies, I’m going to rip your spine out of your body and beat you to death with it.”

Luwin smiles fondly. “I don’t doubt your words for a second, Lyanna.” He props her head on the pillow then he picks up the cup. “You’re one of the few girls I never had to prepare moon tea for. I must admit, I never thought you would be whisked away and involved in a forbidden love affair.”

Back then, Lyanna thought the same. She understands now that she can still be wilful and free while in a relationship. It’s all dependent on the person she chooses to be with. Rhaegar is that person. Even though he’s a manipulative cunt with a deteriorating mind, she’s going to stick by him. She wonders if that makes her a fool. At least she’s a happy fool when she’s with him. That’s better than wishing to die every moment of every day.

“I’ve had moon tea before,” she admits. “The Lannister’s Maester gave it to me that night...” She can still hear Tywin’s voice in her head. It was him who ordered his Maester to give it to her just in case. Rip out the seed before it can sow, he’d ordered callously. She’s grateful to him for that. Still, she had moments where she thought the baby had survived, that she’d be forced to carry her rapist’s
child. Those were truly dark times for her. “Will it give me cramps? I fucking hope not.”

“The results vary.” Maester Luwin helps her drink. He makes her drink all of it. “I take it the rumors are true about Robert…”

Lyanna nods stiffly. “I will have my vengeance, Maester Luwin. You can either help me or you best stay out of my way.”

“Tell me what you need from me.”

The relief that washes over her is indescribable. Unfortunately, before she can make her first request, they hear the sound of Robert’s heavy footsteps. He’s probably come to make sure the deed was done.

“How is Jon handling the information?”

Dany looks away from Grey Worm’s sleeping form to where Missandei is sitting by his bed. She’s draining water from a towel to place on his forehead to help keep his temperature down. She’s been by his side without rest for hours. No one expected less. Still, Arthur and Viserys have tried to relieve Missandei to no avail.

“He hasn’t spoken a word of it to me.”

“That’s not a good sign.”

Even Missandei knows Jon’s rage is like the sea before a great storm. Dany was upset when she heard about Rhaegar’s grand scheme but not for the reason she should’ve been. She was more upset that her brother kept it from them. She isn’t sure why Jon is so upset. Actually, he didn’t seem upset when Gendry told him initially.

What seems to have upset Jon is how distraught his mother looked when she left the house with Gendry in tow. She must remind herself that her husband is a mama’s boy at the end of the day.

She smiles to herself. Then she looks at Grey Worm’s face, and her smile fades. When they arrived at the alley and saw him and Loras there, she already thought they were dead. She thought Grey Worm was dead. And she knows Missandei thought the same.

“Roose Bolton will pay for this,” Dany promises Missandei.

“They all will,” Missandei says, keeping her eyes on her boyfriend. “Is it wrong for me to be glad that Rhaegar intends to use wildfire on the north?”

Dany shakes her head. “I feel the same way. Their swift death guarantees our survival.”

“Rhaegar promised us we’d save the women from the brothels. Aside from them, I see no other reason for us to spare the north.”

Just a couple of days ago, Rhaegar told them that their next big job would be freeing the women who were stolen from Essos by the northerners. She and Missandei had expressed their desire to do something about it when they first heard of it. Hearing stories of how Viserys, Robb, Oberyn, Arianne, and Ellaria went from city to city aiding the woman further inspired them.

“I know this is difficult for Jon and the others,” Dany says. "I only wish Rhaegar would have informed them sooner.”
Last she checked, Jon was still talking to Robb. She’s curious to know how the conversation is going.

Grey Worm begins coughing in his sleep. Both women bustle to his side to help him sit up to make it easier for him. Maesters and other underground doctors are truly remarkable. Without their skills, Loras and Grey Worm would be dead.

Dany sits with Missandei for a little while longer then she goes to check on Jon. On her way to the study, she’s suddenly overcome with a wave of nausea so strong she has to dart to the nearest bathroom to empty her stomach. Sitting on the cold floor, Dany presses a hand to her forehead, wondering if she’s caught some kind of bug. She can’t remember the last time she’s eaten anything or slept or had her cycle…

After washing up, Dany goes upstairs and takes one of the many pregnancy tests she still has. For the full, listed wait time, Dany tells herself that she’s being silly, that no matter how much she wishes for a baby that won’t make her pregnant, that all she’s doing is setting herself up for disappointment. She doesn’t even know why she wants this so badly. She doesn’t understand her obsessive need to get back what was stolen from her. Perhaps it’s something psychological, something she’ll never quite grasp.

Perhaps it’s her desire for a mother. To make up for that loss, she hopes that caring for a child of her own will fill that void. Dany wishes Lyanna were here. She could use her mother-in-law right now.

The sudden shrill of the alarm on her phone has her heart pounding against her chest. Apprehensively, she picks up the pregnancy test, slowly, very slowly she checks the results. She’s read the back of enough boxes to know what the two lines mean. In her excitement, Dany drops the test on the floor as she runs out of the bathroom to find Jon.

When she’s downstairs, she hears a commotion coming from outside. Opening the front door, she steps out on the porch to a chaotic scene.

“You want to fight me then?” Rhaegar is calmly asking a fuming Jon.

Arthur and Viserys stand in between father and son, keeping them away from each other; keeping Jon from Rhaegar. Robb is nowhere in sight, but Dany can see Margaery’s car parked in the driveway. She doesn’t have a moment to even consider what the two are up to because now Jon is shoving Arthur and Viserys away in order to get to Rhaegar, the emptiness that was once in his eyes is replaced by a fiery rage.

“Let him go,” Rhaegar orders them as he removes his shirt. “If it’s a fight he wants, I won’t deny him.”

Arthur and Viserys let Jon go. Her husband runs up to her brother and for a second she thinks Rhaegar is going to stand there and allow Jon to hit him, but no, Jon wants a fight so Rhaegar gives him one.

Rhaegar effortlessly side steps, evading a right hook and then uses the same move to avoid a left hook. He moves as if he’s simply moving from side to side to swat away a fly rather than trying to keep his teeth from being knocked out. One downside of Jon’s blackouts is that he isn’t being strategic with his attacks, making it easy for Rhaegar to dominate.

Jon does land a couple of punches though. The first one, Rhaegar bounces back from, unfazed. He doesn’t return a punch of his own. He hasn’t even touched Jon yet. But the second blow Jon delivers
hurts. That’s evident by the tears that well in Rhaegar’s eyes. There’s blood on his teeth when he grits them, nostrils flared in annoyance.

Then it happens. Rhaegar, her sweet, noble brother, lets some of his masked anger slip. And at that moment, Dany realizes that Jon’s bad temper isn’t all Lyanna.

It’s Rhaegar too.

Rhaegar waits for Jon to get close again, then he punches him in the gut so hard that Jon’s eyes roll into the back of his head and his feet are momentarily lifted off the ground. Instead of letting him drop to the ground, Rhaegar holds him up with his fist.

He touches Jon’s shoulder gently. “I did what had to be done,” he says, sounding as if the act of hitting Jon caused him great suffering. “I know you hate me now, but I did this for our family. I did this because I love all of you.”

Then he lets Jon fall, He leaves him to wheeze and force air into his lungs. He even throws up a little. Arthur and Rhaegar head back inside. Dany rushes over to Jon. She tries to cradle his head in her lap but Jon is stubborn. He struggles to his feet, trying to go another round with his father.

This time Viserys intervenes. “He went easy on you,” he says, obviously speaking from experience. “Let it go.” He puts his arm on Jon’s shoulder, helping him stand.

Jon shoves Viserys off. “You’re right,” Jon shouts at Rhaegar’s retreating back, “I do hate you! You piece of shit! Come back! Fight me!”

Disregarding him, Rhaegar says, “Arthur, check and see if Lyanna and Gendry have made it to the safe house, please.”

Arthur takes out his phone.

At the same time, Jon tries to run up the short steps and attack Rhaegar again. Viserys stops him. She’s grateful that her brother is much stronger than he appears; being drug-free helps, too. He’s able to keep Jon contained somewhat.

“Jon!” Dany steps in front of him, cupping his face. She makes sure his eyes are on her, not Rhaegar. “I know you’re angry that he kept this from us. I know that you’re angry about your mother and Gendry. But we can’t fight amongst ourselves. We’re at war. We must stick together and rely on one another from here on out.”

To see some of the anger leave his eyes fills Dany with an unknown emotion. He searches her face, and she isn’t sure what he finds there but it’s enough for his shoulders to relax and for him to give up his desire for another fight. For now.

Dany has always had this habit of thinking three steps ahead when it came to certain things. In that brief moment, she already has the remainder of their day planned.

Once Jon has fully calmed down, they will sit down with Robb and see how he wishes to proceed, depending on his response they will speak with Rhaegar for the full details of this wildfire plot then they will have alone time where she will tell him that Ghost is, in fact, a baby detector.

That plan is rendered to ash with only three words.

“They’re in Winterfell,” Arthur says.
All of the color drains from Jon and Rhaegar’s faces. It seems inappropriate to point out how much they favor one another at a time like this but they do.


Rhaegar takes the phone from Arthur to see for himself. He takes one look at Lyanna and Gendry’s dots on the map. One look is all he needs. Wordlessly, he runs to his jeep and they all follow him without question. Jon gets in the front seat, whatever tension between father and son is gone. Dany sits smack in the middle, Arthur on her right and Viserys on her left. She reaches under the seat for the guns hidden there, passing one to each of them, minus Rhaegar whose full attention is on the road ahead.

They don’t have a plan and what they’re about to do is foolish but none of them seem to be thinking clearly.

Like some kind of twisted joke, Robert has dinner prepared for them to welcome them home.

He sits at the head of the table where her father once sat, where her brother, Ned, once sat. Lyanna sits to his left, where her mother once sat, where Catelyn once sat. Gendry sits on the right, and she can’t look at him without thinking about her brother Brandon or her nephew Robb. Like Brandon, Robb is good with women. Unlike Brandon, Robb isn’t fucking everything that walks. If he is, he’s being quiet about it.

The tea Maester Luwin gave her has her feeling miserable, but it worked to convince Robert that her baby was aborted. He keeps looking at her as if he’s in on a big secret and he’s dying to rub it in her face. The joke is on him, though.

All of her food is pre-cut for her. Robert is at least smart enough not to give her a knife. But forks can kill, too.

Lyanna doesn’t acknowledge the man, though. She keeps her eyes locked with Gendry, making sure he knows they’re in this together.

“My sources tell me you two were on the way to a safe house in the city,” Robert says, smacking loudly on his food. He picks up his glass of wine, drinking sloppily. His eyes burn a hole on the side of her face. “You and that cunt had a fight?”

His source has to be someone close to the family if they know that information. Lyanna tries to think of who has the means to know that sort of information and successfully relay it to Robert without being discovered. People can’t move in the catacombs without Rhaegar knowing so how can they infiltrate their family and know their secrets? Did she just include herself in his family? Well, at this point, she is a part of the family even if they aren’t married. She’s even begun to bond with Viserys over the oddest of things; reality television.

Robert grunts, pulling her out of her thoughts. “My sources also told me that that worm, Oswell Whent, annulled our marriage.”

Lyanna can’t stop herself from smiling. That’s one of the few times she wasn’t upset by his meddling.

“Did you tell him to do that?” Robert asks. “Did you beg your precious Rhaegar to free you from your loveless marriage?” He mocks.

“The peas could use a little salt, don’t you think?” Lyanna asks Gendry directly. “I’ve forgotten how
bland the food here is.”

She waits for Robert to move to hit her, to bring himself closer to her so she can stab him in the eye with her fork. But he doesn’t lash out.

Instead, Robert orders one of his men to enter the dining room. The man stands behind Gendry, silently waiting.

Lyanna stares at the man.

“We’re going to get re-married,” Robert tells her, taking a sip of his wine. “You owe me a child. You will give me one. You won’t leave here until you’re dead and even then your corpse will reside in the crypts with the rest of the dead Starks.” He sighs. “Minus Ned and that other brother of yours.”

What’s left of Benjen and Ned were buried in the southern territory. It hurts her soul to know that her brothers don’t even have the luxury to rest with their ancestors.

“How dare you show remorse,” Lyanna seethes. “You sided with the man who butchered my brother. Your own pet rat murdered Benjen!”

“And you made him pay for it. I heard what you did at Pyke.”

Lyanna won’t allow him to disregard her other statement. “How can you work with Roose after what he did to Ned? And you call yourself his best friend!”

“My best friend allowed me to believe Rhaegar’s spawn was mine for all these bloody years! If Roose hadn’t killed him, I would’ve!”

“I should’ve poisoned you years ago or smothered you in your sleep!”

“Aye, you should’ve.” Robert looks to his foot soldier then back at Lyanna. “I know how to tame you now. Every time you piss me off, I’ll have Mead here ring the boy’s head like a bell.”

“You worthless sack of-”

Mead slaps Gendry hard enough to knock the boy out of the chair. Lyanna jumps up to run to him but Robert shouts, “Sit down or I’ll make him do it again!”

Stubbornly, Lyanna sits down. She gathers every ounce of hatred, malice, and contempt inside of her and aims it at the despicable man. “He’s your son. Your blood son,” she reminds him.

“The day he ran south to be with you, I disowned him. Once you’ve given me a new heir, I’ll kill him.” Robert means every word of it. “I am still your rightful husband. I don’t give a shit about what any fancy documents say. Now...give your husband a kiss.”

Gendry gets off the floor and sits in his chair. There’s a bruise on his cheek. But he doesn’t cry. He’s gotten stronger, she absently thinks.

“Kiss me liked you’d kiss him,” Robert continues, scooting his chair back a little. “Do it now.”

Lyanna wants to fight him. She wants to kill him and piss on his corpse. She also wants her son to be safe. The very thought of kissing or even touching Robert sickens her, though. Especially after what he did to her.

“Don’t worry, mother,” Gendry says. “I can take a punch. You don’t have to do it.”
As if to prove him wrong, Mead punches him and cracks his jaw. This time, it takes some time for Gendry to pick himself up off the floor. Lyanna cries out of pity and anger. She wants to kill them both, Robert and his fucking lackey.

“Kiss me,” Robert says. “Kiss me like you kiss your silver-haired prince.”

She could never kiss Robert the way she kisses Rhaegar. Ever. Because that requires love, it requires more than utter loathing of the person. She has nothing but loathing for Robert. Yet she gets out of that chair, walks over to him, and pecks him off the lips.

“Do better than that,” Robert whispers, the bitter scent of the wine wafting to her nostrils. “Close your eyes if you have to. I want to know what it feels like when a stubborn bitch like you actually kisses someone and means it.”

Lyanna tries again. This time, she allows his tongue to enter her mouth, the moment it does, she clamps her teeth down as hard as she can, blood filling her mouth. Robert screams in agony and shoves her away. Quickly, Lyanna grabs her fork aiming for his throat, but he blocks it with his hand and she stabs that instead. His hand is so thick that it doesn't sink in as deep as she'd like. But it does something.

Gendry attacks Mead, returning the man’s earlier favor by breaking his nose.

Yes, her son has gotten stronger. He holds his own against Mead, allowing her to worry about Robert and Robert only.

She yanks the fork out of his hand, aiming for his throat again, but he tries to hit her stomach and her instincts have her backing away from the attack. That one movement gives Robert the advantage he needs. The man flips the entire table over, spilling food and porcelain everywhere. It also helps to put further distance between them. Other men rush in and she knows that this is her last chance to kill Robert because after this he won’t be careless enough to keep her hands unbound.

Lyanna moves to lunge forward. The sound of a gun clicking stops her dead in her tracks.

One of Robert’s men points the gun at Gendry's head.

“I'll kill him now,” Robert says. “By the gods, I will have his brains blown out like Benjen’s and fuck you next to his corpse if you don’t stop this madness!”

“I fucking hate you!” Lyanna shouts with everything she has left in her. Her face bright red. "I wish you'd drop dead, you insufferable cunt!” She screams out and fists at her hair in anger.

“I know.” Robert gestures to his men to come forward. “Find it and cut it out of her,” he says.

Lyanna is apprehended from behind. They use a metal detector to find the tracker in her arm, and they do as they’re ordered to do. They cut it out. Panicking, Lyanna tries to stop them from stomping on the device and destroying it. But it’s futile.

The device is destroyed.

“You stupid cunts! They'll think I’m dead!!” She screams as she fights them off of her. “Rhaegar will think I’m dead!”

Robert yells, “Take the bitch away. I’ve had enough of her for one night!”

“You fucking idiots!” As his men drag her away, Lyanna kicks and screams. “You’ve killed us all!”
If Rhaegar thinks she's dead, they'll be nothing stopping him from setting the wildfire off now.

She keeps kicking and screaming until the men inject her with something that puts her right to sleep. Her warnings die on her tongue.

They’re ten miles from the northern border when Lyanna’s dot disappears from the map.

Rhaegar nearly crashes the jeep.

