Imagine Being Loved By Me

by I_Contain_Multitudes

Summary

Modern AU set in modern day Westeros. Sansa is getting married and has roped Arya into being her maid of honour. Arya is allergic to all things wedding related and has just about had enough of the whole wedding preparations when they meet Gendry, an award winning jewellery designer who will forge Sansa and Theon's wedding rings. Arya is immediately drawn to the handsome smith and sparks fly! Pardon the pun!

Notes

The title for this story was taken from Hozier’s lovely song, Talk.

I’d be the last shred of truth

In the lost myth of true love (Hey, yeah)

I’d be the sweet feeling of release

Mankind now dreams of (Hey, yeah)
That's found in the last witness
Before the wave hits
Marvelling at God (Hey, yeah)
Before he feels alone one final
Time and marries the sea
Imagine being loved by me
“I can’t believe you want me of all people to help you with this”, Arya sighed as they headed down the busy Street of Steel, one of King’s Landing’s trendiest streets, bustling with tourists and hipsters alike. Every storefront was either some sort of new restaurant, coffee shop, art gallery or designer boutique. They had a high turnover of businesses down here. She didn’t recognise many of them. Sansa swept along at a breakneck speed, forcing Arya to almost jog to keep up. Not for the first time, Arya cursed her sister’s long stride.

“Arya, you’re my maid of honour! Of course you have to come with me to help me choose Theon’s wedding ring! Besides, you’re better at haggling the price than I am. Mum was all set to come but she couldn’t reschedule her trip so it’s just you and me. Come on, you’ve already made us late.”

Arya glared up at her oblivious sister. Picking out wedding rings for Sansa’s fiancée was about as thrilling as any of the other mind-numbing wedding related tasks she’d been roped into so far since they got engaged 6 months ago. She knew their mother was to blame for Arya being chosen as maid of honour, a title Arya would gladly have done without.

Sansa’s other bridesmaids hadn’t hid their envy very well when Sansa had announced that her little sister would get to be maid honour. And since then they done everything in their power to exclude Arya from the bridesmaid’s duties, much to Sansa’s annoyance and Arya’s relief. But somehow, the job of helping Sansa pick out Theon’s ring had fallen to Arya and she supposed she could only avoid her wedding duties for so long before she just looked like a total bitch.

Sansa stopped abruptly and Arya nearly collided with her back. “Hey, gazelle legs, watch it!” Sansa ignored her, staring intently at her phone, squinting at the map.

“Urgh I hate this bloody map. It’s saying the shop should be right here but it’s not!” She glanced around her. Sure enough they were standing outside a bakery, a queue of young, achingly hip customers waiting patiently to place their order.

“Here, give it to me. You are shite at reading maps. It is known.” Arya stuck out her tongue at Sansa, who merely rolled her eyes in response. “Mmm it does look like it’s supposed to be here. What’s it called again? I just see a pin.”

“Hollow Hill Smithy. Ugh, we are going to be so late.” Sansa continued scanning the other shopfronts, looking for it.
“Smithy?!” What a pretentious name. Seems appropriate for this stupid street full of hipsters.” Arya gave the queue of bakery patrons a side eye. She rarely came down here, finding the neighbourhood too self consciously cool for her taste. “Ugh. The owner is probably some too for school tattooed, mustachioed man bun moron.”

Intent not to waste any more time, Arya cut to the top of the line and waved to get the server’s attention. “Excuse me, we’re looking for Hollow Hill Smithy, any idea where it is? The map is no use.”

A heavily tattooed, rosy cheeked girl smiled at her, not phased by Arya’s urgency. “Yeah it’s behind this building. You have to take the little laneway on the right and follow it down to the end. There’s a small courtyard. It’s in there.”

Arya sighed in relief. “Thanks!”

She grabbed Sansa, who was still looking around her perplexed. “Come on, the girl gave me directions. It’s down here.”

They found the little courtyard easily enough. Its narrow cobble stones looked like they’d always been there and the little buildings looked to be at least 300 years old. But each one had been tastefully revamped in recent years and now housed different high end businesses. Arya liked it immediately. It was much quieter and more secluded than the main street. She spotted yet another coffee shop with a few dogs laid out at their owners’ feet, as well as an old pub with a flowery beer garden, some sort of modern art printers or framers, and finally, Hollow Hill Smithy. It looked like an old forge building, thick stone walls and quaint little windows with tiny window panes. The sign that hung above the door was very modern though. Arya took a moment to figure out what it was, as it was sort of abstract. Then it dawned on her. It was a wrought iron bull, or at least the outline of one.

Sansa, pulled her forward. “Come on, I don’t want to keep him waiting any longer. We’re late enough.”

They entered through the glass door, and heard a little bell ring above their head. Arya was surprised by the minimalism of the interior. The slate grey floor was spotless. The walls were all the same exposed stone brick as the outside of the building. Two aged leather couches sat facing each other with a large marble topped coffee table between them. There were brass light fixtures on the walls with bare lightbulbs illuminating the room.

Several glass cases lined the walls, and Arya and Sansa both went straight to inspect the one closet to the door. Inside the case was a wide array of delicate jewellery. Arya was impressed. When Sansa had asked her to come along to look at rings, gushing about the award-winning jewellery
designer Theon had found, Arya had expected something tooth-achingly sweet and girly, like most to the other wedding related businesses they had been to.

Between the dress shopping, the flowers, the cake, the stationary, if she never had to look at another pastel-coloured store in her life she could die happy. But this place was different. It was elegant and masculine. The jewellery was all really simple but at the same time refined. No blingy pavé or rose gold. Lots of graphic shapes and dark coloured metals that Arya didn’t recognise.

She was having a hard time picturing Sansa wearing any of this jewellery. But Theon had come here to have her engagement ring band remade before he proposed. He had borrowed their grandmother’s Tully ring but the metal had worn away on the underneath and the casing was really loose after nearly 90 years of use, so he had arranged to have a new one made for the beautiful old diamond. Arya could see now why he chose this place and why it had won so many awards.

“See I think Theon would like something really simple that like one”, Sansa pointed her perfectly manicured index finger to a thick white gold band with an etched surface. It looked like a metallic version of a piece of jagged rock. Arya thought it might indeed be Theon’s style. Not that she’d ever seen him wear jewellery. That was the problem. Neither they nor Theon knew what he’d like to wear. She hoped the designer was going to have some ideas for them otherwise it would be the blind leading the blind and they’d be here all day.

“You must be Sansa.” A deep voice startled them both and they turned to find a tall man, dark hair cut short and slightly scruffy. He smiled warmly at them both, and Arya noticed he had most intense blue eyes she had ever seen in real life. He had a faint hint of stubble that accentuated his chiseled jawline and dimpled chin. He was dressed all in black, worn jeans and a slightly faded looking black t shirt that showed off his strong arms. He glanced at both of them, looking a bit unsure as to who was who, waiting politely for one of them to respond.

“Sorry yes, I’m Sansa. I’m so sorry we’re late. We got a bit lost and it took us a while to find this courtyard.” She extended her long, elegant hand for him to shake, and he wiped his large, calloused one on the back of his jeans before taking it. “No worries, it happens literally all the time. The GPS isn’t very accurate down here for some reason. Sorry my hands are probably still filthy, hazard of the job I’m afraid.” He shook Sansa’s hand firmly, then looked to Arya expectantly, and it was then she realised she’s just been staring at him like an idiot through their whole exchange.

“And this is my little sister Arya, she’s the maid of honour.” Sansa, elbowed Arya in the side as if to prompt her to shake the poor man’s hand. Arya quickly snapped out of it and extended her small hand to grasp his, which had to be twice the size. It was very warm compared to her cold blooded one. She noticed his grip was firm but not bone crushing like some mens, who seemed to think a handshake was an invitation to display their brute force. “Hi”, she managed to get out.
“I’m Gendry Waters. Good to meet you both.” His eyes crinkled as he smiled at Arya, seeming to find her amusing. She swore she felt herself blush at his stare, and for the first time in forever she found herself at a loss for words. What the hell was wrong with her?

“Do you want to take a seat?” He gestured towards the couches and waited for them to move before following. Arya and Sansa took one couch and he sat opposite them. Arya noticed immediately that the leather was unbelievably soft to the touch. She was glad, as she had chosen to wear her denim shorts today on account of the hot humid summer weather, but if the leather hadn’t been as worn in and buttery, she feared her legs would have stuck to it and made for an embarrassing exit. “Can I get you ladies a glass of water?” He gestured to the jug and glasses on the middle of the table.

“Thanks I can do it.” Arya reached for them before he could reply, and he shrugged unfazed.

“So I take it you were happy with your engagement ring then?” He looked to Sansa. She beamed in response.

“Oh my gods, yes! It is so beautiful! I couldn’t believe Theon went to all that trouble to have it remade before he proposed. It was SO romantic.” She all but squealed, and her whole face lit up at the memory. Arya had to use every bit of self restraint not to roll her eyes at her sister. She was happy for her, honestly, but she just didn’t get the whole hysteria around weddings.

Much to their mother’s dismay, Arya had sworn ever since she was a little kid that she never wanted to get married. The whole idea seemed like her worst nightmare. Which was why she couldn’t fathom how Sansa had decided to ask her to be her maid of honour. She had a sneaking suspicion Sansa had been guilt-tripped into it by Catelyn. Although she also wouldn’t be surprised if Sansa had made the decision herself, as an attempt for them to bond as adults in a way they had never managed to as kids.

“Yeah it was a fun project. I don’t often get to work with old cuts of diamonds any more. They’re not as popular these days. But to be honest, they’re my favourite.” Gendry smiled gently and reached for Sansa’s left hand. “May I see how it looks on your hand?” She happily presented it to him, and he examined his work admiringly. “It really suits you.”

“Thanks. I’m so happy with it. I’ve gotten so many complements on it too.”

“Great. Well do you have any idea on what you want to do for Theon’s ring? And I understand he’ll be coming back in to design yours at some point?”
“Yes he did so well with this one, that we thought it would be fun to choose each other’s wedding bands as well. But I have no idea what he’d like. He doesn’t wear jewellery.” She exclaimed this as if it was a shameful secret.

“How many guys do you know who wear jewellery San?” Arya was getting exasperated at her sister’s constant anxiety surrounding anything to do with the wedding. Sansa seemed to be growing more and more stressed by the day since she had gotten engaged, despite all the offers of support and encouragement from their family and friends. Ever the perfectionist, she was driving herself mad trying to do as much of the planning on her own, whilst also working long hours in her job as a designer's assistant for a small but successful fashion brand. Her family were starting to worry she was taking this wedding far too seriously. Maybe that’s why their mum wanted Arya to be maid of honour, in the hopes that Arya’s nonchalance would temper Sansa’s nerves.

“I just want it to be perfect for him Arya! Theon spent so much time and energy having my ring made for me so the least I can do is get his ring right!” Arya could sense this was another potential source of anxiety for Sansa so she let it slide. She spotted Gendry watching them both, his brow furrowed, trying not to interfere.

“Look please don’t worry about getting it perfect. Theon told me you have amazing taste and he trusts you completely. You’ll find the perfect ring for him, I give you my word.” He spoke to her in a disarmingly soothing tone of voice, as if speaking to a strung out toddler, but it seemed to do the trick. Sansa visibly softened and she sighed, taking a deep breath.

“Sorry. You probably think I’m just another bridezilla. But I just want to make this as perfect as possible I mean this is more important than the wedding day. He has to wear this for the rest of his life..” She spoke the last words as if it had only just dawned on her. Arya could see the panic rising in Sansa’s expression again.

“Why don’t you pull up all the photos you’ve been collecting for Gendry. So he has somewhere to start? She’s been pinning wedding bands since the week they got engaged.” Arya really had to hold back her eye roll this time but Gendry’s face lit up. At least now they were getting somewhere.

“Yes! Excellent idea! In fact, do you want to email me the link to your Pinterest board?” That way I can start coming up with possible ideas.”

