A Dream of Spring

by wanderlust_and_rainbows

Summary

A self indulgent fic in which season 8 didn't happen the way it did. Written more in the style of the books. Picks up where season 7 ended and follows the general timeline/plot of Season 8, but with characterization that is hopefully more consistent with prior development. From multiple points of view, but it will focus predominantly on Daenerys, as her arc was the one that I felt suffered the most.
Daenerys was not sure what to expect from the north. She had hardly seen any of it from dragon back on her way past the wall, too focused on saving Jon snow from what a vast pit in her stomach had told her was an idiot plan bound to go awry. She had seen none of it on the boat ride back, when Jon Snow had lay half dead and half frozen, the wounds he had taken for his country clear for the whole world to see.

And some of her ignorance may have been forgiven, since she had grown up on the warmer shores of Essos, in the hot humid shadows of her ancestor’s cities. The closest any place she had lived to the North’s frozen and ancient lands was Braavos, and even then, the cold was never as omnipresent as what she experienced as she rode, not on dragon back, but rather by horse through the icy lands and snowdrifts.

She had seen vast forests before, many years ago, when the Khal had first escorted her from her Valyrian home to an entirely new world that would come to shape her destiny. Not even those forests, that guarded the great grass sea, could prepare her for the ride north, through the great frozen swamps, trees rising through the frost and towering overhead. It did not prepare her for the tall and deadly dark woods that spanned the sides of the King’s Road for what appeared to be endless miles.

There were many mountains, whose peaks crested the clouds, waterfalls that were stilled by the northern winds as if the cold would never have them flow again, the crashing liquid turned into icy sculptures. Woods gave way to a vast tundra, whose monotony once again brought her back to the girl she was once. The skies that were often clear of any clouds spanned farther than she could see.

The north was decidedly beautiful. So breathtaking that she was grateful that Tyrion suggested that she ride with them rather than head off on her own. Daenerys knew his suggestion was politic, and not about her enjoying the scenery. But she still thanked him nonetheless.

What truly made the Queen happy was the contentedness she saw in her northern men as they returned to their home from far too long away. Ser Jorah was caught many a time with his gaze cast to the east, where Bear Island hid beyond the horizon, a twinkle in his eyes as he remembered happier times and stories that he was glad to share with her as they rode often side-by-side. Jon also lost some of the tension she had become used to seeing in his shoulders, lessening noticeably the closer that they got to Winterfell. When they were alone, his touches came easier, and she received them eagerly. Daenerys could feel love when their skin touched, an emotion that she had long held back, afraid both for, and of, herself.

It was midday when Winterfell was first spotted by one of Daenerys’s scouts, who often rode ahead of the horde in the Dothraki way, despite the fact that here in Westeros that it was not entirely necessary. He’d come riding back to her, whooping his news in the Dothraki tongue. The Queen had nearly called down Drogon to be her mount, but Jon had seemingly sensed her intent, and brought his horse to her side, whispering in her ear. “Best not.” He said. “They’ll be scared enough already. Don’t want to give my sister another reason to scold me.”

She tried to hide a smile as she urged her silver mare to the front of her army, Jon’s black beast at her heels. They came to the head of the Unsullied guards at nearly the same time, just at the edge of Winter town. “I can’t wait to meet her.” She confessed. “I would very much like to meet the woman who would scold the King in the North. You could do with more scolding.”

He gave her a look that promised that her mischief would be returned. “Especially since the
scolding is only made worse by the fact that Sansa is nearly always right.”

“Again,” Daenerys said, giving a wave to one of Winter town’s children, who had run out to see them. The boy waved back shyly, and darted back to his mother, pointing at them. She couldn’t help a smile. “I can’t wait to meet her.”

Jon’s reply was cut short by a loud cry, and in the same second, the wind kicked up around them, as Drogon dived close, skimming the buildings and the castle by mere feet. Still up in the clouds, Rhaegal roared back, swinging around the city in broad arching circle, until he disappeared into the mist, glimmering like a distant emerald. The Queen looked indulgently up at her children, unaware of the anxiety that had replaced the excitement of their arrival.

Ahead of the horde, the gates of Winterfell opened, and Daenerys bid Grey Worm and a few of her blood riders to order their men to stay behind, whilst they and Tyrion and Ser Jorah made their entrance.

She took a moment to get her bearings once she got past the gate, casting her gaze around what she supposed was Winterfell’s version of a courtyard, though it’s purpose seemed more utilitarian than that of the other courtyards she had seen in any other Westerosi castles. Off to one end, she could see stables, dog kennels, and what looked like practice targets for what was perhaps archery, on the other end was an area that could pass for a small market, with different booths, some with metalwork, others with leather being pressed. Except, it seemed, that the people who would usually have been laboring there were not present. Either gone, or standing behind the welcoming party, Daenerys wasn’t sure.

After she felt that she had given Jon a reasonable amount of time to reacquaint himself with his siblings, Daenerys let herself off of her mare, despite the stablehand who had come to help her, the movement slick and easy after years of practice. Politic may not have come easy to her, but she was well aware that she could never ask or receive assistance in front of her Dothraki, no matter the depths of their loyalty. She’d learned over the years that a show of strength was far more valuable in diplomacy than being simpering and agreeable.

The Queen was also aware of the many eyes trained on her as she approached where the Starks stood. Her reputation, she saw, had even reached the far off North. The Mad King’s daughter, a foreign conqueror, dragon rider, mother of monsters. She may have been entirely necessary for the upcoming war on the darkness, but that didn’t mean that these Northerners did not view her with trepidation.

Dany would never admit it, not to Jon, who she loved, or even Missandei, who she trusted more than any other person in the world, but she truly hated being feared. It exhausted her. And the mistrust hurt her far more than she would ever admit to herself.

She made her way to Jon’s side as he stood by his family, waiting to introduce her. To one side was a young man in a wheeled chair, staring at them near unblinking, his face either unimpressed or uncaring. The unwavering gaze made Daenerys uncomfortable, so she turned to who she expected must be Sansa Stark, Lady of Winterfell, and though she may not have the title in name, the true Lady of the North.

Dany thought that Sansa Stark was rather beautiful, as much as the rumors had said, her bright red hair a stark contrast against her pale skin and icy blue eyes. She was clad in the northern fashion, plain but warm clothes, with a cloak that was not notable for its decoration but rather for the richness of the fur. Daenerys idly wondered if the animal was a wolf, as would befit the quiet strength that radiated off of the Northern woman, tempered by the politely blank mask that she wore on her face.
“I’d like to introduce you to Daenerys Targaryen, Queen of Westeros, and first of her name.” Jon said, his voice almost uncomfortable as he introduced her in an unpracticed ceremonial fashion. “Your grace, this is my sister, Sansa Stark, Lady of Winterfell.”

Dany smiled warmly. Despite herself, she found that she wanted desperately to have the Lady like her. “An honor to meet you, Lady Stark.” She said, holding her hand out to shake. “Your brother has told me many things about you, that you are a brilliant strategist, and a great leader. I’ve been very much looking forward to making your acquaintance.”

Sansa’s grip was firm in Dany’s grasp. “The feeling is returned, your grace. Your reputation precedes you.” Dany wondered briefly what that meant, but Sansa dropped her hand and stepped back with a polite nod. “Winterfell is yours.”

Daenerys had meant to say something in return, but another voice had interrupted. “We do not have time for niceties.” The voice had belonged to the man in the wheeled chair, who had lost the blank look and replaced it with one that was far more serious. “The Ice King and his armies have breached the Wall, they march south, along with the ice dragon. We need to prepare for the great war.”
Jaime

As a Lannister, he used to not think much of walking into any place he came upon. People would bow and scurry out of his way, or rush to his side in an attempt to see to his needs before he knew what his needs were. He was now ashamed to admit that he used to see that as something that was inherently due to him, based on his birth. It was only right that the Lannister lion make the common folk quake with dread and awe.

Now however, he was not so convinced of his divine right to be worshiped. Especially in this place, Winterfell, which seemed more like a monument to his many sins. As he passed through the gates, clad in travelers clothes, unnoticed amongst the crowds of soldiers and workers, he could see the tower that so many years ago, he had altered the fate of his future.

Despite that, despite the horror that he had caused, the events that he had set in motion by pushing that Stark child from the window, Jaime Lannister found that he could not help but wonder if he would still be the same selfish man he was back then, had it not been for that one monumental sin.

He’d seen the Dragon Queen’s army as he had passed through Winterfell, the savage Dothraki and the cold-eyed Unsullied. He knew that meant that the Dragons would not be far either. Jaime had heard their cries far off in the distance. And where there were dragons, there would be the last Targaryen.

And with her, there would be his little brother at her side.

He had not only gone North to fight the good fight, to lend his hand as a knight against the darkness. He had also come here to be by his brother’s side, the little brother, whose job was his to protect, and who he had failed innumerable times. Jaime believed that he would find redemption at Tyrions side. That is, if Tyrion would have him.

He almost felt lost inside of Winterfell, not entirely sure where exactly he should go or what exactly he should be doing. He scanned the courtyard with his eyes, his gold hand wrapped in a scarf, not only to hide him, but also to keep the bitter aching cold from reaching the metal and freezing him further. Despite it acting as a disguise, he could sense eyes on him. He turned slowly, trying not to give himself away, but he found who was staring at him, the second a deep icy chill ran down his spine.

Brandon Stark.

———

He found himself staring down three Starks and the Dragon Queen. Somewhere off to the side, he knew Tyrion was there as well, though he did not make up one of the judges on what appeared to be a trial. Jaime wondered what that meant that his brother was not among them, but he also wondered why exactly he was not in chains.

It also appeared that it was not the Dragon Queen leading the questioning, nor the former King in the North either, but rather the red-headed Stark, who he loosely remembered as Sansa Stark. Though she had dramatically changed from the girl she’d been when he’d last seen her… Which, if he recalled correctly, had been the day his eldest son had died. Joffrey. Supposedly at her hand, or his brothers. He knew differently now.

Sansa had since then, perfected the cold Stark stare, her icy blue gaze staring him down as she
listed his many crimes, some of which he did not consider to be ones that he should personally be held accountable for. A spark of irritation made it’s way through the guilt, these Starks were always so judgmental…

But apparently it was no longer Sansa’s turn to speak. The Dragon Queen looked at him, her eyes unreadable. Jaime had seen her up close once before, at the council meeting that had convinced him to travel north, and even then she had not been quite the monster that he had expected after watching her burn his soldiers alive and destroy his caravan.

When she stared him down, no more than twenty feet away, he could not see her father in her face. Aerys had been hideous towards the end, scrawny, covered in claw marks from his long nails, and many often openly bleeding cuts from sitting on the Iron Throne. His hair had often been awry, pulled out in clumps, his cold violet eyes twitching uncontrollably as he constantly scanned the room for unseen dangers.

Nor could he really see Rhaela in her. The old queen had held her strength in quiet reserve, like an armor that could protect her from the world and from her husband. When she held her chin high, it was not because she was proud, it had been because it was expected of her. Her golden hair was often pulled high above her head in elaborate, controlled ringlets. Her gaze was always guarded and polite, and empty. Holding back her true heart in favor of projecting a sense of queenliness.

The Dragon Queen was so unlike her forbearers that it left Jaime on shaky ground. He did not know how to judge a person that was not shaped by their past, but had instead shaped themselves. He did not know what he should expect from her, or how to play her game.

“When I was a child, my brother would tell me stories about the man who killed our father,” She said, her eyes flickering violet and orange in the firelight. “He would also tell me what we would do to the man who killed our father when we got our hands on him.” There was a long moment, where to Jaime, it felt as though the air had gotten much colder. “Lucky for you, Ser Jaime, I am neither my father, nor am I my brother. And I do not consider you killing my father to be a crime against the realm, I understand who he was and what he did. What you did, in that circumstance, was a just execution.” The Dragon Queen paused, her eyes flickering off to the side where the Starks said, though her expression did not change. “However, as the Lady Stark has pointed out, your crimes are not to me or mine, but rather to the House Stark. Your judgement is theirs.”

Jaime watched as the icy mask on Sansa Stark’s face broke for a brief moment as she examined the Targaryen, and though it was back on before he could truly figure out what was underneath, Jaime thought that it might have been curiosity.

There was a sliding noise from behind him as someone’s chair scraped along stone, when he turned his gaze, he was surprised to see that it was Brienne, making her way to his side with purpose. Her head was held high, and her eyes would not meet his while she looked entreatingly at his judges. “Lady Sansa,” She paused, and then spoke again, almost unsure. “And Your Grace, though you do not know me.” Her eyes went back to Sansa Stark. “But I do know Ser Jaime, and I trust him to do the right thing. Whatever his crimes, he has paid for them in full, I know him as an honorable man.”

Daenerys Targaryen looked from between him and Brienne of Tarth. “You are willing to vouch for him?”

“I do Your Grace, my Lady.”

Sansa Stark looked away from her sworn sword to her younger brother, who watched this all surprisingly impassively for a man who was watching the trial of the man who had confined him to
a wheeled chair. “Bran?” Sansa asked, like his opinion was the deciding one.

“Whatever his crimes,” Brandon Stark said, maybe with a touch of amusement. “He has paid for in full. And he will have a hand to play in the war to come.”
Arya Stark crept through the shadows of Winterfell’s winding halls, taking each turn through the maze-like corridors with ease, the muscle memory leftover from many years ago when she was a child running through the halls to avoid her mother's scolding guided her path far more than her sense of sight. She may not have been in danger here in her home, but she still walked with her hand on her sword, ready at a moments notice.

Winterfell was full of more strangers than Arya had ever seen, even more than where Robert Baratheon and his entourage had come north. Now northern warriors, southern warriors, dothraki, unsullied, knights, and wildlings, wandered the halls as if they were as much at home here as she was.