He swerves off the road, making the tires screech like dying birds, leaving dark, smoking marks on the asphalt. They end up in a vast field. Up ahead, they can see the shape of the remains of Moat Caitlin in the distance through the fog.

No one in the car makes a sound.

No one moves.

For a long, agonizing minute, they just sit there, reeling from the news until the silence becomes suffocating. Rhaeger’s grip on the steering wheel is so tight, his knuckles are ghostly pale, matching the color of his stunned face.

He is the first to move. He fumbles with the door’s handle and gets out of the car, stumbling out as if he were intoxicated. The man walks away from the jeep and for a moment it looks as if he intends to walk the rest of the way north, but he stops in the middle of the field and falls to his knees.

Arthur is the next to get out. He goes to his friend.

Inside the jeep, Viserys and Dany, who are equally stunned, staring at the back of Jon’s head with uncertainty. He hasn’t moved an inch since the car came to a stop. If Dany looks close enough, she can see her husband’s entire form trembling. With either rage or sadness, she can’t know for sure.

Dany wants to remind them that they shouldn’t get ahead of themselves, that the disappearance of Lyanna’s dot could simply mean that the tracker was removed. But it doesn’t make sense.

The tracker is undetectable unless a person knows of its presence, and there’s no plausible reason, that she can think of at the moment, that explains why Lyanna and Gendry would give away the chance of them being rescued. On top of that, Gendry’s dot is still on the map. If they were aware of Lyanna’s tracker, they would be aware of his too, right?

The most likely cause for the dot no longer being there is that Lyanna is dead. Realization seems to hit her and Viserys the same time it hits Jon.

Mimicking his father, he struggles to open the car door and when he steps out, he nearly falls over. Dany and Viserys get out then. They go to him.

Jon leans his back against the side of the car, eyes wide and watery. He’s frozen in place.

The sudden sound of Rhaegar’s scream cutting clear across the field shatters the silence. He screams so loud, the gods can probably hear him. Dany sees her brother double over and Arthur kneels beside him. She looks to Jon in time to see him slide down the side of the jeep slowly, sinking to the soft earth. She sinks down with him, holding his hand so that in the deep, unbearable darkness, he’ll know she’s there.

Jon sucks in a harsh breath, and for a moment she thinks he’ll scream too.
He doesn’t.

The strong, fearless man she’s grown to love cracks.

He sadly mutters, “Mother,” sounding like a scared child then he sobs.

Dany pulls him into her arms and he sobs on her shoulder, his sorrow is so discernable that she feels it in her own heart. She sobs with him, for him, and for herself. When Viserys gets on that ground with them, dirtying his clothes and shoes, just to hug them both, they both cry harder.

Across the field, Rhaegar shouts the same order to Arthur over and over.

“Burn them all!” He screams it until his throat is raw and his eyes are bloodshot red. "Burn them all!"

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!
Father and son were inconsolable.

It was as if Jon’s rage was spurred on by his father’s constant demands to “Burn them all!”

Once they both became worked up it was difficult to talk them down. They wanted to continue the journey north; a stupid endeavor from the very start. Arthur had to sedate them. He was prepared to do the same to Robb when they made it back to the house and shared the news with him.

However, Robb’s breakdown was a slow build. The boy remained calm long enough to ask the questions Jon and Rhaegar never considered. When he received the answers and turned them over in his head, that’s when the waterworks began.

Margaery and Grey Wind were there to console him. Arthur discreetly handed her a sedative to give Robb just in case he decided to do something reckless.

This loss hit them hard, and after a loss like this, it’s best to take a moment to regroup and mourn for the short time they’re allowed. They all loved Lyanna that’s for certain. Even now, it feels wrong for Arthur to use the past tense when referring to her.

By all rights, he should’ve hated her when she blew into their lives, into Rhaegar’s life. That’s how the story usually went, wasn’t it? Lifelong best friend wary and unimpressed by his best mate’s new love interest.

Nevertheless, Lyanna wormed her way into his heart, and he grew to love her in his own way. When Rhaegar lost her that first time, it felt like they both lost her.

It’s the same now.

Arthur can’t afford to mourn her now though it pains him. He still has work to do and phone calls to make. As Rhaegar’s right hand it’s his responsibility to fill in until further notice.

The first thing on the agenda is notifying their allies, mainly Tywin and Arianne, of the recent turn of events. Lady Olenna has asked them not to call her until the north is in ruins; she’s rightfully furious about Loras.

He checks in on Jon and Rob next. The former is still sleeping, Dany, Viserys, and Ghost are in the room with him while the latter is with Margaery in the den, his dog is out doing whatever it does when it’s off alone. Before returning to Rhaegar’s room, he sees how Grey Worm and Missandei are fairing. Grey Worm has yet to wake up. Missandei is asleep in the chair beside his bed. Arthur covers her shivering form with a blanket.

Rhaegar is awake when Arthur drops in to check on him. He’s laying on his back, staring at the ceiling with an empty expression. Only the bedside table lamp is on, casting half of the room in a warm, yellow light. Like the room, a portion of Rhaegar’s face is hidden in shadow.

“Tell me it was only a nightmare, Arthur,” Rhaegar says.

Arthur is taken back to the night Dany was born; after the family’s mortician carried Rhaella’s body
away. While Dany slept on Rhaegar’s chest, Viserys slept beside him, and Arthur watched over, what they all thought to be, the remaining Targaryens. His best friend asked him the same thing that night. He wanted it all to be one long nightmare that he’d wake up from soon.

Arthur responds with the exact words he said back then. “I swore on my life to never lie to you.”

Closing his eyes, Rhaegar turns his head, shrouding his face completely in darkness. “How’s Jon? I need to see him. He needs me.”

“He’s still out cold.”

Arthur wants to sit on the bed, he wants to be closer to his friend but he resists. He lingers near the edge of the bed, waiting for an invitation he knows will never come.


Rhaegar is whispering something that Arthur can’t pick up on from where he’s standing. He goes to the side of the bed and kneels.

“Lyanna,” Rhaegar is saying, “I...I should’ve never allowed her to leave. She would’ve hated me but...she’d…” A sharp cry escapes. “And my mother...had I killed my father sooner…”

“Enough of that,” Arthur says sternly, pulling Rhaegar’s hand away from his face. “It was out of your control, Rhaegar. All of this was out of your control.”

Even with dark bags under his eyes, bloodshot eyes, and tousled hair, Rhaegar remains a vision. There was always something about his general gloominess that suited him so well. A child of despair is what Rhaella used to refer to him as.

He blinks up at Arthur, full lashes damp, eyes gleaming like jewels. “Arthur.” He stretches out a hand.

He moves away from Rhaegar’s hand, afraid of what that touch might do to him. This is a grieving man. This is his best friend who’s on the brink of a mental collapse. Hell, the collapse has already happened.

“She was just here.” Rhaegar hugs himself tightly and cries harder. “She was...she was just here…”

Ever since they were boys, Arthur has been weak to Rhaegar’s tears; weak to Rhaegar as a whole. He moves closer despite his better judgment. He gets on the bed despite the small voice in his head telling him to stay away. He pulls Rhaegar into his arms, and even though it feels right in his heart, his gut says otherwise.

Rhaegar clings to him, sobbing and muttering Lyanna’s name.

The day she agreed to stay with them at Dragonstone was the happiest he’d seen Rhaegar in some time.

Granted, Lyanna’s options were slim, but she knew if she asked, Rhaegar would’ve made sure she and Jon were tucked away somewhere safe, far from Robert’s reach. Yet she chose to stay with him; with them.

It made Arthur happy to see his friends reunited. Their triumphs were his, their losses his to bear. When he was in Dorne, Elia asked him what he got out of all this. Aside from the children they
raised together, what benefit did he receive from being by Rhaegar’s side after all these years? At the
time, he didn’t know how to answer.

To this day, he isn’t sure how to put into words how satisfying it is just to be here. Not just with
Rhaegar, but with everyone. With his family.

“Please…” Rhaegar lifts his head. Silver strands sticking to his wet face, his eyes pleading. “Make it
stop Arthur…”

“Make what stop?”

“All of it.”

It almost sounds as if Rhaegar is asking for death, the sweetest of all reliefs, some say. But what
Rhaegar wants is a temporary relief from the grief that consumes him.

“Arthur.” This time when he utters his name there’s a purpose behind it. He clutches Arthur’s sides,
pulling him closer, pressing him close to his body. “Please…”

“You don’t want that,” Arthur says, prying Rhaegar’s hands off. “You think it’ll make you feel
better, it won’t.”

“I’ve seen the way your eyes follow me when you think I don’t notice. I know you want me. You
always have.”

Arthur grabs Rhaegar by the wrists, shoving the man’s hands against his chest. “And I’ve seen the
same from you. I know you desire the same of me. Are you sure you’re ready for that discussion
now?”

No, neither of them are. It’s a discussion better left in the figments of their imaginations.

“Lyanna knows…well, she knew,” Rhaegar says quietly. “She knew how you felt about me. She
knew how I…” He lifts his chin stubbornly, peering up at Arthur like the spoiled brat he is
underneath his staggering reputation, underneath his ruthlessness. “Tell me that the times you were
with Oberyn or the countless women that it wasn’t me you thought of.”

What good would telling him that do? Arthur has known Rhaegar long before he truly knew himself.
Lyanna is the love of his life, and if there is room for anyone else, it wouldn’t be him to fill that
vacant space. Her death changes nothing.

“You promised to never do that to me,” Arthur says through gritted teeth. “You promised to never
ask anything of me that would put me in an uncomfortable position. Are you that far gone that you’d
break your word?”

“What of your word to me, Arthur? Do you remember the night you swore yourself to me? You
made an oath. Need I remind you of that oath?”

“You’re a prick.”

Rhaegar smirks, eyes glinting the way they do before he says something that’s going to cut skin

“Aye, you are. You’re all that. But you promised to treat me fairly. Always. This is the opposite of
that. I don’t give a shit how sad you are, you don’t treat me this way!”
Rhaegar moves away from him. “You swore to always do as I command,” he continues. “I ordered you to burn them all. Have you?”

Arthur sighs. “Gendry is still alive. We have to save him and the women first.”

Rhaegar’s silence is heavy. It’s telling.


“I see your time in Dorne has stripped you of your subservience.” Rhaegar leans into his face again, his shoulders squared. “Call Qyburn. Tell him to begin.”

“No. This isn’t you.” It isn’t. Because Rhaegar, his best friend not this imposter, spent hours coming up with a plan to ensure the stolen women’s safety. This is nothing more than the madness speaking. This is Aerys. “We will save the women and Gendry first. Then—”

“Do you command me now?!” Rhaegar shouts. “I gave you an order!”

“And I’m telling you to shove that order up your pompous ass! You made a promise to our children that you’d see to the women’s safety! And you can’t just leave Gendry there!”

Rhaegar breaks free from Arthur’s hold, roughly pushing him away. “Fine. I’ll do it myself!” He hurriedly gets off the bed, heading toward the door.

Arthur rushes after him. He grabs Rhaegar’s arms, attempting to subdue him. But Rhaegar manages to slip away. That’s how the fight starts.

And it’s not like the scuffles they’ve had in their youth.

That tension they’ve ignored all these years is released, but not in the way Arthur used to fantasize about whilst with a lover with hair so light it could pass for silver in certain lighting.

They exchange blows for some time, eventually knocking each other to the floor. Years ago, Arthur would’ve dominated easily but he’s not fighting the boy who fell on the Trident that day. Rhaegar is truly in his prime. Every opening he sees, he takes it. Nothing is off limits for them, either, where in the past they were always mindful of one another’s weaknesses and never exploited them.

Arthur punches Rhaegar in the chest, in the same area Robert’s bat hit him.

Rhaegar once told him that sometimes the area still ached despite the bones and muscle tissue having healed ages ago. When he hits him there, Rhaegar’s eyes soften for a moment, welling with tears of betrayal, and Arthur is immediately remorseful.

His reluctance to end the fight right then and there costs him. In retaliation, Rhaegar repeatedly hits the side of Arthur’s leg, the same leg that the steel rod pierced on the night of Dragonstone’s fall, until the bones lock up, leaving the limb stiff.

“You fucking cunt!” Arthur yells angrily.

He fists Rhaegar’s shirt, bringing him down for a headbutt. Tossing the man off, he straddles him and they tussle savagely, their shirts tearing. Arthur fights to maintain his position while Rhaegar fights to overpower him.

Rhaegar uppercuts him, making Arthur bite his own tongue so hard it digs into the tough skin, filling his mouth with briny blood. In response, Arthur punches Rhaegar in the mouth, bloodying his teeth,
splitting his lower lip.

Not allowing the man to bounce back from the attack, Arthur holds Rhaegar’s arms to his sides, pinning him down on the floor with every ounce of will he can muster.

“Let me go!” Rhaegar shrieks. “Let go!!”

He spits blood in Arthur’s face, trying to distract him. Arthur doesn’t budge. And that infuriates Rhaegar further, the likes of which Arthur has never seen. The man starts to bang his head on the floor repeatedly, shouting curses, and practically foaming at the mouth.

“This isn’t you!” Arthur shouts over the chaotic struggles. “Punishing those women and Gendry for the north’s crimes! Turning your back on them when you gave your word!”

The head banging ceases, but Rhaegar’s struggles continue. He’s fighting tooth and nail to break free, to continue their fight. There’s blind hatred in his eyes, not aimed at Arthur, not aimed at the women, or Gendry. Just pure hatred.

“This isn’t you,” Arthur says again, softly this time. “Aerys has finally poisoned your mind. Perhaps I’m to blame for not encouraging you to get the help you needed when the early signs made themselves known…”

The night Arthur swore himself to Rhaegar years ago in Dragonstone’s catacombs, he was partially influenced by emotions he couldn’t yet identify at the time. But mainly, he’d been inspired by Rhaegar’s kindness and fairness. He exhibited every characteristic of a good and just king, the kind of person that Arthur had always hoped to follow and give his life to if need be.

Arthur swore to no longer do Aerys’s bidding but to answer to Rhaegar and only Rhaegar. That night, they pricked their thumbs and mingled their blood together, sealing the oath, binding their souls.

With tears in his eyes, Arthur wipes the blood from Rhaegar’s mouth, stunning the man as he brings the hand up to his own mouth, mixing their blood together.

Even in Rhaegar’s madness, he knows what his actions imply. “Stop!” he says. “Arthur sto--”

“You are no longer the king I swore to serve.” Arthur wipes his bloody hand on Rhaegar’s shirt, cleansing his body of the man’s mark. “I renounce you. My body is no longer yours to command, my will is now my own.”

“If you do this,” Rhaegar seethes, “there’s no turning back!”

“...I renounce you,” he repeats. Every word physically hurts. “I will return to you when you’ve returned to yourself. I swear it. Even as I utter these treacherous words, I swear it, Rhaegar.”

Arthur staggers to his feet, his leg throbbing. He walks to the door, exhausted, mentally and physically. He’s done. He’ll save the women and Gendry on his own if he has to. But he’s done with this imposter.

Rhaegar wheezes in a shaky breath and screams, “Oathbreaker!”

The words hit Arthur’s back, and it hurts more than any blow he has been previously dealt, more than anything anyone has ever said to him or done to him. He halts but he doesn’t face Rhaegar. He can no longer face what the man has become.
Out in the hallway, Viserys is there. Meeting his eyes, Arthur can’t help but feel ashamed. He knows Viserys heard it all. He heard the traitor’s words fall from his lips.

“If you leave, we’re all lost,” Viserys says.

“I’m not turning my back on everyone. This is still my family.”

Viserys nods. He walks up to Rhaegar’s door and hesitates. “Is he truly lost? Do…do you think he can come out of this?”

“I suppose time will tell.” That isn’t how he truly feels but Arthur doesn’t want to sound like a hopeful idiot any longer. “Go to your brother, Viserys. He shouldn’t be alone right now. And if you can-”

“I won’t allow him to leave,” he promises. He takes a filled syringe out of his pocket, flashing it. “I’ll knock his ass back out if he gets started again.”

Arthur smiles. “I trust that you will.”

When Viserys enters the quiet room, Arthur catches a glimpse of Rhaegar still on the floor right where he left him before the door is closed shut.

In the cold, lonely darkness of the hallway, Arthur cries.

“Everything’s fine,” Dany assures Jon as he looks around the room owlishly. The noise of Arthur and Rhaegar’s fight disturbed his sleep. “Viserys went to handle it.”

Her brother was in bed with them before he left. Her husband needed her, and Dany needed her brother to get through the night. Viserys held her as she held Jon and wiped her tears as she wiped Jon’s tears. It was a pure and intimate moment she never thought she’d have with the brother she used to fear.

The entire house is in mourning.

All of them blame themselves in some way. At one point, Dany even thought that had she not been concerned with taking the pregnancy test, perhaps she would’ve noticed where Lyanna and Gendry were sooner. She knows it’s foolish. She knows that they were all blindsided by this. But that’s how grief operates. It’s not just the loss of a person that burdens them but every little mistake in between.

“How long was I out?” Jon asks, voice thick with sleep.