As Sansa opened up Pinterest on her phone and typed in Gendry’s email, Arya took it as her opportunity to escape to the other side of the room to examine the rest of the cases.
Despite Arya’s resistance to all things wedding ring related, she actually loved jewellery itself, just not wedding rings. She was wearing multiple rings on both hands, some stacked on top of each other. She favoured silver and dark coloured stones.

Her most precious ring was a wolf’s head with jet black eyes. Her brother Jon have given it to her for her 18th birthday and she never her took it off. She also had several ear piercings running up both ears, much to her mother’s annoyance. She’d often been tempted to get her nose pierced but so far had held off, for some reason unknown even to herself. As she looked at the pieces in the case, she couldn’t help but notice a beautiful silver necklace in the shape of delicate antlers. It was far more sophisticated than anything she owned.

“I’ve given her a look book to flick through for some more ideas.” She hadn’t noticed Gendry approaching behind her. He peered past her shoulder to see which one she was looking at. “Oh the antlers. Yeah that’s one of my favourites. Really proud of how at it turned out. That would look amazing on you. Want to to try it on?” He raised his eyebrows at her gently. Once again she found herself blushing, and wondered when in the hell she’d become someone who blushed so easily? This was ridiculous.

“Oh no, I’m just killing time. We’re here for Sansa. I don’t want to distract you.” She smiled at him sheepishly.

“Nonsense, it’s not like I’m particularly busy. I gave her my biggest book so she’ll be a while flicking through it all.” He took a set of keys out of his pocket and unlocked the case. “It was this one you were looking at right?” She nodded in return.

He carefully removed it from the display and unfastened the clasp. “Would you mind lifting your hair off the back of your neck?” he asked her softly.

She would not mind at all, she thought to herself, as she pulled it up and away from the the nape of her neck. He came to stand behind her and gently draped it across her collar bones, before fastening it for her at the back. She let her hair fall back down.

He pointed at a long mirror to the right of the case on the wall. She stepped in front of it and he followed behind her. She took in her reflection. The necklace fit perfectly against her collarbones, with the antlers forming a wide v shape. Arya had never worn such a grown up piece of jewellery before. Most of her stuff was chunky or goth inspired. This looked like something from a high end editorial.

“It looks really good on you. I knew it would.” Gendry smiled at her in the mirror, his eyes
crinkling again at the corners and making her forget herself. Bloody hell this guy was getting under her skin. She never got flustered by guys like this.

“Thanks. It’s beautiful.” She met his eyes and smiled softly before looking back at herself, examining her neck.

“Think it would go with your dress for the wedding?” He was still looking at it on her in the mirror.

“Mmm I don’t think so. Sansa has her heart set on high necked sleeveless dresses. Although that could all change. Again.” She rolled her eyes this time and Gendry chuckled.

“I take it you’re not enjoying the wedding planning process as much as the bride?”

“I’m not even sure she’s enjoying it any more to be honest. She’s just such a perfectionist. She creating all this unnecessary stress for herself all the time. She has us all driven mad with it. And poor Theon gets the brunt of it. I hope the poor fucker doesn’t get cold feet from it all.”

“Nah I saw the way he looked when he talked about her when he was in here. The bloke is head over heels for your sister. No chance of him getting cold feet.” Gendry chuckled to himself. Arya wondered how Gendry could possibly be able to tell that from meeting Theon a few times. But she had never been in love so what the hell did she know? Maybe this guy was in love with someone and knew it when he saw it.

“Yeah well she’s mad about him, for some unknown reason. So the two of them are both head over heels it seems.” She went to unfasten the necklace herself, but Gendry rushed forward. “Wait let me.” She pulled her hair back for him, and he carefully unfastened it. She couldn’t help but shiver as his fingers almost grazed her skin, sending goosebumps down her back. He didn’t seem to notice as he replaced the piece back in its case and locked up.

“Well once we get the wedding bands sorted out, I’m sure Sansa will be eager to pick out the rest of the jewellery for herself and for the bridesmaids, so I’m sure we’ll be back in then.” She turned to face him and looked up at his bright blue eyes. They were even more blue up close. He stepped back, as if remembering himself, and cleared his throat. “Yeah well it’ll be fun finding you something to wear too. You have a very unique sense of style.” He looked at her multiple ear piercings. Arya felt exposed somehow under his glance. “Let’s see how she’s getting on. I’m afraid if I leave her too long she might have gathered too many ideas…”
They made their way back over to the couch, Arya joining her sister on her right side, and Gendry sitting to the left. True to form, Sansa had already made a list of her favourites, and proceeded to go through them one by one, waiting for both Arya and Gendry’s approval. Eventually after much back and forth, Sansa narrowed it down to 5 references. Gendry went to pull 5 similar rings from their cases for Sansa to look at in person. Sansa spent a great deal of time examining each one, asking Arya’s opinion, which Arya attempted to give as best the could. They were all lovely. Gendry was much more helpful of course. He took the time to explain the differences in each one, never making Sansa feel stupid for not knowing. Sansa favoured white gold to match her own ring, and she had chosen mostly simple designs, including the etched surface one they spotted on their way in. Gendry assured her he could create a new design that would suit Theon’s taste. And he promised her would make sure that whatever Theon had in mind for her band that it would complement her engagement ring.

Arya looked at the time on her phone. They had been there for nearly an hour. She had no idea if that was a long time for a meeting like this but it seemed long enough to her so she nudged Sansa subtly and pointed to her sister’s expensive wrist watch. “Sansa I think we’ve taken up enough of Gendry’s time, yeah?”

“Oh you’re right! I hope we haven’t kept you from anything?”

“Not at all. It was my pleasure.” The three of them stood together, and Gendry once again extended his hand to both sisters. “It was great to meet you both. Sansa why don’t I start coming up with some very preliminary designs and we can meet back here in a few weeks?”

“Yes that sounds great. Arya you’ll come back too, won’t you?” Suddenly Arya didn’t seem to mind having to tag along. This was the first wedding related errand she’d actually enjoyed.

“Sure. I think someone has to rein you in before you lose the run of yourself!”

She smirked at her sister teasingly as Sansa sighed. “I know, I know! I’m working on my perfectionism, believe it or not! Gendry it was so lovely to meet you. I’ll be in touch soon to schedule our next meeting. Sorry my calendar is just all over the place at moment between work and the wedding. It’s so hard to plan in advance.”

“It’s fine. You’re not getting married til next year right? You have more than enough time!” He grinned at them both, obviously amused at Sansa’s eagerness.

OK lets get out of here and maybe grab a drink San? You look like you could do with one. I know I could.” Arya shoved her sister towards the door gently.
“The pub next door is pretty cosy but there’s a really good wine bar back out on the main street on the right. Might be more your cup of tea?” Gendry added, following close behind them.

“No we like pubs. We’re not snobs, well some of us aren’t.” Arya said pointedly, looking at Sansa.

“I like pubs too Arya. But actually I would love a glass of white wine now.” Sansa added longingly.

“Wine it is then. Come on bridezilla. Nice to met you Gendry.” She gave him one last look, wondering if she was imaging that spark or not.

With that they left, Gendry seeing them out the door and closing it behind them.

As they walked back down the cobbled laneway to the main street, Arya couldn’t help but think about the man she’d just met. She had not expected to meet anyone at the moment, let alone whilst wedding panning with Sansa. But Gendry had made an unexpected impression on her. Something about the way he had looked at her in the mirror made her feel seen in a new and unnerving way. He seemed fascinated by her.

And she couldn’t deny he was handsome. Especially with those piercing blue eyes, so much deeper in colour than Sansa’s wolf eyes. They were both blue but where Sansa’s were pale and almost icy, his were dark and almost stormy. She didn’t think she’d ever been so caught up in anyones eyes before. Sansa’s voice shook her out of her reverie.

“He seemed really good didn’t he? I mean I knew he’d be good because he made this ring, but I really loved his other pieces. I think Theon will love whatever we end up getting for him. At least I hope he does.”

“He will love it, because he loves you, you dummy. And you have immaculate taste, except when it comes to fiancees! Would you stop beating yourself up about everything?”

Sansa sighed and her shoulders slumped. Arya wondered how she managed to do even that in an elegant way. They turned the corner back on to the main street. Sansa pulled out her phone before Arya stopped her. “No more maps! Gendry said it was just down here. Let’s ask someone for directions if we need to.”
They found the wine bar quickly enough. It was a lot easier to find than the smithy. They perched themselves at a high table and ordered two glasses of Chablis, which was Sansa’s suggestion since Arya knew next to nothing about wine except that she liked dry ones. Sansa visibly relaxed a little.

“So you seemed to really hit it off with Gendry eh? Don’t think I didn’t notice the two of you over at the other side of the room.” Sansa sipped her wine and arched her perfectly groomed eyebrows over the rim of the glass at Arya.

Arya shrugged her shoulders, trying her best not to react to the prodding. “Don’t know what you’re talking about. I was just being polite.”

Sansa scoffed. ”Yeah right. I saw they way you were both looking at each other in that mirror. You might as well have been had big heart emoji eyes!” She couldn’t contain her glee at Arya’s shocked reaction. “I knew it! You fancy him!”

“What? I do not! Shut up!”

“You fancy the pants off him!”

“No I don’t!” Arya felt her cheeks flush now and she knew she couldn’t hide that. She felt like a bloody teenager again, not the mature sophisticated 23 year old she liked to see herself as.

“What? He’s cute! You’re single. You should ask him out next time. He’s gorgeous. And he’s totally your type Arya!”

“What? I don’t have a type! Wait do I?” Arya was flummoxed. How the hell would Sansa know what her type was? She’d barely ever even had a boyfriend.

“You totally have a type. You always go for big guys with blue eyes.” Sansa hummed to herself, smugly, like she’d cracked Arya’s code.

Arya thought back to the only guys she’d ever been attracted to. Ned Dayne certainly fit that description, he was tall and she supposed he had blue eyes but they certainly didn’t jump out at him the way Gendry’s had today. Although Ned was so tall that kissing him was awkward, as she was
almost a foot shorter than him. And he was slim, whereas Gendry was much broader, although there was less of a height difference. Arya then thought of Jaqen, her brief fling last year that ended messily. With a start she realised he too had blue eyes, although his were almost grey like hers. And he was big, but not as broad as Gendry. Lastly she thought of Micah, her childhood best friend, the first boy she had ever kissed. He wasn’t tall but he was broad and he had bright blue eyes too. She groaned and hid her face in her hands. “Oh my god, you’re right, I do have a bloody type! Every guy I’ve been with has had blue eyes and was either really tall or really big or both.”

Sansa hummed in agreement, sipping her wine triumphantly.

“I told you. And why stop now. You should definitely ask this guy out. He’s sweet. He’s your type. He’s successful. He’s won lots of awards for his work so you know he’s making a good living.”

“I don’t care about that! I’m only 23! Not all of us are desperate to settle down and start popping out babies you know!” She stuck out her tongue at her sister cheekily. But maybe Sansa did have a point. It had been nearly a year since things ended with Jaqen and that had been rough. Looking back at it now with some hindsight, Arya could see it hadn’t even been a real relationship. It had been somewhat one sided infatuation on his part and she had let it drag on far too long before coming to her senses. Maybe she was ready to have some fun again.

“Just think about it ok? You were obviously attracted to each other so why not see what happens? We have to go back there in a few weeks. You can see if you still fancy him then.” She stuck her tongue out at Arya, mirroring her little sister’s earlier gesture.

“We’ll see.” Arya sipped her wine and tried to think of something else to talk about. But all her mind would land on was the way her skin felt as he had brushed his fingers against her neck when he fastened that necklace in place…
Covet

Chapter Summary

Gendry has some unexpected news that gets under his skin. He anticipates seeing Arya again and debates with himself whether to ask her out...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Three weeks later.

Tuesday 9:30am: Sansa Stark wedding ring meeting. Have sketches ready.