And Arya wasn’t entirely sure how she felt about that.

Outside one room, the one that the old king Baratheon had stayed in years ago, there were two Dothraki guards perched outside the door, arms folded and looking bored. Neither had their weapons at the ready, they were so confident in their abilities. Arya grinned from her position in the shadows. She’d dueled with some of Dothraki over the past few weeks, and they’d been good, but not good enough. For a group of warriors that happened to be united under a Queen, or rather Khaleesi, they had a tendency to underestimate female fighters.

But Arya could hear voices from behind the door, talking in low relaxed tones. That on its own would not have been enough reason for her to consider spying, she didn’t often feel the need to listen in on other peoples conversations. It was instead the fact that she recognized the voices, and they were two people who she could not imagine under any circumstances to be speaking to each other.

Arya slipped down a small servants corridor that even she had to duck her head to walk through, and made her way around to the opposite side of the room from the guards, pushing through a set of broken stones that had been covered with a tapestry. No one that didn’t grow up in the halls of Winterfell would know that it was there, and even then it was likely still a secret to only Arya, and maybe Bran from back when he was also able to explore these halls.

She sidled quietly into the room, her footsteps making little noise on the stone as she perched near a window, a good spot to observe the conversation whilst still being hidden, nearly ten feet away from the where the silver-haired queen and Gendry spoke. Daenerys Targaryen was calm, sipping whatever was in her tankard as she listened to Gendry recant stories about his childhood, and how he had first come to know the Starks. She didn’t seem remotely surprised to find out that Gendry was the bastard child of Robert Baratheon, nor did she seem particularly bothered by the fact that it was his father that had usurped her crown.

Arya was willing to admit that the Dragon Queen did not seem as though she was plotting, but Arya’s past experience with Queens led her to believe that Gendry was in far more danger than he could know. The types who take to ruling, Cersei, Tywin, even her sister, never hesitated to wipe out what they considered a threat, much the same way that Arya would not blink at swatting a bug.

“Being as someone who has also spent a significant portion of their life being hunted like sport because of the sins of their father, I feel I’m in a position to empathize.” Daenerys began when Gendry had finished telling her how he'd fled from Kings Landing. "My brother and I spent our childhoods running from city to city, convinced that assassins were always around every corner.” She put down her tankard and sat up, looking Gendry in the eye. “Can you read?”
Gendry startled, shifting back in his chair a bit. “A little, your Grace.”

“But you can learn, surely, My Lord.”

“My Lord?” He asked.

The Queen gave a small smile. “After the war is over, if we are both fortuitous enough to survive, and if you would have it so, I would have you legitimized as Gendry Baratheon and named Lord of Storm’s End and the Stormlands, as is your ancestral right.”

“You- Your Grace I don’t know what to say.” He stuttered.

“The Baratheons and Targaryens were not always enemies,” The Queen said, tracing the rim of her tankard with a finger. “In fact, the house Baratheon was started by Orys Baratheon, who was rumored to be the half-brother of Aegon Targaryen. Our families had hundreds of years of love and loyalty between them until the Mad King tore that asunder. I would like to repair that alliance and have it be as it was before.” She stood, moving to stand far too close to the fireplace, her hand dancing idly near the flames. “You need not answer me now, but I would like to know if you are willing to at least consider the idea.”

“I will… I will think about it, Your Grace.”

“Good.” Without looking up from the fire, Daenerys spoke again. “Lady Stark, you may come out now.”

It was Arya’s turn to startle. She stood and made her way into the light of the room, where Gendry was staring at her with the appropriate amount of shock. “How did you know I was here?”

The Dragon Queen turned to her, a smile on her face. “Your brother warned me about the secret entrance to the room, and said that I might expect you to stop by.”

“Jon did?”

“No, Bran.” She gestured to the table where she and Gendry had been talking. “Please, have a seat.” She waited until Arya sat and then sat down between her and Gendry, her chair angled towards Arya. “How did you get past my guards without them noticing?”

“You need better guards.”

The dragon Queen raised an eyebrow, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth, though she kept it under careful control. “Better guards than Dothraki Bloodriders sworn to die in my service? If you know where to find someone like that, then please do enlighten me.”

Arya thought for a brief second that maybe she could like this queen. “You won’t be able to. The only person you should trust to keep you safe is yourself. Can you fight?”

“You need better guards.”

The dragon Queen raised an eyebrow, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth, though she kept it under careful control. “Better guards than Dothraki Bloodriders sworn to die in my service? If you know where to find someone like that, then please do enlighten me.”

Arya thought for a brief second that maybe she could like this queen. “You won’t be able to. The only person you should trust to keep you safe is yourself. Can you fight?”

“The only weapon I’m accustomed to using is a Dragon. Other than that, I’m more of a military tactician than a soldier or a warrior.”

She supposed a dragon was a fine enough weapon, but- “You shouldn’t limit yourself to just one option, you can never know what will happen during a fight. A dragon is a one purpose tool. And only an idiot would use a sword to lance a boil. You need options, have someone teach you what to use and how.”

Daenerys seemed to choose to be amused by being called an idiot rather than insulted. “Are you
offering?"

“Maybe.” If things went wrong, if this Targaryen proved to be something other than what she was showing the world, it would do better if Arya could be close when she turned. And she could only do that if she earned her trust. “Get yourself a sword and some armor, then come find me.”

She took a drink from her tankard. “It’s a good thing we have a blacksmith, then."
“Excuse me, Lady Stark?” A polite voice asked from the doorway. “Her Grace requests that you come to the library to speak with her.”

Sansa looked up from her papers, the accounts and ledgers that accompanied the management of any household, multiplied not only by the households status as a castle but as well as being host to the largest collective army in Westeros, in addition to letters and petitions that it fell to her as Lady of Winterfell to sort out. She was far too busy to accept any interruption to her ceaseless work, but the work was just that, ceaseless. The delay would hardly be worth any protest against it.

And if you valued your life and the safety of those who depended on you, it would not do to refuse a Queen.

Her face was equally polite as the messengers, Missandei, who Sansa remembered from earlier introductions as the left hand to the Queen, an advisor as equally valued to Daenerys as her actual Hand. Sansa recognized that by sending someone that was so highly regarded, that the Queen was trying to send Sansa a message that she was respected. Or at least that the Queen wanted Sansa to believe that she thought that way.

Games upon games.

“Of course,” Sansa said as she stood, tucking her chair back in under the desk before turning to leave. She was surprised to find that Missandei followed her, just slightly behind and to the right of where Sansa walked. “Her Grace has business with you as well?”

“I’m not just a messenger, My Lady. The Queen’s business is mine.” She smiled. “However, I will not be joining you for now. Her Grace has me speaking with her Generals this morning.”

Sansa stopped in front of the library door and inclined her head towards Missandei in a respectful goodbye before pushing the door open.

The Dragon Queen stood at one end of a long table, illuminated by soft candlelight as she examined a series of maps and diagrams. Rather than the typical Targaryen black or the white furs that Sansa had seen her in on her arrival, her clothes were more relaxed, a loose soft fabric hanging off her shoulders in shapeless waves. Her hair was down as well, ringlets haphazardly framing her face and swinging down in silver curls that hung past her hips.

Dothraki custom, if Sansa recalled correctly, held that the only time a warrior may cut their hair was if they were defeated in battle. Those silver locks were a sign to the world that no one that had tested Daenerys Stormborn had lived to tell the tale.

A chill ran down her spite, despite the furs that she war. Games upon games.

However, when the Queen looked up at the sound of the door closing, Sansa could see no falseness in her smile, or danger in her eyes. “Lady Stark,” Daenerys said. “Thank you for joining me.”

“I would not refuse the summons of a Queen, your Grace.” Sansa said. “What is it that you wanted to see me about?”

“I’ve spoken to many people about you, Lady Stark. There is a unanimous consensus that you are a brilliant strategist, and you know the land far better than I ever could. I would have you help in drawing up battle plans.”
Sansa shifted hesitantly. “I don’t know much about war, your Grace. My skills lay elsewhere.”

Daenerys raised an eyebrow. “I’m not so sure about that. Jon told me that it was you that turned the battle against the Boltons in his favor. The northern armies fight under your banner as much as they do under your brother’s leadership, and the armies of the Vale are here, at your command. That does not speak to you being inexperienced in strategy.”

Her mouth opened and closed. The Queen was not wrong, but it unnerved Sansa that she’d been able to see who she was so quickly, and that she was so frank about what she knew. “Very well.” She made her way to the other side of the table, next to where the Dragon Queen stood and examined the maps in front of her. “Where should we begin?”

They spoke for nearly an hour, examining the maps and drawing figures and checking charts. Daenerys pointed at one river pass that flowed through the massive glacial basin that Winterfell resided in. The river had long frozen over, meaning that now it was a valley with sheer cliffs on either side. “I’ve seen these Wights attack, they move without any planning, following any living thing they see, their only thought to kill. I would have some of my Dothraki lure them into this pass here,” Daenerys pointed, drawing along the outside of it. “And use the Dragons to close them off on the other side with fire. If we could close off the pass on the southern side as well, then we might be able to trap most of them in there.”

Sansa pulled another map to the top. “Jon said that these White Walkers are controlled by the Night King. What if he splits the army and has them follow this pass,” Sansa gestured, showing a smaller pass that led in a winding loop around Winterfell.

“He likely will,” Daenerys said, her face grim. “And if he splits his army it will have us at a disadvantage. We’ll have to make a perimeter around Winterfell, where I’ll station my Unsullied. If He splits his army and goes through these woods, them maybe…” The Queen stopped. “Show me the figures again. How much pitch and oil do we have?”

“It’s a shame we don’t have Wildfire,” Sansa handed the chart over. “It would have been useful here.”

“Wildfire?”

“An explosive accelerant, destroys everything it touches. They used it during the battle of the Blackwater because even the smallest amount of it could wipe out a whole fleet of ships. Cersei has caches of it all over King’s Landing.” She stopped when she saw Daenerys staring at her, her expression terrifying.

“Cersei Lannister has weapons that could kill thousands scattered throughout King’s Landing?” The Dragon Queen’s voice was far colder than the winter winds outside. “Are these the same weapons that killed half of the Tyrells and destroyed the Great sept of Baelor with hundreds of innocent people inside?”

“Yes they are.”

Dany pinched the bridge of her nose like she was holding back strong emotion. “The war against her has not even truly begun and she is already holding the city hostage against me.”

Sansa hesitated, but this was far more human and vulnerable than she had ever seen the Queen. “Why are you doing this, Your Grace? You could have stayed in the South with your armies, safe from all of this. You could have targeted Cersei directly, completely annihilated the Lannister forces with fire and blood. Why put yourself at risk?”
“I have many reasons, Lady Sansa.” Daenerys said, sliding down into a chair and folding her hands over her stomach. With her chin and a raised eyebrow, she bid Sansa to sit as well. “It is the right thing to do, for one.” She smiled a bit. “But you know well that I’m not here for purely altruistic reasons. You don’t just win a war with military success, you also need to win the people’s hearts and trust. And why would the people trust me if I let the North be massacred by white walkers while I’m in the south furthering my own goals?”

“And after this, your Grace, what then? If you win this war, if you win against Cersei, what happens to the rest of us when you take the throne? What happens to the North?”

The Dragon Queen’s expression was indiscernible, despite the smile she gave. “I do not plan on abandoning the North, Lady Stark. I’m aware that you do not trust me, but know that I will not act against the interests of the North, not now or ever.”

Before Sansa could respond, there was a knock at the door, and in the next moment it pried open, revealing Missandei, who inclined her head towards the both of them. “Your Grace, Lady Stark. The Generals are ready for you.”

“Thank you, Missandei. Please send them in.” Daenerys stood up, casting her gaze towards Sansa as people started to filter in. “It appears our work has only just begun.”
Tyrion had seen little of his older brother the past few months despite the fact that they were residing in the same castle, in particular a castle where it would perhaps have been safer for two lions to stick together rather than stay apart. It was not altogether surprising, though. He had been Hand to a monarch before, despite the fact that Joffrey could not be more different from Daenerys, and he knew that the position entailed constant movement, meetings, and other miscellaneous duties.

And besides, there was a war on. One could not expect much time for socialization.

Still, he could not help but wonder whether it was his situation that was more precarious, or if it was his brothers. Jaime Lannister had committed far more individual crimes against house Stark, yet he had been essentially pardoned for them all in view of the pending battles and need for capable warriors. Tyrion, on the other hand, despite never directly attacking the Starks he did have a hand in assisting his father carry out war against the late Robb Stark. One would perhaps think that since he was the Queen’s man that he would be welcome here in Winterfell, maybe even the Queen herself would think that. She was not particularly wanted, either.

He could feel Northern eyes on him as he walked the walls of Winterfell, scanning the horizon for the blue-eyed Wights that spelled a great deal of death for all the armies gathered here. Her Grace had Dothraki scouts hidden on the landscape, ready in an instant to bring notice of the invasion. Yet Tyrion could not help the gnawing pit in his stomach.

“Brother,” A voice said, and Tyrion looked up to see Jaime approaching, an easy smile on his face, despite the fact that he’d lost some of the air of importance he’d used to carry. Rather than walk with an egotistical swagger, he approached the way most would, except of course for the golden hand that rested on his sword. “Didn’t expect to see you up this early, usually around this time you would be drinking your hangover away with a whore in one hand and a cup of wine in the other.”

Tyrion snorted. “Her Grace doesn’t approve of drinking so early in the morning. Besides, there’s only so much you can get done drunk, and I am a busy man.”

“Her Grace…” Jaime said, his tone only halfway to mocking, where once before it would have been all the way. “Not Cersei, surely.”

“Surely.”