“A few hours. It isn’t even dawn yet.”

Tilting his head back, he closes his eyes tightly, and it almost looks as if he’s going to cry again. Dany sits up and hugs him from behind. No tears escape him. Only a loud, weary sigh.

“It was Varys,” he whispers.

Confused, Dany touches Jon’s shoulder, urging him to look at her. When he refuses, she doesn’t hold it against him. He touches her hand and the gesture is more than enough.

“Varys betrayed us.”
Dany thought the same, briefly. “But you’ve had someone tailing him.”

“They told me that Varys has done nothing aside from making a lot of phone calls. He hasn’t met with anyone suspicious or acted strangely. Still, he could’ve called anybody. Who do we send to scout the place out before we move to our next base?”

“Varys’s little birds,” she replies numbly.

It’s easier to send one of them because they’re able to blend in, unlike the Second Sons or anyone from their group. However, this time they didn’t have enough time to send anyone ahead to scout and ensure there were no surprises waiting for Lyanna and Gendry. So how would Varys know they were on the move?

Dany explains this to Jon, not because she thinks he’s wrong, but because she wants to be able to see it from all sides before she finds Varys herself and kills him.

Jon finally looks at her. His eyes are red, puffy, and bleak. “It takes nothing for our enemies to wait around for us to make our move and attack us when we’re most vulnerable. That's if they had an idea of where we were from the start.”

The anger that builds inside of Dany burns hot in her belly. “Can we trust no one?”

“No,” Jon quickly replies. “Everyone has their own agenda.”

“Do you think perhaps one of his little birds went rouge?”

“Either way, Varys failed to keep an eye on things and it cost my mother her life and put my brother in danger. He’ll be held accountable along with his subordinate.”

“Even now, that mind of yours doesn’t stop working,” she laughs. It’s a hollow, forced sound. They may have discovered the traitor but nothing has changed. She hugs him from behind, settling her chin on his shoulder. “I’m so sorry, Jon...I wish there was something, anything I could do to free you of your pain.”

Jon leans into her, sighing. “I know you’re hurting too, Dany. I know how much she meant to you.”

Dany hates how easy it is for the tears to pour out of her. She’s supposed to be strong for him right now, yet she’s the one falling apart. A good woman’s life was stolen. She’d hope Lyanna would walk away from all this, away from her trauma, happy and at peace with the man she loved. And although Lyanna could never replace the mother she lost, not that she ever tried, it truly feels as if Dany lost her mother as well.

She and Jon embrace one another while they cry. He’s ashamed for breaking his promise. He said that no one else in his family would die. He thinks he’s failed. Dany assures him he hasn’t.

“We have to save Gendry,” she tells him. “And the women. Then we’ll leave the rest to Rhaegar.”

Jon says nothing.

She isn’t sure who reaches for who first. It’s the most detached thing they’ve ever done together. Jon touches her in a way that’s mechanical, and she hardly responds to his touch. She just lets go, allowing the pleasure to wash away all the bad. He falls into her, his sorrow with it. Each thrust is languid, their moans are weak cries more than anything. They don’t kiss. They just press their mouths together, lips trembling and wet with tears. When it’s over, he lays on top of her, spent, and sobs, his tears falling into her hair.
She wants to tell him she’s pregnant.

Not because she actually thinks it’ll brighten his mood. She just wants to share the news with someone. She’s being selfish, she tells herself. To share news of a new life when a life so dear to them has just been lost.

She’ll tell him when the time is right.

“I had to drug him,” Viserys says as he enters the dining room where everyone else, minus Grey Worm and Rhaegar, are seated around the table. “But only because he wouldn’t stop crying. I wanted him to be at peace even if that peace is false.”

Arthur nods solemnly.

Dany sees the guilt on the man’s face. She heard his fight with Rhaegar. The whole house heard it. Under the table, she clasps his hand, and he looks up at her in surprise before gracing her with one of his signature smiles. He squeezes her hand then he lets go.

Once Viserys is seated the meeting commences with Arthur laying out the hard facts. With Gendry being in Winterfell, their plan of simultaneously ambushing the brothels and rescuing the women isn’t going to work the way they planned.

“We have the numbers,” Jon reminds Arthur. “We have men to spare. I’ll take a group to Winterfell—”

“I’m sorry, Jon. But you and your father will have to sit this one out.”

Jon’s entire demeanor changes, the air around him chilling. He stares at Arthur. “Come again?”

Unfazed by his threatening tone, Arthur says, “Right now, you and your father are unpredictable. We can’t afford you two going on a killing spree while we have those women’s lives in our hands. Your brother’s too.”

On the table, Jon’s fists clench.

“Arthur’s right, Jon,” Dany says. Her husband’s gaze falls on her and she can see the hurt and betrayal, but she continues. “We can’t risk it. Please, understand.”

“Aye, I understand.” He takes his hands off the table, dropping them limply at his sides. “I can’t promise I won’t try to kill every last fucker up there.”

Although he says he understands, Dany knows he’s pissed off. She’ll deal with him later, though,

“You’ll get your chance,” Viserys promises Jon. “You, my brother, all of us will have our chance to avenge what we’ve lost.”

Something passes between uncle and nephew. And Dany knows it’s Viserys’s silent promise to make sure Lyanna is avenged. Even if he has to do it all by himself.

Jon seems to accept this.

“We all want the same thing,” Arthur reminds him. “Your mother…” His voice cracks. “She meant a great deal to me, as well.”
The mere mention of his mother is enough to disarm Jon. Beside him, Robb touches his shoulder.

Dany does the rest of the talking for him. “Tywin Lannister assured us his aid for this task. I know we hate relying on others these days but we need his men.”

“About that…” Arthur shifts uncomfortably in his chair. “Tywin made that promise to Rhaegar.”

“And?” Dany asks, confused. "Rhaegar was the one who proposed the plan."

Begrudgingly, Arthur informs them of Rhaegar’s state of mind as of late. Her brother wishes to see the north fall now, and he’s willing to sacrifice Gendry and the women to do so. The news shatters Dany. She almost doesn’t want to believe it but Arthur wouldn’t lie about this.

Jon and Robb are rightfully upset. Viserys is deeply troubled by the news the same as Dany. While Missandei…

“I don’t believe it,” she says quietly, drawing everyone's attention to her. “Rhaegar wouldn’t do that. He’s not like that.”

Dany thinks the same but the lump in her throat forces her silence. Their family is falling apart right before her very eyes.

“I know it’s hard to hear,” Arthur says to Missandei. “But it’s true. Rhaegar has been battling with mental illness for most of his life and I...I overlooked it because I thought by just being here that was enough.”

Missandei still doesn’t seem convinced. She’s always been stubborn when it came to her beliefs. An admirable trait though it is, it’s not without its faults. Her unwavering trust in Rhaegar is keeping her from seeing what has always been there. Perhaps it hurts to witness this because Dany is the same, especially when it comes to Rhaegar.

It’s the downside of near perfection. Rhaegar is always held to a higher standard, always deemed above everyone and everything. He’s only human, however. And they all need to come to terms with that. No matter how hard to swallow the pill is.

Still, Dany won’t abandon her brother. Ever.

“Then we’ll do it without Tywin,” Jon says. “Whatever it is my father’s dealing with, we will help him with that.” A pause. “After the war is won. We've wasted too much time as it is.”

“Are we to keep him locked up until the war's over?” Arthur asks. “Your father has more pull than any of us in this room. All he needs is access to a phone and he could destroy this entire city if he wanted. We'd have to cut him all from the outside world completely.”

“If that’s what’s needed then yes.”

“We still need Tywin.” Arthur hates to admit it but it’s true. “We need his men to fill in for the Second Sons we lost during the surprise attack.”

Robb chimes in, “The Second Sons in Essos are still an option.”

"They’re too far away. I want to save my brother and the women before the day ends," Jon says. “The longer we wait, the more at risk they all are.”

Suddenly, Missandei pushes her chair back abruptly, the legs scraping across the hardwood. She
storms off. The way they're talking about locking Rhaegar away as though he were an animal is unsettling. Dany knows that Arthur and Jon are speaking from a realistic perspective and that they care for Rhaegar's well-being. With the war and everything that's happening, her brother's mental health seems unimportant now. It isn't unimportant, though.

“She needs time,” Dany says, mainly to Arthur. She knows he’s already blaming himself. “We all do where Rhaegar is concerned.”

Viserys stares at Missandei’s empty chair absently. “Without Rhaegar’s approval, Tywin won’t answer to any of us. Not even the king and queen of the south themselves.”

“Then what was the point of him handing over the reins to us?” Jon asks.

“That’s irrelevant.” Viserys turns to Jon. “Lady Olenna is out. Arianne would help but she won’t supply enough men to make much of a difference.”

Arianne and her family are dealing with a small turf war in Dorne. She can’t afford to give more resources to their cause at the moment. She has, however, offered more support than any of their other allies, meaning she isn’t obligated to do so further.

“We’ll figure out something,” Robb says. “Tywin is an opportunist. Perhaps we just need to offer him something he wants enough to bargain for.”

“Actually,” Dany says, sullen. “I have a better solution...”

In plain terms, Rhaegar absorbed Aerys’s likeness after killing the man.

He believed himself inadequate, unprepared for filling in his father’s role. So he took the cruel, undesirable parts of the man and hardened himself. For all that his father was, he maintained power for years, and despite his madness being his ultimate downfall, it garnered fear and obedience from his subordinates.

Rhaegar wanted people to fear and love him. He accomplished that, but now it appears things have backfired. He took too much of his father’s likeness and now he’s paying the price.

Arthur was the first to abandon him. Who will be next?

He doesn’t care, that voice tells him. Arthur, like Lyanna, made him weak. All of them were holding him back from ascending. That's what the voice is trying to tell him. Yet already the loss of Arthur combined with the death of Lyanna is tearing Rhaegar apart.

The drug Viserys administered has him in and out of sleep, battling for consciousness. When he does slip into unconsciousness, he has lucid dreams about his mother. She expresses disappointment in his inability to win against his father.

“You were never ready for this,” she says.

Rhaegar agrees.

There’s nothing to be done now. This is the path he took. He has no choice but to see what the end of the road holds for him.

Foolishly, he entertained the thought of actually moving to that house in Dorne with Lyanna. He
even went so far as to believe Arthur would accompany them. He could be closer to his sister and
niece, Lyanna would’ve been free of the city she’d grown to despise and the painful memories it
held, and Rhaegar, well, he just wanted to exist with them until the end of his days.

Stories like theirs don’t have happy endings, however.

The next time Rhaegar blinks himself awake, a small child is standing beside his bed. The girl has
almond-shaped brown eyes with hints of molten gold, and her hair is bountiful, curly. He recognizes
her immediately.

“Did you have another nightmare, Missandei?” he asks.

He sits up in bed and when he does, the little girl changes into older Missandei. The girl was only a
figment of his imagination.

Missandei frowns. “Is it true?” she asks. “Do you intend to break your promise?”

Has Rhaegar not already broken many promises? He promised to always protect his family, put their
needs above his own, and be a reliable patriarch.

He failed them when Dragonstone fell. He failed again with Lyanna. He will not fail them again.

Rhaegar cups the side of her face and is glad she doesn’t recoil from his touch. She does not fear
him. She still loves him. “This is necessary, Missandei. The north’s demise guarantees our family’s
safety.”

Missandei places her hand over the hand that holds her face. “As long as our family exists, there will
be enemies to face, Father.”

Father.

That one word has always been a weakness of his. The first time Missandei called him that he’d
rushed to share the news with Arthur only to learn she’d been calling him the same for far longer.
But it was still a victory in Rhaegar’s book.

Out of the two children he brought back with him from Essos, Missandei was the hardest to
understand despite her fluency in multiple languages. While Grey Worm’s trauma left him voluntary
mute, Missandei’s left her untrusting and hateful. Patience and unconditional love won. It astounds
him to this day how healthy environments can heal most, if not all, emotional wounds.

“I want to see them burn too,” Missandei whispers as though it were a dark secret. “But I want to see
those women saved first.” As an afterthought, she adds, “Gendry too.”

Any other time, he would’ve harmlessly poked fun at her obvious indifference toward Gendry. It
would appear the boy hasn’t earned his place in her heart yet.

But Lyanna had, Rhaegar bitterly thinks.

His children adored her. He saw it in the way they cared for her relentlessly during her recovery.
They could’ve been one big happy family. They could’ve-

Missandei squeezes his hand, pulling him out of his darkening thoughts. “I’m sorry for what
happened to Lyanna. She’d been through so much and she reminded me a lot of how Grey was after
what he endured in Astapor...”
“Is that why you grew easily attached to her?”

“Perhaps.”

A noise pulls their attention to the door. It creaks open and a small face peeks in. Again, he sees a small child. Silver-haired and porcelain faced. When the child steps fully into the lamp’s light, she is a child no more.

Dany approaches the bed, tears in her eyes. She kneels beside Missandei, and for a moment Rhaegar wonders if any of this is real or if it’s something his troubled mind has conjured. Why is he seeing their child forms like this? Is it guilt? Whatever it is, this is real. When Dany clasps his other hand, she feels as real as Missandei does. They are made of flesh and bone and memories.

“Rhaegar, we need you,” she says. “Please, we need you more than ever now.”

Rhaegar doesn’t realize he’s also crying until Missandei wipes his tears away. This wasn’t supposed to happen. They shouldn’t be kneeling before him, pleading for the lives of innocents he swore to protect. What has become of him?

He ignores that voice in his head that tells him to send them away, to isolate himself. That’s what it wants. It wants him alone, weakened. He’s already pushed Arthur away. If he loses his children, there’ll be nothing left for him. He’ll be better off dead.

And Lyanna would want him to live. She would want him to fight the madness not be utterly consumed by it.

They help him out of bed.

The drugs have him weak and disoriented at first but with every step he takes forward, he feels more like himself and more aware. Darkness tries to cling to him, trying to keep him in his anguish but his girls and their will are stronger.

At the bottom of the stairs, Viserys and Jon wait for them.

Rhaegar expects Jon to attack him and blame him for his mother’s death and his brother’s capture. He expects to be met with anger and hatred when he reaches the bottom of the stairs. Instead, he is met with a warm embrace from his son. Rhaegar hugs him tightly, providing support as his son, in turn, gives him strength.

Over Jon’s shoulder, he sees Arthur watching. Their eyes meet. After everything, the man can still read his mind.

Arthur breaks eye contact first. He leaves the room to give Tywin a call.

This doesn’t mean Arthur has forgiven him. The man makes the call for himself and their children; for Gendry and Lyanna’s memory. Not Rhaegar.

In the northern territory, there are three brothels managed by the Umbers, the Boltons, and the Karstarks.

The smallest and least profitable establishment resides deep in the territory, close to a small town known as The Gift; Tormund’s neck of the woods. The establishment even has the same name as the
town.

Had things worked out accordingly, they would’ve had Tormund and the free folk as reliable guides through the unfamiliar territory. Unfortunately, Tormund has his own operation to run. Currently, the man is two cities over, closing out a deal. The free folk have their eyes on bigger fish; heists no longer appease their appetite.

Without aid from Tormund, and Jon, who along with Grey Worm and Rhaegar is to remain at Casterly Rock, for the time being, they have Jaime, Arthur, and Viserys leading groups to each brothel. Better to save all the women at once rather than hitting the brothels one by one.

Obviously Robb knows the north better than anyone out of the group so he’s tasked with retrieving Gendry from Winterfell.

Hearing the news of Lyanna’s death, Oberyn and Ellaria canceled their trip to Qohor. They spent a short time alone with Rhaegar and Arthur in private before offering their aid. But everyone knows it’s vengeance they seek.

With the addition of Ellaria and Oberyn, new issues were presented. Like Jon and Rhaegar, Ellaria and mainly Oberyn are wild cards. It’s known that Oberyn is oftentimes described as being half-mad. Nothing will stop him and Ellaria from starting a blood bath if unchecked.

To keep his old friends in check, Arthur assigns them to his team. They’re to take the brothel operated by the Karstarks, on the northeastern side. Jaime’s group have the brothel near Moat Cailin, the Bolton’s establishment, leaving Viserys’s group with *The Gift*.

“You’re joking right?” Arianne straps a knife to the thigh holster on her pants and straightens up, giving her boyfriend an incredulous look. “You want me to be the getaway driver?”

“Yes.”

It’s clear Arianne wasn’t expecting such a curt answer from him. Her shock wears off quickly. She crosses her arms defiantly as he knew she would.

“The weakest links are assigned this task,” she reminds him, her voice clipped. “You might as well spit on me!”

“I thought you liked it whenever I spat in your mouth.” Viserys steps around her, reaching for his duffle bag.

Arianne grabs his wrist, holding it in her ironclad grip, her sharp nails digging into his skin. “You know what I mean. Assigning me this task is insulting!”

Viserys is aware of that. He understands why Arianne is so upset. Before he even told her that he wanted her to stay behind and act as the getaway driver, he knew how this conversation would play out. Yet he took the risk anyway because he’s afraid.