At 8:30am that morning, Gendry scrolled through his calendar, reading the first item on it again for the thousandth time since confirming the appointment with Sansa two weeks ago. He checked himself again in the bathroom mirror. Should he shave or not? He decided against it. He thought the light stubble he’d been maintaining recently looked good. He didn’t normally worry that much about his appearance before meeting clients but today he wanted to look his best, just in case she was there. Ever since he’d met Arya Stark that day, he hadn’t stopped thinking about the tiny brunette, with the amazing legs and even more amazing deep grey eyes. She was beautiful and bright and he was instantly attracted to her dynamic energy.

As he had draped the antler necklace around her delicate neck, and met her wide eyes in the mirror, he had felt it for a split second, as if there might be a flicker of something more between them. He was actually nervous today, knowing she would more than likely come along again to help her sister pick out Theon’s wedding ring. He was definitely excited to see her, but what if he had merely imagined that connection they’d had last time?

He checked his watch. He had more than enough time to go downstairs and grab a coffee before they arrived. As he crossed the little cobbledstoned courtyard, his mind kept coming back to Arya. He debated with himself if it would be unprofessional of him to ask her out. It wasn’t like she was the one getting married! But she was the client’s sister, so somehow it felt inappropriate. What if we went on a date and it went badly, but I still had to see Sansa and Theon? Or even Arya herself? That might be awkward. Or was he just making excuses, yet again, not to put himself out there?

The aromatic smell of roasted coffee hit him as he entered the coffee shop. Like all the other businesses in the little courtyard, it was in the same kind of modernised artisan building as his own shop. He loved how secluded this space felt compared to the noisy hustle out on the Street of Steel. He ordered a black coffee to go and went to the end of the counter to wait for his drink. After a
minute, he felt a light tap on his shoulder and turned around.

“Morning!” Missandei’s bright smile lit up her lovely face. She leaned in to give him a warm hug. He returned it somewhat awkwardly, still not completely used to her easy familiarity. He wasn’t normally a hugger but she always seemed to make a point of hugging him every time they met, so he was gradually getting used to it.

“Missandei, hey! Are you here with Grey?” he asked, looking around for his best friend.

“Yeah, he’s just in the loo. Thought we’d grab something nice for breakfast before the day starts.”

“You guys are up and about very early. I don’t usually bump into either of you before lunch,” he observed curiously.

She smiled back at him enthusiastically. “Yeah we have a busy morning. We’re actually closing up early today cos we’re flying off to Naath for a holiday this evening.” She seemed delighted at the prospect.

“Oh, nice! So you’re finally taking Grey home?” Gendry smiled. Things must be getting pretty serious between them, he thought to himself.

“Yeah I thought it was about time. My parents have already met him when they came to visit last year, but my mum keeps asking me when I’m going to bring him home, you know?” She rolled her eyes at the prospect but was clearly excited by the idea herself.

“Hey man, how’s it going?” Grey slid up behind his girlfriend, wrapping his arm around her waist.

“Hey. Missandei’s just been telling me about your trip,” Gendry explained, trying to keep the amused tone out of his voice. Even though the two of them had been together for quite a while, he still found it funny seeing his oldest friend so loved up and smitten. He didn’t know if he’d ever get used to it, but he was very happy for him.

“Yeah ten whole days in paradise. I can’t bloody wait!” Grey beamed back at him.
“We’re going to fly in and spend 3 nights with my parents, then take a road trip around the island for the rest of the week. I want to show Grey my favourite spots,” she added, smiling sincerely before moving past them both to collect her coffee order. “Babe, I’ve got to get ready for my first client. She’ll be here any minute,” she handed Grey his coffee.

“Yeah you go ahead, I’ll won’t be long,” Grey replied casually.

“Have a great trip,” Gendry called out after her.

“Thanks. We’ll send you a post card!” she giggled as she backed out the door, holding her coffee in one hand and a paper bag in the other.

Gendry watched her leave before turning back to Grey. “I hope you realise you are one lucky bastard!” he admonished jokingly, shaking his head.

“Hey you’re the only bastard around here man!” Grey threw back at him, with no malice behind his words. They had been friends since they were in primary school and Gendry knew Grey meant no offence. “And yeah I’m well aware how lucky I am,” he grinned.

Gendry picked up his coffee and the two of them headed back outside. Grey looked around at the almost empty courtyard, lowering his voice as he spoke.

“Actually I have a favour to ask. Have you got a minute?” He looked so serious for a moment, that Gendry immediately thought something must actually be wrong.

“Yeah sure mate. Do you want to come inside? I have a client coming in at 9:30am though.”

“OK yeah thanks. This won’t take long.” Grey suddenly looked nervous. Gendry was perplexed.

As they came into the shop, Gendry eyed his friend. “OK what the fuck is wrong? You’re making me nervous now!”

“I’m gonna propose to Missandei on this trip,” Grey exhaled, as if he’d been holding on to that particular breath for too long.
“Oh! I thought you were going to tell me you had cancer or something,” Gendry replied, relieved for a moment. Then the gravity of what his friend had just confided in him hit him. “Wait, you’re really gonna do it? Now?!”

“Yeah! I’ve actually been thinking about it for like 6 months or so. Working up the courage. Then she suggested this trip and I thought it would be the perfect time, you know?”

“When are you gonna do it? Are you going to ask her parents first?!” Gendry raised his eyebrows sceptically. He was finding it hard to wrap his head around the idea that his best friend since he were five years old was actually going to ask a woman to marry him. Not just any woman. Missandei was Grey’s dream woman. He’d told Gendry this himself on more than one drunken occasion. This whole conversation felt so surreal. It seemed so grown up. He felt like he’d missed something, like his friend had suddenly skipped on to the next phase in life without him while he wasn’t paying attention. It made him feel uneasy somehow.

“Well I thought I might run it by them when we stay with them. I know she’d kill me if I asked for their permission but I thought I’d phrase it like I’m just asking for their blessing.” He grinned cheekily, obviously pleased with himself at the solution.

“Smooth,” Gendry nodded.

“Well I have to keep on their good side, if I’m gonna be their son in law. They’re very traditional.” He paused tentatively… “So I know Missandei would prefer to pick out her own ring. I mean she works with jewellery every day so…”

“Yeah that makes total sense. Obviously an engagement ring is very different to piercings, but I can’t see her being happy with it unless she’s involved in the process.” As someone who made jewellery for a living, Gendry could empathise with that.

“Exactly. But I still need something to actually propose with…” Grey continued hesitantly.

“You want to borrow a ring?” Gendry interrupted his train of thought.

Grey seemed slightly embarrassed to come out and say it. “I know it’s a lot to ask…”
“No problem mate.” Gendry walked over to one of the cases at the wall, unlocking it and grabbing a simple yellow gold band with a small solitaire crystal set into the metal at the centre. “Here. This is a placeholder ring,” he explained as he passed it over. Grey took it gratefully. “This isn’t a diamond,” Gendry continued as the other man examined the ring appreciatively. “It’s just a cubic zirconia. People borrow them to propose with and then they come back in later to pick out the ring together.”

He crossed over to the other side of the room to his desk and pulled open one of the drawers, taking out a small glossy wooden ring box. He took the ring back from Grey and carefully put it in the box in the right position, handing the box over.

“Thanks man. I didn’t even know that was a thing. I was just going to ask you for a plain ring or something. But this is even better.”

He grabbed Gendry in a bear hug, squeezing him tight around the shoulders. “Hey, there’s one more thing. Will you be my best man?”

Gendry pulled back, astonished. He hadn’t even thought about whether Grey would ask him that yet.

“Of course mate! I’d be honoured!” He beamed, feeling a swell of pride and affection for his oldest friend.

“Good! Thank you.” Greys eyes crinkled as he slapped him on the back.

“That’s assuming she says yes of course.” Gendry teased.

“She’ll say yes.”

“How do you know?” Gendry wondered. Grey seemed oddly sure about this, despite his previous nerves.

Gendry felt an odd sensation in his chest. It was an emotion he couldn’t immediately identify. For a moment he thought he might actually be jealous of his best friend. But that wasn’t quite it. It was something else, more bittersweet. He almost felt sad at the idea.

Grey pulled his phone out of his pocket and checked the time, “Shit I better get back to the studio. It’s nearly half past nine.” before heading towards the door.

“Yeah but keep me posted in the meantime! Send me a photo when she says yes. Since you’re so cocky about the whole thing,” Gendry teased.

“Oh I will!” Grey pushed open the door and waved as he left, smiling to himself on the way out.

Gendry’s smile slowly dissolved, as he thought about his friend’s certainty that Missandei would say yes. When Grey had first met Missandei 3 years ago, Gendry had initially found himself slightly resentful of her for stealing his best friend away. He didn’t understand why Grey wanted to spend every free minute with his new girlfriend. That was until he’d actually met her. He immediately got why his best friend had virtually disappeared for 3 months. She was amazing. Stunningly beautiful, obviously, but more importantly she was one of the kindest people Gendry had ever met. And she brought out a side to Grey that Gendry hadn’t seen in him since they were little kids. A softer, gentler side that wasn’t afraid to open up and be vulnerable. He had never seen his best friend be so happy and content before.

Much to his relief, Gendry found that he clicked with Missandei instantly. She and Grey never made him feel like a third wheel when they hung out together and when the two of them moved in together later that year, she always made a point to invite him over for dinner. As an only child, it had meant a lot to him to still have his friendship with Grey as adults. He was the closest thing to a brother Gendry had ever known.

He thought about that initial reaction he’d had when Grey told him he was sure Missandei would say yes. It somehow made him sad, but he couldn’t quite figure out why. Then it hit him. He wasn’t jealous that his friend was getting married. He honestly hadn’t even decided if marriage was something he wanted for himself yet. No, he was envious of his friend’s certainty. Another wave of melancholy washed over him as he realised he had never felt that kind of certainty with anyone he’d been with. Maybe that’s what being in love felt like. For the first time in his life, he let himself consciously wish that he would find that for himself one day.

His mind returned to the present and he realised it was almost time for Sansa to arrive. He thought of Arya. He tried not to get his hopes up that she would come along today, but he couldn’t help but want to see her again.
At 9:30am sharp, he looked up to see Sansa and Arya coming through the door, along with another older woman, who he quickly realised had the exact same hair colour and build as Sansa. Oh shit, they brought their mother with them! He hadn’t expected that today. He’d only been preoccupied with whether Arya would show up.

“Good morning ladies,” he smiled at them warmly as they approached, shaking Sansa’s hand first, then reaching out for Arya’s. The first thing he noticed was her outfit. She looked distractingly gorgeous this morning in black silky shorts and flat sandals, showing off her toned legs. He quickly took in the rest of her, noticing the loose white racerback top that hung from her shoulders. It was cut so low on the sides, that as she turned to face him he couldn’t help but see both the band of her black lace bra and below it, what looked like the tail end of an arrow tattooed across her ribs. He wondered how far inwards the tattoo extended, and if she had any more hidden on the rest of her body... Gods he really hoped he wasn’t being too obvious in his ogling.

“Good morning Gendry,” she replied, as she took his large hand in her much smaller, softer one. As she extended her hand, he noticed another tattoo, this time on the inside of her wrist, of three small paw prints. A hand shake seemed oddly formal to him now, almost a little awkward. But he was glad to have the chance to touch her, even if just for a few seconds. Her bright eyes met his own as her dark eyebrows lifted in a smile that seemed genuinely happy to see him again.

“Gendry this is our mum Catelyn Stark,” Sansa explained, gesturing to the statuesque woman between them. “Mum this is Gendry Waters, the very talented man who made my engagement ring.” Sansa beamed at them both. She was such a natural diplomat.

“Lovely to meet you Mrs Stark.” Gendry nodded and shook her hand quickly, trying to come across as respectfully as possible to the older woman. Catelyn Stark gave off strong matriarch vibes which instantly reminded him of his own mother. It made him feel like a little boy again, not a grown man who had his own successful business.

“Please Gendry, you can call me Catelyn. It’s a pleasure. Your studio is beautiful.” Catelyn reassured him, looking around the room. She had the same refined body language as Sansa, almost regal in her posture.

“Thank you. It’s a pleasure to have you here.” His eyes couldn’t help but dart to Arya as he said that. She met his gaze for a second before looking around the room, seemingly impassive.