His brother looked down at him, his face surprisingly unreadable. “You really still ally with this Dragon Queen over your own family?”

“Daenerys Targaryen has never tried to have me killed, Jaime.” His voice was curt. “Which is far more than I can say for our sister. Cersei will try to have you killed, too, I imagine. For having the audacity to choose to do the right thing rather than serve her.”

There was a long tense pause as they assessed each other. “Do you believe in her?”

“In spite of myself, I do,” Tyrion sighed. “Do you believe in Cersei?”

Jaime opened his mouth like he was going to reply on instinct, but he stopped. Down in Winterfell’s courtyard, they could hear the clang of steel on steel as people sparred. Tyrion watched his brother’s head turn towards the noise, his expression one of almost longing as he looked down on the people there, his eyes trained on the woman, whose name Tyrion did not
know, that had defended Jaime during his mock trial. Seeming to sense his gaze, the woman
looked up from what she had been doing, one hand raised like she was going to wave at Jaime-

Who stepped back from view, so far back on the platform that Tyrion nearly thought he would fall
down the other side. It was hard not to laugh, which of course Jaime noticed. He pulled himself
together, and when he spoke, his voice was so affronted and embarrassed that it would have been
impossible for Tyrion to be annoyed with him. “And where is this Queen of yours, anyway?”

“Most likely waiting for me. She’d requested that I meet with her this morning.” Tyrion wasn’t
worried about being a little late, Her Grace was willing to forgive his brother for killing her father,
so he was willing to believe she would excuse some tardiness.

Jaime didn’t look at him. “Better get going, then.”

Had he been far far younger, he would have rolled his eyes as he left his brother there with his
unsaid thoughts. However, as he was no longer a child, he just nodded and gave him a small smile
in lieu of goodbye.

Even if Tyrion had never been to Winterfell before and never walked it’s halls, he thought that he
would have been able to find Daenerys Stormborn if only by following the Dothraki as they
crowded the castle, speaking over him as they went about the Queen’s business.

Tyrion knew that she had good reason to keep the Dothraki so close despite the Westerosi
tendency to mistrust of them. Few people here spoke their guttural language, even Tyrion could
not claim himself fluent, so she did not need to worry about secrecy or being overheard when with
them, and for even the few Dothraki that did speak the common tongue Daenerys had no reason to
doubt their loyalty. Tyrion had seen it for himself, the way that they believed in her the way that
Tyrion had never known people to believe in others. They did not view her as a god, as most
outsiders were prone to thinking, but rather as a warrior, a conqueror, and he as had even heard
some whisper, the stallion that mounts the world.

The Dothraki respected strength above all things, and Daenerys done much to earn their respect
and devotion. As much as she had earned his.

The guards at the Queen’s door let him through with a nod before he even said anything,
announcing his presence with an afterthought.

The Queen’s rooms were much hotter than anywhere else in the castle, nestled in warmth not only
by the warm springs directly underneath, but also by the massive flames that erupted from the
fireplace. Daenerys stood in the center of the room, being laced into what looked like leather armor
that hung loosely around her middle despite the metal scaling that was sown into it, and clung tight
to her chest and shoulders. “…a haj enta, Khaleesi.” One of her handmaids said whilst hefting a fur
cloak into her arms.

Upon seeing him, Dany held up a hand to her handmaids and told them that they may leave in their
native tongue. The one holding the cloak put it down with a knowing smile to her Queen as she
left. The rest followed suit, emptying the room.

“My Lord, thank you for coming.” The Queen gestured towards the table, where he took a seat.
“What do you think?” She gestured to the armor, the furs.

“You look very northern.” He said, taking the tankard that sat on the table and peered into it,
disappointed that it was only water. “Though I supposed that was the point.”
“It was.”

Tyrion wondered at that sometimes, how Daenerys changed who she was, depending on who was with her. With the Dothraki, she was a Khaleesi, with her Unsullied she was a General, with him she was a Queen, and now apparently, here in the North she would be a Northerner. It served a purpose, people were more likely to trust what is familiar to them, yet he thought that perhaps she had spent so much time altering herself to suit others that maybe she had never had the chance to learn who she really was. “May I ask why you are wearing armor? You’ll hardly be fighting with the ground forces.”

“It was recently pointed out to me that in war I cannot guarantee anything. I need to be prepared for the possibility that I might find myself ‘unhorsed’, as it were.” She paused, perhaps contemplating the possibility that she might loose yet another of her Dragons. “At midday I am meeting with Lady Arya, she will be teaching me fighting techniques more suited to someone of my stature than what some of my other warriors would be able to.”

Perfectly reasonable.

“But before that, Jon Snow and I will be scouting the land on dragon back, I wish to make sure our preliminary battle plans are feasible.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Jon Snow will be on dragon back?” He pretended he didn’t notice the brief amused smile that lit her face as she sat across from him at the table, pouring herself a horn of water from the tankard.

“That is the hope, yes.” She took a sip. “I have two dragons, there ought to be two dragon riders. Better so if the other rider is someone the dragons already are proven to like.”

“Yes, it would be hard to convince another to try after their predecessor had been eaten.” Though he couldn’t imagine Jon Snow being particularly spectacular at it. “Why did you wish to speak with me, Your Grace?”

Her eyes flickered dark with a coldness that he felt deep in his bones. “What can you tell me about Wildfire?”

“Wildfire?” Despite the years he had spent at her side, he could not help hearing the Mad King’s voice, recanted over the years time and time again by Jaime, told like a horrible ghost story. Burn them all…

Yet, the look she gave him as she thought was not mad. Calculated and cunning with the tempered potential of cruelty, yes. But not mad. “Is it true, what they say about how dangerous it is? And that your sister has it hidden all over King’s Landing?”

Ah. He felt almost ashamed for thinking the worst of her. “Yes to both. I’ve seen it with my own eyes. It is… Horrible. And I’m certain that my sister will not hesitate to use it. Cersei would rather turn King’s Landing to ash than surrender it.”

Daenerys tapped the side of her cup with a nail. “I would have you work with Varys and his spies to find out where exactly the wildfire is hidden, and if it would be possible to remove it from the city without anyone knowing.” Her gaze was almost scattered, like half her mind was on something else entirely. “If not, we’ll have to draw up evacuation plans in order to get the people out before our battle against her begins.”

“Very well, your Grace.” He stood. “Anything else?”
“No. Thank you, my lord.”

Tyrion was halfway to the door before he paused and turned back to look at the Queen, her hand over her stomach and her eyes on the flames. “Does Jon Snow know?” She startled, and he smiled gently at her. “I do know some Dothraki, Your Grace.”

For a brief moment, the mask broke. “Not yet. I will tell him after the battle…” Her voice trailed off. “Assuming we both survive.”
Dany and Jon crested slowly to the ground on a long empty patch of land near Winterfell, kicking up snow and debris as the Dragons made their descent. Drogon landed first, crouching so his mother could slide down his scaly body with a practiced ease. She stood by his head and scratched the underside of his jaw, which was now easily thrice the size of her, and the two of them watched the Warden of the North struggle ungracefully to dismount Rhaegal.

Despite the laughter that wanted to bubble up in the back of her throat, she bit her lip and made her way to where he landed narrowly on his feet. The dragons, now thoroughly done with the two of them, shot back into the air, careening up into the clouds, going gods know where.

When Jon met her at the center of the field, she could see the same frightened exhilaration in his eyes that she had felt the first time she had rode on dragon back. Headless of the riders heading towards them with their horses in tow, he pulled her against him in, his lips pressing against her forehead.

“Well, Jon Snow,” She said, separating from him. “Do you think you are battle-ready?”

“I don’t think I’ll ever be ready to go into battle on a dragon,” His voice was warm. “Don’t know how anybody could ever be.” Daenerys knew that he wasn’t insulting her or her children, and she also knew that he was not saying no to being a dragon rider, so she smiled indulgently at him as he continued to speak. The riders handed over Jon’s black stallion and her silver mare, and they mounted their horses, Jon’s voice continuing on in the conversation, uninterrupted. “My father used to tell us stories about Winterfell and it’s history. Hundreds of years ago, King Jaehaerys and the good Queen Alyssane came to Winterfell, and supposedly her dragon laid a egg deep in the crypts. I don’t think anyone ever thought to look for it.”

“Well,” Her heart ached a little at the thought. “Maybe it’s true. It would certainly be a good if it were. After all, why wave the flag of the three headed dragon if there are only two dragons?” She didn’t need to tell him the military advantages having a third dragon would bring.

“You’d need to find a third rider then, Your Grace.”

An honest smile lit her face. “Hm. I suppose I would.”

The gates of Winterfell loomed before them, though they were not nearly as ominous to Daenerys now as they had once been. Her allies were here, the Dothraki, the Unsullied, and of course Jon Snow. She even thought that she was well on her way to forming new alliances, perhaps even friendships, with some of the people she had met with here.

“Jon! I, er, My Lord—” A voice spoke up from the crowd, drawing Dany’s attention. A rather fat man, clad in Northern regalia and armor despite the fact that Daenerys knew him to be southron, approached them. Or rather, he approached Jon. When the man looked at her, she could see the awkwardness he felt around her plain on his face.

Awkwardness that she felt as well, though it would not do for her to show it. She had executed his father and brother with dragon fire, after all. She had a reputation to maintain.

“Excuse me, Your Grace,” Samwell Tarly said, his bow to her more of an afterthought than anything else. “But I do urgently need to speak with Jon, it’s very important.”

“Yes of course,” She said. “Besides, I do have an outstanding appointment with a blacksmith.”
Daenerys smiled at the two of them as she dismounted, leaving her Silver mare with one of the pages that had run out at their arrival.

The smithy of Winterfell was alive with all sorts of activity, people coming and going heedless of Daenerys’s presence, too busy with their own work to worry about or even notice a stray Queen wandering about, so long as she doesn’t get in their way. There were few places Dany could exist without being noticed, so she enjoyed them when she happened to be there.

The very blacksmith that she was here for was, like the others, so immersed in his work that he didn’t notice her watching him. Dany watched him sink red-hot steel into water to temper it, and admired the rippling of the muscles in his arms as he lifted it into the air to examine what appeared to be a small, but not delicate, sword. Had she been younger, she may have stayed longer than necessary to watch him rather than his craftsmanship.

Nowadays, older and perhaps wiser, given her current attachments and also the way Dany had seen Arya Stark look at Robert Baratheon’s bastard son, it was the sword that she was far more interested in. “My Lord, Gendry.” She said in greeting, approaching his work table.

“Your Grace!” He exclaimed. “Is it midday already?”

“Did you loose track of time?” Daenerys asked, amused.

“Yes, Your Grace, I’m sorry—“

She held a hand up. “I understand, my Lord.” She thought back to how easy it was to forgot about the whole world and her many responsibilities when she was on dragon back. “No one wants to think about time when they’re doing what they love.” Daenerys moved forward to examine the sword, noting the swirls that seemed to be engrained deep in the metal. “Valyrian Steel?” She asked.

Gendry seemed almost pleasantly surprised. “Yes, Your Grace. Hard to get ahold of, but I guess word got out that this sword was going to be for you. The steel for it was wrapped up in my station, no note or anything. Every blacksmith in the realm dreams of working with this.” His voice was awed as he presented it to her, hilt first. “Excellent balance, lightweight. ‘Right shame people forgot how to make steel like this.”

She took it into her grasp, holding it out in front of her in a way that she hoped didn’t betray her inexperience. It was very light, but it was a real, traditional Westerosi sword, not an arakh like the Dothraki used, nor the thin blades preferred in places like Braavos and the free cities of Essos. “I am not an expert in these matters, but even I can tell that the craftsmanship is excellent.”

His face lit up under her praise as he handed her an accompanying sheath and assisted her in slipping the Valyrian steel into it. “Careful, your Grace, it’s very sharp...” He said. She could nearly see his thoughts wander through his eyes, and she paused rather than bidding goodbye, patiently waiting for him to speak. “I’ve been thinking about your offer, Your Grace.” He seemed to steel himself, his shoulders straightened and he held his chin high, looking her in the eyes for what she thought may have been the first time. “I’m going to accept. And not just because I want to be a Lord but—“

Daenerys saw the way he stopped himself, and her lips twisted up in a smile. She thought back to the night when both he and the Lady Stark had been speaking with her in her rooms, the furtive glances exchanged between them, and she was sure she knew the real reason that he was accepting. “Of course. I’ll have the proper papers drawn up.”
She left with a nod, bucking the sword belt around her waste as she walked through the castle. Rather than train in Winterfell’s courtyard, as was typical for the warriors and soldiers, Daenerys had requested that Arya teach her somewhere more secluded, away from prying eyes.

It made sense that a Stark would choose a place under the shadows of Winterfell’s great Godwood. Dany walked under the trees, scanning what little of the sky she could see through the canopy of leaves that had managed to stay green despite the encroaching winter cold. Ahead, she spotted the white and red of the Weirwood in the center of the acre-wide woods.

She examined the face carved into the bark, the red sap running in rivulets down the tree from where the ancient knives had cut into it. Despite the fact that she was not one of the first men, nor did she worship the Old Gods, or even any deity, she felt something call out to her from the wood. Unbidden, her hand reached slowly out to the Weirwood—

And she felt a hand on her shoulder.

She spun quickly, her heart pounding so quickly that she thought for a moment that it would leave her chest. Arya Stark smiled at her, obviously enjoying the fact that she had been able to startle the Dragon Queen. “You should pay more attention to your surroundings.” She said, stepping away. “Enemies won’t always approach you from the front.”

“No, I suppose not.” Daenerys took a deep breath. “Should we begin?”

Under the red leaves, Arya started instructing her. Or rather, she did her best. Dany soon found that she was never meant to be a fighter or foot soldier.