If his nightmares weren’t enough to drive him to this, Lyanna’s death sealed the deal.

“We don’t have time to discuss this,” he says, yanking his hand away from her. His actions leave his skin red and marked by long scratches. His back has seen far worse dealing with her.
It’s true, though, they don’t have time to discuss this. They’re at an abandoned barn, three miles away from the brothel.

“You will make time!” Arianne shouts.

Viserys towers over her. Short people have always reminded him of luxury, purse dogs. All bark and no bite. But Arianne can back up her words, she’s fierce just like a wolf. Like one of the miniature horses, rather. She’s fearless and brave and he loves that about her.

It’s just that he’d take an alive, obedient girlfriend over a dead, defiant one.

He wants to open up about what has been plaguing his mind for weeks. Instead, he does the opposite.

“I’m the acting commander on this assignment. If you had no intention of following my orders then you should’ve stayed your ass in Sunspear!”

Arianne opens her mouth to speak, but he doesn’t allow her.

“If this simple task is too difficult for you,” Viserys says, tapping into his nastier side, “then you should reevaluate your position as head of your family.”

He could’ve called her every name in the book, degraded her, and done many other atrocities yet she would’ve endured. But questioning her position, a position she had to fight for, a position she continues to fight for, does the trick.

Viserys isn’t done, though. He leans down, whispering in her ear, “If your brother Quentyn were here...well, this conversation wouldn’t be happening, would it?”

Only an asshole would use their girlfriend’s insecurities against her. Viserys has always been a piece of shit. She knows that better than anyone.

Arianne’s eyes water. She doesn’t shed a tear. She won’t cry in front of him after he’s insulted her this way. Stubborn through and through.

“Is that your only order?” she asks.

“I fear if I give you more than one order you’ll be terribly confused.”

He picks up his duffle bag and heads for the open door. Beyond the large doorway, he can see Dany feeding Ghost a treat. He has enough on his plate looking after his sister. Jon made him swear to protect her as if Viserys hasn’t spent all of Dany’s life doing just that.

“When this job is over, our relationship ends with it!”

Viserys ignores her. She isn’t going anywhere, he tells himself.

She calls him a colorful name in her mother’s tongue. That’s how he knows she isn’t done with him. Because she gave him parting words instead of a knife to the back.

He’ll make things right with her when this is over. They’ll vacation somewhere far away and he’ll spend the duration of their trip apologizing for the way he treated her today. He’ll lavish her with gifts and attention and love. All of which she deserves for putting up with him.
Before leaving Casterly Rock, Dany and Jon had a similar conversation to that of Viserys and Arianne. Dany overheard the couple though it wasn’t her intention to eavesdrop. Unlike her brother, her husband didn’t resort to callous remarks in an attempt to force an argument.

Viserys’s intentions were so painfully transparent that she didn’t have to physically be in the same room as them to see through him. Jon only expressed his discomfort with her going but he didn’t try too hard to make her stay. He simply entrusted Viserys and Ghost with her safety.

Oddly enough, Dany was a little peeved that he didn’t make more of an effort. It’s silly, she knows. Had he tried to hold her back, she would’ve been furious.

Truthfully, she shouldn’t be out here now, storming through the shabby brothel doors by her brother’s side with Ghost at her heel, ten elite Second Sons at their backs, considering she’s pregnant. Yet this particular task is personal for her.

These women were stolen from their homes, raped, beaten, stripped of their humanity, their rights. To think, the same fate could’ve been Missandei’s or Grey Worm’s. Is it not what Robert had done to Lyanna for over a decade?

Yes, this is personal.

The Gift, as it turns out, is the least profitable of the three northern brothels because it caters to a niche clientele; extreme sexual deviants.

Dany doesn’t want to discuss the various sexual acts they stumble upon as they go from door to door, killing patrons and saving the poor women. It’s the kinds of things she’ll never be able to wash away from her mind.

While Ghost eats the face of the brothel’s security guard who was slacking on the job, the bulk of the Second Sons head down to the basement as Dany and Viserys head further down the corridor.

The plan is to take the catacombs back to the barn. Three women they’ve saved are already being taken out of the brothel to the lining woods to an entrance to the catacombs. If only they knew the exact number of women here, the job would be easier.

A door to Viserys’s left suddenly flings open, a heavyset man aiming a pistol at them. Her brother sidesteps swiftly and she ducks in time, barely dodging a bullet to the head. The bullet fires through the wall beside her loudly. Grabbing the man’s arm at the wrist and elbow, Viserys twists and breaks the limb with a sickening crack then he flings the man forward. Dany shoots him in the head. Casually, Viserys tosses his body to the side.

They share a smile. This is their first time really being on their own like this, and it’s astonishing how in sync they are.

They enter the room the dead man previously exited, finding a naked woman crouched beside the bed. Dany urges her to come with them. She speaks in Valyrian. Some of the women spoke other languages but understood enough of the common tongue. Even though the woman clearly understands her she is hesitant which is justified. Sadly, they are pressed for time.

“Please, we must leave quickly,” Dany urges.

Frightened, the woman presses her body closer to the bed, away from them. Viserys steps forward and at the sight of him, the woman starts to shake uncontrollably. He takes a step back, his hands raised to show that he means her no harm. Her brother begins to speak, softly, softer than she’s ever heard, in Valyrian. He explains the situation to the woman, their purpose, and their intentions to only
see her home safely.

Even Dany finds herself transfixed by her brother, and it’s obvious the woman’s transfixed as well. The woman outstretches her hand for Viserys to take. As he reaches for her, the sound of a gun firing rings in the air.

Blood oozes out of the wound in the woman’s head as she slumps back against the bed, her hand falling limply to the floor. They don’t get a chance to mourn her as they now have the assailant to worry about. Enraged, Dany spins on her heel, shooting the man in the chest. But it isn’t enough to stop his own gunfire. He fires at Viserys’s, shooting him in his left arm. Thankfully, Viserys is right-handed.

He kills the man.

Looking at the woman remorsefully, he says, “he killed her out of spite.”

Dany nods sadly. “We need to get the others out of this horrible place.” She looks at her brother’s bleeding arm.

Viserys notices. “It’s nothing. Let’s keep moving.”

At least the others in their group are successful during their raid in the basement. They communicate via radio, informing Viserys that they found eight women sharing a cell. Viserys orders the men to split up. One half is to continue onward and take the women to the catacombs, and the other half is to keep an eye on the parameter and provide backup for him and Dany.

So far, they’ve collected eleven women. By the looks of it, there are four rooms left. They waste no time kicking doors in. Out of the three rooms they enter, they find no one. The last door is at the end of the hall. It’s the only red door in the entirety of the establishment. In truth, it’s a little daunting from the outside, but the room holds the standard sadomasochism elements.

There’s only one person in the room. It appears the patron was still waiting to be serviced when they decided to rain on his parade. The man tries to attack them and it’s almost comical. Dany dispatches him by roundhouse kicking him out of the window. They watch him hit the ground.

At the same time, a window on the second floor is burst through by Ghost who attacks a group of men approaching from outside. The Second Sons posted outside attack as well.

“Fuck,” Viserys curses. “Their backup has arrived.” He radios for their men to move forward with the extraction plan. “I think we’ve got everyone.”

Dany believes so too.

Just as they’re turning away a small device is thrown up into the window. Hearing the telltale beeping, they hurry out of the room. The device explodes and they barely make it out. Black smoke and flames erupt from the doorway. Before they can get off the floor, another explosion goes off inside the brothel, reminding Dany of the night Dragonstone was attacked.

“Dany,” Viserys shouts, his voice blotted out by the ringing in her ears.

She feels his wet hand clasps hers and he yanks her up. They run down the hall and head for the staircase but are forced to retreat from the railing when someone below starts firing at them. Now they’re being attacked from all sides. As explosions continue to go off at random, at every turn they’re fired upon, bullets bursting through the walls around them.
The Umbers would rather destroy their business and kill the women than allow them to leave. It’s disgusting. Fortunately, they managed to get all of the women out.

Viserys finds an open door and flings them inside, closing it behind them. A static voice on the other end of their earpieces informs them that they’re in the catacombs en route to where Arianne waits for them.

“Mission accomplished,” Viserys jokes weakly.

It’s then that Dany notices the wet spot on his side. His black shirt does nothing to hide the large bloodstain. She reaches for him but he pulls away. During the chaos, one of the bullets made their mark apparently. And blood from the wound in his arm is dripping down his hand. That explains why his hand was wet earlier when he grabbed her.

“Viserys,” she cries.

“We’re more than likely surrounded,” he says walking over to the only window in the room, peeking out of it. “But we’re not out of options…”

Warily, Dany looks at the window. Her mistake dawns on her. She shouldn’t have come here. Any one of those bullets could’ve hit her; her stomach. The distance from the window to the ground isn’t a great one but the idea of jumping out of that window while pregnant has Dany’s stomach doing somersaults.

Anything can happen. A bad landing, a hard fall, a bad angle that causes her to fall face first, landing on her stomach...

“You’re afraid,” Viserys says. “The fall won’t kill you, Dany. And we don’t have time on our side. Come on!”

Dany grabs his arm, clinging on to him as though she were a frightened child. “It’s not me I worry about.”

“I’ll be fine-”

“I’m pregnant!”

Viserys’s initial reaction is genuine happiness. The way his face and eyes briefly light up is a moment Dany will never forget. Then the realization falls on him. He swallows thickly and looks at the window again.

“Even more reason for us to get the hell out of here,” Viserys says, prying the window open. A cool breeze blows in, whipping his hair around his face. She catches a slight smile through the silver strands. “I’m going to be an uncle-”

The building shakes again from another explosion, making the floor collapse.

When Dany is older and able to properly reflect on this moment, she’ll realize that Viserys was fast enough to shove her closer to the window, placing himself over the exact spot where the hole in the floor is created. Something he always said he’d never do for another person was risk his life for theirs. And yet...

Through the hole, she can see the fire spreading wildly and an emptiness better described as death waiting below. With bloody, cracked nails, Viserys holds on to her hand as she tries to pull him up. Sadly, the wetness of his bloody hands makes it near impossible. But Dany doesn’t give up easily,
she doesn’t give up at all.

“Dany,” Viserys says, his voice cutting through the mayhem around them. “I love you.”

Shaking her head frantically, Dany sobs. She pulls harder, so hard her right shoulder dislocates. Instead of pulling away and allowing her brother to fall, she puts all of her strength into her left hand.

“Tell Arianne I’m sorry.”

Dany can’t form a single word or thought before Viserys shoves her back hard, forcing her hand to slip from his. She screams for him as she stumbles back and falls out of the window. A second later and she would’ve been engulfed in flames as another bomb goes off inside the room.

As the brothel burns, Dany stares up and watches the ceiling cave in through teary eyes. A small part of her wishes to be crushed by the building as well.

The gods decide that she must live, however.

If only they’d decided the same for Viserys.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry :(
Dragons Don't Burn

Chapter Notes

Heads up! A The majority of this chapter shows what was happening with Lyanna during the events of the last chapter. We pick up from the last chapter starting with Dany’s first POV in this chapter.

For years, Lyanna has blamed the unfortunate predicaments she often found herself in on her poor decision making. She blamed herself for Robert’s obsession with her, for the abrupt end of her and Rhaegar’s marriage, and for everything she endured in the years following.

There was even a time when she blamed herself for what Robert did to her that night in the woods. She wasn’t strong enough and she didn’t fight hard enough. Every bad thing that has ever happened to her was her fault somehow.

But now, as she tries to fight for her life and the life of her children, Lyanna realizes that most of her problems are due to fucking men.

It was noble Ned who gave her away to Robert like a broodmare. She begged him not to, threatened to take her own life, and hate him forever, yet he did it anyway. Robert’s obsession with her and his treatment of her was born out of his own misogyny.

As for Rhaegar, it was his stupid hair that led her brothers to the Tower of Joy, and his incessant need to control everything that made her leave their safe house. She put herself and Gendry in harm’s way because she couldn’t be around him after his deceit.

Yes, she’s at fault for being an idiot and not seeing through Rhaegar sooner. She’s a dumb ass for not poisoning Robert in his sleep as she so often wanted to do, and she never should’ve forgiven Ned as easily as she had.

But what’s done is done as far as Ned is concerned. Ned is dead. She mourns her brother, yes, but if he were alive she’d probably try to kill him right now; as if she could ever commit fratricide. Robert will be joining him soon. And Rhaegar…when and if she sees the silver-haired twat again there’s going to be words between them, that’s for sure.

She can’t raise a baby with him if he isn’t willing to seriously change for the better and seek the help he needs. Even if being without him again will kill her.

Whatever Robert’s guards gave her wears off quickly. She awakes in her bed, and she isn’t alone. At first, she assumes the person seated by her bed is Robert. She is relieved to see that it is Maester Luwin.

“You must stay hydrated,” he tells her upon realizing she’s awake. “For yourself and your babe. I’ll fetch you some water.” He leans in to touch her forehead.

“Maester Luwin, we need to leave the north immediately,” Lyanna whispers. She clutches the Maester’s shirt holding him close to her face so that he can see the desperation in her eyes. “If we
stay here, we’re all dead.”

The Maester frowns. “Lyanna, we can’t leav-”

“There’s wildfire in the catacombs beneath the northern territory,” she says, watching the old man’s eyes widen. She pulls him closer. “We need to leave.”

“I’ll warn the others.”

“You will do no such thing.” Before he can voice a protest, she continues. “We don’t have time for that. Every second wasted is a second closer to our deaths. If you want to stay here and be a hero, fine. Gendry and I are getting the hell out of here.”

Maester Luwin sighs, defeated. “They intend to take Gendry to Storm’s End soon. I believe Robert realizes that the boy is stronger when around you.”

“Which Storm’s End?” There’s Robert’s ancestral home and then there’s the mansion he built in the north in order to separate himself from the southern territory; from Rhaegar. “Have they already left?”

“The home your boys grew up in,” he says. “And they haven’t left yet.”

There’s no doubt in Lyanna’s mind that Rhaegar intends to blow up Robert’s mansion. He knows no one lives there anymore but that won’t stop him from wiping away every remnant of Robert.

“Leaving here will not be easy,” Maester Luwin says. “But I will do my best to see to it that we all make it out safely.”

Good, she thinks. If he would’ve taken the high ground and tried to warn the others, she would’ve had to kill him.

Lyanna releases the man’s shirt. “Is Benjen’s room still intact?”

He nods. “They tried to break the door in when they first moved in, but they failed.”

That’s because Benjen swapped his wooden door out for a metal one ages ago. Her little brother was always the smartest one out of all of them. It was as if he knew a day like this would come. Which is why he was sure only she knew the passcode to get inside his room. She gives the code to the Maester.

“He keeps a black case under his bed. Can you bring it to me?”

“I will do my best.”

“If there was a landline still in my room, I could’ve called Rhaegar and ended all of this.” But she can steal one of the guard’s cellphones and make the call. “On second thought-”

Maester Luwin shakes his head. “Roose doesn’t allow his men to carry cellular devices. They use walkie-talkies only. He’s a paranoid man.”

No, he’s a smart fucker though Lyanna hates to admit it. She’ll have to just find a phone when they make it out of here.

If they make it out of here.
“You were foolish to bring her here.”

“She is my lawful wife,” Robert says with a roll of his eyes. “It is my right!”

To Roose, Robert is nothing more than a child with too much freedom. He should’ve been properly disciplined as a boy. Now he’s a rampaging drunk with a sick obsession with women. Not just Lyanna. The man’s a predator to all women. She’s the only one who continuously fights him off, and that makes Robert want her more.

While he is partially to blame for feeding Robert’s darker impulses, Roose won’t take responsibility for it.

“He will come for her,” Roose says, pacing the floor slowly. “He will stop at nothing to get her back this time. We are not prepared for a full-on attack from the south.”

“How will he come for her if he doesn’t know where she is or if she’s even alive? I took the damn tracker out of her arm!”

“What kind of tracker was it?”

“What does that matter?”

“It matters a great deal. If it’s a low rate tracker, which I doubt, then it is of no concern. But if it’s a newer model taking it out will lead them to believe she’s dead.”

Robert pours himself a glass of whiskey. It’s the third glass Roose has seen him consume in the time they’ve been inside the office. They haven’t been here long.

“If they think she’s dead, good.”

“Good?” Roose grits his teeth. Only Ramsay has ever made him this irritated before. “You bloody idiot! In what world is that a good thing? Rhaegar’s wrath will end us!”

Robert laughs heartily as if Roose told a funny joke. “The sissy will cry about it and retreat into his little cave again. We have nothing to fear from him. He is no dragon. He never has been. I’ll be glad when everyone sees what I’ve always seen in him! He is nothing!”

Perhaps Roose and Rhaegar can come to an understanding if he were to offer the man a prize. He can save his own skin and perhaps keep Winterfell for himself. It’s highly likely that Rhaegar is only backing Robb Stark because of his importance to Lyanna.