“You know I’ve actually been here many, many years ago? Catelyn continued. “This was where my husband and I got our wedding rings from. I can’t remember the name of the man who ran the business back then. It was so long ago now...”
“Tobho Mott,” Gendry offered enthusiastically. “Yeah I was his apprentice. He’s the reason I got into metal work in the first place.”

“Oh really? Isn’t that funny? What a small world,” she remarked, impressed.

“Yes he actually left his business to me when he passed away 7 years ago,” he added solemnly.

“Oh I’m sorry to hear that.” She smiled softly. “He was a very talented man.”

“He was. Taught me everything I know. He was like family to me. He didn’t have any children of his own so I was very lucky to inherit this place.” He normally felt almost embarrassed to tell people this story but Catelyn somehow made him feel comfortable sharing it.

“Well I’m sure he would be very proud of you.” She said it with such genuine warmth that for a moment he wasn’t quite sure how to respond.

“Thank you” He nodded, shifting his feet and attempting to dissipate the awkwardness he suddenly felt. “Please, ladies take a seat. Sansa I have your sketches ready.” Sansa and Catelyn smiled eagerly.

The three women sat down on one of the couches with Sansa in the middle. Gendry couldn’t help but notice how Arya made eye contact with him as she sat and crossed her bare legs. *Fuck, how can someone that short have such long legs? She’s even sexier than last time…* He did his best to ignore her, otherwise he’d never get through this meeting without saying something stupid and embarrassing himself.

He sat opposite them and picked up a large sketch book from the coffee table. “OK Sansa, so I had a look at the Pinterest Board you sent me. It took quite a while to get through. You had a LOT of pins!” he said, laughing slightly to himself at the memory. Sansa looked a bit embarrassed at his observation.

“She does like to pin things,” Arya added, cynically. “At least you only have to look at her ring board, not the 100 other bloody boards she’s set up for the wedding!” Catelyn glared at her reproachfully, and Arya rolled her eyes at her mother and shook her head as if to ask what’s your problem? Gendry suddenly had an idea of what she must have been like growing up as a surly teenager.
“No it’s good,” he said to Arya sincerely, who looked at him rather unimpressed. Ignoring her apparent doubt, he turned his attention back to Sansa, adding “It helped me get a good sense of what you like. So based on that and on the rings you were looking at here last time, I’ve drawn up some options.” He opened the sketch book on the relevant page and handed it to Sansa.

Sansa sucked in a breath, clearly impressed by his work. “Oh wow!” she exclaimed. All three women looked at his sketches intently, taking them in.

“These are wonderful designs Gendry,” Catelyn said, clearly very impressed. “Arya look at this one, isn’t it gorgeous.” she pointed at the top left one.

“Yes they’re really beautiful,” Arya agreed, looking up at him sincerely, all traces of her earlier scepticism vanishing.

“Thank you,” Gendry replied modestly. He was relieved Catelyn approved and it made him inexplicably happy to hear Arya call them beautiful. “They’re all variants on the etched surface theme, since Sansa really seemed to like that one,” he continued.

“Yes, I do. It reminds me of the jagged rocks on the beach at Pyke, where Theon is from,” Sansa replied enthusiastically. Arya looked almost disgusted at Sansa’s sentimentality. Sansa deliberately ignored her sister’s expression, continuing. “And I think he’d really like something with a natural texture like that.” She looked to him as if for approval, which caught his attention, and he realised he had been staring at Arya again as her sister spoke.

He cleared his throat. “Yeah well I think that’s a lovely idea,” she assured Sansa as he forced himself to focus on her rather than her younger sister. “So this is what I’ve started out with. These are just to give you an idea of what that finish would look like on different designs. The first one is a much wider band and the second one is a more traditional narrower width.”

From his seat on the opposite couch, he reached over the coffee table, pointing at each one as he spoke. “And this one is a smoother textured one that’s still got the same effect, but it’s a much softer finish. This one is closest to the one you first looked at last time you were here. Do you see how it’s got a much rougher surface? It’s more a rugged effect, which is maybe what you were drawn to originally, but that does mean it won’t catch the light as much.”

Sansa ran her fingers over the pencil sketches. Arya and Catelyn looked on, giving her time to take them in. Gendry kept his gaze fixed on Sansa, but he felt Arya’s eyes on him. Eventually he gave in
and looked up at her, sure enough finding her staring at him. Their eyes met and she smiled, almost shyly. He held her gaze, unable to look away from those intense grey eyes. He noticed she was wearing more make up this time, especially around her eyes. It looked like she had some dusky pink eye shadow on her lids, accentuating the smokiness of her irises, and a perfect thin line of black eyeliner that ended in a delicate flick. It was then that he realised her eyes were pretty huge, with or without the makeup. He was totally captivated by her.

Sansa took her time to examine the sketches. “I’m pretty certain that Theon would prefer a wider band,” she declared eventually. “But I’m still not sure whether I should go with the rougher surface or the smoother one. Mum, what do you think?”

“Well I think the smoother one is more refined and looks more like a traditional wedding ring, whereas the rough one is maybe a bit too modern. For my tastes,” Catelyn added politely.

“But Sansa didn’t you say you wanted a rougher surface?” Arya interjected, her attention snapping back to their conversation, her brows furrowing. “I thought that was the whole point?” She looked at her mother pointedly. “To not be too traditional?”

“Yes but now I’m not so sure,” Sansa sighed, clearly torn between the two choices. She looked at Gendry, waiting for him to mediate.

Gendry’s brain was on a 5 second delay, still contemplating if the fact Arya seemed more dressed up today had anything to do with him or if he was just imagining it, when he finally processed what they were saying.

“OK well you don’t have to decide on the surface now. But at least I know which width you’d prefer. That’s a good start,” he added diplomatically. He wasn’t quite sure why Arya was so irritated by her mother’s opinion but there was clearly some tension between the two of them that he wasn’t privy to.

“We also need to talk about metals,” he continued with Sansa’s rapt attention. “Now, your engagement ring is platinum. It’s more expensive than gold upfront but one of the main advantages is that it doesn’t require any additional maintenance over time, so it’ll work out better value in the long run.”

“That sounds good.” Sansa replied carefully. “So do you recommend I stick with platinum for this ring too?”
“Yes I always recommend it over gold, if you can afford it. Plus it will match your rings exactly, versus if you were to go with white gold.”

“OK well let’s go with platinum then. I like to match.” Sansa sounded decisive for once.

“Finally, an actual decision.”, Arya sighed, seemingly relieved. Gendry couldn’t help but be bemused by her exasperation. They hadn’t actually been discussing it for that long.

“Right so the next step is I draw up a final design, based on what we’ve agreed on today. Don’t worry about the finish, as I can make that as rough or as smooth as you like once the ring itself has been created,” he explained confidently.

“Oh. Ok that’s great,” Sansa responded, relieved.

“And maybe have a think about any engravings you might like to put on it.”

“Oh yeah, I definitely want to do that! I love that idea.” She replied excitedly. Catelyn smiled at her.

“So I should have the final design ready by this time next week. Once you’ve signed off on it, I will start making the ring itself. I have quite a few pieces I’m working on at the moment so there’ll be a bit of a wait, I’m afraid,” he cautioned, hoping she wouldn’t mind the idea of a delay.

“How much of a wait?” Arya chimed in, seemingly unimpressed at this new information.

“’Bout 2 months, give or take.” He lifted his head up assertively, somewhat proud of the fact that he was so busy with other clients.

“Seems like a excessive amount of time to wait,” Arya challenged him cockily.

“What can I say, I’m very busy at the moment.” He responded, undaunted by her tone. In fact he found her rather liked it. He liked how impertinent she was.
“It’s fine Arya. Sansa doesn’t mind the wait, do you darling?” Catelyn chimed in, attempting to keep the conversation polite.

Sansa looked at Arya and Gendry, her expression inscrutable, before answering her mother. “No of course not. That’s why I wanted to come in and meet you so early Gendry. I knew you’d be very busy at this time of year.” She tilted her head at him, endearingly, before directing her words at Arya “Gendry is an award winning designer Arya and he’s in high demand. That’s why Theon chose him in the first place.” Arya shrugged, feigning insouciance.

“How’s Theon getting on with Sansa’s ring?” she asked him, the question catching him off guard.

Gendry paused for a second. “Fine. It’s coming along nicely,” he said, hoping for no further follow up questions. Apart from getting Theon’s ring size when he was designing Sansa’s engagement ring, he hadn’t actually started the design process for her wedding band with him yet. Theon had told Gendry he wanted to wait until Sansa had signed off on his ring, because he wanted to make sure whatever ring they went with for her would compliment whatever she had chosen for him. But now Gendry wasn’t sure how much of that to disclose to Sansa. Arya looked at him suspiciously, as if she found this hard to believe, but she didn’t press it. He was relieved.

“I don’t want to know anyway. It’s supposed to be a surprise!” Sansa chided, raising her hands up to her ears in mock defense.

“Don’t worry you’ll get no spoilers from me! I promise,” he assured her, once again amused at how seriously she was taking this whole process. “Anyway, I think we made good progress here today. I should have the final design ready for you to sign off on by the end of next week. How does next Friday work for you?”

Sansa checked the calendar on her phone. “I’m going to be really swamped next week in work. It would have to be after 5pm if that’s ok with you?”

“Yeah that’s no problem. Will we say 5:30pm then?” he asked.

“Ok that should be fine. If anything comes up in the meantime, I’ll give you a call to reschedule,” she spoke as she added the appointment into her phone.

“Great.” Gendry replied. The three women seemed to take this as their cue to stand up and head towards the door. Gendry followed behind them, unable to stop himself from watching the way
Arya’s hips swung gracefully as she walked ahead of him. *Fuck, she has a really great arse,* he thought to himself, before dragging his attention up and away from it reluctantly.

He bid them goodbye and closed the door after them before returning to the coffee table to pick up his sketch book.

Spotting a reusable water bottle on the table, he realised it must be Arya’s as he remembered her carrying it with her on the way in. He was just debating whether to call Sansa’s phone to let them know she’d left it behind or keep it until they came back next week, when he heard the door open. He turned to see Arya enter, alone this time. She immediately spotted the bottle in his hands.

“We got all the way back out to the main street before I remembered it!” she smiled apologetically, reaching out to take it from him.

“No worries,” he shrugged, handing it over.

“That’s like the third one I’ve bought! I keep leaving them behind on my travels. Sort of defeats the whole purpose of them if you have to keep buying new ones,” she shook her head. He smiled back in response. She stood, resting her weight on one hip. For a moment, she seemed as if she wanted to say something else, but then thought better of it.

“Um, I didn’t want to say anything in front of Sansa, in case it would freak her out, but I actually haven’t started working with Theon on her ring yet. He hasn’t gotten back to me about it.” He sounded almost apologetic, and he wasn’t even sure why he was the one who felt the need to apologise.

“Bloody typical Theon,” she sighed, exasperated.

“I did tell him it would be better to get started on it sooner rather than later, but he hasn’t responded to my last email. Which I sent two weeks ago,” he explained.

“He never responds to emails. You’d have better luck catching him on the phone.” She didn’t sound in the least bit surprised by Theon’s lack of communication.

“Good to know. Thanks.” He rubbed the back of his neck absentmindedly and he couldn’t help but notice the way her eyes travelled to his raised arm before returning to meet his gaze. It made his
pulse quicken to think she might be checking him out.

“Look I’ll tell him to get a move on and get back to you ASAP,” she offered.

“Thanks. Yeah it’s not a big deal. It would just be better if he didn’t leave it too long. I like to give myself plenty of time to work on it, and next spring will be a very busy time of year for me. Wedding season and all that.”

“Ugh yeah, tell me about it. I’ll be so relieved when we get to next May and all this wedding shit is finally over!” she groaned dramatically. “Sorry no offence, “ she caught herself.

“None taken,” he grinned. “You’re really not enjoying the planning are you?”

“No! I just don’t get why people go to so much trouble for one day! It’s ridiculous,” she declared.