“You’re not bad.” Arya Stark said after about an hour of going at it. “You’re just not good. Maybe if you had a few years, like I did…”

“Unfortunately, we don’t have a few years.” Daenerys said, her voice more curt than she had intended. She leaned against the wood, feeling the bark against her back, despite the thick leather she wore. Somewhere above, she heard Drogon's familiar cry, and the woods suddenly became a lot darker as wings momentarily blotted out the sun. The pause let Dany catch her breath. “Where did you learn to fight like that?”

“Here, in the beginning.” Arya said, a smile on her face. “Our mother didn’t want me to, when Bran and I fought with sticks, I always bested him. Later on in King’s Landing, my father got me a Braavosi teacher. When he died I learned on my own for a while, until I got to Braavos and studied with the faceless men.”

That name sent a chill down Daenerys’s spine. Any person that had grown up in Essos had heard of the faceless men and knew to fear them. No one was safe if they were hired to kill you, not even a Queen. She tried not to let her unease show on her face. “Braavos?”

Arya Stark gave her an interested look. “You know it, Your Grace?”

“I spent the first few years of my life there.” Dany said wistfully. “We had a house with a red door… And a lemon tree in the backyard. When our guardian died, the household staff took the house and kicked me and my brother into the streets. I was too young then to remember much else, but it was home once.”

“Braavos was never my home. Only a necessity.”

Dany grinned. “So you didn’t sight-see?”
Arya grinned back. “No, I didn’t—“

“Your Grace.” They both turned to see Jon walking quickly towards them, his face unreadable. Dany almost said something, but the look in his eyes stopped her. “Sorry to interrupt, Arya,” He said. “But I need to speak with the Queen.”
He walked side by side with his Queen down the cold dark steps into the crypt below Winterfell, her hand on one of his arms, while his other arm held the torch out in front of them. He could feel the weight of the cold stone pressing down above them, though the crypts themselves were not cold, as they were warmed by the hot springs that bubbled up deep in the earth below the castle. The air here was always eerie, yet Jon almost felt as though the statues were staring at him, whispering that he didn’t belong there.

He used to attribute his unease in this place to his being a bastard, but after his talk with Sam… He knew better.

Jon didn’t want to believe it, had ranted and railed to himself about how it couldn’t be true, how there was no way something like this could be possible. Yet he could not deny it, the gnawing feeling of otherness that now weighed on his soul, the knowing who he was, the knowing that he didn’t particularly care for that knowledge.

He looked at Dany, her face lit by the flames. He knew how she felt about her family, that she hated them for what they had done and the havoc they had wrought, and that she at the same time grieved for not knowing them. She did not love the name Targaryen. Jon wondered if how he was feeling now was how she always felt.

But then she looked up at him, her face quizzical and trusting. Trusting that he would never hurt her.

He felt a pang in his chest. He knew that he would never lead someone he loved into a physical danger, but where he was taking her would hurt her nonetheless.

He hadn’t told her why they were going down here, but he still spoke as they passed by the ancient tombs. He told her the names of the ancient Stark Kings, whose bones had turned to ash, and whose swords had long ago become a powdered red rust. He pointed out Brandon Stark, who had built the Wall with the help of giants. He led her past Torrhen Stark, the last Stark King, who had bent the knee to Aegon the Conqueror.

Dany listened with rapt attention to his stories, not saying a word as she stared into the statues stone eyes. Eventually he brought her to the grave of Lyanna Stark, the only woman to ever be immortalized in this cold dark place. Jon saw her Dany’s face change almost imperceptibly, revealing more emotion to him than she would reveal in front of anyone else.

He didn’t even need to tell her who this statue was, whose bones were entombed in this stone. “People always said how great my brother was,” Her voice was hushed. “That Rhaegar was noble and kind, that he enjoyed music and gave money to the poor. Yet he still kidnapped Lyanna Stark and raped her.”

“But he didn’t, your Grace. Rhaegar had his marriage to Elia annulled. He and Lyanna married in secret.” Jon didn’t remotely know how to tell her this. “He loved her, and she loved him. Before she died, Lyanna gave birth to his child, named it Aegon after his ancestors, gave the baby to her brother and made him promise keep him safe from Robert Baratheon. Ned Stark did that by telling the world that the babe he brought North to Winterfell was his bastard son.” He felt Daenerys pull away from him. “I’m so sorry, Dany. I didn’t know.”

“That’s impossible… I—” He could see the shock in her eyes as she searched his face. When she
saw that he was earnest, her shoulders steeled. “I’ve been working my whole life towards the Iron Throne, the only basis to my claim is that I’m the last Targaryen. If you’re Rhaegar’s son, then your claim far exceeds my own. The people of the Seven Kingdoms that are allied with me don’t follow me because they believe in me, they follow me because of what they think is my birthright.” Jon saw a change pass over her face, like a bolt of lightening ran down her spine, from trepidation to outright fear. Worry that he would take everything that she had ever wanted. She grabbed her stomach with one hand and steadied herself against the stone walls with the other.

“Dany,” He whispered, reaching forward to put his hands on her shoulders, bending to look her in the eyes. “I never wanted to be King in the North, let alone the Seven Kingdoms. Alright? Ned Stark was the one who raised me, he’s more my father than Rhaegar ever could have been. I never would have bent the knee to you if I didn’t think that you were the right person to take the Iron Throne, and this,” He gestured to the air around them. “Doesn’t change anything.”

Her desire to believe him was plain on her face, and her mouth opened to say something, when they both heard frantic footsteps making their way down the stairs. A Dothraki warrior practically exploded into the crypt, covered in blood, breathing so heavily that Jon wasn’t sure how Dany could make out any of his words. “Khaleesi— Driv dothrak gwe—Nakho ki asshek.”

She approached the rider, her voice sharp, not betraying anything about their conversation. “Gwe, Hethkat tih Khals. Ajjin!” The Dothraki sprinted back up the stairs at her shout.

“Danaerys,” Jon said, grabbing her hand as she started to follow. “What did he say?”

“The night King’s army has been spotted.” When she turned to him, there was fear in her eyes. “They’ll be here before sundown.”

The two of them emerged from the crypts to absolute chaos. Jon could see Daenerys’s men organizing themselves, the Dothraki mounting their horses and bolting out of the gates in their efforts to follow her Grace’s plans, nearly trampling the residents of Wintertown as they fled to safety inside the castle. Dany went off to one side, urgently speaking with Tyrion, Missandei, and Greyworm.

He could hear Sansa’s voice, and spotted her as she evacuated the civilians into the deepest parts of Winterfell, Arya and the Hound at her sides. “Jon!” Someone shouted, and a hand clapped down on his shoulder. Tormund Giantsbane grinned at him, half-manic. “Time to live or die, Jon Snow!”

“Hope it’s not the latter,” Jon said, hugging the Wildling, who hugged back with a typical ferocity, slapping his back so hard that it hurt. “Fight well, Tormund.”

The two of them separated, swept up in the crowds. He searched for Daenerys through the throngs, knowing that he wouldn’t be able to get the dragons without her, but she found him first, her sword on her hip and her hair pulled out of her face with a long Valyrian Steel pin. She grabbed him and pulled him towards where an Unsullied soldier held their horses, and Jon followed suit when she swung up into the Dothraki saddle and kicked her mare into motion with one quick movement.

Together, they blew out of Winterfell, past the soldiers and scared citizens and out to the empty Tundra where they had landed earlier that morning. If he had the time to think about anything other than the upcoming battle, he maybe would have thought how much had changed between them since then. However he scanned the skies instead, his heart pounding in his chest as he searched for the Dragons.

With a loud cry, Rhaegal broke through the clouds first, diving down and pulling up next to Jon shortly before crashing straight into the ground. When Jon’s horse reared back, he let himself slide
off rather than gain control.

Rhaegal crouched to let him clamber on, but didn’t take off immediately. The dragon instead watched the clouds, and roared a high keening call that Jon had never heard from him or any other living creature before. Deep in the skies, the call was answered, and Drogon, the black dread, pierced the air, casting shadows in the near-dusk light as he circled to a stop.

No sooner was Daenerys on his back that he shot into the clouds, Rhaegal following suit. Dany had the dragons dive down and close to the earth, skimming the trees as they passed over the land. They saw the white walkers marching, glowing blue eyes pointing up at them, and Jon heard Dany shout a command in high Valyrian, causing Drogon to take an arching swing around the Eastern end of the army whilst shooting flames out of his mouth, walloping them in on their east flanks. Jon followed suit on his dragon, trapping the White walkers on the West to heard them into the deep ravine that led away from Winterfell.

The dead followed the war cries of the Dothraki that led them farther into the ravine, while Dany and Jon spat fire at the wights that escaped the blaze. No way out, the white walkers followed the riders deeper and deeper until there was no way back out from where they came in, at which point the waiting Wildlings dropped massive boulders, sealing a barrier between the living warriors and the dead.

“Jon!” He heard his Queen shout, and followed her gaze to a fast approaching figure in the distance, its cold blue wings pierced with the dying daylight. Jon looked back at her, and saw the heartbroken expression at the sight of her undead child rapidly turn to rage. “Valar!” She said, and both Dragons shot towards their brother, flames glowing through the skin of their gullets.

Viserion’s corpse hissed at them, too decomposed to cry out with battle fury, and shot an icy stream of fire out at them, making Jon shout and twist Rhaegal away. When the dragon pulled straight, he saw Drogon snapping at the neck of the white dragon, fire bursting forth from both of them as they clawed against each other, teeth scraping against scales. Jon watched as the Night King reached back and pulled a spear he had tethered to the Viserion’s side, aiming directly at Daenerys— “No!” Jon shouted, crashing Rhaegal into his side, urging the three dragons unintentionally farther towards Winterfell.

Dany’s war cry echoed loudly through the air as Drogon ripped at one of the Ice Dragon’s wings, crippling it. It swung in dramatic turns towards the ground and crashed just outside the walls of the Godswood, taking the Night King with it. Viserion let out a hiss at them, shooting the icy blue light straight into the sky as he clambered away, unable to fly with the shredded wing.

The Night King watched them from the snowy ground in the space the dragon had vacated, apparently unharmed by the descent, his spear still clenched in his grasp. He reared back, and Dany and Drogon noticed at the same time, spinning to avoid it as it shot through the sky—

But they didn’t do it fast enough. Jon watched as it sliced cleanly through Daenerys’s shoulder, rather than her heart, where it had been aimed. She tried to right herself, but her left arm didn’t appear to be working, and the scales were so slick with blood—

The Dragon Queen eyes met his as she plummeted towards the earth.
He had been watching the battle from his vantage point inside the Godswood, where he had insisted on being placed after a lengthy argument with his sisters. Sansa had eventually relented, insisting however that he take Jon’s white dire wolf with him for protection, as Winterfell had no one else they could spare to keep him safe.

He slipped into the collective mind of a flock of crows, soaring over the lands, tracking the Dothraki as they led the White Walkers into the ravine and the Wildlings as they poured pitch over the writhing masses and set them aflame. Watched as more of the dead erupted from the crypts, the bones of the dead Starks not caring that it was their descendants that they were attacking. Watched the hidden half of the Night King’s army split off and went through the great woods to the West of Winterfell, where the Armies of the North were waiting for them with torches and dragonglass.

Watched as the Dragon Queen fell off the great black beast, directly over the Wierwood. Bran slipped out of the crows and into Ghost, sending the wolf clawing up the white limbs and through red leaves until he stood near the top. The wolf waited and waited as she came closer, what was likely less than a few seconds feeling more like minutes. The two dragons dove after their mother, the green heedless of Jon Snow struggling to maintain his hold on his back.

Drogon reached his large claws out for her, grabbing hold of the Northern style fur cloak that Daenerys had been wearing, which immediately shredded in his grasp. However, it slowed her fall just enough…

Bran drove the wolf into a jump, and caught the Dragon Queen’s arm in his jaws, pulling them both down through the leaves, crashing thirty feet to the ground, the Dragon Queen landing right on top of Ghost.

The shock of pain forced him out of the Wolf’s mind, and he watched Daenerys struggle to stand, a thousand cuts from the branches streaking her face, her left arm dangling from it’s socket in a way that was decidedly not right, bleeding freely from where his teeth had sunk into her skin, mingling with blood from the hideous wound in her shoulder where the spear had pierced straight through. The wolf below her wasn’t moving, but Bran could see it’s breath, ragged but alive. He guessed from the pain he felt that Ghost’s right front leg was broken, as well as many if not most of his ribs.

But Bran had more important things to worry about. “The Night King is within the walls of Winterfell. He will be coming for me.”

Daenerys Stormborn wasn’t looking at him, but rather at the wolf, who she knelt next to, running her fingers of her right hand through it’s fur in a motion that Bran assumed was supposed to be soothing. Ghost didn’t agree, growling at this stranger, too close to him while he was injured. She pulled her hand back, not looking particularly affronted. “It saved me.” She whispered, her voice almost awe-struck.

“No, I did.” Bran said, his voice curt so as to distract the Queen from the shock that would no doubt soon take over. “My siblings and I, even Sansa, had she the opportunity to develop the skill, are Wargs. We can enter the mind of animals that trust us. However, I am more than that. I am the Three-eyed Raven. I can take over the mind of any living creature, even the minds of men. That’s
“Why the Night King wants me.”

“Khaleesi!” A voice shouted, and they both turned and looked to see ser Jorah Mormont running for them, his sword at the ready. The knight stopped in front of his Queen, holding a shaky hand out towards her as he looked over her wounds. “I saw you fall…” His hand cupped her face briefly, like he was making sure that she was real. “The Night King’s close, we need to leave—“

A cold shock of wind rushed through the Godswood. “He’s here.” Bran said. The three of them turned and saw where ice was worming it’s way through the splinters of the great oak gates of the Godswood. Daenerys and Ser Jorah would have enough time to run if they left the Three-eyed Raven behind.