But if Rhaegar believes she’s dead and that Robert was the one solely responsible for her demise, he’ll be willing to do anything to avenge her. He'll even make a deal with the devil.

Apparently the man is irrational when it comes to the woman. He never thought someone like Rhaegar would have such a stupid weakness.

“Very well, Robert,” Roose says. “Do you have any intentions of attacking them while they’re down?”

“I have a better idea.” Robert takes a long sip of his drink. When he’s done, he slams the glass on the desk, cracking it. “I want that cunt to face me on the Trident. We’ll settle this once and for all.”

For once, Robert has suggested a plan that doesn’t give Roose a headache. If the two meet on the Trident and kill each other, he won't have to worry about either of them. If one of them wins, he’ll
deal with them on his own. Perhaps he’ll order one of his men to take them both out during the fight.

The possibilities are endless, and each one ends with him on top.

“When do you intend to issue the challenge?” Roose asks. He will need to make a blood contract with Rhaegar prior to their fight. Even in death, Rhaegar will have to uphold his word; meaning his heir will have to uphold it.

“Soon,” is all Robert says.

The son of a bitch wants to be vague now, but that’s fine. Roose will just arrange a meeting with Rhaegar immediately.

“I’m sure it will be a sight to behold.” The stag and the dragon meeting again on the Trident.

“Everyone will want to see you two face off.”

“I want them all to see. I want them to see me put an end to that abomination!”

Roose’s phone rings.

Robert rolls his eyes. “I thought phones weren’t allowed here.”

“That rule only applies to my subordinates.”

He leaves the room to take the call. The information that is relayed is surprising, to say the least. Someone is raiding their brothels and abducting their women. It’s a simultaneous attack. After ensuring Harald and Smalljon are aware of it, he gives Ramsay a call.

It’s time his son has redeemed himself.

No matter how many times Jon checks the map, his mother’s dot won’t reappear. He’s refreshed the screen and powered his phone on and off to no avail. The dot is really gone. His mother is really gone.

He supposes he shouldn’t be surprised. This is war, after all. Going into this he knew there would be casualties. He just didn’t think it would be anyone so close to home. Perhaps that was his arrogance blinding him. There’s nothing more humbling than having the woman who gave him life taken from him.

Beside him, Tyrion solemnly stares out over the balcony down at the vast backyard of Casterly Rock. Cersei and her children are walking in the gardens. The sun reflects off their blond hair, making it look golden in the light.

But with Tyrion, his hair doesn’t shine at all. It’s the color of withering wheat. What it must be like to be different from his family in every way. Jon doesn’t pity the man, however. His last name grants him a life others in his situation will never have.

A picture-perfect family is what an outsider would see when they look at the Lannisters now. Jon only sees the life he once saw for his own family. But the longer this war is drawn out, the more out of reach that life seems.

“I shouldn’t have allowed Dany to go,” he quietly says.

“Want my advice?”
Jon stares down at the man.

Tyrion nods. “You’re never going to let me forget my failings are you?” He returns his gaze to his family down below.

“Never,” Jon says. “You put my family at risk with your poor judgment.”

“I believe we’re both guilty of that.”

Jon glances over the balcony. “Do you think this fall would kill you?”

“You wouldn’t kill a man in his own home surrounded by his dear family, would you?” He laughs nervously.

Jon would definitely do that, especially with the kind of mood he’s in. And he knows Tyrion can see that. The man puts a little distance between them. As he should.

But of course, that isn’t enough to make Tyrion shut up altogether. “From what I’ve seen and heard of Daenerys, I doubt you have anything to worry about. She can take care of herself.”

“The same could be said of my mother.” It’s gotten easier not to cry every time he thinks of her or mentions her. Doesn’t mean he’s accepted her death, however. “My mother was known for her bravery and fierceness. Yet she…” He grips the stone railing. “No one is invincible. I was stupid for letting Dany go.”

“I fear if I agree with you, you will throw me to my death.”

Jon looks at the glass of wine in the man’s hand. He can’t recall a time when Tyrion didn’t have a glass of wine in his hand. “You’re already dead, Tyrion. That’s why you drink yourself to oblivion and can’t advise anyone for shit. Why would I bother with you?”

Tyrion stares into his glass sadly before draining it. Then he raises the glass in a mock toast. “You’ve figured me out, dear Jon. I am nothing more than a drunken fool.”

“What happened to you?” he asks out of genuine curiosity. “People used to praise you for your wit and cunning. Now you can’t even solve a crossword puzzle to save your life.”

“Life happened,” he says.

Jon wants to know more despite himself. But they’re interrupted by the clearing of a throat. Tyrion doesn’t bother turning to address the newcomer because he already knows who it is.

Tywin stands in the door’s threshold, looking bored. “A moment, if you will,” he says to Jon. Unlike Tyrion or Jaime, Tywin doesn’t bother with small talk or any other conversational pleasantries. Another difference from his sons is his intimidating presence. Jon wouldn’t dare threaten to throw Tywin over a balcony, that’s for sure. He’d just do it without warning. That’s the only way to ever beat a man like Tywin. Blindside him.

Jon asks Tywin how Grey Worm is doing, and the man’s answer is short and to the point. Grey Worm has yet to wake up, and the Maester hasn’t noticed any alarming changes in his state. He is said to make a full recovery in time.

Jon assumed Tywin wanted to speak with him about an important matter but all he does is take him to where his father is waiting in one of the parlors. Tywin gives them privacy.
“Is Tywin Lannister your messenger now?” he asks jokingly.

Rhaegar smiles. “Don’t let him hear you say that.”

His father has reverted back to the haggard look he donned following Dragonstone’s fall when he used to spend a good bit of his time in the caves. To think he was making wildfire all of that time, and Jon believed he’d abandoned them. He should’ve known better.

Nothing keeps a Targaryen down.

There are heavy bags under Rhaegar’s weary eyes, and he has a five o’clock shadow. He looks as if he hasn’t slept in weeks when it’s only been less than two days. As always he’s in black from head to toe, and his hair is pulled back in a low ponytail.

Jon sits in the adjacent chair and checks his phone for the millionth time. “Have you heard from anyone?”

“No.”

“Have you?”

“No.”

His father frowns but says nothing.

Jon hates this. He hates sitting around here while everyone is out there fighting and doing what he should be doing. He knows his father hates it too. The man’s finger is twitching, he’s chewing his bottom lip, and he keeps glancing around the room.

Arthur took his phone from him for safekeeping. So, if they can’t reach Jon for some reason, they’re to contact Tywin.

“What about the other thing?” Rhaegar asks. “Jaime tells me he sent his best men to take care of it…”

“I at least know that was successful. They should be returning here with our friend soon.”

“Very good. I can’t wait to speak with him.”

“Neither can I.”

Rhaegar looks at him, his expression thoughtful. “I’m sorry, Jon. For everything...mainly your moth-”

“Don’t do that. Don’t apologize for that or you’re going to tick me off.”

“Do you not blame me? Even a little?”

At first, Jon did blame his father. He blamed himself more than anyone, though. Now, the blame is rightfully on their enemies, and them alone. He can’t waste his anger on his family. They’re not in a position where they can fight amongst themselves; even though he did try and fail to fight his father.

“No,” he answers truthfully. “I only wish you would’ve been honest with me from the start. You tried to do everything on your own and it backfired.”

“So, you’re not upset about the wildfire plot specifically. You’re upset I kept you in the dark?”
“I guess I should care more since I grew up there. The north was once my home and there was a time when I would have done anything to protect the territory. But this is my home now, and my family is my only concern.”

Rhaegar’s expression is that of a proud father. Although, there is still sadness in his eyes. Jon doubts the sadness will ever leave his father. His mother means a great deal to him. And perhaps that is why Jon can’t find it in himself to hate Rhaegar or be at odds with him. No one can deny his love for his mother.

“I know I can’t replace her,” Rhaegar says, his eyes watery, “and I don’t intend to. But I need you to know that you still have one parent and I will do my best...no, I will be everything you need in a father, Jon.”

Jon thought he’d shed every tear in him. He was wrong. He still has a little more to give. “Thank you, Father.”

He wants to know more about his father’s troubled mind, but he doesn’t know how to approach the subject. During the meeting earlier today, Dany implored them all to not cast Rhaegar aside until the war was done, but to show their support now. She has a way with words, his wife. When she speaks everyone listens and wants to follow her.

The door to the parlor opens. Tywin strides in with a smug smile on his face. Seeing the man’s smile sends a chill through Jon. He gets the feeling Tywin only smiles when another is suffering.

“You have a phone call,” Tywin announces to Rhaegar with the closest thing to amusement in his voice.

“Who is it and what do they want?”

“Roose Bolton has a proposal for you.”

That’s the last person Jon was expecting. His father appears to be thinking the same, though, he acts unsurprised.

“And what is Roose Bolton offering?” Rhaegar asks, disinterestedly. “It has to be quite the offer if he thinks I’ll be sitting down with the likes of him.”

Tywin grins, and Jon has never seen anything as terrifying. “He is prepared to hand over Robert Baratheon to you.”

Without hesitation, his father says, “Give me the phone.”

In Benjen’s black case, Lyanna finds three handguns, a silencer, two grenades, and a small collection of knives.

Additionally, Maester Luwin brings her a shotgun that he found under the bed as well. Lyanna eyes the gun warily since it was a shotgun that killed Benjen, but she overcomes that fear quickly. She has to.

“You’re certain no one saw you?” she whispers, hurriedly getting out of bed.

“I’m certain no one saw me. They’re holding Gendry in the basement.”

Lyanna moves over to her dresser. After some rummaging, she finds a hideous, multi-colored
windbreaker she used to love for some reason. If she puts it on, she won’t only be seen from miles away but everyone will hear her coming. After another search, She finds a grey sweatshirt set from her old fencing team and is happy to see that it still fits.

Next, she grabs an old pair of sneakers from her closet and a duffle bag. She throws in the guns, minus one that she conceals at her waist.

Maester Luwin adds his medical bag as well. He carries the duffle for her since “she’ll be doing the heavier lifting.”

“And Robert?”

“We’re in luck,” Maester Luwin says. “Robert has just left to check on a disturbance at one of his establishments.”

Lyanna should ask which establishment and inquire more about the disturbance. She doesn’t. Because right now, only two things matter to her; getting them all to safety and killing Robert.

“We’ll have to wait,” Lyanna says. She sits on the foot of her bed. “I’m not leaving Robert to wildfire. I’m going to kill him with my own hands.”

“Lyanna, please. You yourself expressed how dire the situation was. We’re sitting in a ticking bomb. We must leave while we can.”

Rhaegar promised he wouldn’t destroy Winterfell. He assured her there wasn’t any wildfire beneath her ancestral lands. That means she has a chance, right? She can wait for Robert here. Gendry and Maester Luwin can go on ahead.

If they take the crypts far north, they can enter over into The Gift. Even further and they’ll be in the next city out of harm’s way. But what if Rhaegar goes back on his word because he thinks she’s dead? What if he blows up Winterfell, too? She’ll die with Robert; she and her baby will die here.

“Goddammit,” Lyanna curses under her breath. She’ll probably regret this decision for the rest of her life but at least she’ll be alive. “Let’s go get Gendry.”

As they’re getting up to leave, the bedroom door is swung open. “What the fuck is going on in here!” a guard shouts.

Lyanna throws her comforter over his head, covering him fully. The man struggles to get it off, causing him to stumble and fall on the bed. She descends on him, stabbing him until his struggles cease. She dislodges the knife and rolls off the bed into a crouch.

“Stay low, Maester Luwin,” she says.

He follows her instructions. They peek out of the room, ensuring that the coast is clear.

It is.

They creep down the hall, all the way to the staircase without interruption. Over the railing, she sees three guards posted up by the archway that leads out of the den. They’re talking and laughing about something Lyanna has no interest in.

All she knows is they’re blocking the exit. So, she’ll have to get rid of them.

“Allow me,” Maester Luwin whispers. He leaves the duffle bag with her.
Lyanna watches him descend the stairs and approach the men. She can’t make out what he’s saying to them but whatever it is, it has the men laughing harder than before. While the men laugh, Maester Luwin touches the shoulders of two of them as he laughs along.

Moments later, they collapse. The remaining man tries to figure out what occurred, and the Maester takes him out too.

“The Maester’s touch,” Lyanna notes as she joins him downstairs. They make their way out of the den and into the kitchen. “I always wondered how that trick worked.”

“Not a trick,” Maester Luwin says, revealing the tac like needles between his fingers. “Just powerful yet compact tranquilizers.”

Inside the kitchen, there are two doors.

One leads outside and the other will take them all the way to the basement. It’s more of a dungeon, really. There are several rooms, some are even used to hold hostages. Benjen used to interrogate people down there. She prays they’re not using any of her brother’s favorite tools on Gendry.

The door to the basement is locked, but thank the gods Maester Luwin has a skeleton key. He takes the liberty of opening the door first. And it’s a good thing that he did because there’s a guard at the bottom of the stairs.

The sight of the Maester distracts the guard long enough for Lyanna to push Luwin aside and fling a knife. Her aim is off a little. She stabs the guard in the eye so he doesn’t die as quickly as she would’ve liked. Hurriedly, she rushes down the stairs to finish the job before his groaning alerts the others.

He tries to get up and reach for his gun. Mercilessly, Lyanna stomps on the knife in his eye, pushing it down further into his brain. She doesn’t remove her foot until she’s certain he’s dead.

Squatting down, she takes his gun. “Do you know which cell he’s in?” Lyanna asks.

Maester Luwin doesn’t have to answer because soon they can hear Gendry screaming in pain further down the corridor. They follow his screams to the last door on the right; a room Benjen used frequently.

Through the small opening in the door, she can see Gendry strung up on the wall, his arms held up by shackles. There’s only one man down here with him, and by the look of it, he’s having a ball slicing at Gendry's torso. Thankfully, the cuts aren't deep.

Lyanna gestures for Maester Luwin to stay back. Once he’s out of the way, she bursts through the door. Using the man’s startlement against him, she shoots him with the silencer, twice in the head.

“Gendry!” Lyanna rushes to his side, frantically searching for the keys to the shackles.

“Mother…” His words are slurred and his eyes are droopy.

She searches the torturer’s body and finds the keys in his back pocket. Maester Luwin helps her get Gendry down. They look him over to make sure he doesn’t have any wounds that are bleeding profusely before helping him out of the cell, his limp arms on either of their shoulders.

“Take a left,” Maester Luwin instructs as they’re passing the stairs they previously descended. “There’s a door that’ll take us straight to the crypts...”
Lyanna can’t help but think about how smoothly things are going. Escaping shouldn’t be this easy. It’s as if most of the guards are either slacking on their job or they’re away. Why would Robert leave her and Gendry so poorly manned?

“Something big must be going on,” Lyanna says while Maester Luwin is unlocking the iron gate. It’s the only entrance to the crypts where her ancestors rest. “What establishment did Robert go see about?”

“I overheard one of the men mention a brothel...”

The sound of hurried footsteps drawing near puts an immediate end to the conversation. Maester Luwin hurriedly opens the gate and allows Lyanna and Gendry to enter first.

“They’re getting away!” someone shouts.

And they don’t stick around to see who that someone is. Lyanna encourages Gendry to pick up his feet and try to run, even a little bit, but it’s no use. He’s gradually losing consciousness. The situation becomes even direr when they hear gunfire and shouting all around them. In their panic, they assume it’s Robert’s men.

“Nothing’s stopping them from following us,” Maester Luwin says. “I didn’t get to lock the gate.”

“Take Gendry.”

The Maester hesitates. “Lyanna...”

“I’ll block their path, that’s all.” She hands Gendry over and he slumps against the man. Opening the duffel bag, she takes out a grenade. “We have no intention of going back, right?”

Maester Luwin nods.

“Good.”

Her ancestors are probably turning in their graves right now. Whenever she finally dies and meets them, they can scold her all they like. The grenade causes so much damage that all they can see is a large cloud of smoke and the outlines of crumbled stone blocking the entrance. They don’t wait for the smoke to clear, either.

As they said, they had no intention of going back.

“Just up ahead,” Maester Luwin says, adjusting Gendry’s arm. “There’s a motor cart they use to easier transfer the bodies. Let us pray that it has enough gasoline to take us far north.”

“Can all of us fit?”

“Yes. There’s even room for two more, I believe.”

“Only the dead reside down here, Maester Luwin. And I have no intention of bringing the dead with us.”

Their plan was simple. Retrieve Gendry and retreat as swiftly as possible.

They set off a grenade at the gates to distract the guards while they came in from the side. Admittedly, Robb got his hopes up too fast because, for the past three hours, Gendry’s dot was in the same place. But right before the grenade went off at the front gate, the dot began to move at a rapid
“He’s moving through the basement,” Robb shouts to Margaery over the loud sound of gunfire.

Margaery ducks, reloads her gun, and peeks up to find her target. Finding the man, she pops up, aims and fires, shooting the man in the chest. After that one falls, it’s as if another is there to take his place. They’re being shot at from all sides but neither of them cracks under the pressure.