“Hey I’m with you! I don’t really get it myself. Seems like a gigantic waste of money to be honest.”

She scoffed at his admission. “That seems a bit hypocritical, if you don’t mind me saying. Coming from a man who makes a living making wedding rings?!” She raised her thick, perfectly shaped eyebrows at up him. Once again it felt like maybe she was flirting with him and it thrilled him.

“I’ll have you know that wedding and engagement rings only make up a small, but significant, percentage of my business.” For some reason this seemed like an important fact he wished to get across. “They help pay the bills but they’re not my first love.”

“Yeah what is then?” she asked, her face lighting up eagerly. She seemed genuinely interested to know.

He thought for a moment, unsure of how honest he wanted to be with her. But something in her expression made him want to share this with her. “You know that antler necklace you tried on last time?” She nodded in response, her eyes quickly flitting to where it sat in its case. “Well I much prefer working on those more unique bespoke pieces because they’re always one of a kind. Whereas the wedding rings can get a bit repetitive,” he explained.
“Yeah I get that,” she nodded approvingly.

Their easy back and forth was interrupted by the sound of Arya’s phone ringing. ’Sorry,” she said to him before pulling it out of her small handbag and quickly swiping it to answer. “Yeah I found it. Coming now.” She hung up just as quickly. “That was my mum.” He noticed she almost sounded reluctant to cut her conversation with him short. “I better not keep them waiting any longer.”

She moved towards the door. Gendry followed close behind her so that this time he could open it for her. She seemed pleasantly surprised by the gesture, looking up at him from under her long dark lashes as she passed through the door.

“Well I guess I’ll see you next Friday then?” he offered.

“Yes, I’ll be there. Sansa insists.” She smiled up at him, tucking a loose lock of her dark hair back behind her ear. He followed the movement of her hand up and noticed she had multiple piercings in her ear, with several small silver hoops running along her outer ear lobe and a few more tiny studs dotted inside the conch. He was impressed with how elegant they looked.

“Nice earrings. They’re very delicate.”

“Thanks.” She seemed surprised that he had noticed them.

“You like your piercings.” It wasn’t so much a question as much as an appreciative observation.

“Yeah I started getting them when I was a young teenager. Much to my mother’s disgust.” She smirked.

“I think they look good. They suit your ear.” He felt himself flush instantly. *They suit your ear? What the fuck kind of compliment was that supposed to be?*

“Thanks.” She squinted her eyes at him, bemused, before chuckling, almost to herself. “Well, I really have to go or I’m going to be in trouble.”
“Yeah of course. Don’t let me keep you… See you next week Arya.”

“See you Gendry.” She held his gaze for a moment and then turned to leave.

Yet again, he wondered to himself if he should just bite the bullet and ask her out or if he should wait. Maybe when he was finished working on Sansa and Theon’s rings? Which would be soon enough. A couple of months, max, depending on how long Theon took to get back to him. That didn’t seem so unreasonable. He could wait. Or maybe he was just too scared to put himself out there and he was making excuses.

He rarely dated. That was the problem. He had no virtually no idea how to ask someone he’d just met out on a casual date. He didn’t do casual dating because he didn’t do casual sex. As the bastard son of a philanderer, he just couldn’t bring himself to run the risk of getting a stranger pregnant. As a consequence, he was pretty much all or nothing when it came to women. If he was going to date someone, it was because he really liked them. And after meeting her again this time, he had a gut feeling that he was really going to like Arya Stark.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much to everyone who left me a comment and/or kudos on the first chapter! It means the world to me when you do!

So this chapter took me way longer to finish than I had anticipated. But I'm finally happy with how it turned out. I've never written a slow burn before, so please bear with me.

I promise not to string them along for too long before we get to the good stuff! In the meantime, I hope you’re enjoying it. Please leave a comment if you are. I get such a kick out of reading your comments! It makes me so happy to know that other people are enjoying this story too.

I'm over on tumblr at @icontainmultitudes if you want to join me. It's my happy place since the show ended and broke our collective Gendrya shipping hearts...
Well, this story has taken on a life of its own. I originally planned on maybe doing 3-5 chapters, but now I'm thinking it will be more like 10.

Thanks again for all the kudos and the kinds words. You guys are the best!

Arya rounded the corner on to the Street of Steel and spotted her mother’s car, parked outside what looked like a Dornish restaurant. She could see Podrick, her mother’s driver and bodyguard, waiting patiently behind the wheel as she approached the black town car. As soon as Podrick spotted her, he jumped out and ran around to the curb side to open the door for Arya, but before he could, she cut him off and opened the passenger door herself. “It’s ok Pod, I’d prefer to sit up front if you don’t mind?” she looked at him expectantly. The young man faltered for a second, before nodding politely and holding the door open for her as she got in.

“Of course, Miss Stark.”

“Pod I told you please just call me Arya!” she laughed and rolled her eyes at him.

“Arya” he nodded, returning to his side of the car and getting in beside her. Arya looked behind her. Sansa and Cat sat in silence in the back seat, both women sitting with their right legs crossed over their left in unison. Arya couldn’t help but be amused at how alike the two women were, both in looks and in temperament. Not for the first time when it was just the three of them alone, she felt like the odd one out.

Her mother was staring intently at her phone, no doubt checking emails, when she spoke. “Arya darling I have get back to the office. Sansa does too, don’t you dear?” Sansa nodded. “Do you want Podrick to drop you off at home or are you going into work now?”

“No I’m not working until the afternoon today. So I guess you can drop me back at home please Pod. I don’t mind if you drop me off last, if these two need to be back first.” She glanced over at him as she spoke. He gave the slightest of nods in acknowledgement, and the four of them fell into comfortable silence for a few minutes as they drove.

Arya’s thoughts returned to Gendry and the conversation they’d just shared. The way he had
looked at her this time had confirmed her gut feeling that there had been something between them, a spark. It had been so long since she’d met anyone she was interested in that she’d almost forgotten that feeling, but here it was again. He was obviously handsome, she’d noticed that immediately the first time they’d met. And he was talented too. She appreciated how much pride he took in his work, without being cocky or obnoxious about it. He was quietly confident in his skills, and she found that very attractive. And he was also sort of gentle in his body language, despite his obvious strength.

As she’d watched him explain his sketches to Sansa, she couldn’t help but appreciate how his arm had flexed and his long fingers had drifted across the page. He had very nice hands, she’d realised. Strong but refined. She imagined what they might feel like on her body and the thought excited her more than she’d like to admit, even to herself.

She had felt his eyes travel over her more than once during the meeting, and she was thrilled to know he was staring at her. She’d made a point of wearing her most flattering dressy shorts to show off her legs and her favourite loose top to show off her best bra. She knew it was a little more skin than she’d normally show, especially first thing in the morning, but the weather was still ridiculously hot for what was now supposed to be autumn, so she could get away with it without looking like she was trying too hard. And it probably would have worked even better if her mother hadn’t been there to cock block her. What the hell was Sansa thinking?

That reminded her. She pulled out her phone and started texting her sister:

_Arya: Wtf? You didn’t tell me you were bringing Mum along today?! I was all set to chat up Gendry and maybe get his number! 😊_

Sansa’s phone pinged and she quickly muted it so as not to alert Cat or Pod to their text chat.

_Sansa: Sorry!! Yesterday she asked me how all the wedding planning was going and when I mentioned this meeting she insisted on coming along! And I totally forgot about you asking Gendry out._

_Arya: Well you fucked that up for me._

_Sansa: Is that not what you ran back for? When you VERY OBVIOUSLY left your water bottle behind?? 😊_
Arya: Was it that obvious?!

Sansa: Just to me I think. Well what did you say to him??

Arya: Nothing! We were just chatting about the wedding for a minute. Didn’t get the chance to ask him out or anything before Mum rang me. Ugh! 😞

The car came to a stop outside a large office building. Podrick jumped out and came around to open Cat’s door for her. She looked at both her daughters warmly.

“Girls I’m sorry I have been so busy working and traveling lately. We must have a proper catch up soon. Will you both come for dinner next week? Rickon would love to see you both, and I can ask Robb and Bran if they’re free too?

“Yeah of course Mum, we’d love that. Wouldn’t we Arya?” Sansa looked at her sister pointedly.

“Yes sure. I’d like that too Mum.” Arya found herself genuinely looking forward to it. She rarely got to see all her siblings together anymore.

“Great, I’ll be in touch to find a day that works for all of us.” Cat gave Sansa a quick hug, and then leaned forward to kiss Arya on the cheek before exiting the car. Podrick returned to the driver’s seat and they took off.

Without missing a beat, Sansa continued on from their text conversation. “Well he was definitely ogling you today! In a very subtle, classy way though.”

“Do you think so?” Arya asked cautiously. She couldn’t help but feel excited at the idea that he’d been checking her out. Podrick didn’t react, instead acting as if he couldn’t hear them.

“Yeah I saw him staring at your legs several times. Nothing gets by me… So are you going to ask him out or what?” Sansa arched her eyebrows at Arya in the rearview mirror.

Arya looked ahead, hesitating. “I don’t know…”
“Come back with me next week,” Sansa offered, cheerily. “Why do you think I asked him to meet me at 5:30pm on a Friday evening?!”

Realisation dawned on Arya’s face. She laughed loudly. “You sneaky bitch!”

“It’s the perfect opportunity to ask him to go for a drink with you…”

Arya sat in silence for a minute, thinking it over before answering, “OK, I’ll think about it.”

The following Friday, Arya stood in her bedroom, staring at her wardrobe. Sansa would be home any minute to pick her up to go to Gendry’s shop. She stared at her clothes, at a loss as to what to wear this time. The weather that week had begun to get noticeably colder, so she thought it might be too cold for shorts and a light top again. But she wanted to look just as good this time around, in case things went well. She didn’t really wear dresses. She was much more comfortable in shorts or jeans, a holdover from her tomboy days as a kid.

She settled on her favourite pair of dark grey skinny jeans, the ones she knew made her bum look great, and a fitted black lace shirt with no sleeves. She’d made a point of wearing her favourite black lace bra again, plus the matching lace knickers. Just in case, she told herself. Not that she was planning on letting Gendry see her underwear, but she wanted to be prepared. That’s why, despite the jeans, she’d shaved her legs that day. Just in case…

She spent some time fixing her hair into soft waves that hung loose around her shoulders. She was just putting the finishing touches to her makeup when she heard Sansa come in the front door of their shared townhouse.

Sansa and Theon had been renting the house for several years at this point, originally with their cousin Jon. Arya had moved in with them about a year ago, after she split up with her ex. But Jon had long since moved out to live up north with his girlfriend Ygritte. And Theon and Sansa, originally roommates, were now thoroughly loved up and together for the past 2 years. But the three of them had found a way to make it work. Arya knew, however, that once Sansa and Theon had gotten married, they planned to move out and buy their own house. She couldn’t afford to rent the whole house on her own, so she knew she’d have to figure out what she was going to do.
eventually.

“Arya, are you ready to go?” Sansa called out to her from the kitchen, the sound of the fridge opening and closing.

Arya grabbed her handbag and joined her sister in the open plan kitchen/living room.

Sansa looked her little sister over, examining her outfit carefully.

“That’s good. You look really hot in that.” She said approvingly before moving forward and unbuttoning the top two buttons on Arya’s shirt. “That’s better. A little bit of cleavage never hurt anyone!” she winked playfully. Arya giggled at her sister’s words.

“Sansa what are you trying to do? You think I need to get my tits out to lure him in?” she rolled her eyes in exasperation.

“No but that shirt looks better when it’s open. And you might as well give him a hint of what’s underneath.”

“What’s going on with you? Why are you so intent on something happening between me and Gendry?”

“Because you like him and he clearly likes you. And he seems like a really good guy who would treat you well. Which is what you deserve Arya,” she said sincerely, gripping her sister’s shoulders affectionately and looking down at her from her great height advantage. Arya was used to being smaller than most people in her life, but it still bothered her that Sansa had outgrown her by so many inches. It made her feel like the perpetual little sister. She couldn’t help but feel oddly exposed by Sansa’s words.