The Dragon Queen turned towards Bran, her eyes half manic. “I am not a fighter,” She said, her voice surprisingly cold despite the fear on her face. “I am a strategist. And you can enter the mind of any living thing.” She bent down, her face close to his. “Even a dragon?”

There was a moment of understanding between the two.

“Ser Jorah, get Brandon Stark out of here.” Daenerys said, pulling her sword out of it’s sheath, holding in a shaky grasp with her one working hand.

“What about you?” Jorah said, his heart in his eyes.

“I can get Drogon to listen to me, I’m his mother. But I’m not Rhaegal’s rider, and Jon…” She swallowed. “I need someone to make Rhaegal obey me. You need to get Bran out of here.” There was a loud crack as the gate exploded from the force of the ice. “Go!” The Dragon Queen shouted, as ferocious as her children.

Ser Jorah grabbed the handles of Bran’s chair, and as he pushed him away, Bran took one last look at Daenerys Stormborn through human eyes, facing the Night King, bloodied and well aware that she was certain to die.

And the he slipped into the mind of the emerald Dragon.

Bran had been many things, wolf, bear, dear, man. He could not have anticipated how much harder for him it was to become a Dragon, their minds much more complex than any other living thing in the Universe, far smarter than any human surely. There was a long moment where he thought that he wouldn’t be able to do it at all as he stretched himself to the furthest reaches of the dragon’s mind, fearing that he would get thrown back into his vulnerable human body.

With a blink, he saw through the beast’s mind, and pulled his scaled mass back from where Jon had him diving towards Winterfell, no doubt in a harebrained scheme to save his Queen. Drogon, circling above them, gave a wrenching cry to his brother, which Bran… No, not Bran… Answered back.

With a shock, he realized that he was not in control of the dragon. It was just cooperating with him.

They swept closer, agreeing on this, to watch their… No to watch the dragon’s mother face against the Night King.

Daenerys swiped her sword against the Night King, not only disadvantaged by her inexperience, but also by her wounds which hampered her ability to hold it properly. He avoided the first blow with ease, his eyes on Rhaegal, sensing Bran inside of it, and did something with his icy face that map have been a smile. Perhaps even enjoying the knowledge that the end was almost in his grasp.
The second of the Dragon Queen’s swings was much closer, nearly catching the Night King in the face. Without any effort, the Night King disarmed her, reaching out with one hand to grab her wounded shoulder, digging his fingers into the injury and causing an ear-splitting shriek to rip out of her throat, echoed with heartbreak by the roars the Dragons. Ice spread across her shoulder, covering her neck and crawling across her face—

With her one good hand, Daenerys Stormborn reached back, and pulled the pin from her hair, stabbing the short Valyrian-steel blade into the Night King’s neck. It looked like maybe for a moment that it would have been enough, cracks started running through his icy facade... Until they stopped, and began to repair themselves.

Dany and Bran realized at the same time what they had to do. She looked up at her dragons, or up at Jon, and used the her grip on the pin to pull the Night King close to her. “Dracarys.”

Flames welled up inside his gullet, and Bran reared the dragon’s head back, ignoring Jon’s “No, no, no what’re you doing- Stop—“ And shot the fire out at them, Drogon mirroring him from the other side.

As the flames consumed the Night King and the Dragon Queen, the arcing flames almost looked like Dragon wings.

Chapter End Notes

Y’all I actually loved the Arya twist the show had, but I did not spend 7 seasons and 5 books worth of my life to throw the prophecies to the wind \_-(ツ)_/¯
Missandei

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She had been in the crypts, where it was supposed to be safe, comforting the cries of a child in its mothers arms while they listened to the sounds of battle above them. She sung in the language of Naath, which was only half remembered to her, humming the parts that she could not recall. Missandei had not seen the moment that the dead had come to life, had only noticed when the shadows flickering on the walls were cast by something other than torchlight.

She knew nothing of war, or of even basic self defense. Missandei had been taken as a child, kept as property until adulthood, treated like a pretty glass bird until Daenerys had freed her. She had travelled the world twice over, she had witnessed brutality and survived assassins. She would not let herself die here, in the cold, in a foreign land without anyone who loved her at her side.

So she had pried the rusting sword from the cold stone grasp of a faceless statue, and kept herself safe with a ferocity more expected from Her Queen’s warriors than a simple scribe, had shattered the brittle bones of dead Starks until their dust could no longer reach for her. She still heard the screams of the others within the crypts, fighting for their lives as well, and knew that she would have to join them if she wanted to see another day.

The risen dead had abruptly stopped, collapsing into heaps at the feat of the living, fewer now in the crypts than there had been earlier that day. Missandei faced the Lady Stark and Tyrion Lannister, all of them bloodied by their ordeal. Those in the crypts let out celebratory yells at their victory. It was over. They had won.

The scene that greeted them when they emerged from the tunnels was not celebratory, however. The bodies of the deceased lay in heaps and bloody piles throughout the castle, food for the crows. Anyone who was still standing was bruised and dazed, staring at the great fire blazing in the Godswood.

Missandei heard the roaring cries of her Lady’s dragons, and raced to the courtyard, stopped before the gate to the great Wood, craning her neck up at where they circled, calling out to each other and vocalizing, screaming, and… Crying? Missandei wasn’t sure exactly how much emotion a dragon was capable of experiencing, yet she was sure she heard distress in their voices.

Rhaegal swept down, perching on the walls of the great castle, his wing acting as a slope for Jon Snow to slide off of him. He skittered away from the dragon, looking both nauseous and terrified, and Missandei watched Drogon, waiting for her Queen to land as well.

Yet the black dragon didn’t stop his arcing watch, his every attention on the roaring flames. Missandei felt a great pit in her stomach, for she could not see Daenerys Stormborn on his back.

Missandei rushed towards the Lord of Winterfell, heedless of their difference in station, and grabbed his arm, forcing him to look at her. “What happened? Where is the Queen?”

“The dragons… She was with the Night King in the Godswood and Daenerys ordered them to attack… She held him still while they both burned alive.” His voice was shaky. “She’d dead.”

Missandei heard a snort behind her, one of the Dothraki that had started filing back into the castle now that the battle was over. He spoke quickly, and Missandei’s mind turned as she translated-
“What did you say?” She asked, not entirely sure if she had heard correctly, letting go of the former King in the North.

“He said,” Daenerys said, stepping through the shattered gates of the Godswood. “That there’s a reason I’m called the unburnt.”

Missandei felt, rather than saw, Jon Snow fall to his knees.

All of Winterfell turned to look at the Dragon Queen as she emerged from the flames, her hair hanging loose around her naked body, doing little to cover her. There was a gaping wound in her shoulder that appeared to have been cauterized by the flames, the blood dried to cracked brown rivulets. And of course her swollen belly, once a carefully kept secret, now in view for the whole world to see.

Missandei, Grey Worm, and Tyrion made quick work of spiriting their Queen away from the eyes of the castle, into her rooms where there was already a Maester waiting, called by Varys who stationed himself just inside the door, two Unsullied and two Dothraki guarding the entrance from the other side.

She pushed her Queen down into a chair and draped the furs from Daenerys’s bed over her naked body while Maester Thorne pushed the Queen’s shoulder back into it’s socket with a sickening noise. Dany for her part chose to distract herself from the pain by speaking. “How many dead?” Daenerys said, through gritted teeth, while the healer wiped the blood away from her skin.

“Better than we could have hoped for, your Grace.” Grey Worm said. “Early reports say that we lost fewer than one thousand Unsullied. I don’t know the Dothraki numbers, all but six of the former Khals have checked in.”

She gave a pained groan as her arm was stretched, checking it’s range of motion. “And our Northern Allies?”

“Not as well, Your Grace.” Varys said, stepping forward. “Houses Flint and Umber are gone in their entirety, Lyanna Mormont and her men are dead, and the Lord of house Manderly is severely wounded. However, all the Starks have survived, as well as a large portion of their army.”

“What about ser Jorah?” Dany asked. When she looked up, no one could quite meet her eyes. “Tyrion?”

Missandei knew that any misplaced emotion would do better to fall on her than a Lannister. “He died, Your Grace, protecting Brandon Stark from the white walkers.”

The Queen looked at her. There was so much emotion in her eyes that Missandei couldn’t read, emotion that Daenerys would only reveal when they were alone. When she felt safe enough to let herself be vulnerable. But for now… Missandei reached a hand out and let the Queen lace her fingers with her own.

There was a sound of scuffling outside the room, followed by the curt commands issued in a broken common tongue of the Dothraki guards. Grey Worm put his hand on his blade and moved towards the door, but Missandei held her hand up and went to the door instead, raising her brows at him when he looked like he considered arguing.

She pulled it open. “Fin anna?” She asked the guard, her voice calm.

“Ver ki Khaleesi.”
Missandei turned from the door. “Jon Snow, Your Grace.”

Daenerys sighed. “Let him in.”

She nodded at the guards, who stepped aside to let the former King in the North through. He walked straight past Missandei without even looking at her, his attention solely on the Queen, but he paused once he reached the middle of the room, apparently just then realizing how many people were in there as well, all of them looking at him, waiting to see what exactly what he was going to do. “Could we have a minute alone, Your Grace?”

The Queen looked at him impassively, her face perfectly calm, despite the fact that her nails were digging into the wood because of the Maester’s painful ministrations. “Anything you want to say, you can say in front of the people in this room. I trust them implicitly.” Maester Thorne moved down her arm, smearing some sort of poultice over the bite marks that encompassed her wrist, causing Dany to hiss. Missandei returned to her position by the Queen’s side, and Jon moved closer as well, like he instinctually wanted to offer comfort, but he pulled himself short of actually doing so.

“All done, your Grace.” The healer said, the multicoloured chains around his neck clinking together as he stood. “I do not think infection is likely, though you must keep a careful eye on your injuries until they heal completely. I would also advise you to avoid any activity that would require exertion of the left arm, your mobility as well as strength have been severely limited by the wound in your shoulder.”

“Will I be able to ride again?” The Queen asked.

All the eyes in the room turned to the Maester. “That remains to be seen.” He bowed, somewhat awkwardly. “Your Grace.” They all pretended to not notice how quick he was to leave the room.

Dany stared into the fire. “What is the point of a Dragon Queen if she cannot even ride a Dragon?” She asked in Valyrian, her voice hushed, too quiet for anyone but Missandei to hear.

Missandei squeezed her Queen’s hand, her voice equally low. “You were a Queen before you had dragons. You will still be our Queen without them.”

Daenerys looked up at her, and smiled briefly before straightening in her chair. “You had something you wished to speak with me about, Jon Snow? Then please, speak.”

His eyes flickered to Missandei before returning to the Queen. “You are with child.”

“I am.” Carefully, she lay a hand over her stomach, and Missandei thought that Daenerys was almost afraid to say the words out loud. After all the years of thinking that it was impossible, surely her Queen was afraid that even the littlest thing would turn the tide of bad luck against her.

“Why didn’t you tell me, Dany?”

Daenerys sighed. “If I told you that I was pregnant, could you have guaranteed that you wouldn’t put yourself through unnecessary risk to keep me safe during battle?” He didn’t say anything, and she smiled wryly. “That’s what I thought, Jon Snow. You needed me against the Night King, but I needed you as well, in case the worst case scenario came about. When I die, be it now or in the future, I need to make sure those that are capable enough to rule, and good enough to not be corrupted by it, are alive to do so. It’s my job as Queen to keep those people safe,” She paused. “and I count you among that number.”

Missandei swore that she saw Varys give Dany a curious look, but it was gone within a second.
Jon wiped his face with his gloved hand and exhaled deeply. “Do you…” He trailed off. “D’you think I could feel it? The baby?”

There was a long moment where Danaerys said nothing. Finally, she nodded to the room. “Leave us.”

Missandei followed the others out of the door, but she spared one last knowing smile to her Queen as she shut the door behind her.

Chapter End Notes

I've been uhh hinting at Dany being pregnant for a couple chapters, but subtlety has never been my strong suit, so sorry if this blindsided anyone lmao.
Sansa

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sansa Stark stood on the wooden walkway overlooking the courtyard. In her hands was a small oak box, made from Weirwood salvaged from the burnt remains of the Godswood, carved with the dual heads of a dragon and a wolf, inlaid with silver. A peace offering, even though there was technically no ill will between her and the Dragon Queen, Sansa felt it was necessary nonetheless.

And Sansa had been very careful to keep the knowledge of the box’s contents close.

She watched the Unsullied and Dothraki soldiers pack up their armies, readying themselves for the long march south. Despite all they had done to keep her and her family safe, Sansa’s more practical side was grateful to see them go. Winter was upon them, and the granaries were dangerously low due to the occupying force. As it was, they would likely only just scrape by until spring came again. If they were to stay any longer Winterfell would starve.

“Sansa,” A voice greeted her, and she turned to see her sister walking towards her, still clad in trousers and leather armor. Sansa was half tempted to scold Arya as their mother would, to remind her that ladies should wear skirts and silks. Yet she knew any such reminders would fall on deaf ears, so she smiled at her instead. “What’s that?” Arya nodded at what Sansa held in her hands.

“A gift for Daenerys Targaryen. I want her to know that the North fully has her support against Cersei.”

Her sister grinned at the careful phrasing. “You still don’t trust her,” It wasn’t a question.

“No.” There was a time where Sansa would have been able to trust someone like Daenerys, but she was no longer the naive girl that believed in the kindness of Queens. “Do you?”

“Of course not,” Arya smiled. “But I do like her… She invited me to go South with them, and I agreed. Her Grace needed someone that knows King’s Landing, and this is the best way for me to make sure that Cersei dies.”