This is just a typical day for them, especially Margaery.

Despite the heavy gunfire they’re under, it still feels as if Winterfell is undermanned. Seems like everyone’s off trying to ensure their brothels don’t collapse.

“How close are we to an entrance to the basement?” she asks.

Robb has to strain his eyes to see through the smoke. “It’s across the courtyard,” he says, pointing discreetly. “We’ll be in the line of fire, though.”

“Is there a long way?”

“Yeah, there’s a long way.”

“Then we’ll take it.”

Suddenly, the gunfire stops. They don’t immediately check to see why that is, assuming everyone just needs to reload at the same time.

“Robb Stark!” someone shouts angrily. “I know you’re there, you bloody coward!”

Robb peeks from behind the crate they’re hiding behind and sees none other than Harald Karstark. The man is holding an ax tightly, and he looks as if his head is going to explode. He’s furious.

Robb grins.

The man should be off trying to figure out why his brothel is under attack yet he’s here. It’s almost as if he knew Robb would come. Has he been waiting around for him all this time? Robb is honored to have such a loyal fan.

Truth be told, he’s been anxious to kill Harald. He wants to take the man’s head as a prize, the same way he did to Harald’s father.

“How dare you,” Margaery whispers to him. “We don’t have time for this, Robb.”

“He wants to avenge his father,” Robb says, enjoying this far too much. But, first things first...“He’ll just have to wait. We get Gendry and we leave.”

Margaery sits up and moves to shoot Harald. But Robb stops her.

“I was only going to slow him down,” she says.

“I want him at his best when I kill him. Besides, we can use him to our advantage right now. If he wants to kill me so badly, he won’t let anyone else do it.”

Margaery doesn’t need any more explanation. She just readies herself to move when Robb moves. They wait a second or two before leaving their hiding place and dashing across the courtyard.
Bullets fly in their direction, but they hear Harald yelling at everyone to, “stop fucking shooting! He’s mine!”

Using his radio, Robb orders the men they brought along to finally make their presence known. The surprise attack should keep everyone but Karstark off their backs. But Robb has something else for the man.

He touches the tiny whistle around his neck and blows. The sound is so small that human ears can’t pick it up, but it’s not human ears he’s trying to reach.

They hear a wolf howl in the distance.

“Your secret weapon.” Margaery laughs.

“Grey Wind’s more than that.” They reach a storage room and kick the door down. A servant is inside, and when she sees Robb, she lowers her gun and lets him pass. Robb nods and smiles. “Grey Wind’s a part of me. Same way Ghost is a part of Jon.”

“How cute.”

They pick up their pace, moving through the storage room to the kitchen. From there they find the door that’ll take them to the basement. Robb is surprised to find the door unlocked. It used to never be unlocked.

“Be careful, the stairs are steep,” Robb says, opening the door.

“Thanks for the heads u-”

In the distance, they hear an explosion. From the muffled sound of it, they know it didn’t come from outside. It came from below. Robb checks his smartwatch and sees Gendry’s dot is no longer in the basement but in the crypts.

“Gendry, where in the fuck are you going?” he mumbles.

They hurry down the stairs, occasionally checking their surroundings. The dot is moving away from Winterfell at a steady pace now. Which Robb finds odd. Considering the circumstances, there’s no reason for anyone to be moving at a comfortable pace. When they reach the entrance to the crypts, he learns why that is.

“Well, now we know where that explosion came from,” Margaery says.

Robb curses. “That’s the only way in and now it’s blocked.”

He checks Gendry’s location again. The boy is heading north. Far north. It looks as if his idiot cousin escaped right before they rescued him. Only Gendry would do a thing like that. Now he’s making his way toward The Gift close to Tormund’s stomping grounds.

But Tormund isn’t home.

“Let’s retreat,” Robb says, begrudgingly. “I’ll call Tormund. Whoever he has holding down his fort while he’s gone will need a heads up that Gendry’s coming so they don’t kill him the moment he pops out of the ground.”

It was a bush that softened Dany’s fall.
While the brothel burned, she hid from the Umber men who were circling the grounds. Eventually, she heard one of them mention something about Winterfell being under attack before their footsteps faded away.

Shortly after, she slipped into unconsciousness, and later woke up to herself being dragged away from the ruin. She assumed one of the men had found her but it was Ghost. Without Ghost’s aid, Dany would’ve never had the strength to pull herself up and keep moving.

But when she saw Arianne’s face, Dany couldn’t hold her tears in any longer. She broke down, and no matter how hard she tried to form the words, she just couldn’t say them. She couldn’t tell Arianne that Viserys was dead.

Arianne understood, however.

How could she not what with the way Dany was screaming and sobbing incoherently? Then if her tears weren’t enough, Viserys’s dot was no longer on the map.

It was Arianne who drove them all the way to Pyke. It was Arianne who made sure the women were safely on the boat with reassurances that they would see their homes soon. And Arianne stood on the docks and watched until the ship was so far away that it looked like a speck in the water.

Dany wishes she could've been strong enough to lend a hand but losing Viserys hit her harder than she could have ever anticipated.

“Your brother was my first love,” Arianne says sadly. She expertly pops Dany’s dislocated arm back into place then hands her the bottle of gin Asha passed to them before sailing off; the woman figured they could both use a drink. “In fact, he was my only love. I used to pray that he would one day see me the way he saw Oberyn…”

Dany refuses the gin. “I...I’m pregnant...that’s why…” Ashamed, she looks away from Arianne. “He’d still be here if I hadn’t told him I was pregnant.”

“You think Viserys sacrificed himself to protect your unborn child? He did it for the sister he adores.” Arianne sounds angry but Dany knows that anger isn’t fully directed at her. “Don’t sit there and act as if he wouldn’t have done that for you or Rhaegar without hesitation. It is insulting to his memory!”

“I know,” Dany cries. “I know. I’m...I just wish…”

Arianne takes a swig of the gin. Afterward, she wipes her mouth with her hand. “If you say that you wish it were you and not him, I can’t promise you that I won’t slap you, Daenerys. I don’t want to slap you.”

Despite herself, Dany laughs. “I see why he loved you so much. You’re always so bold and honest and...I envy you.”

“Equals should never envy one another. Always remember that.” She sets the gin aside. “I guess it hasn’t really hit me yet, you know. Viserys was...he’s my whole world. I know I shouldn’t say that about anyone. A man, no less. But it’s true. I’ve loved him since I was a girl.” Her voice breaks and her eyes water. “No one knows me as well as he does. Maybe that’s why he’s the only one whose words cut me skin deep. He was a temperamental cunt but I...I can’t imagine life without my Viserys.”

“He told me to tell you he was sorry, Arianne. Those were his last words.”
And that's what finally crushes Arianne. Her face crumbles and she falls apart completely. As she cries, she calls Viserys a “dumb cunt” then in the same breath calls him her everything. They cry together in the back of the van while the Second Sons are outside waiting for their next orders.

Dany lets them wait.

She doesn’t know how she’s going to break the news to her family; especially Rhaegar. They managed to bring her brother out of the darkness. Learning of Viserys’s death will surely undo their work.

“I have to go,” Arianne says, sniffling. “While you both were gone, I got a call from my aunt Elia. The turf war in Dorne has escalated. They need me.”

“You’ve already done so much for my family so I understand that you must see about yours now.”

“I don’t want to go,” she admits. “I don’t want to be here either. I just want to curl up in a ball and disappear. It feels as if my heart was torn out and eaten... “

Dany hugs her tightly. She knows exactly how Arianne feels. “You’ll always be my sister. I will always be here for you.”

“That means a great deal to me, Daenerys. And don’t worry about me. I will contain these feelings of hopelessness and despair and be the leader my family needs. When our enemies are dead and their blood stains the earth, then I will mourn my love. It’s what Viserys would want.”

Arianne dries her tears, fixes her hair, and puts her mask on so that the world can’t see how devastated she truly is. Dany feels honored that only she was allowed to witness that. She follows in Arianne’s lead, gathering herself and bottling up her sorrow.

When she informs the Second Sons that they’ll be leaving now, it’s with dry eyes and a stoic face.

Soon, as they’re leaving Pyke, they learn that the others have completed their jobs successfully. They’re all to return to Casterly Rock and regroup. With nothing else to still Rhaegar’s hand, the north’s end is nigh.

When Jaime’s men apprehended Vary’s, he was trying to board a flight to Pentos. No doubt the man intended to flee the city for good. Since his capture, Varys hasn’t uttered a single word. He hasn’t denied his betrayal nor has he admitted to it.

He refuses to say anything. Like Daario, it would take a special form of interrogation to get the man to speak.

They were holding him in the wine cellar at Casterly Rock but they had to move him because as Tywin put it, “The Rock isn’t a bloody slaughterhouse.” So, they moved him to the bunker beneath Dragonstone. Which is a fitting location considering it was where Viserys honed his torturing skills.

“Viserys started with animals,” Rhaegar says, his voice as empty as his expression. “I know how monstrous that may sound, and initially I was concerned, but these were the same vicious dogs my father had trained to attack my mother, and her alone, if she ever tried to leave Dragonstone...”

Expression blank, Varys sits comfortably in the chair his arms and feet are bound to. He looks as if he’s sitting at the table of a Michelin restaurant waiting for his meal to be served.

In honor of Viserys, Rhaegar is playing a piece from his favorite opera. The dark, ominous music is
very fitting, he thinks.

“I never told Dany about that, he says. “So when Viserys would tell her stories of the animals he’s tortured just to scare her, she believed he was a monster. I didn’t know how to tell her that he just hated anyone and anything that caused his family harm.”

Varys blinks.

“Misunderstood,” Rhaegar continues, keeping his back to Varys. "Viserys was misunderstood his whole life. I used to have people in my ear, telling me to cast him aside and throw him away in some mental ward so that he wouldn’t turn out like our father.” Rhaegar closes his eyes tightly, fighting back the tears. “I have never turned my back on my baby brother and in turn, he has always been loyal to me, our family…”

He ghosts his hand over the various tools on the table. All of the tools are used to dismantle a person, piece by piece. “I worried that Viserys would never find his match, that he’d stumble through life aimlessly, but then he found Arianne…”

Varys finally speaks. “As a child, I was cut by a second rate witch doctor. None of your knives or vague threats can scare me.”

“...I used to think he would never notice how Arianne hung onto his every word, how she loved every aspect of him, even the parts others found despicable,” Rhaegar continues. He doesn’t choose any of the tools. Instead, he walks across the room and picks up a wildfire cache. “I can’t express the happiness I felt when he finally noticed her. Finally, my sweet baby brother knew that he was loved and deserving of that love…”

“Sweet baby brother,” Varys mocks. “There was never anything sweet about him. Viserys was a monster. He was a pompous brat—”

Rhaegar places his hand on Varys’s shoulder. The touch is barely a touch at all because of how light it is, but the pressure is still there. “Careful, Spider.”

Varys scoffs. “If you’re going to kill me, get on with it. Cut me, slice me, chop me up into little pieces. I won’t quiver in your presence, Dragon.”

“I told you if you ever betrayed me, you’d burn for it.” Rhaegar finally walks around Varys, revealing the glowing cache in his hands. He smiles in delight when the man’s eyes widen fractionally. “Cutting, slicing, and chopping aren’t my expertise, I must admit.”

The opera piece changes to something more upbeat with thunderous vocals and heavy brass trumpets. He can’t help but think of the first time he took Viserys to the Opera House. It was his brother’s first time outside of the estate without their father or guards breathing down his neck. His first taste of freedom. The way his little face lit up when the music began will forever bring Rhaeger both joy and sadness.

He allows a single tear to fall. Then he steps forward, holding the cache in front of Varys.

“Why did you betray us?” he asks quietly. “Are you and Illyrio Mopatis working together?”

Varys is surprised.

That makes Rhaegar smile wider. “You think you’re the only one who knows secrets. Did you think I would hire you without knowing where you hailed from, Spider?”
“If you know that then you know why I betrayed your family.” Varys holds his head high. “Beneath the gold, the bitter steel,” he quotes.

There’s someone in the east who claims to be a Targaryen, and they’ve built their reputation by doing so. Every time Rhaegar gets close to finding the person, they slip away. He’s been hunting them for years. It’s just one of his many problems, but now he sees that he has to move it up on the priority list.

“I see they still wish to take what rightfully belongs to my family as their own. No matter,” Rhaegar says, dismissively. “When I’m done with the north, I’ll pay the mummer’s dragon a visit. Did you tell anyone about the wildfire?”

Varys eyes the cache in his hand warily. “No. I was waiting.”

“For them to offer more coin for your secrets?”

“Yes.”

“Good. I can’t wait to show the north my surprise. Too bad you won’t be able to see it.” Rhaegar raises the wildfire cache.

“Wait! Is that all you wish to know? Killing me would be a mistake. I am a well of information. You know that!”

Rhaegar chuckles darkly. “Kill you? Oh no, Spider. I’m not going to kill you.” He pours a little bit of the wildfire on Vary’s eyes. Over the man’s blood-curdling screams, he says, “This particular batch is more contained than the original formula. It’s more like acid, I suppose.”

All of Varys’s screaming and failing causes him and the chair to fall over. As the flesh of his eyelids and his eyeballs deteriorate, Rhaegar hums along to the song that’s now playing. It’s another one of Viserys’s favorites.

Losing himself in the song, he begins to waltz around the room. “You’re going to stay down here,” he says as he moves around fluidly. “Every single day, I will come here and take a piece of you and you will share a piece of information until you have nothing left to give. If some tragedy befalls me, I’m sure my family will continue where I left off...”

Varys screams louder. There are two, smoking, gaping holes where his eyes once were.

“Quiet now, Spider,” Rhaegar says, his eyes closed. He’s picturing Lyanna here, dancing with him. “Your screams are ruining this masterful piece.”

Varys’s screams do eventually stop, settling down to pained whimpers. Later Qyburn joins him in the bunker. He says he has news.

“Is everything ready, Qyburn?” he asks.

Qyburn nods. “We are ready to begin whenever you give the order.”

“Marvelous. And what news do you have for me?”

“A challenge has been issued for you, Master Rhaegar.”

Rhaegar ends his dance. “A challenge?”

“Robert Baratheon wishes to meet you at the Trident at dawn. Do you accept?”
Just earlier that day, Roose Bolton contacted him offering Robert in exchange for immunity. And Rhaegar agreed to the man’s terms, though he planned to kill Roose whenever they met up to sign a blood contract.

But when he learned of Viserys’s death, Rhaegar told Roose the deal was off. He and Jon agreed to get Robert on their own and give the man the death he deserved in Lyanna’s honor but this is better.

“The Trident is the perfect place to watch the fireworks,” Rhaegar says, pleased. “Tell Robert I accept his challenge.”

“He won’t be alone, sir.”

“And neither will I.”

They’re a couple of miles from The Gift when Lyanna decides it’s safe for them to go above ground. Fresh air could do them all good, especially Gendry who’s now awake and able to move on his own. Had it not been for the motor cart it would’ve taken them far longer to get this far.

When they reach the surface, it’s still dark outside but it feels like early morning instead of late evening. It’s cold too. They take refuge in the woods. Soon, Tormund will notice someone’s lurking around his territory and he’ll come for them if they don’t make it to him first.

In the meantime, Lyanna looks for a stream so that they can set up camp nearby. She isn’t as familiar with these woods as she is with the ones lining Winterfell but she knows there has to be a stream nearby because of the signs of wildlife she’s spotted. They won’t hang around a barren place.

As children, her father would take them out to the woods and teach them how to fend for themselves out in the wild. She will always be grateful to him for the many lessons he taught. She tried her best to teach Jon the same lessons whenever she could. Robert seemed intent on ensuring everything Jon learned was because of him, not her.

Absently, Lyanna touches her stomach. At least with this child, it will be different. She’ll be able to raise them however she pleases, and hopefully, their father will be around to take part.

Jon and Gendry are going to be so happy to have a younger sibling. They used to beg her for a little sister. They ended up adopting Arya as their little sister to fill in the role. She’ll be upset that she has to share that role now but she’ll be happy too.

Girl or boy, it doesn’t matter to Lyanna. She’s just glad she gets to create a new life with the man she loves.

Approaching the stream, Lyanna sighs in relief. She’s about to go back for Maester Luwin and Gendry when she sees something, rather someone, lying face down in the stream. Carefully, she approaches their still form.

Spotting a head of silver hair, she rushes to their side. “Seven hells,” she mutters to herself. The person is covered in tattered clothes with large parts of the fabric burned and sticking to their pale skin. “Viserys, how did you get all the way up here?”

Viserys croaks, “Mother,” he says, sounding like a frightened child, “when did you get split ends?”

Lyanna rolls her eyes. “Even half-dead you’re still a cunt.”

“Is this Stark hell?” he asks, groaning. “Ew, I don’t want to be here. Send me back.”
“You’re not dead, you idiot. Not yet at least. Stay here, I’ll go grab Maester Luwin.”