“Thanks San,” she replied, not sure what else to say to her sister’s earnest words. “Come on, let’s go. Traffic is going to be a nightmare at this hour.” She grabbed her leather jacket and they headed out the door together.

Sansa found a parking spot off the Street of Steel near enough to the courtyard. Arya felt a low hum of nervousness running through her body as they approached Gendry’s shop.
She hadn’t been on a date in so long. Since her relationship ended with Jaqen, she had been so worn out from it that she had deliberately steered clear of guys or dates, for fear of getting in over her head again. The more time had passed the more she’d realised how dysfunctional her relationship with him had really been. He’d been infatuated with her for months before she finally gave in and let him seduce her. And it had only gotten more intense from there. She eventually came to her senses and saw how toxic and controlling he was, breaking it off with him and going no contact.

Through it all, Sansa had been her rock. Theon too, oddly enough. They supported her and helped her see how unhealthy this thing with Jaqen had been. Sansa even convinced her to go to therapy for a while after it ended, to help get her mental health back on track. It had worked and now, nearly a year later, Arya finally felt ready to put herself out there again. As ready as she’d ever be…

They arrived at the shop and found Gendry, sitting at his desk behind a large sleek computer screen. His blue eyes lit up when he saw them enter, immediately standing up to greet them.

“Ladies, how are you both today? He reached out to shake Arya’s hand first and she couldn’t help but feel that wonderful tension again at his touch. He wasn’t wearing his usual t shirt and jeans this time. Instead he had on a tight long sleeved crew neck shirt and black slacks. He looked good, Arya thought, really good. Maybe he dressed up for me? No, don’t be stupid.

“I’m no lady.” Arya found herself saying playfully, and she shouldn’t help but notice him grin back at her.

“Gendry hi, it’s good to see you.” Sansa added politely. As before, the three of them made their way to the couches and took a seat.

“So you’ll be glad to know I have the finished design,” Gendry explained. He lifted up a stiff piece of paper mounted on black cardboard. He handed it over to Sansa who took it gratefully. Arya glanced down at the sketch, it was bigger and more detailed than the previous ones. She noticed Gendry had very nice handwriting. His notes were carefully written in small sections around the sketch with lines drawn pointing at each feature, like the dimensions and the metal used and the finish left to be determined.

“Oh Gendry it’s perfect!” Sansa exclaimed. “Isn’t it Arya?”

“Yeah it looks great,” Arya agreed, lifting her gaze up to meet Gendry’s. His eyes were so blue.
She felt that flutter again in her stomach.

As Gendry carefully talked Sansa through the details of the ring one last time, Arya found herself zoning out and watching him instead. He really was handsome, his cheekbones more noticeable now than they’d been the first time they met, with more stubble covering his face. She liked his jaw line too, it was strong. And she really liked his arms and his shoulders. *He must train or something. He looks strong.* She thought about how his arms might feel wrapped around her, and how his hands might feel on her skin. *Bloody hell! You can’t just jump him. You have to ask him out first.*

Sansa and Gendry went to stand, and Arya’s mind snapped back to the present, following them. She heard Sansa say something about a deposit and bank details. Gendry moved over to his desk and wrote something down on a card, handing it to Sansa and promising to email her on his bank account information and invoice by Monday at the latest. Sansa thanked him and slipped the card into her handbag, before pulling out her phone and making an exaggerated sigh. “Oh dear, would you both excuse me for a minute, I have to call someone at work back. It’s urgent.” She smiled apologetically at Gendry and turned to step outside, winking at Arya once her back was to Gendry.

Arya supposed this was another part of Sansa’s plan to get them alone so she could ask him to go for that drink. She immediately felt her pulse quicken and a nervous thrill ran though her. She turned to look at Gendry who had sat back down at his desk and seemed to be checking something on his screen.

“So have you got any more clients coming in this evening, or are you done for the day?” She tried to keep her voice as calm and neutral as possible.

He looked up at her immediately, eyes lighting up. “No you two are the last ones. I’m pretty much done.”

*Fuck it, she thought, it’s now or never.* Before she could over think it and talk herself out of it, she decided to just go for it.

“Um, I don’t know if this is inappropriate or not, but would you like to go for a drink with me? If you’re not doing anything else, that is?” she spoke the words so quickly that she hoped she hadn’t sounded too nervous. She was used to guys pursuing her, not the other way around, so this felt awkward and new. She felt herself blush.

His face registered her words and his eyebrows shot up comically, before he caught himself and gained some composure. “Oh! Yeah I would love to.” He stood up from his seat and came around
the front of his desk to stand in front of her, arms folding across his broad chest and grinning enthusiastically.

“Great!” she sighed in relief. “How about we go into that pub next door?”

His face seemed lit up now at the prospect of them going for a drink. “Sure. Or we could always go down to that wine bar I told you about. Did you and Sansa go there in the end?”

“We did. But to be honest, I’m more of a pub person. What about you?”

“Yeah me too. I go in there all the time. I know the owner actually.”

“Great. Well let’s get rid of Sansa first!” she joked, and he laughed along with her good-naturedly.

“I have to close up here anyway, so why don’t we meet you outside in 5 minutes?” he asked.

As she nodded and stepped outside the door, she met Sansa who was standing, looking expectantly at her. “Well, did you do it?,” she whispered, not hiding the excitement in her voice.

“Yes, I did and he said yes!” Arya replied, trying to keep her voice down. Sansa squealed in delight, before Arya slapped her on the arm, shushing her. “We’re going into the pub now so you have to fuck off please!”

“OK OK I’m going. Oh Arya this is so exciting! She squeezed her little sister in a tight hug, which Arya half heartedly reciprocated before pushing her off. The door swung open behind them and Gendry stepped out, wearing a black bomber jacket. He smiled bashfully.

“Right well I’m off,” Sansa announced loudly. “Enjoy your drink, you two!” and she winked at Arya before turning on her heel and gliding off across the cobble stoned courtyard toward the main street.

Arya looked up at Gendry. He really was broad shouldered, and taller than average. Taller than most guys she knew, although Arya was shorter than almost everyone else in her life anyway. But somehow here with Gendry, she no longer minded the height difference.
“Shall we then?” he asked, sweeping his arm out as if to invite her in to the little old pub. She looked up at the name that hung outside the door, on a sign that swing from a post. “The Peach”

“Oh no, this was my idea, let me buy the drinks!” she pushed.

“Fine.” She acquiesced. “I’ll have a beer please.”

“Arya looked to Gendry expecting him to take the lead. “Would you like to sit in one of those booths?” he pointed towards the window, and Arya nodded. “Great, well why don’t you take a seat and I’ll get us some drinks?” he offered.

“Any kind in particular? They actually brew their own IPA here. It’s pretty good.”

“Great I’ll have one of those,” she bounced on her feet a bit. He nodded and she made her way over to the booth, as Gendry headed to the bar. She quickly pulled her phone out and saw a text from Sansa:

“Enjoy your date! Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do! Let me know when you’re coming home. And
for fuck’s sake don’t walk, get an Uber or call Pod! Xx”

She replied with a thumbs up and quickly put her phone away again.

Gendry brought two dark glass bottles of beer over and took a seat opposite her. For a moment, there was an awkward silence as neither of them knew what to say, before he spoke up.

“Believe it not, I wanted to ask you out too,” he smiled, his eyes crinkling.

“You did?” Arya was taken aback but pleased. “Why didn’t you then?”

“Well you beat me to it! I was planning on waiting til the rings were finished, you know? Keep it professional.”

“Oh, well Sansa was the one who encouraged me to ask you out, so I don’t think professionalism was that important in the end.” she laughed.

“Oh that’s good! She approves then?” he asked nervously. Arya nodded, taking a big sip of her beer. It was good.

“She said you were my type.” Arya blushed instantly at her confession.

“What’s your type?!“ he seemed intrigued by this, eyebrows lifting.

“No just that you have blue eyes and you’re big. You’re tall, I mean!”

He laughed easily at this. “Well I’m flattered. I don’t think I have a type myself…”

“What sort of girls do you normally date then?” she cocked her eyebrow at him. She was dying to know the answer.
“I don’t really date that often to be honest.” He squirmed a bit as he spoke, looking almost embarrassed. “I’m sort of a monogamous person. My last relationship ended about a year ago. She had dark hair too. But that’s the only similarity I suppose.”

“Why did it end?” she was dying to know now.

“She wanted to get more serious. Move in together. And I wasn’t ready. I was really focusing on my work, and she got fed up.” He shrugged and Arya thought she couldn’t help but appreciate his honesty.

“And now? Are you still more focused on your work?” she couldn’t help but ask.

“No,” he spoke earnestly, “I don’t think it’s healthy to put all your energy into work, no matter how much you enjoy doing it.”

She nodded in approval. “I know what you mean.”

“How about you? What do you do?” He sounded genuinely interested.

“I’m an animal care assistant at a rescue centre,” she answered eagerly, curious to see how he’d respond. His face lit up.

“Really? I had no idea. I figured you were either still in college or you were just working in an office or something.”

“Why?!” Do I look like I belong in an office?” she scoffed.

“No not at all. You’re just young so I guessed,” he offered, slightly apologetic.

“I’m 23. I graduated college last year. King’s Landing University. Anthropology and dance.” But I’ve always loved animals - we grew up with lots of them - so I’ve been working there for about 18 months so far. I really love it.”
“That’s amazing. I love animals too. We could never have a dog growing up, not enough room my mum said. But we had cats. I have a cat now actually. He’s upstairs.” He pointed upwards to the ceiling, and for a moment Arya was confused.

“Upstairs?”

“Yeah I live upstairs above my shop. I have a flat there.”

“Oh. Really?” She wasn’t expecting that revelation. She’d figured he lived nearby but hadn’t given it much thought.

“I inherited the whole building from Mott when he died,” he explained.

“Ah. Your old mentor?” she remembered him mentioning the man last time.

“Yeah when he died, he left everything to me. I was just finishing art school. I worked for him all through secondary school and college and then one day he just dropped dead of a heart attack. I never knew he’d left me everything until after he was gone. He had no family. But he was a great guy.” He said fondly.

“He sounds like it… And what about your family?”

“It was just me and my mum growing up down here in Flea Bottom, not out far from here actually, before they gentrified it. No dad. No siblings either.”

He seemed comfortable talking about it, but Arya was unsure how to respond to his admission. She’d grown up surrounded by a big family, always rebelling against their expectations. Now she couldn’t imagine life without them. Not after everything…

“I have 5 siblings. And I lost my dad when I was 11…” She didn’t know how else to say it. “Car accident.”

His eyes immediately fell on her with empathy. “I’m sorry. That must have been very difficult.” He reached over and put his hand on hers gently squeezing it. It felt good. Warm, comforting.
“It was horrible. It took us all years to come to terms with it. But I was lucky to have him in my life. He was a good man. He was the best father.” She smiled sadly, taking another sip.

“What was his name?” he asked gently.

“Eddard but everyone called him Ned,” she said sadly.

Gendry’s face dropped suddenly, something dawning on him. “Wait. Wasn’t he a politician or something?”

“He was. He was deputy Prime Minister Actually.”

“Fuck. OK I guess now would be a good time to tell you who my dad was.”

“Who? Her brow creased, confused by his change in tone. She took another sip.

“Robert Baratheon. I’m his bastard son.” He sounded almost ashamed to admit it.

Arya was mid sip of her beer and nearly spat it out in shock.

“Fuck off. Your dad was the fucking Prime Minister!! Oh my god. This is insane. My dad was his deputy. They were best fucking friends Gendry!!” she tried to keep her voice down but she couldn’t hide her shock.

He looked upset. “Arya I never met him. He wanted nothing to do with me when he was alive.” His expression darkened.

For the first time, Arya saw a different side to Gendry, angry and cold. Not towards her but at the memory of the man who’d fathered him. It was obviously an old wound. Arya felt terrible for bringing these old memories up, but her mind was reeling at the revelation that Gendry was Robert’s illegitimate son. Possibly his only biological son, as it had long been revealed that his children with Cersei Lannister were not his own, leading to a very bitter and public divorce many
“Well, he was a fucking arsehole, from what I remember,” she spat out. He looked up at her, his face dark for another moment, before he broke into a loud chuckle, breaking the tension.