Sansa didn’t like her sister endangering herself once again, and couldn’t help the note of irritation in her voice at the thought. “If she needs someone that knows King’s Landing, she could have taken Gendry Waters… Though I suppose he’s Gendry Baratheon now.”

“Gendry’s going as well.”

Ah. “So that’s why you’re going then, is it?” She’d seen the way her sister and Robert’s bastard had looked at each other. Gendry’s devotion to her sister was so obvious that Sansa thought he would follow Arya to the ends of the world and back if she asked it of him.

Arya didn’t answer Sansa’s question. "He’s asked me to marry him. Said now that he’s Lord of Storm’s End he’s finally worthy. Idiot. Like a fancy title is what I needed to make me like him.”

“And what did you say?”

Her lips pressed together and her brow furrowed, and for a moment, she looked so much like their father that it made Sansa’s heart hurt. “I can’t agree, not with the war going on. I might die, or he might die. But I didn’t say no, just… Not Yet.”
Sansa couldn’t resist the opportunity to tease, “Little Arya’s finally going to marry a Lord and live in a castle. Mother would be so happy, you’ve finally become a real Lady.”

Arya scowled. “No.”

“You’re gonna have to wear pretty silk skirts and learn needlework.” Arya shoved her, and for maybe the first time in years, Sansa laughed, a little bit of the weight lifting off her soul.

Her sister patted her back and walked down into the courtyard, disappearing into the crowd. It was then that Sansa noticed Daenerys watching from a polite distance away, her lips quirked like she was trying not to laugh at the Stark’s antics. Her presence acknowledged, the Dragon Queen moved forward. “My Lady Sansa, would you walk with me?”

Sansa slipped the box into a pocket inside her cloak. “Of course, your Grace.” She moved to the Queen’s side, and they walked together through Winterfell in a surprisingly easy silence. Sansa thought about the woman at her side, that maybe she could like Daenerys Targaryen even if she could not trust her. She certainly respected her, which was more than she could ever say for Cersei Lannister.

They made their way to the walled in woods, now just as quiet as they were charred. The Northerners did not come here, too afraid of the ghosts of the dead gods. Even Sansa found herself unnerved as she stepped over the ashes of the great Wierwood, where once her father would sit and polish his sword. Where her brothers would play. Where she had been married, under the red and white eyes carved into the trees, their sap running down the bark like bloody tears.

She was almost glad to see it gone. The gods had never done anything to keep her safe. Dany turned, pushing at the snow and ash with her boot as she examined the calamity around her, expression unreadable. “I haven’t believed in gods in a long time, but I am sorry that you have lost yours.”

Sansa was almost surprised. She would have thought that Daenerys worshiped the God of the red priests, given her origin in Essos, and the fact that they seemed to believe the Dragon Queen to be some sort of prophetic savior. “It is no loss, Your Grace.” Sansa said, though she knew any denial would sound like a lie no matter how truthful it was. “I threw love my love for the gods into the gutter the day they let my father be executed.”

Dany’s eyebrows raised and for a moment she appraised Sansa, looking impressed. “I’m assuming Jon told you the truth of his parentage?”

He had. A cold shiver ran Sansa’s spine, where she had been relaxed before. If the Queen knew that Sansa was aware of a threat to her power… Then why would she want to speak with her about it, rather than simply kill Sansa to cull the threat? Perhaps she intended on scaring her into silence. “He has, Your Grace.”

“I ask that you not reveal that knowledge to anyone outside of your family.” Seeming to sense Sansa’s unease, she gave what was supposed to be a reassuring smile. “I’m sure you know the danger you would put him in if the world knew the truth.”

“How would that put him in danger?” From anyone except you…

“One Targaryen is a threat. Two Targaryens is a call to war.” There was something ferocious behind her eyes as she put a protective hand over her belly. “If the lords of Westeros knew that Jon is Rhaegar’s son they would see this child as us following in the steps of our ancestors and they
would happily destroy the Targaryen bloodline root and stem to avoid the same fate.” She stepped
closer to Sansa. “Do you think there is anything that Jon wouldn’t do for his family? He would get
himself killed keeping our child safe, and I will not let that happen.”

Jon, regardless of everything, was still her brother. And she would do whatever necessary to protect
him, even if that meant protecting the Dragon Queen as well. “I understand, Your Grace.”

Daenerys took a shaky breath. “Good.” She smiled. “I have... Lost too much. My husband, my
brother, my son, my dragon. I’m not sure if I could bear it if I lost Jon, too.” Almost as if they were
just two girls, gossiping, Daenerys took Sansa’s arm the way Margaery had taken it so many years
ago. Sansa blinked down at the Queen, shocked by the familiarity. “I can never love him the way I
used to and yet I’m carrying his child... It’s almost funny, I can tell my heart over and over how
wrong it is, yet I still love him.”

Sansa felt the need to comfort her. “The Targaryens always used to intermarry family, brother to
sister. And what happened between Cersei and the Kingslayer is open knowledge, I’m sure people
wouldn’t be taken aback—”

“Cersei Lannister isn’t a foreign whore with an army of savages.” Daenerys said, self-mocking.
“She was once the beloved daughter of Westeros, and people still remember that. I’m the daughter
of the Mad King, for me forgiveness will not come so easily.”

Sansa felt a rather begrudging admiration for the Queen, that perhaps it was not so bad to be a
vassal Kingdom under Daenerys. She let herself be led out of the Godswood and into Winterfell
proper, their arms still linked.

“And what about you, my Lady?” Daenerys asked, seeming to be willfully oblivious to the eyes
trained on them. “The war in the North is won, and you victorious. Now that it’s over, how will
you move on? What are your plans to consolidate power? I’m sure you know the most traditional
way.”

Sansa snorted. “I have no plans to marry a man again anytime soon, Your Grace.”

“Who said it had to be a man?” Sansa nearly stopped in her tracks, which the Queen noticed. “Oh,
is that not something that people do in Westeros?” She seemed to consider it. “Well, I suppose it’s
not particularly common practice for a woman to marry another woman in Essos, but still not
unheard of. Especially in the Free Cities.” Daenerys looked up at the taller woman and stopped
walking. “My apologies if I have made you uncomfortable. But from the way Olenna Tyrell had
talked about you and her granddaughter, I had just assumed...”

Sansa pulled away from the Queen. “What did she say?”

“That Margaery had cared for you deeply, that before she died she had planned for you to come to
Highgarden, how she wanted for you to be happy and that she was glad that you had escaped
King’s Landing.”

Her head spinning, the Lady of Winterfell let Daenerys take her arm again. “Have you ever...”

Dany’s mouth quirked up. “Irri, my handmaiden, was my paramour for quite some time. Though
her affection was born of duty more than love. She’s since married one of my blood riders, and
they’re very happy.” Eventually they came to the walkway on Winterfell’s second story. “Good
day, Lady Stark.”

Sansa very suddenly remembered— “Your Grace, wait!” The Dragon Queen paused just long
enough for Sansa to root through the folds of her cloak to find where she had tucked the Wierwood box. “There were old stories, of when good Queen Alysanne came to Winterfell, that her dragon had laid an egg in the crypts.” Sansa presented the box to the Queen. “No one ever took them very seriously, but I found this while we were down there.”

Dany walked back towards Sansa, her steps quick, yet her hands shook when she reached for the white wood. Slowly, she pried the lid open. A gasp came out of her throat as her fingers gently stroked the scaled egg, long ago turned to stone. When she looked up at Sansa again, tears shimmered in her eyes. “Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

*John Mulaney voice* And I will pepper in the fact that Daenerys (at least in the books) is canonically bi.

Update: July 7, 2019
I've been getting some nasty comments on this, and just to let y'all know that from this point forward, any homophobic/biphobic comments will be deleted (I've already deleted the particularly malicious and mean-spirited ones). I am only writing this for fun, I do not get paid for this, and I am under no obligation to pander to people who are outraged that I had the audacity to make an already bisexual character bisexual.

Dany being bi is included in this because it is canon in the books, but even if it wasn't canon, who cares? The whole point of creative fan works is to reimagine it in a way that makes you happy! Which is exactly what I'm doing! I'm only publishing these in the hope that other people get some enjoyment out of it as well.

If you want a more detailed explanation of my point of view you can see it in the comments of this chapter, but just to reiterate: hate will not be tolerated.
Daenerys

Her armies left Winterfell on a cold morning before the storm clouds on the horizon could trap them inside the castle for any longer. She rode her Silver at the head of the campaign, Tyrion on her right and Jon and Missandei at her left. The dragons flew in long arcing circles above them, sometimes disappearing off into the clouds or past the mountains, hunting or scouting Daenerys could not tell. In a fold of her cloak, she kept the stone egg close to her abdomen, where it could be warmed by her growing belly.

Jon Snow had urged her to follow behind the army in a carriage. Daenerys had to remind him time and time again that Dothraki mothers rode their horses until they were near labor, any less than that and it was thought that the child would be born weak. Her privilege as Khaleesi did not negate that.

Her riding Drogon was not an option, as it was well clear that with her still-crippled shoulder she would not be on dragon back anytime soon, if ever.

She could still feel his irritation as he rode alongside her, though she found herself unable to return it as she knew that his feelings were born of worry.

They rode through the frozen countryside at an easy pace, taking time to savor the sights that were no longer so new to them. They passed by the ruins of Moat Cailen, the boggy waters frozen over with ice so thick that their horses could pass over easily. Temperatures only started to warm somewhat when they reached the swamps of the Neck, where Lizard Lions poked their noses up through the frosty waters, and smaller critters deep in the woods watched them with hidden eyes.

The Riverlands were still marred in chaos after the wars that had plagued it, many of the people either long dead or fled from these ancient lands, leaving behind only stones and broken cities in their wake. Those few that had returned watched the army with weary eyes, waiting for the next massacre.

Silence fell over the soldiers as they made their way past the ruins of Harrenhal, abandoned once again, it’s melted towers a reminder to Daenerys of the ruthless cruelty of her ancestors, though she could not help the note of bitterness in her heart. Had she visited on any place the same fate that Aegon had on Harrenhal, she would not be viewed as a conqueror, she would be viewed as a monster.

They did not hear the wails of ghosts that were rumored to still walk the castles halls, yet their spirits seemed to haunt the party until they came to Maidenpool, where the Lord Mooten greeted their arrival with an enthusiasm that surprised Daenerys. He had apparently been taken prisoner by Lord Randyll Tarly, his daughter made to marry the Tarly son that Daenerys had executed, and attributed their freedoms to her.

Invited to stay in his castle, and given the finest rooms in Jonquil’s tower, Daenerys felt forced by courtesy to agree to have her armies camp within the city. Lord Mooten had toured her through the rubble and scorched streets, lamenting the fall of this ancient place, where once the beautiful Jonquil had met Florian the Fool.

She listened politely to his tales, her eyes meeting Tyrion’s over the man’s shoulder as her Queen’s Hand struggled to hold in his laughter. William Mooten certainly liked to hear his own voice. Though she kept her thoughts to herself, as she had great plans and needed a strong ally in the Riverlands to help her execute them. With the wealth that Maidenpool brought even in it’s deplorable state, he was an easy choice.
Night had long since fallen by the time Daenerys was able to escape back to her rooms, where she took supper with her advisors, rolling her eyes at the antics of the day. They laughed and ate hard cheese and drank the Mooten’s fine wine, though Daenerys sipped a horn of water instead. “Your Grace,” Missandei said as she put her tankard down. “Have you thought of any names for the baby?”

Dany smiled. “I have given it some thought, yes.” She saw, out of the corner of her eye, Jon Snow’s attention focus on her. “With my son, I had named him after my older brother Rhaegar. I think this time I would like to name this child after my sister.”

Missandei gave her a curious look. “I thought that you had no sister?”

“I do.” She could not help the mischievous smile that pulled at the corners of her lips as understanding dawned on the scribe’s face. “Though not by blood.”

Her face flushed and her mouth opened and closed in shock. “Your Grace, I don’t know what to say…”

Daenerys looked around the room, savoring the content expressions on her companions faces. It was a lovely feeling, to be surrounded by people who cared for you. “I was thinking Missereon for a boy, and Missenya for a girl… That is of course if the father approves.”

All the eyes in the room turned to Jon, who set his tankard down, his heart easily readable in his eyes. “I think they’re excellent names, Your Grace.”

They spoke for another hour, until Daenerys could no longer hold back her yawns, more easily exhausted in her current state than she normally would be. She did not say anything herself, but Tyrion took the initiative to clear the room, ushering everyone out with a remark about having a long day ahead of them. “Jon?” Dany asked before he could leave. “Stay a moment?”

“Of course,” He said, closing the door behind him, and watched as she stood and walked towards the small fireplace in the center of the room.

“Come, I wish to show you something.” She reached into her cloak and from it pulled the dragon egg, running her fingers over the scales. It was gorgeous, a bright white despite its age, marbled with indigo hues that were the same color as her eyes. Jon came up behind her shoulder and out of habit put his hand over her hip as he looked down at the egg. “Your sister gave this to me, she found it in the crypts when the white walkers attacked.”

“It’s beautiful. May I?” He asked, and she placed the stone egg carefully in his gloved hands. “I’m surprised Sansa gave it to you.”

Daenerys chuckled. “She’s a skilled politician, Jon. She knew what such a gift would mean to me.” Respect was plain in her voice.

“It’s stone,” He said suddenly, with a forlorn note. “Dead.”

Her lips twisted up as she took it back from him. “My children’s eggs were in the same state when I was given them. It is possible to wake dragons from Stone, but not easy. That’s why I wanted to talk to you about this, before we go against Cersei. You may not approve of my methods.”

His brows furrowed and he took a step back. “Your methods?”