She can’t begin to wrap her head around this. How on earth is Viserys of all people out here in the middle of nowhere? She supposes she’ll have to ask him once the Maester’s done with him. When Gendry and Maester Luwin sees Viserys, they are just as stunned as she is. The latter has a different reason for his shock.

Using a pair of medical shears, Maester Luwin cuts Viserys’s shirt so that he may see his wounds better. “How are you alive?” he asks in astonishment. “Did...did you cauterize your own wound?”

“After I took the bullet out, yes,” Viserys tries to sit up but Lyanna holds him down. He doesn’t put up a fight. “I thought you were dead,” he tells Lyanna. “We all did. Your tracker…”

“Robert took it out.” Lyanna looks at the large burn on Viserys’s arm. Another wound he’d cauterized from the looks of it. “I see your tracker’s lost too. That means they think we’re both dead.” Rhaegar is going to level the entire city, no doubt. “Maester Luwin, patch him up quickly. We need to get to a phone fast.”

“Be gentle with me, Maester,” Viserys says. Somehow he manages to be ridiculous even during a time like this. “I’m precious.”

Maester Luwin sorts through the tools in his bag. “Mind telling us how you ended up like this?”

It’s quite a tale.

Viserys tells them of the plan to rescue the women from the brothels, his assigned task with Dany and a handful of Second Sons, and his daring escape from the burning brothel. After being shot twice, falling through a hole in the floor, and being surrounded by fire, Viserys dug his bullets out, used the fire to cauterize the wounds, crawled out of the brothel, hid in the bushes, passed out twice, and stumbled through the woods until he passed out again by the stream.

By the end of the story, he’s bandaged up and is given a tonic to help with the pain. The Maester tries to give him one so that he may sleep, with the promise that they’ll carry him the rest of the way, but Viserys stubbornly refuses.

“That fire should’ve killed you,” Maester Luwin says. “You should be dead.”

“I haven’t you heard, dear Maester?” Viserys smirks lazily. “Dragons don’t burn.”

Chapter End Notes

“You can’t kill me. I’m a bad bitch.” — Viserys
Chapter Notes

First part is a flashback!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He screamed so loud his entire form shook. “Burn them all!” he said, voice trembling, beard damp with spit. “Burn them all!”

“Father?”

Aerys whipped his head around and gaped at his first born with rage-filled, violet eyes. He reached out to Rhaegar with thin, wrinkled hands, his nails unkempt. “You’re awake? Good. Come, Rhaegar,” he urges with a twisted smile. “Come and see…”

Rhaegar didn’t budge from his spot in the threshold. Behind his back, he tightened his hand on the letter opener. It was an impulsive decision to swipe it from his father’s desk before entering the hidden door in the office wall. He wasn’t even sure if he had it in him to use it.

The injury he’d obtained during his fight with Robert at the Trident still ailed him. Every inhale and exhale was agonizing. When Robert’s bat struck him and shattered his chest, he thought he was finished. His family and friends did as well. Then he awoke in his bed, bandaged and bewildered.

Little by little, his mind returned to him and he remembered.

Before they rode off for the brawl, Jaime Lannister told him of his father’s plot, how the man planned to use wildfire to decrease the entire city to a ruin; a waste as vast and desolate as their true home Valyria.

Rhaegar could not allow that. This city, the people, for the most part, were innocent bystanders to a war essentially started by his father’s own cruelty. This city was also home to his Lyanna. No, he couldn’t allow this.

“Father,” he says again, taking a cautious step forward. “Please, do not do this. What you speak of it’s…it’s madness.”

He inwardly winced at the word choice, but that was what his father was doing. It was pure madness in every sense of the word.

“Your mother put you up to this, didn’t she?” Aerys asked with a scowl. He turned his back to Rhaegar. “I always knew she was whispering in your ear, the witch. When I’ve taught the wretches their proper place, I’ll deal with her. Oh yes.”

“There will be no her,” Rhaegar shouts. “Or anything left for you to deal with. You won’t even survive. None of us will. Do you not understand that?!”

“Silly boy, dragons don’t burn.”

Rhaegar realized there was no reasoning with this man who was once the father who doted on him
and told him stories when his nightmares kept him up as a boy. That man was long gone, he had been for some time.

“Qyburn, begin—”

A letter opener wasn’t a choice weapon. Especially when he wasn’t strong enough to plunge it in deep enough for a fatal blow. So, he aimed for his father’s neck, delivering three, quick stabs to the carotid arteries, cutting off the blood flow to his brain. Blood spurted from the wound, wetting his face and bandaged chest.

Aerys stared up at Rhaegar like a scared child, clasping at his bleeding neck, his mouth opening and closing. Tears streamed down his face, mixing with the blood and it broke Rhaegar. He wanted to keep a distance, to avoid mourning the death of a monster, but even he pitied the man.

“Father, forgive me,” he sobbed, cradling the man’s head in his lap. “I had to do it. I... you gave me no other choice…”

Whenever he and his mother plotted his father’s murder, Rhaegar always imagined himself as vengeful and angry when he carried it out. He wanted the man to suffer for all the suffering he’d caused his mother, his family, everyone. In the end, his mother was right.

He was too soft.

Rhaegar rocked back and forth, muttering broken apologies as his father died in his arms. He thought of his mother, his little brother, his dear friend, and his wife. He thought of how he’d unintentionally wronged them in some way because of his spinelessness.

“How unfortunate,” someone said from behind him.

“Qyburn, I take it.” Rhaegar sniffled and smoothed his father’s hair from his face. He avoided the man’s bulged eyes. He couldn’t face the guilt he saw there. “Are you the pyromancer?”

“I am.”

The man, Qyburn, stepped around him, examining the corpse in his arms mournfully. “Some say those who commit patricide are damned.”

“Then I am damned.”

Rhaegar continued to hold his father. The man’s face had never looked so peaceful. “You will not be moving forward with whatever schemes my father had with the wildfire. Do you understand?” he asked sternly.

Yes, that’s right.

He had to be assertive. If he faltered, even a little, he’d lose his grip on this new role before he fully settled into it. He glared at Qyburn, using all of the rage and hatred that the war had stirred inside him. He thought of Gerold’s murder, the countless men they lost. Lyanna being ripped from him shortly after their wedding, and every little thing in between.

When Qyburn swallowed, he saw the man’s adam’s apple bob and his hands twitched. He was intimidated.

“I was told there were caches under the entire city. Is that true?”

“Yes, that is true.”

Rhaegar closed his father’s eyes, his fingers lingering. “Can you get rid of it?”

“There are ways. But it would be a waste to—”

One look. That’s all it took was one pointed look for the man to backtrack.

How long could Rhaegar keep this up? Once his sadness and anger deserted him, how would he maintain his hold on his subordinates?

Qyburn bows. “Very well, Master Rhaegar. I will do as you bid.”

“Qyburn?”

“Yes, Master Rhaegar.”

“Keep a cache or two. Just in case.”

“Understood.”

Rhaegar didn’t have the strength to carry himself and his father to the lift so he left the man there until he could get the family’s mortician to come for his body. Arthur was waiting for him in the office and he helped him to his mother’s room. It was a good thing he waited to make the call to the mortician because before the night ended, his mother was dead as well.

“I’ve done it mother,” he told her as he knelt by her bedside, clasping her sweating, frail hands. “I killed him. He will hurt you no longer.”

“You did it? You...really, he’s gone?” Rhaella let out a shaky sigh of relief. She cupped Rhaegar’s face tenderly. “My children will be safe,” she said, smiling contentedly. “You will watch over your brother and sister...yes?”

Rhaegar nodded. “Of course, mother. I will watch over you as well.” He looked to where the Maester was at the foot of the bed, gathering towels and setting the basin of water aside. His little sister was ready to be born. “We don’t have to cower in his shadow anymore.”

“You don’t have to cower in his shadow anymore, Rhaegar. You will lead this family now.”

“I will but...” He lowered his head in shame. “I’m not strong enough. You were right, I’m not ready.”

Rhaella touched his face with both hands, lifting his head with a force he thought lost to her. “You must make yourself strong. Without you, our family is nothing. Family...family always comes first, Rhaegar. Never forget that!”

But he would have his mother to guide him, wouldn’t he? Rhaegar stared into her eyes, her lilac eyes, and saw the truth there. She wasn’t going to survive the birthing of his sister and she knew it. Rhaegar didn’t want to accept that.

How could she know that she wouldn’t survive? She was strong, stronger than anyone he knew. She would overcome this. She would heal from the years of abuse and find peace and happiness. Rhaegar wanted that for her desperately. Seeing her like this now made him regret his kindness toward his father in the man’s last moments.
“Mother, do not worry about me,” Rhaegar said quickly. “I will not fail you. But I need you to hold on please…”

Rhaella’s hands dropped from his face, and she dug her hands in the bed sheets, twisting them violently as she screamed.

“It’s time,” the Maester said.

He held her hand through it all. Even the times when she squeezed so hard he feared she’d tear his arm off, he didn’t let go.

“The last time I met Robert on the Trident, I was a child pretending to be a man,” Rhaegar says as he laces up his tactical boots, one foot at a time. “I’d never lost a fight. It was those victories that ultimately defeated me…”

Jon leaned against the wall, his arms crossed, his expression contemplative. “I say we fly over the Trident and pick him and his men off one by one.”

“You want me to take the coward’s way out?”

“I want you to avoid the trap he’s obviously set for you.”

Rhaegar shakes his head. “Robert hasn’t set a trap.” He plants his foot on the floor and stands, stretching from side to side, his bones popping noisily. “He will want to fight me fairly. For all that he is, he will uphold the traditions of the brawl.”

If a challenge has been issued only the one who made the summons and the one who answered are to engage one another. Other fights may break out, of course. But no one is allowed to intervene in their fight. Guns aren’t allowed during brawls either.

“You expect me to go there unarmed?” Jon asks irately. The thought of losing another parent so soon has him angry; afraid.

“Do whatever you like, Jon. You and Dany are the heads of this family, not me. If you want to violate the sacred rules and bring guns, do it. But you will not intervene in my fight with Robert. Even if he manages to overpower me. Swear it.”

Yeah, well it sure as shit doesn’t feel like they’re the heads of the family what with the way people still only answer to Rhaegar. Most aren’t willing to make moves until he approves of them.

Is that what it means to have a reputation like his father’s? The man can formally decree that Jon and Dany are the new heads of the family until he’s blue in the face but people will still treat him like their king. How long will it take for him and Dany to achieve that recognition? Decades probably.

Jon’s jaw clenches defiantly. He will make no such promises. If his father looks like he’s losing, he’ll intervene. He expects to be yelled at, to be ordered to obey.

Then again, this isn’t Robert.

“You got your stubbornness from your mother,” Rhaegar says, smiling fondly. He gestures for Jon to come to him. When Jon does, he pats the top of his head gently. “Dany and Missandei are your priority when we’re at the Trident. Do no worry about me. Protect your wife and your sister,
“That’s a given.” Jon nudges his father’s hand away, fighting back a blush. He isn’t a bloody child. “I’m going to protect my family, including you. I’ll have armed men surrounding the area and men flying above, as well. I don’t give a fuck about tradition when it comes to keeping everyone safe.”

“As you shouldn’t. When Robert falls, we will kill everyone who came with him.”

“But I thought—”

“I only wish to fight Robert on my own. I don’t care about upholding tradition outside of that.”

Jon is relieved to hear that.

“Are there repercussions for breaking the tradition?” he asks.

There hadn’t been a brawl like this in decades so he isn’t sure about the rules. Whenever they bumped heads with the smaller gangs in the northern territory, his uncle Ned always wanted them to do it with honor. To only kill those directly involved, and avoid civilian areas. Other than that, they didn’t have many rules to uphold during brawls.

Rhaegar tilts his head to the side like a curious kitten. “Who will be around to reprimand you? Our southern allies surely won’t. The north will be nothingness. “

“Now that I think about it, what will the rest of the world say about this? What will they say to us leveling the north?”

“Us?” Rhaegar asks. “I did this all on my own, Jon. You, Dany— everyone else are blameless.”

Realization slams into Jon like a freight train. A lump forms in his throat, his eyes water. “No,” he croaks, shaking his head slowly. “I...I won’t let you take the fall.”

“You will.”

“No.” They’re all in this together. “No, father.”

“Yes, Jon,” he says sternly. He wipes Jon’s tears and cups his head. “You and Dany ordered me to stand down but I disobeyed. I went behind your back, I plotted on my own, and I leveled the north out of pure vengeance. You two knew nothing about it.”

That isn’t true, though. They may have been in the dark a majority of the time but they know now, and they’re doing nothing to stop him. They’re just as guilty as he is. Why is his father doing this?

“The other families will tell the same story,” Rhaegar says. “On your wedding night, when they kissed yours and Dany’s rings, they solidified that vow to me.”

He thinks about his father adding him to his will and the other arrangements he’s made in the past to ensure that his family will be financially set without him. Now there’s this. He set them up to be blame free once the smoke clears. By making them the acting heads of the family, it’ll look as if he betrayed their wishes, that he committed this atrocity on his own.

The man has been planning this for months down to the smallest details.

Always three steps ahead, Jon thinks bitterly.

“What if we decide not to go along with this fabrication?” Jon asks. He doubts Dany would be open
to it either.

Rhaegar smiles sadly. “Family always comes first. You and Dany will go along with it because it’s for the good of the entire family. I am but one person.”

That isn’t true. His father is the heart of their family. He’s each and every last one of them.

“It’s nearly time,” Rhaegar says, patting Jon’s head again. “Are you ready?”

No. No, he wasn’t ready because he had a strong feeling that his father had no intentions of surviving this.

The man wants to die. But Jon doesn’t give a shit about what he wants. He’s not letting that happen.

“Yeah, I’m ready,” Jon says.

Dany doesn’t know what to do.

On one hand, she desperately wants to avenge Lyanna and Viserys. She wants to stand beside her brother and husband. She wants to look their enemy in the eye as they die. However, she also wants to keep her baby out of harm’s way.

There’s no doubt that Rhaegar and Robert won’t be the only ones fighting on the Trident today. Dany has learned to prepare herself for any and all outcomes. The wisest thing would be to stay as far away from the brawl as possible as she’s certain she will be targeted alongside her brother and husband.

But the idea of sitting around while everyone else is fighting sickens her.

“Does Jon know yet? “Missandei asks. She was informed of Dany’s pregnancy only moments ago. They’re in the room sitting with Grey Worm, waiting for Jon and Rhaegar to come for them.

“I haven’t told him.”

Missandei gives her a criticizing look.

“I know I need to tell him but there’s so much going on. I found out the day Lyanna died. I just couldn’t tell him that I was pregnant while he was grieving his mother.”

“As long as you’re prepared for him to be pissed when he learns that you’ve been running around fighting without telling him that you’re pregnant, then fine. The decision may seem hard but it’s really a simple one.” Missandei is straight to the point, per usual. “Either you stay behind or go and fight. There will be consequences to deal with either way. You just have to decide which ones you’d prefer to face.”

Neither. Dany would prefer to not have to deal with any of this. But that isn’t an option.

She touches Grey Worm’s forehead, checking his temperature despite the countless times Missandei has already done that. The Maester warned that fever may settle in again. Her brother woke up a few hours ago, only long enough to have a sip of water and try to get out of bed so that he may fight again.

Her family is full of stubborn people, it would seem.

Rhaegar had to assure Grey Worm that everything was fine, that his rest and recovery was far more
important. They didn’t mention Viserys’s death to him because Grey Worm would’ve never went back to sleep if they had.

Viserys, her loyal and protective brother. She used to think him stupid and weak. Now she can’t think about him without crying.

“There are times when I wonder if our family will ever be how we were,” Missandei says, her voice barely a whisper. “How can we be without Viserys? He had his faults, it’s true. But I loved him. I always felt safer when we did jobs together because I knew despite his indifference, no harm would come to me when he was around and now…”

Dany embraces Missandei and they cry on each others’ shoulders. Their family will never be the same after this. How can they be when such a vital member is gone? Sometimes, when she’s left to her thoughts, she thinks about how likely it is that all of them will be dead before this is all over.

The end of the Targaryens, the end of a dynasty. That cannot happen. That will not happen.

“I’m going to stand with my family at the Trident,” Missandei says, sniffing. “I want to stay by Grey’s side but that will do him no good. I’m going to kill as many as I can, I’m going to do as much as I’m capable of. That’s all we can do.”

Dany hugs Missandei tighter, fearing that she may never get the chance to do so again. “Is it too early to ask you to be godmother to our child?”

“Never too early. Actually, I was wondering when you were going to ask me.”

She’s glad Missandei is still able to make a joke. “I know Jon will be fine with you and Grey being godparents.”

“And if something were to happen to me…?”

“We won’t speak of it.” Dany couldn’t even think of it. “We always planned to raise our children together, remember?”

“We did. But you are moving so damn fast. I’ll have to catch up.”

Dany laughs. It feels good to do so and actually mean it. “Jon is the one with the powerful sperm. I’m still on birth control, you know.”