“Yeah I bet.”

“Hey, it’s my turn to get a round.” And before he could protest, she had jumped up and was heading towards the bar. She ordered the same again, and when she returned to the booth, Gendry was nursing his beer, a look of melancholy hanging over him. She put her hand on his back lightly for a moment, which brought him out his reverie.

“Well this evening took a very heavy turn, didn’t it.” She attempted to say jokingly. He looked up at her as she sat down.

“Yeah. Look Arya I’m sorry if this was too much information for you. I understand if me being his son is too weird for you.”

“What? Gendry no. Don’t be stupid. You’re nothing like him. Trust me. He was a drunk piece of shit most of the time. My dad ran that administration. Robert just fucked and drank himself into an early grave.”

Gendry laughed bitterly. Arya thought she better lift the mood and quickly, before the night was ruined. She looked around the room.

“Come on. Let’s play some darts!” she offered.

He blinked, taking a second to register what she’d just said.

“Loser has to buy the other one dinner?” she added, her face lighting up.

He grinned. “You’re on. But you should know, I’m in here all the time. I’m pretty good.”
“We’ll see about that,” she smirked.

Gendry got up and went to the bar, chatting briefly to an older man with grey hair, who looked over at Arya curiously, before handing Gendry the darts.

Arya picked up their drinks and they moved over to the dart board.

Gendry tried to hand her the darts. “Ladies first,” he insisted. She smirked.

“But I already told you earlier, I’m no lady.” She put her hands on her hips, not budging.

“OK it’s your funeral,” he shrugged, and Arya once again was distracted by his broad chest and shoulders.

He took his stance in front of the board at the correct distance. ‘How do you want to do this?’ he asked, grinning back at her.

“First one to hit a bullseye wins.” She deadpanned.

He grinned again, before nodding in agreement.

He took aim and threw the first one. It landed near the top of the board, at 20, on the outer ring. He looked over to Arya, who quirked her eyebrows at him, feigning admiration, biding her time. He threw the next dart, and it landed directly below the first, but still nowhere near the bullseye. She looked on, keeping her expression neutral.

He took a deep breath and threw his last dart, it landed almost exactly beside the second one, again nowhere close to the centre. He sighed and shook his head, then walked towards the dart board, retrieving them and handing them over to Arya.

“Your turn, mi’lady.” His eyes twinkled as he met her gaze, and Arya felt that spark again.

She took the darts from him, and turned to position herself in the right spot. At the last second,
Gendry put his hand on her lower back, whispering “good luck” into her ear before stepping back. It sent a shiver up her spine, and nearly knocked her off course for a moment.

She shook her head, refocusing. “Stop trying to distract me.” She bit her lip and winked up at him. She took aim, steadied herself and threw the first dart. Gendry’s eyes went wide. It had hit the bullseye almost exactly, give or take a few milimetres. She threw the second one, and it landed within a hair’s breath of the first. Arya never took her eyes off the target. She threw the last dart, and it hit the bullseye perfectly, dead centre. The three darts were almost on top of each other.

She looked over to Gendry, a smug grin forming on her face. His face was frozen in awe.

“Wow,” was all he managed to say.

“I think you owe me dinner, Mr Waters.” She was still grinning. He shook his head.

“Yeah I think I do.” He laughed. “That was incredible. I feel like I just got hustled though.”

“You did. I failed to mention I grew up playing this with my four brothers in Winterfell. And I did archery too.”

“Hence the tattoo on your side?” he cocked an eyebrow.

“You noticed?” she smirked.

“Yeah I couldn’t help but spot it the last time,” he explained, holding her gaze for a beat. She felt that lovely tension being to build between them again.

She was pleased he’d noticed the tattoo. Sansa was right, he had been checking her out.

“OK so where are we having this dinner? I’m starving.”

“Well we could stay here if you want. They do a good burger. Great pies too.” He took the darts off the board.
“Sure. I like it here. You were right. It is cosy.”

“Great I’ll get us some menus.” He sprinted over to the bar and spoke briefly to the older man again, whom Arya presumed must be the owner Gendry had mentioned earlier. The silver haired man looked over at Arya approvingly as Gendry spoke. A moment later Gendry returned with two menus and they took their seats again at the booth.

“So what are you having?” You said the pies are good?” she asked, quickly scanning through the items. It was mostly pub food; fish and chips, burgers and various savoury pies like steak and kidney and chicken and leek.”

“Yeah they’re really good. The chef is a mate of mine too. He’s really, really good.”

“I’ll take a pie then. Chicken and leek. And another beer please.” She handed him the menu.

“Good choice. I’ll get one too.” He returned to the bar and put in their orders, before coming back with two more bottles of beer.

“So how old are you Gendry?” she had been dying to ask him. He looked like he was roughly the same as Jon and Robb, and she hoped he wouldn’t find their slight age difference a problem.

“I’m 29. Why is that too old?” He frowned, looking worried.

“No. Not at all. I’m nearly 24. Besides my last boyfriend was much older…” she trailed off.

“How old?” he asked, suddenly sounding concerned.

“I’m not actually sure. I think he was nearly 40. It was a mistake. The whole thing.” Gendry started at her incredulously. “He was foreign, Bravoosi. And I thought he was mysterious, exotic, you know? I let it go on for way longer than I should have. I ended it last year. Took me quite some time to get my head clear afterwards. Sansa was a big help actually. That’s the last guy I dated.” She looked up nervously, hoping she hadn’t put him off. Instead she found him listening intently, brows furrowed.
“Well I’m glad it ended. I’m glad you’re single now.” He smiled shyly. His eyes had that brightness in them again. It made her stomach flutter once more.

“I’m glad too.” She returned his shy smile.

The older man from the bar appeared, carrying two plates.

“Excuse me but I have your pies. Chicken and leek for the lady,” he said as he put down her plate. The savoury smell of the chicken and the buttery pastry hit her immediately and made her mouth water. “And one for you too, Gendry.” The man smiled kindly at them as he set it down.

“Arya this is Davos Seaworth, an old friend. He owns this pub.” Gendry explained. Arya extended her hand to the old man, who took it both of his and shook it warmly.

“It’s a pleasure Arya. I hope this young man is treating you well? Behaving himself?” he grinned as Gendry rolled his eyes.

“He is thanks. Lovely to meet you to Davos.” She smiled warmly in return.

“I’ll leave you two to it then. Let me know if you need anything else.” He nodded and returned behind the bar.

“This looks delicious.” She was nearly drooling at the food on her plate. The pie was a deep golden colour, and beside it sat a bed of creamy mashed potatoes and shredded greens, all swimming in a dark gravy. It reminded Arya of the food she grew up on back in Winterfell. Proper winter food. She took a bite and was pleased to find it tasted just as good as it looked. She hummed in approval, and Gendry laughed happily.

“I’m glad you like it. I wasn’t sure if it would be too heavy for you.”

She shook her head emphatically, then speaking with her still mouth full of food, “No I love it. It reminds me of the food up North. My favourite.” She giggled, taking a sip of her beer to wash it down. “Sorry, not very ladylike… Told you.”
He chuckled, not bothered by her lack of table manners. “Hey look I’m a bastard from Flea Bottom, I have no airs or graces either.”

They sat in companionable silence, tucking into their food for a few minutes. They were almost finished eating when a ping from Gendry’s phone disturbed the quiet, and he tutted to himself as he checked the screen.

“Shit. Sorry I just have go upstairs to feed my cat. I almost forgot!” He moved to stand up before adding, “I’ll only be a minute, if you want to wait here. Or you can come up with me if you want?”

She looked up at his honest face. He had given her no reason not to trust him so far, especially since he had opened up and revealed his parentage to her.

“Is this what you say to all the girls? Do you even have a cat up there?” she smirked, enjoying his flustered reaction.

“I do! I swear. He’s a little shit and if I don’t feed him he’s likely to piss on the floor in protest!”

She laughed at that, enjoying watching him squirm. “Relax Gendry, I believe you.”

She grabbed her jacket and together they approached the bar. Gendry caught Davos’ attention, and slipped the man some cash for the meal, before whispering conspiratorially to him. Davos bent down behind the bar and returned with a six pack of the same beer they’d been drinking all night, handing it over to Gendry. He then waved at Arya.

“Have a good night, you two. Say hi to Storm for me.” He called after them.

“Storm?” Arya asked, perplexed.

“My cat.” Gendry replied. He held the door open for her again, which Arya thought she could get used to, and they stepped out in to the chilly autumn air. The sun had long since set, and the little courtyard had taken on a magical glow with the fairy lights on front of the pub twinkling above them.
Gendry held his arm out as if to let Arya walk ahead of him back over to his shop, but then stopped at a door to the left of it that looked like it led to a separate entrance. He took his keys out and opened the door before stepping back to let Arya through.

“After you, milady.” He grinned playfully.

“Why do you keep calling me that?” she asked, amused.

“I don’t know it seems to suit you. Shall we then?” he asked, and they stepped into the hallway that led upstairs to his flat.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter was originally supposed to be even longer, but these two characters were talking too much, so I'm splitting it up!

Chapter 4 will pick up right where this one left off. I have to build that tension first, you know...

Oh and in case it wasn't obvious, I know fuck all about playing darts, so don't @ me! I just needed an excuse for Arya to show off her skills...

Find me over on tumblr at @icontainmultitudes where I celebrate Gendrya every day...
Chapter Summary

Arya and Gendry continue their evening upstairs in Gendry's flat. Arya finally gets to meet Storm, and Gendry uses every available bit of willpower not to give in to temptation and rush this. He does his best to explain to Arya how much this means to him...

Chapter Notes

As always thank you so much for the kudos and the comments! I'll try and figure out how to add my tumblr photo sets here, since they help illustrate the tone I'm going for.

This chapter took a rather smutty turn towards the end! We're finally starting to earn that explicit rating...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Gendry let Arya walk ahead of him up the narrow stairs to his flat. He’d like to think it was because he prided himself on being a gentleman, that’s how he was raised. But it also allowed him a great view of her arse from below as she ascended the steps. He loved the way she swung her hips from side to side as she walked. He couldn’t help but wonder what she would look like under those tight jeans. He shook his head as if to clear his thoughts before he got too excited and embarrassed himself.

His mind was still reeling, trying to catch up with the evening’s events. He had been excited at the prospect of seeing Arya again today but he had told himself that he would wait until he was finished working on her sister’s rings before he asked her out, even though he really wanted to do it now. The last thing he’d expected was for her to turn around and ask him to go for a drink instead, stealing his thunder and throwing him completely off in the best possible way. If she didn’t object, and Sansa didn’t object, that what was the harm? Now he found himself taking her home to his flat, something that he really hadn’t been anticipating earlier that day.

“There’s another lock at the top of the stairs”, he explained as they reached the landing. She stood to the left of the door, as he put the key into the lock and and turned it. A little voice meowed eagerly behind the door and Arya’s eyes went wide before she laughed.

“So there is a cat in here!” she joked, looking up at him from beneath her dark lashes. He smiled back at her, pushing the door open gently to make sure Storm didn’t try to escape. He held the door open for her, and it was a bit awkward as she had to duck under this arm to enter.

The glimmering light from the courtyard illuminated the room, streaming in through the tall window with its many smaller window panes. Storm made his presence known immediately, circling Gendry’s legs and head butting him forcefully several times. Arya stepped into the open plan living room area as Gendry shut the door behind them. He reached down to scratch the cat’s head affectionally, earning another head butt.

“Hey buddy. I know, I know! It’s very late to be coming home. I’ll give you your dinner now,” he
spoke softly to the large grey cat, who continued to circle him happily. He looked over to Arya, who was watching them both, a highly amused smirk on her face.