“A secret our ancestors forgot, though it was always right in front of their faces.” Daenerys placed the egg on the coals, watching the flames lick against the scales. “Our words are not a threat
against our enemies, they’re an instruction. To hatch a dragon you need Fire and Blood, a human sacrifice.” She could feel his body still next to her, horrified. “If it is a stone dragon, you need more than that. There is magic in the blood of Kings.” She straightened and looked up into his eyes. “When my children were born, three Kings went into the pyre, their sacrificial cradle. My husband, my son, and of course, myself.”

“And you want to do the same thing to Cersei?” His voice was dark and unreadable. She was sure that he disapproved.

“I will have Cersei Lannister face justice for the pain that she has caused.” Daenerys said coldly, pulling the egg from the flames with her bare hands. “If that justice comes from Fire and Blood, then so be it.”
This is not a happy chapter.

His teeth gnashed into the corpse of the bear, the creature had put up a far fiercer fight than the deer or even men that his brother preferred. He gobbled it up, swallowing the beast with two quick bites, savoring the feeling of it sliding down his gullet. And yet he was still hungry. He shot up into the sky, feeling adrenaline surge into his wings as he soared over the mountains of the Vale, not far from where his mother’s armies camped.

Out in the distance, he could hear the clicking cries of Drogon calling to him, and he careened in that direction, soaring through the misty clouds with no care for coordinates or miles the way humans did. He passed over one little hamlet, smoke curling from chimneys and people scurrying into their halls and houses as his shadow passed over them. Rhaegal could not help the disdain he felt at the sight of them, a feeling that Bran echoed, as small as he was inside the mind of the dragon, men were boring in their idiocy, too involved in… making things such as weapons and clothes and monuments to their mortality, to be truly worth his time.

Their mother the exception, of course. The dragons could never hold disdain for their Valyrian kin, connected to them on a level that humans could not hope to understand.

Rhaegal roared in amusement at the petty fear of the villagers below, echoed by his brother, who vocalized back to him from the Riverlands, staying closer to their mother in his hunting ventures than Rhaegal as he was prone to do. When they met in the fields of the God’s Eye, a place untouched by man, the sun was nearly out of the sky, stars blinking overhead. They settled there, ready to sleep.

When the Dragon’s eyes closed, the boy was promptly thrown back into his own body, flung against his will. He blinked, processing the change in scenery, the humans wandering the great halls outside of his room, and his stomach rumbled, despite the fact that he had eaten a whole bear…

It took him a few moment to remember that he was not the Dragon. It took longer for him to remember who he was, Bran Stark. Human.

He used his arms to hoist himself into the new chair that Daenerys’s Hand had designed for him, a contraption that allowed him to push the wheels himself, rather than rely on others for his mobility. He wasn’t sure how long he had been inside the mind of the beast, which if Bran was still capable of worry, would have scared him.

He was well aware of the side effects that being a Warg could bring if one spent too much time inside an animal. Yet he had hardly been inside Rhaegal more than an hour during battle, the monster agreeing to let him participate rather than simply being overtaken by the force of the Three-eyed Raven’s will. The minds of Men were more dangerous than simple beasts like dogs and wolves to inhabit, the influence of human’s more complicated cognition and personality could influence the Warg even when they were not actively possessing.
Bran Stark did not know how much influence a Dragon, a beast more intelligent than any man, could have on a person.

He had felt that influence when he had watched the Dragon Queen’s army leave Winterfell, with his brother at her side. A deep, roiling fear had filled him, his mother was abandoning him just as she had abandoned him before, leaving him crippled and alone—

But Daenerys Targaryen was not his mother. She was the dragon’s mother, not his.

His true mother, Catleyn Stark, blended with this woman in his memories, to the point where he could no longer recall her face, only the Tully hair, which after weeks and weeks and weeks, slowly turned silver…

Yet he could not ask the gods for advice, they had died in the same flames that killed the Night King. Their voices silent.

He pushed the wheeled chair down the halls, his new room on the bottom floor of the castle, near to the kitchens and the Great Hall. Few servants scurried around at this late hour, mostly ensuring the fires stayed roaring in order to keep the aching cold at bay. He passed by them on the way to the kitchens, where there was only one servant, sleeping, a broom in his hand to chase away any rats that dared walk by his unconscious form.

Bran very carefully snagged a loaf of bread from the counters, though by now it was hard and stale, and he slipped it under his cloak so that he could continue to use his hands to move. Years ago, as a child, he had used to sneak into these kitchens to get sweets, and he had caught more often than not, handed over to his father for scolding. However, Eddard always tempered his harsh words by letting Bran have just a little bit of the sweet he had stolen before sending him off to bed to think about what he had done.

Yet those memories washed off of him now like water off of a duck, Bran Stark had long ago lost the ability to feel heartache or nostalgia.

He only got to the courtyard before realizing there was an impediment in his mission, to reclaim some of the knowledge he had gained from the gods that had slipped from his mind in their deaths. From where the roof provided him some shelter from the storm, Bran watched the blizzard rapidly fill his world with snow, far too deep for his wheels to move through unassisted. He may have missed his last chance to visit the burnt remains of the Godswood before the earth would thaw again in spring.

“You’re up very late,” A voice said, surprisingly cheery since it belonged to Jaime Lannister. The Kingslayer was wrapped in heavy northern furs and hunched against the wind, shivering in the cold in only the way a southron person would. “Though I suppose I’m not one to talk.”

“No, I suppose you’re not.” Was he curt or humorous? Even he could not tell. But he knew, in the same detached way that blacksmiths know to make swords or cobblers to make shoes, that he should socialize politely in order to get a pleasant result. “I thought you would have left ahead of the Dragon Queen’s army to warn your sister.”

Jaime gave him an interested look. “Sansa didn’t tell you? I’m under house arrest, on orders of the Lady of Winterfell.” He grinned down at Bran ironically. “They’re keeping me here on pain of death if I attempt escape. I do believe that it was my little brother’s suggestion.”

Bran could empathize with overprotective siblings. Sansa worried over him in a way that reminded him of… Someone. His mother maybe, or perhaps the crannog woman. Their names escaped him.
His silence apparently made the Kingslayer uncomfortable. “Well, what are you doing out here? The servants have said that you haven’t left your room in two days, and you’ve been leaving your trays of food uneaten.” Ah, that must have been how long he was lost to the dragon. It also explained the aching pit in his stomach. “Is it that now that the war is over, you’ve lost your purpose and you plan on just letting yourself fade away? Awfully disappointing for your family, I'm sure.”

“Spoken like a man that knows what it's like to loose his purpose.”

There was a long while of quiet before Jaime Lannister decided to be honest with Bran. And with himself. “I used to know my purpose.” He said, uncomfortable, staring off at the snowdrifts. “To protect my sister. It’s all I’ve ever known and all I’ve ever wanted. But now I’m not so sure.”

“So find something new to live for.” Bran told him, though this time his voice was curt. “You’ve got a child on the way, don’t you? Cersei will die in this war, you know the world cannot allow someone like her to live, so take your child somewhere the memory of her will not reach it and choose something better for yourself.”

“And what will you choose?” Ser Jaime asked.

Dragons did not need purpose, they had long evolved past it. Bran didn’t know until that moment that he had made his choice the second the Dragon had allowed him inside it’s head. He knew what his new destiny was. Brynden Rivers had given up the life of a Targaryen dragon to become the Three Eyed Raven. Bran would give up the life of the Three Eyed Raven to become a dragon.

This delicate body was already wasting away, he had not taken the time to maintain it aside from the bare minimum to ensure that it survived. Inside Rhaegal, he had everything he had lost, everything that he had before trauma and pain turned him into something inhuman. Into the three-eyed raven. When he was the dragon, he had a mother, he had his brothers in Jon and Drogon and the little egg. He could even protect his sisters and his home from inside the beast.

“Will you take me to the Godswood?” Bran said, nodding at the snow, and indicated his inability to traverse it on his own. “There are some goodbyes I still need to say.”

Jaime did what he asked, most likely because he didn’t know what Bran had planned. Together they went to the burnt wood, stopping in where once would have been the shadow of the great Wierwood tree. Something whispered at the edges of Bran’s conscious, the voices of the old gods… alive somewhere in this place, in him. Below the ashes and snow, the roots were still there, still thriving, just waiting for him.

The first men had for thousands of years sacrificed both man and beast to the trees to feed the gods. It was only fitting that his blood and bones be the nourishment from which the Old Gods could grow again.

But Bran could not give them what they needed just yet. From their vantage point, they could see the ruined tower from where the Kingslayer had pushed him so many years ago. “I forgive you,” Bran told him. “Though you do not need it. You’ve changed since then. I know you attribute that change to your suffering as a result of what you did that day, but you need to know that you would have changed regardless. The seed of goodness was always inside you. You just had to want it.”

He didn’t seem to know what to say. So Bran turned away, letting the whispers of the old gods overtake him. The roots grew over his body, shocking the Kingslayer away with a shout, white bark clawing up from the earth and piercing through the snow. Limbs pierced his thighs and wormed through his ribcage, feeding on his life willingly given to return them anew. The branches
exploded out from his crown painlessly, red leaves chasing the moonlight.

From within the tree, he took one last moment to be Bran Stark. He looked out at Winterfell through the cold white wooden eyes, and then closed them. For the final time, he left his body, slipping through the ether.

And he became the dragon.
Arya

She brushed the hair from her face with a flour-caked hand, the strands sticking annoyingly to her sweaty skin. The roll of bread sat on the table in front of her, taunting her. The damned thing was much harder to knead properly than she would have ever thought it to be.

Adi, her kindly neighbor, a fat older woman who lived with her adult son, looked indulgently down at her, a smile on her face. Adi’s loaf had turned out beautifully, sitting in the bowl that she had placed it in to rise. “‘S alright dear, ye can’t get it right every time.”

“Haven’t gotten it right any time,” Arya grumbled.

“Dinnae worry about it.” Adi commanded, as stern as any mother could be at the sight of someone bemoaning themselves. “Fancy Braavosi girl like ye never had to bake your own bread. It’s new to you, you’ll get used to it eventually.”

Arya gave a smile, the polite mask fitting easily over her face.

Her and Gendry had been sent out to King’s Landing a month ahead of the army to keep their eyes on the city. They worked with the Spider and his spies, noting movements of the guards, slipping through the night and peeping into abandoned buildings to find Cersei’s caches of Wildfire. A whisper, and hours later, the little fruit-shaped canisters carrying death would be gone. Presumably dumped into the Blackwater.

However, to do this, they needed to blend in with the people. With Gendry it was easy, he was remembered, protected by the common folk as one of their own. He had been able to return to the blacksmith’s shop that he had once apprenticed for, his friends and comrades welcoming him back into the fold with open arms.

Arya had a harder time of it despite her innate ability to blend in wherever she went, something in her voice and her mannerisms marker her as other when people looked too long. It had actually been Gendry that came up with the story, as he had to also explain his extended absence. He told anyone who asked that he had gone to Braavos to learn their way of making swords, and while there he had met Arya, who had been apprenticing under one of the famed courtesans.

The rest of the story, in which he had met her under the moonlight and convinced her to marry him, that they would run away together, struck Arya as a little bit of wishful thinking.

However, the tall tale had given her leeway, excuses for why she did not know the aspects of household management that would be expected of a blacksmith’s wife. A noble Lady of Braavos wouldn’t be expected to cook or bake or clean, so no one suspected that maybe she was in fact a Westerosi noble woman hiding her identity.

They had gotten apartments near the shop, thanks to the Spider. It did mean that they had to deal with nosy neighbors, including Adi, who had taken it upon herself to teach Arya how to be a proper wife, perhaps imagining her poor son, named Jon like Arya’s brother, having to fend for himself after marrying an ignorant woman.

Arya put up with the fuss during the days, despite the fact that there were times she longed desperately to plunge Needle through Adi’s thick gut, because at night she got to be a spy and an assassin, taking out Lannister soldiers in darkened alleyways, wishing that it was Cersei she was taking out instead.
Yet she knew that despite her skills, if she were to go alone in the Red Keep to kill the Lion Queen, she would not likely be able to come back out alive. So she waited, and worked, chipping away at Cersei’s defenses, so that when the Targaryen army came, Cersei would not be able to stand against them.

Adi looked up through Arya’s apartment window, squinting at the setting sun. “Time for me to go, missy. ‘ve got to get supper on for my boy. Ye just let that bread rise overnight, put them in the stove when the sun rises and you’ll have it baked and ready before your man even stirs. Bye for now!” She left with a wave, down the street.

Arya briefly considered tossing the loaves out into the gutter, but she sighed and put them off into the shade to rise and then stretched her sore muscles. She washed her hands off with the pitcher they kept in the corner, and decided to get some rest before slipping off into the night. The bed she shared with Gendry was hard as stone, and the sheets were scratchy against her naked skin, but it was miraculously absent of fleas. And so she slipped into sleep the moment her head hit the pillow.

When she awoke, the moon was casting light in through the windows. Gendry lay next to her on the bed above the covers, still fully clothed and sweaty from the work he’d done earlier that day, snoring softly. Arya got up quietly without disturbing him, and lit a candle, placing it on the table by the bed before laying back down.

His eyes slipped open slowly, and then very quickly when he saw her, naked as the day she was born, staring at him. He backed up quickly, nearly falling off of the bed, and Arya laughed at him. She was inclined to believe that no matter how many times she lay with him, that he would still be shocked at her brazenness. Gendry seemed to still view her as a Lady, pure and to be protected. She aimed to eventually kick him of that habit.

She gripped the neck of his shirt and pulled him into a kiss, which he returned, as always, with a shocked eagerness, and then she dropped him, breathless, back onto the bed. “I’m going out. Are you coming?” She asked, hoisting her trousers up over her hips.