“Now that is an image I did not need in my head.”

“This is payback for all the times you told me about sex with Grey Worm when I was getting zero action.”

Missandei is making a comment about how she was going Dany a favor by adding some interest to her dull life when Arthur comes to let them know that they’re preparing to head out.

Whatever decision Dany is going to make, she has to make it as soon as possible.

They’re an odd, disagreeable bunch, the four of them.

Lyanna, Maester Luwin, Viserys, and Gendry tread carefully the closer they draw to The Gift as they know the free folk lurk in the surrounding woods with bow and arrow at the ready. Guns are too noisy and they scare the animals away.
There’s no guarantee that they’ll be welcomed warmly. The free folk are known to shoot first and ask questions later. If they do happen to let one of their arrows fly she wouldn’t be opposed if one hit Viserys.

He’s a proper cunt through and through. Viserys refuses Maester Luwin’s offers of Milk of the Poppy at every turn despite how much pain he’s obviously in. He even offers a bit of dreamwine.

“You bloody maesters and your damn potions,” he says at one point, having reached his wit’s end. “Try to give that shit to me one more time and I’m going to—”

“Don’t threaten the man who’s trying to treat you,” Lyanna snaps. “You’re heavily injured and you’re in pain, we all know it. And you won’t stop complaining. Just take the damn milk and shut up!”

Viserys is livid. “At least I’m doing something!” He points at Gendry who’s been lagging behind the entire journey far north. “Seriously, name one meaningful thing he’s done since he’s been here with us. Do it quickly!”

So much for them treading carefully and keeping quiet. They stop walking, Lyanna turns to Viserys while the others watch from a safe distance.

“He’s been injured,” she argues. “Cut him some slack.”

“Injured, you say? Well, damn, me too! But I’m trying to stay awake and alert so that I can still be of some use! Gendry here has been a waste of space ever since he ran away from home! Because of him you both got captured again and because of him again, it’s taking us too fucking long to get to Tormund’s territory!”

Lyanna wants to knock Viserys’s head off his shoulders but she feels like if she hit him at all, he’d drop dead. No matter how insufferable he is at times, she isn’t going to kill the man. And if she were being honest with herself, she’d admit that he spoke some truth. Of course, she can’t openly agree with a man who just called her son a waste of space.

“Gendry’s just a boy. He was tortured and beaten by his father, you cunt!

“Am I supposed to feel sorry for him because he’s been tortured and beaten by his father? Join the shitty fathers club, Gendry!”

“You’re a sack of shit, you know that?”

“At least I’m something,” Viserys says, shrugging. He laughs. “Oh look, the little doe is running away. Again.”

Lyanna sighs loudly. “Goddammit, Gendry!” She runs after him. “Wait! Don’t listen to Viserys. He’s a cunt, and he’s just upset because he’s hurting.”

She follows him a good distance away from where Viserys and Maester Luwin are then she grabs him by the arm to stop him. They don’t have time for this. Any minute, shit’s about to hit the fan. They don’t have time for this shit, they really don’t. But this is a conversation she’s been meaning to have with Gendry for some time now. She only wishes it would’ve gone differently.

“He wasn’t lying,” Gendry says, refusing to face her. “I’m just useless. I couldn’t even save you from my father.”

“I never expect you to save me, Gendry. Don’t listen to Viserys, you’re not a waste of space.”
“But you wish I was more like Jon, don’t you?”

Lyanna squeezes his arm gently. “Gendry, look at me.” She tugs a little. “Please.” When he faces her, he’s crying and refuses to meet her gaze. “I love you both for who you are. I don’t wish that either of you were any different. You do understand how dire this situation is, yes?”

Gendry nods.

“Good. We need everyone to pull their own weight, that’s all Viserys meant. He just has a cunty way of saying it.”

“It’s my fault we were captured. It’s all my fault. I’m useless and-”

Lyanna jerks him up by his shirt. “This isn’t the time for that,” she says. “I wish I could hold you and list all the remarkable things about you to prove that you’re far from a useless waste of space. But we can’t do that right now because the man I decided to love is going to blow this place to the high heavens. So, please, please, pick up your feet, son. We’re running out of time!”

Gendry is no longer lagging behind after that little pep talk. In fact, he walks a little ways ahead of her and Viserys with Maester Luwin. Maybe that’s just his way of keeping his distance from them.

She wonders if perhaps she was too harsh with him. Sometimes tough love is best.

Beside her, Viserys sways slightly and she fears he’ll fall over. He doesn’t. The man, for all of his faults and annoyances, is strong-willed.

“You should rest,” Lyanna says tightly. “There’s nothing more for you to do in this fight and you know it.”

She expects him to lash out and give her a reason to knock him clean out once and for all. A good hit in the jaw should help him rest.

Viserys chuckles. “I am aware of that, but I won’t rest until we’re where we need to be. Rhaegar would be upset if I let anything happen to you.”

“You do understand that I am more than capable of taking care of myself and everyone here, right?”

“You weren’t there when we thought you’d died, Lyanna,” he says quietly, his words sincere. “You didn’t hear Rhaegar’s screams, see how broken Jon was. I need to keep you alive so my brother and nephew can know happiness again.”

Lyanna never even considered how that must have been for them. Her only concern has been getting them all to safety, far from Rhaegar’s wrath and regrouping with the others. Jon, her poor, brave boy.

She knows he’s probably taking the false news harder than anyone. He loves her so much and there’s never been a moment when she felt otherwise.

Then there’s Rhaegar. That man loves her so much that sometimes it’s scary to think of what he’d do to anyone who harmed her in anyway.

“I’m sure they reacted the same to the news of your death.”

“Do you think so?” Viserys is smiling. Of course he is. He does love attention. “I can’t wait to see the looks on their faces when we show up like, ‘surprise, bitch!’” He laughs.

Lyanna hates herself for laughing too.
Then their laughter dies at the sound of something whizzing past. Quickly, they all take cover behind the trees. Maester Luwin, bless his heart, is a little too slow and barely misses an arrow in the back.

“Who are you? What do you want?!?” someone shouts.

As she said, they hoot first and ask questions later.

“I’m Lyanna Stark,” she shouts. “We’re here to seek refuge from Tormund.”

“You Jon’s mother? Robb’s aunt?” they ask.

“Aye!”

Thank the gods her son and nephew were smart enough to make friends with the free folk instead of keeping the dispute going. It’s because of them, Jon mainly for his infiltration of their gang, that their family has maintained reliable allies.

And true to his word, Viserys holds out until they’re safely inside the territory before passing out. Lyanna makes sure he doesn’t face plant.

“We need a phone.” Lyanna is surprised to hear Gendry say that. “The sooner we call Jon and let him know we’re okay, the better.”

Lyanna looks at her son, and she’s happy when he looks back without an ounce of animosity in his gaze. Perhaps the tough love did come in handy.

“They’re making their way to the Trident, I hear,” one of the free folks says, spitting tobacco into a plastic bottle. “Robert issued a challenge to Rhaegar and he accepted. Roose’s boy, the rabid one...him and his woman were lurking about until the news spread. I reckon they’re on their way there too. Some of us were thinking of going to watch the show.”

“Robert’s at the Trident?” Lyanna eyes are wide, some would even say crazed. She needed to get to that fucker before Rhaegar ends him. “We’re coming with you!”

Croaking, Viserys startles awake against her. “The fuck are we waiting for then?” he asks weakly. “Let’s go.” He struggles to sit up.

This man is ridiculous.

Before Lyanna can pitch the nerves in his neck, Maester Luwin injects him with a needle. Viserys is out cold after that. When he wakes, he’s going to curse them all but at least he’ll be alive. She hands the man over to the maester, a new purpose fills her bones.

“But Viserys is right,” Lyanna says, adjusting the duffle bag on her shoulder, feeling the weight of the guns more than she did before, “the fuck are we waiting for then? Let’s go!”

Sometime ago, during the early years of organized crime in the city, the Trident was named a neutral zone for moments like this. The first dispute to be handled on the riverbank was between lower Karstark and Umber families.

Although the accounts differ, everyone says the dispute was over an unfaithful man. The two women fought with their bare hands and fingernails until one of them decided it wasn’t worth it. In the end, they shook hands and deemed the issue solved. It is said that they left town together, but who knows.
And who cares.

Ramsay sure as shit doesn’t. For him, the Trident holds a lot of fond memories from his younger years. In the northern territory, it’s like a right of passage for them to all meet up out here and settle whatever squabble they have.

He never fought fair, however. He never broke the rules and brought guns but he wore knuckle rings and never fought alone. Him and his gang of knuckleheads always fought together rather it was them against another group or them against one.

“You look pleased with yourself,” Myranda says, taking out a pair of binoculars to get a better look. They’re watching the opposing vehicles pull up from a safe distance. “Thinking about that woman we had before we got here?” She smiles, bringing the device up to her eyes.

He’s already forgotten about that toy. “Reminiscing of my younger years,” he says. “This is the first brawl we’ve had like this in a long time. Long before either of us were born.” Too bad it wasn’t going to last long.

When Ramsay heard about the challenge, he dropped everything and they came running. There was no way he was going to miss this. On his way here, his father called and told him that they planned to end the war once and for all on this day.

Regardless of who won the brawl, they were to kill the remaining survivors. The man would be arriving soon with the bulk of their men from the Dreadfort, Last Hearth, and Winterfell.

It’s going to be a massacre. Ramsay’s dick is hard just thinking about it.

The vehicles down below come to a stop.

Robert Baratheon is the first to get out, carrying a metal bat in one hand, fat face red and scowling. He looks fierce, fiercer than Ramsay’s ever seen him. In all of his time around the man, he’s always looked like a great buffoon rather than a fearsome stag. He wonders what’s changed in the man.

From the other SUVs on Robert’s side, exits five of his footmen, Harald Karstark, Smalljon Umber, and their men all carrying wooden bats.

On the other side, Rhaegar Targaryen exits the back of a black Jeep, silver hair whipping around his face, dressed from head to toe in black. The man ties his long hair back while the other doors open and men begin piling out; mostly the foreign sellswords and a handful of Lannisters.

Out of the front seat, on the driver’s side exits a petite, dark woman. She’s the one he always sees with them. She’s Rhaegar’s adopted daughter, he thinks.

That bitch killed so many of Karstarks men during the brothel raid, he heard. Her and Arthur Dayne who exits another vehicle. It’s surprising that he didn’t ride in the same vehicle as Rhaegar, but Ramsay doesn’t dwell on that minor detail.

Robb Stark, the Tyrell girl, and Jaime Lannister are with him, along with the great beasts that are more wolves than dogs.

All of the legends of old are here. It’s exciting. He grew up on stories of men like this and now he gets to watch them die.

Then Ramsay sees him, and he must see him at the same time Myranda sees her prey because the woman gasps loudly beside him.
Jon and Daenerys are here as well.

The newlyweds walk in front of the Jeep, standing side by side. Jon’s hair is shorter than he remembers, he’s bigger too, like he put on some weight. He looks healthy. Unconsciously, Ramsay licks his lips.

“Is that her?” Myranda asks. “Is that Daenerys?!”

Ramsay rolls his eyes. “Who else would it be?” He puts the binoculars away. “I want to get my hands on Jon before the others come and kill him.”

“Daenerys is mine,” she reminds him, sounding giddy. “I want to carve up her pretty face!”

*If she doesn’t carve up yours first, Ramsay thinks.*

Several minutes pass without anyone uttering a word.

The only noises come from the wind blowing and rustling the leaves on the wood trees and the ever flowing water of the Trident. Occasionally, a bird will chirp in the distance or one of the wolf dogs will growl lowly in their chests, their forming blood thirst spurred on by the electrifying tension in the air.

But no one speaks. Heated words and curses aren’t exchanged, only hateful glares. The hatred rolling off of both men is so strong that everyone can smell it and taste it in the air. Because of this, no one is brave enough to break the silence.

So, they all wait.

Flanking Rhaegar are Jon and Dany, and guarding his back, though at a distance, is Arthur as it has always been. Missandei is beside Dany, scanning her eyes across the faces of their enemies, quietly deciding on who she’ll pick off first.

Aside from Rhaegar and Robert, Harald and Robb have a stare down of their own. Tight in Harald’s grip is a sharp ax already wet with blood. Robb’s carrying a spiked bat, the same kind they say his uncle Brandon favored during brawls.

Like his father, Jon is unarmed, and his silent anger also matches that of Rhaegar’s as he stares at the man who put his mother through literal hell for decades. The same man who violated her on that fateful night, and instilled hatred and self-loathing in him as a boy.

He hoped Ramsay would come out today too so he could kill the man. He hasn’t forgotten what that coward did to him, how he made him stare at his uncle’s rotten head.

Vengeance will be had on this day.

Soon, one of Karstark’s men grows restless. Or perhaps he believes that he’ll gain respect and prestige for being the one to take out Rhaegar Targaryen. Whatever the driving force may be, it’s idiotic.

The man rushes towards Rhaegar, screaming at the top of his lungs, wooden bat hanging low for a strong upward swing. Arthur, the more experienced of the two, moves first then Jon, both prepared to end the man before he lays his bat on Rhaegar.

But Rhaegar beats them both to the punch.
A loud snap rings throughout the clearing, frightening the birds nesting on a nearby tree causing them to take flight. As everyone watches on stunned, minus Robert who looks even more pissed than before, his father snatches the broken bat out of the stunned man’s hand and plunges the jagged end in his throat.

Eyes never leaving Robert’s face, Rhaegar brutally stabs the man, over and over. He ends the assault with a sickening twist of the bat. Then he rises, pointing the blood dripping stump at Robert.

“Look around you, Robert,” his father says, voice cold, trembling with barely contained anger. “Acquaint yourself with this area because this is where you will die. This is where the wolves will feast on your rotting corpse for that is all you’re good for, that is all you are. Meat for hungry beasts.” He tilts the bat up, beckoning Robert forth. “Now come, Robert. Come and die!”

A shiver passes through Jon as though the man’s words were aimed at him. He can see the eyes of the others on the opposing side, and they’re shivering too. His father is a terrifying man and anyone who came here today thinking this would be a repeat of the first brawl against north and south were dead wrong.

Robert, for his part, does a fine job of acting unfazed. “Did she tell you how I took her that night?” he asks, cracking a smile. “Or how she cried and begged for you to save her but you never came? You failed her on that night and you’re going to fail her again by dying by my hands like you should’ve the first time—”

His threat is cut short by the sound of what can only be described as a thunderous boom coming from the north. The ground beneath their feet shifts, ever so slightly, from the impact.

Jon and his father share similar smiles.

At the enemy’s backs, the sky is momentarily aflame with neon green. Immediately after the first explosion, there’s a second one. Yet again, the sky is lit and roaring, abnormal flames can be spreading like a raging fire; a wild fire. Robert and the others watch with frightful eyes as dark smoke billows toward the heavens and slowly spreads southbound to where they are.

“That,” Rhaegar says, stepping over the man he killed, “is the north’s reckoning.” He waits for the wretched man to face him again before he lunges forward, bat at the ready. “And I am your reckoning, Robert!”

And so it begins.

“It’s nearly finished,” Roose speaks into the phone as he fills his suitcase with clothes. “I will board the next flight to Pentos. By the time I land, the Targaryens will be no more…”

He walks across his bedroom to the window and looks out to see the men loading into the vans, machine guns strapped to their backs. This war will end before lunchtime, he’s certain of it. With the remainder of the men from each surviving stronghold, they can wipe out the southern forces.

“Very good. I look forward to seeing you soon.” He ends the call.

As his ally in the east promised, the Tyrells and the Martells have been removed from the conflict. Lady Olenna is sour over the condition of her grandson while the Dornish princess has a turf war to deal with; a turf war that his ally started for this very reason.

Roose should’ve had faith in the man but very rarely does he have faith in anyone other than himself. He intended to double cross his ally in the east and make a deal with Rhaegar. If only to ensure his
skin was saved when the dust cleared.

This alternative is much better. He will end Rhaegar and Robert, their lines as well then the north will be his to do as he pleases. His ally can do whatever he wants with the Targaryen estate; per their agreement.

However, it doesn’t make sense to him. Why would a random captain of a sellsword company be so adamant about seeing the end of the Targaryens?

Well, there was once a story he heard from a long time ago...

Roose walks away from the window and continues packing. Ramsay will be cross with him for not bringing him alone but he doesn’t want the insipid boy to ruin anymore of his business deals. He’s almost done packing when he smiles to himself.

Yet again, he’s managed to come out on top. All of his time spent kneeling at the feet of that spineless oaf Eddard has paid off.

Hearing shouting coming from outside, Roose goes over to the window again. If those idiots are fighting among themselves again, he’ll have them hanged. Sometimes the old way is the best.

He looks out of the window and sees a flash of green.

Before he can form a single thought, before fear can manifest inside of him, the green consumes him and he is ash.

Chapter End Notes

Don't grief me for the cliff hanger or I'm trashing this fic. :) thanks for reading!

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