voices on our skin

by Amymel86

Summary

There's just something about the way she looks at him, like she's sincerely cheering him on. And the smile she gives him when his stupid mouth finally cooperates? It's like she's proud of him. At least, Jon thinks it looks that way.

He's not sure anyone has ever been proud of him.

Notes

For the 100 drabble challenge. I was tagged by the lovely pandizzy with the word 'tattoo'.

This drabble is a continuation of my other drabble, 'hiding under my tongue'. I've grouped them together in a series called 'finding my voice'.

Thank you so so much for all the people who have left encouraging comments on the first drabble in this series! I love you all!

I'm going to tag sansaswildlinglover next, with the prompt 'dirty' 😊

See the end of the work for more notes.
Jon has taken to frequenting The Wolf Pack Coffee Shop on his own now. Sometimes he just sits on his laptop, scouring employment websites for a job that would take on an ex-con, sometimes he actually goes up to order coffee.

He always tries to visit when Sansa has a shift.

He hopes she doesn't find that creepy. It's just that Sansa is the easiest for him to attempt to talk to. There's just something about the way she looks at him, like she's sincerely cheering him on. And the smile she gives him when his stupid mouth finally cooperates? It's like she's proud of him. At least, Jon thinks it looks that way.

He's not sure anyone has ever been proud of him.

Sansa is behind the counter her nose buried in some textbook as she takes advantage of a quiet spell in the coffee shop. Jon hadn't bought his laptop with him today. Today, he has only a notepad and pencil. Flipping through the pages of half-finished doodles, he comes to a letter he'd been working on for a while now.

Back before he'd done time, Jon had found himself a place within Mance Rayder's menagerie of dealers and thugs. He was part of the muscle. He never pushed the goods like the dealers did, but he sure did push for proper payment.

People found him menacing. He thinks it was his silence that had them unnerved more than anything else. What they might think of him should they hear his stuttering through the simplest of sentences, he can only guess, but he has a good idea.

The letter he was writing was an apology. One of many he owes, but he's starting with this one. One particular addict of Mance's had failed to make good on his payment. He'd pled and pled with Jon and Orell to give him more time.

Jon had wordlessly bloodied his nose for that.

But then Orell started snooping in the man's wallet, prizing out a small photograph of a young girl in pigtails and braces. Jon had stood by while his 'colleague' made ugly threats using the photograph and for that, he is more sorry than any bloodied nose he's ever caused.

He would rather die than harm a child. But their addict didn't know that, and Jon had let the man believe his daughter was at risk. He was complicit.

That little girl with pigtails and braces haunts his dreams still to this day.

"Whatcha writing?" Sansa asks, appearing suddenly and popping herself down on the adjacent seating of the booth he was at.

Jon scrambles, defensively flipping the page to cover his scribbled sorries. He shakes his head instinctively before remembering to use words. "A l-l-l-

_Breathe, dumbass._

"A letter."

Sansa smiled that smile that turned this ex-con's knees to jelly. _Gods!_ He's never experienced this much of a reaction to a woman before.
She pushed a plate with a single blueberry muffin towards Jon whilst keeping an identical plate for herself. "They're gonna get chucked out if they're not eaten," she told him, peeling the paper casing off her own treat. Jon shifted in his seat to better delve his hand into his pocket and retrieve payment. "No, no!" Sansa waves a hand at him, "it's on the house."

Looking around, Jon only just now realised the place was empty and the world outside was fading into evening. "You sure?" He asked, secretly pleased to have not tumbled over any words this time. He might be imagining it, but Sansa looks pleased for him too.

They ate in comfortable silence for a bite or two before Jon caught the path of her gaze from the doodles on his notepad up to his tattooed arms. He instantly felt like hiding.

"Did you design those tattoos?" She asks. She sounds excited by the prospect and there's a glint in her eye, but Jon's gut plummets.

Yes, he's designed the ink on his arms, but all the imagery reminds him of the man he used to be. He's not so sure he's ready to tell a nice girl like Sansa all about his past crimes just yet.

You're not like that no more. You're gonna contribute to society, he tells himself. Somehow.

Jon nods and Sansa seems impressed. She stands as best she can in the booth, her knee pressing into the old soft leather and, much to Jon's racing heart's delight, starts to undo the button of her jeans. "I got this when I was young and stupid," she tells him, revealing a swirling script low on her left hip. "It's my ex's initials." Jon squinted at the loopy, feminine letters. JB. "He turned out to be a violent drunk just like his dad. I'd like to get it covered one day," Sansa said, smiling at him as she plopped back down on the seating with a bounce. "Maybe you could design something for me?"

Jon nods his head before reminding himself to speak. "I c-c-c-c.. I c-can try." He very much would like to cover that branding she has on her body. Jon's never met the man, but he suspects he'd think him an utter douche if he did. He doesn't deserve an inch of Sansa's skin, just like Mance and his boys don't deserve any of Jon's. "What w-" the innocuous word was making his jaw tense. He sat up straighter and tapped his pencil on the table. "What would you like?... for a t-" Urgh! Jon wanted to hit himself, or ram his own fist into his mouth and drag the word right out, damn it! He looked to Sansa, waiting patiently. There was no pressure in her expression at all. He took a breath. "-for a tattoo," he finished. "What would you like for a tattoo? ...To get rid of him."

Sansa beamed, stealing a few beats of Jon's heart. "I like wolves," she told him, taking a dainty bite of her muffin.

End Notes

So I was going to go a bit further and add what kind of textbook Sansa was reading and have a convo over that as the answer would lead to more stuff happening should I continue in this au... but alas, that darn 1k word limit stopped me 😞😞😞

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