“Out?” He asked, pulling her back towards him and into another kiss. “Why not stay here?” He rolled, taking her with him, so that they both landed in a heap on the floor.

Arya grinned, wiggling out of his deliberately loose grip. She knew that he would always give her enough room to escape him if she wanted to. “C’mon, Varys says that there’s got to be at least two more caches of Wildfire in the city. I want to check up Visenya’s hill again.” She slipped a long dress over her, covering her trousers. It was a fashion common with the poor of Kings Landing, that allowed for the wearer to hike up the skirts to work or to run. Arya didn’t care for it especially, but the billowing fabric allowed for her to easily hide Needle, and the slits in the sides made it easy for her to grab at a moments notice.

Gendry had sat up to watch her dress, and asked, as was his usual custom nowadays, “Marry me?”

She sighed. “Why? Cause I slept with you?” She wasn’t sure if she was being too mean, so she ruffled his hair affectionately as she walked by him.

“No,” He said, looking up at her with his heart in his eyes. “Because I love you.”

By this point, it was an old argument, one they’d had all the way from Winterfell. “I wouldn’t make a good wife. I don’t want to sit in a castle wearing fancy dresses, doing needlework, and popping out babies one after the other.”

He stood. Through his shirt, she could admire the rippling of his muscles as he moved. “I don’t
want you to do that either.” Gendry said. He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her head against his chest in a hug before letting her go. “If you’re my wife, you can go anywhere you want, do anything you want. Just as long as you come home to me every once in a while, I’ll be happy with that. I don’t want you under specific conditions or anything, I just want you.”

She looked up at him. What she told him was true, she would not make a good wife, and she wasn’t going to sacrifice who she was to try to force herself into that role. Yet she knew that Gendry was almost incapable of lying, especially to her. If he said that he would let her have her freedom, he meant it. Honesty came as easy to him as violence came to her.

Arya remembered the conversation that she had with her sister just before she left Winterfell. She hadn’t said no. Just not yet. “Fine.” Arya said. “I’ll marry you.”

Her tone was so flippant and relaxed that it took Gendry a moment to process. A smile lit up his face, bright as the sun. “Yeah?”

There was a knock on the door, interrupting whatever he was about to say. Their eyes met for a brief second, Gendry dived for his sword where it was hidden under the hard mattress, and Arya put her hand on Needle’s hilt. She walked towards the door, nodding at Gendry where he had moved to hide in the shadows, and flung it open, prepared for a Lannister army to meet her-

And instead, a scrawny little boy looked up at her. Hardly more than twelve, stick thin and coated with the general grime of the city. One of the Spider’s spies. Arya waved for Gendry to stand down, though she herself hardly relaxed. “Lady Stark,” The boy said, staring up at her with cold hollow eyes. “The Spider sends his regards, as does our Lady, the Queen. They wish to inform you that the battle will begin before dawn today. May I come in?” He stepped through without waiting for her to answer. “Do you have any food?”

Gendry had put his sword away and stepped out of the shadows. “We’ve got hard bread and harder cheese.”

The boy’s face didn’t change, except for a spark in his eyes that betrayed his excitement. “I’ll take it.” A second later, a plate was handed to the boy, who scooped the food into a pocket of his shirt with little ceremony. “At dawn, Dothraki riders will lure the Lannister forces away from the city in a feint. Northern warriors will charge King’s Gate, and the Unsullied have already the walls and are just waiting to for the signal to attack. Her Grace hopes to take the city before the morning bells ring.”

“And us?” Arya asked.

“Lord Baratheon’s job is to lead the warriors through the city in a manner that ensures the fewest civilian deaths. Lady Stark, the Spider says that you know the Red Keep?” She nodded. “Enter the castle, kill the guards, and open the gates. No more than that. Her Grace wants Cersei Lannister alive. For now.”
Hey! Sorry for such a long time between updates! I've recently just started a paid internship in my field of study, and it involves 12 hour work days consisting of hard manual labor, which had been taking a lot out of me, so I haven't had the energy to write. I know we're nearing the end of the story, but please expect at least a week between updates from this point on.

Content warnings for vulgar language and non-graphic depictions of childbirth.

She had slept fitfully for weeks now. No word had been sent about the state of Winterfell or the North since the supposed battle for the dawn, no word from even the assassin she had sent to kill her brothers. It was a bad idea to send Bronn, though she had hoped that his ambition and blatant greed would make him willing. Yet apparently she was wrong. He was either incompetent, as men so often are, or he was weak and had given in to the fondness he had developed towards them. A mistake. Since when did Cersei Lannister start making stupid mistakes?

There had been no news at all, to the point where The Queen was almost hopeful that they had all been killed by whatever those blue-eyed monsters were. Destroyed by ice and fire, a fitting end to houses Stark and Targaryen.

Her hopes had been unfounded, for rumors and whispers started reaching the city of foreign soldiers marching through the Riverlands in meandering paths away from the King’s Road, picking up allies and armies along the way. As it had been when the war between her father and Robb Stark had consumed Westeros, the common folk had fled to King’s Landing in the hopes that it’s great red walls would keep them safe from the Mad King’s daughter.

Cersei couldn’t let them in, of course. Winter had come. She could not afford to feed the beggars at the gates when those inside the city would starve. Even from the Red Keep, she could hear them pounding at the walls, begging for sanctuary.

Their pleas fell on deaf ears, and slowly the voices died down, one by one, until they were gone.

Abruptly, she sat up in bed, dislodging the maid that slept at her side to keep her warm. Her hand went automatically to her swollen belly, felt the baby through the heavy silks she wore. Not long now. Cersei loved the baby dearly already. She had always loved her children with the ferocity of a lioness, and she would protect this child with the same fierceness, come Wolves, or Winter, or Dragons. The Queen would let the world burn before she let anything hurt her child.

There was a knock on the door, frantic sounding. Cersei felt the spark of anger rise up inside her, though she stuffed it down long enough to open the door, her useless maid still sleeping away.

A general or something similar, too unimportant for her to learn his name, bowed without decorum. His armor was askew, like he had put it on in a hurry, and his rather frog-like face was coated in a fine layer of shine. “Your Grace— Apologies for waking you, but Dothraki warriors and the Targaryen’s dragons have been spotted within an hour of King’s Landing.”
She felt a sharp pain in her abdomen. Fear—she thought. Though the lioness does not fear. “What are you waiting for?” She snapped. “Ready the troops, stop them before they can get to the City.” The Queen put a hand over her stomach. “I want the city guards on high alert. Put men on every turret, have them bar the gates with whatever they can find.”

The general sweated. “With all due respect, Your Grace. Walls and gates won’t stop dragons. Perhaps we ought to surrender—“

Coward. Her lip twisted into a snarl, and she stepped to him, forcing him out farther away from her bedroom door as he hurried to back away from her rage. There were two guards in the outer room, and she rounded on one, pointing at the general with one shaking finger. “Kill him.” She turned to the other. “Did you hear my instructions?” The man nodded, fear plain in his eyes. “Alert the city. Now.”

She didn’t wait to see what they would do, going back into her bedroom. The maid was sitting up now, rubbing the sleep away from her eyes. Cersei ignored her too, doubling over in pain as her belly ached like her monthlies… only ten times as painful. She knew this pain well, had felt it three times over.

No no no no, it was far too soon. Heedless of the girl watching her, she hiked her sleep dress up to her hips, her hand reaching down to the hair between her legs, and felt a wetness. The Queen let her skirts drop as she stared at her fingers in horror. A few moments, and the contraction faded until it was tolerable. She was quite tolerant of pain, perhaps she had slept through the early stages.

A sense of resoluteness replaced her fear, and she shook the water away. “Help me get dressed.” She commanded, and the girl scrambled to her feet to obey. Cersei steeled herself. The pain of labor would be nothing compared to the pain that would come if she let that Targaryen bitch win this war.

Queen you shall be... until there comes another, younger and more beautiful, to cast you down and take all that you hold dear.

———

It had hardly been three hours before another interruption came. Cersei was fully dressed, thankfully, and had been keeping the contractions under careful wraps, timing them in her head. She could not reveal that she was vulnerable at a time such as this, as much as the pain wanted to pull her away.

So she worked, ordering the frantic guards and household staff to positions, stepping away for moments when it became too much to bear, the hulking form of the Mountain keeping away all from bothering her while she struggled to catch her breath.

The Queen was sitting on the Iron Throne, watching the people scurry below her the way a lion watched mice run round it’s feet. An easy meal, if they were worth the energy it would take to catch. She felt such disdain for them, for everyone. The only person that she had never hated was Jaime, and even he had failed her in the end.

A shock of anxiety wound through her, and she clutched at the throne a little too hard, feeling one of the points of the welded swords prick through the skin of her hand. Warmth spread over her fingers as the blood ran down them, and she stared at the wound. Cersei had never been this alone. Every time that she had gone into labor in the past Jaime had been at her side to welcome their children into the world. Her brother should be here, with her, protecting her from all that wished to cause her harm.
had she been a lesser woman faced with the same dangers, a foreign army at the door and a baby coming over a month too soon, she would have cried.

but crying had never been an option afforded to her. instead she had to pull herself together while a hurried and bloodied soldier approached the throne, his skittish eyes glancing at the red spreading over the throne’s barb before he even bothered to remember that he should bow before her. “your grace,” he said, his voice lacking the appropriate amount of reverence. “i’ve come from the fields, with bad news…” the man hesitated under her withering gaze. “daenerys targaryen’s forces have taken our regiment. we could not hope to stand against a thousand mounted dothraki in open field. those who were not slaughtered have either fled or surrendered.”

her lip twisted up with hatred. “and you? why are you still alive before me?”

he stared, just as resolute as she. “her grace has allowed me to bring a message to you. she says that if you surrender the city, and yourself to her justice, that she will not bring war to your doorstep.” was there respect in his voice for that hideous wretch? “she says that she doesn’t want to risk any innocent lives, and pleads that you consider the people of the king’s landing before yourself.”

“daenerys targaryen is a lying bitch.” she spit. “she is going to bring fire and blood to this city just like her father, the mad king. i will not let her have it. not now or ever.”

another man approached the throne, clad in the armor of the city guard. a crowd of servants and courtiers had slowly started to surround the throne, watching them the same way people watched an approaching storm, to make sure that they wouldn’t be swept away by the floodwaters. “my queen,” this one said. “there are reports of targaryen soldiers within the city, and that they’re opening the gates.”

another contraction started gripping her belly, much sooner than her earlier ones. it was a bad sign that they were getting closer and closer together. she pinched the bridge of her nose with a hand to disguise the pain, and took three deep breaths to compose herself. “which ones?”

“the river gate and iron gate are already open, your grace. there is fighting at the lion and dragon gates still, and according to my reports, there are northern soldiers battering at the gate of the gods.”

the soldier that had brought news from the fields stared at the city guard in open-mouthed horror. “if they get in through there, the city is lost.” he stepped forward. “your grace, you must surrender while there is still time—“

she stood, towing over those simpering fools, her rage radiating off of her in waves. the audacity he had, to try to order the true queen of westeros. “i will not surrender the throne!” she swore fiercely. “i have lost everything to get this crown. the iron throne is mine, and i will not lose it. qyburn,” she turned to the former maester, his black robes swirling around him as he ducked his head low. “light the wildfire. let daenerys targaryen be queen of the ashes.”

the guard swallowed, looking afraid for the first time. “my queen, we don’t have time to evacuate the common folk—“

“i don’t care. let them burn.” cersei said, her face twisting into a half-mad snarl with the pain that she was keeping contained. unbidden, her voice rose into a shout. “burn them all. burn them all!”

stars danced in her vision, and she nearly collapsed back onto the barbs of the throne as this contraction rocked her to her core, unable to be ignored any longer. “take me—“ she panted,
clutching her belly, and the Mountain hoisted her body up, carrying her like a new bride. “Take me to my rooms. Qyburn—“

The halls swam around her as she was carried, her back arching in agony. She hardly felt the hands of the maids rip off her dress, the cold compress pressed against her forehead while she was lowered onto the silks of her bed. The disgraced Maester spread her legs, and clicked his tongue disapprovingly, casting orders that Cersei was too pained to listen to about the room, directing servants this way and that. “You should have alerted me sooner, Your Grace…” He said.

The next hour passed, Cersei pushing with all her might while battle raged outside of the castle. She couldn’t tell the difference between her screams and the ones of those dying in the city.

Before long, the babe was pulled out of her, though it was deathly silent. The Queen panted, sitting up on her elbows, despite the midwives and maids urging her to rest. “Please, the baby, is it okay-“ Something that was either tears or sweat stung at her eyes, and she tried to blink it away, reaching out for her child.

A little bundle, still covered with blood and viscera was placed in her arms, warm and cooing, oblivious to the chaos outside. “It’s a perfectly healthy little girl, Your Grace” One of the midwives said, smoothing some of the hair out of the Queen’s face. “A beautiful princess.”

Cersei reached a shaking hand out, smoothing her palm over her daughter’s head, and pulled the babe close to her, pressing her lips to her baby’s forehead. A glad sob tore out of her throat as she smiled down at the child. A weight that had pulled at her shoulders for years lifted away. “Hello,” She whispered. “I’m your mother, and I love you so so much.”

The doors to the Queen’s room exploded open with a bang, and soldiers swept in, sending the staff scattering. Cersei clutched her baby to her chest, pushing herself as far back on the bed as she could with her legs, still too weak to stand, to run.

One of the soldiers took off his helmet, emblazoned with the image of a bull, revealing a face that looked so much like that of her dead husband that Cersei thought for a moment that Robert Baratheon had come back to haunt her. “Cersei Lannister,” He said, his voice cold, thick with a flea bottom accent. “You are under arrest, under the orders of Daenerys Targaryen, the Queen.”

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://example.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!