“Gendry, are you a cat lady?” she laughed warmly, before approaching Storm, squatting down to his level and reaching out her hand for him to sniff. He immediately inspected it and decided she was trustworthy, allowing her to give him a good rub behind the ears and on both furry cheeks. “Hello big guy! Were you lonely up here, hmmm?” Her voice took on a melodic tone as she spoke to the cat, earning her some loud purrs in response. Gendry couldn’t help but notice how soothing and sexy it sounded.

“He likes you. He’s not normally that friendly with strangers,” Gendry observed. It was true, Storm usually kept his distance when new people came into the flat, until he was relaxed enough to approach them, which usually took a while. This was the first time he’d seen him be so affectionate with a new person straight away. He was almost a bit jealous, which was ridiculous. How could he be jealous of his own bloody cat? Just because Arya was talking to Storm in that low, dulcet voice?

“He gorgeous! He’s so big. What do you feed him?” she marvelled, seemingly enjoying the cuddle as much as Storm.

“Not as much as you’d think! He’s just always been huge. He was skinnier when I got him though. Now he’s pretty much a house cat, so he’s filled out a bit.” Gendry shrugged. He walked over towards the kitchen which was at the other end of the room. Compared to the living room it was small space but was more than enough for one person. He opened a cupboard door and took out Storm’s food.

At the noise of the dry food rattling in its container, the cat trotted over quickly to join him. Gendry scooped the food into his dish and set it down on the floor, earning an appreciate head butt from Storm. Arya stood up and followed them into the kitchen space, looking around.

“Your flat is lovely,” she noted approvingly.

“Thanks,” he responded, taking the six pack of beers Davos had given him in the pub and putting them carefully into the fridge, except for two. He twisted the caps off the bottles, handing the first one to Arya.

“It’s not what I was expecting, it much more modern up here than the outside of the building.” She continued, as she glanced around the small, muted grey kitchen with its stainless steel appliances and black granite counter tops. He was relieved that he had just happened to clean up the place that morning, otherwise she might have been horrified at his sloppy bachelor ways.

“Yeah when I inherited it, I wasn’t sure what to do with it at first. Then Davos helped me figure it all out and I ended up having the whole place gutted and remodelled. Since it’s just me, I could keep the space open plan.” He wasn’t sure why he was explaining it so much but he felt the need to tell Arya as much as possible about himself. He’d never felt like that with a girl before. It felt good, easy, natural.

“How long have you been living here?” she asked, her fingers trailing on the counter.

“About 6 years now, give or take. Do you want to take a seat in the living room?” he motioned to the large, charcoal, upholstered couch in the middle of the room. It faced the glossy black TV which was the focal point of the room, flanked either side by built-in bookshelves stacked full of books, mostly on metalwork art and design. Some of them he had inherited from Mott, some were old text books from university and the rest he’d collected over the years. She walked over to examine them, picking up one and reading the back.
“You have a lot of books on metalwork?” she asked curiously, squinting at the text in the low light. He followed her, turning on the lamps on either end of the couch and behind the TV, illuminating the room a bit better.

“Yeah, well you’re never done learning are you?” he answered, coming to stand behind her. “I suppose it looks like I’m obsessed with work though, doesn’t it?” he smiled down at her, eyes crinkling jovially.

“No, not at all,” she explained, “I think it’s really cool that you are so into what you do,” she looked back up at him, her eyes as earnest and intense again as they’d been downstairs in the pub. He wanted to reach out to her, take her in his arms and kiss her then, to finally find out what she tasted like, but instead he held back, nodding towards the couch and waiting for her to move first.

She held his gaze for another moment, as if waiting for something to happen before she took the hint and sat down on one side the deep, soft couch, curling her legs up under her, but keeping her booted feet off the couch. He sat on the other side, keeping a respectful distance between them. He couldn’t help but notice her face fall slightly and wondered if she was disappointed he hadn’t sat closer to her.

Storm jumped up from the back of the couch and tip-toed elegantly along the cushions behind them, before plopping himself down behind Arya’s head. She turned to nuzzle him gently, amused by his familiarity.

“You seem very comfortable with cats. Did you grow up with them?” He wasn’t sure why he was asking about cats. He really hoped she didn’t think he was a crazy cat lady. But she had mentioned she worked with animals, so it seemed like an acceptable topic of conversation. And a safer one than family, which ran the risk of bringing them back to more heavy stuff they had gotten into downstairs. Gendry didn’t want the evening to take on a morose tone again, now that they’d found a happy balance.

“Yeah we had a few that roamed around the grounds but they weren’t ever allowed inside. Not like this lucky guy.” She continued to scratch his head as she spoke. “Someone told me once that I should try and catch them, so I spent months chasing after them.” She laughed at the memory. “I never got close! Truth be told, I’m more of a dog person really. But I love cats too. I love all animals. Comes with the job I suppose.” He smiled in response. He found he liked this nurturing, affectionate side to her just as much as the teasing flirtatious side.

“How did you end up working in an animal rescue centre? Did you always want to work with animals?” he asked, fascinated. He had been genuinely surprised when she had revealed this to him earlier. It was pretty much the last job he would ever had guessed.

“I used to want to be a vet growing up, but I didn’t get the grades to study it at university. My mother was very disappointed. I was ‘not applying myself enough’ back then.” She rolled her eyes at this, clearly annoyed at the memory. Gendry laughed at this. He could relate. It wasn’t until he found metal work that he had ever felt passionate about working or studying something so avidly.

“Then I sort of forgot about it during uni and focused on studying anthropology and dance. But after I graduated a family friend offered me a job at the centre and I thought, what’s the worst that could happen? So I took it, thinking I’d be there for a few months max and now I’ve been there nearly a year and half. I love it. I find it very therapeutic to be honest.” She smiled softly, her grey eyes glinting in the low light. “Where did you get Storm from?”

“He was a stray. He used to hang around downstairs outside Mott’s shop. He was a bit skinnier then!” She laughed at that, her face lighting up at the idea. “And once I moved in here he just kept
turning up every day. To the point where I thought he might as well come in and live with me. I still let him go out in the mornings and evenings for a few hours. Felt wrong to keep him completely indoors.” He reached over towards Storm and gave him rub behind his ear. “He has everyone in the courtyard wrapped around this little… Paw?” He paused, frowning, not sure if that sounded silly, but hoping she knew what he meant. Her wide grin in response confirmed she did.

“I have to say, I was curious to see if you really were a cat person, or if it was just a line to get me up here,” she looked at him carefully, as if waiting to see how he’d respond. Gendry felt encouraged by her honesty rather than intimidated.

“And now? Do you believe me?” he asked, hoping she’d approve. Her eyes squinted in mirth.

“Oh it’s much worse than I thought! You’re well on your way to crazy cat lady territory I fear!” she giggled at her own words, enjoying teasing him. “Maybe it would’ve been better if it was just a line…” She looked over at him from under those thick dark lashes, her expression testing. He wondered what she would do if he made a move. He cleared his throat.

“Hey look, you’re the one who asked me to go for a drink tonight! I was all set to come back here after work and just chill out. This was the last thing I expected to happen today.” He found he enjoyed the back and forth with her. She was easy to joke with. He noticed the small paw print tattoos on her wrist as she continued to rub Storm’s head. Feeling brave, he reached out and traced them with his thumb, causing her to pause her movements and meet his eyes. “What’s the story behind these?” he asked, holding her gaze searchingly.

Her warm expression faltered momentarily, and for a second he was worried he’d over stepped a boundary, but she didn’t seem to mind the contact so much as the question.

“They’re for the dogs we lost. My siblings and I were each given a puppy from the same litter when I was about 9, I think. Malamutes. Their mother had died and my dad thought it would be good for us to learn how to look after our own individual pets. He grew up with dogs. The wolf is our family sigil, you know?” He nodded, vaguely remembering something about the Stark family sigil and the ancient Direwolf that represented it in centuries past. “So it seemed appropriate. They’re amazing dogs. Almost like wolves. They make great pets for children. But some of them didn’t make it.” Her voice trailed off, as if lost in the painful memories.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realise there was a sad story behind it.” He kept his eyes on hers, even though her gaze had dropped to her lap. She made no move to pull her wrist away from his touch, so he continued to rub it ever so gently. He skin was so soft there.

“It’s ok. Really,” she looked up at him, smiling sweetly, making his heart beat faster. She looked so unguarded in that moment. “My dog was called Nymeria. I’d only had her for less than a year when she got spooked one day on a road trip and ran away. We searched and searched for her for the rest of the day but there was no sign of her. I was hysterical. I blamed myself for letting her out of my sight. We never found out what happened to her.”

“We’re really hitting all the sore spots tonight, aren’t we?” he said gently, eliciting a soft sigh from her response. “I’m sorry you lost her. I hope she found her way to somewhere safe.”

“I hope so too. I used to dream about her all the time after it happened. The dreams were so vivid, it was like I was there with her. But they faded over time and I can’t remember the last one I had. Must have been at least 5 years ago…”

“Would you ever get a dog here in King’s Landing? Do you have the room for it?” he asked gently, hoping not to upset her further.
“Yeah I’d love to. Probably will one day. Sansa, Theon and I are renting a town house over on the other side of the city. Not sure the landlord would approve. In the meantime I have more than enough animals to hang out with at work,” she spoke cheerfully, her voice taking on its lighter tone again. He was relieved. He wanted to see her face light up again.

“When are you back in work? Do you work weekends?” he asked. She shook her head.

“Sometimes but not this weekend. I’m not back in until Monday.” She looked at him expectantly.

“What about you? Why don’t you work weekends? It would’ve been a lot handier for us to come in on a Saturday you know!” she laughed lightly.

“I used to work at all hours, all week. It was part of the reason my last girlfriend broke up with me. Said she couldn’t compete for my attention. I realised I was using work as a distraction from real life. So now I try and keep my weekends free. I’m trying to have a life, you know?” he felt himself blush slightly at his words, hoping she wouldn’t judge him too harshly.

“So what do you normally do on weekends?” she asked, her eyebrows raising again curiously.

“Well I’d normally go for a drink with some mates in The Peach. My best friend is away at the moment, otherwise we’d probably have bumped into him downstairs. Saturdays I try and get out of the house, either to the gym or for a run. I usually call over to my mums in the evening for dinner. She works all week too so the weekends are usually the only time we both have off to catch up. And Sundays I usually get together with my old football team. Most of us don’t have time to meet up more than once a week, so we just have a kick about for a few hours.”

“Where do you play?” she asked, her interest piqued.

“Just down the road at Flea Bottom football club. We call ourselves The Brotherhood Without Banners. Been training there since I was 5. It was good. Kept me out of trouble. Gave me some male role models, which I think my mum was worried about, growing up without a dad…” he trailed off, self-consciously.

“I think you turned out ok,” she offered, her voice taking on that melodic quality once again and making his stomach flutter.

“Thanks,” he met her eyes, finding himself lost for words at the intensity he found there. She seemed to be searching him for something unseen, her dark grey irises flitting back and forth between his own, her pupils blown wide in the dim light. She looked as if she was considering something for a moment. She put her bottle down on the coffee table and pulled her wrist away in the process. He followed her lead and put down his bottle. She shuffled herself closer in to him, their knees now touching. He felt his pulse quicken and his breathing deepen. She looked up at him amused, seemingly enjoying the effect she was having on him.

“Do I make you nervous Gendry?” she smirked up at him, her lips parting ever so slightly. She looked anything but nervous herself.

“No. That’s not the word I’d use…” He felt himself drawn towards her. He wanted to reach out to her, take her face in his hands and crush his lips to hers. He wanted her in a way he hadn’t wanted anyone in a very, very long time. He wasn’t even sure what was holding him back, except that he was terrified of ruining the moment somehow.

“What word would you use then?” she breathed out softly, her eyes never leaving his.

“Does excited sound any better?” he asked, not sure if he sounded eager or just terrified. He looked
into her wide eyes, then at her soft lips, glistening in the light. She looked like a predator hunting their prey, about to strike. He suddenly felt very, very nervous indeed.

She moved with a grace and speed he hadn’t anticipated, pulling herself forward to face his turned head. She gave him one final questioning look before she tilted her head towards him, their size difference disappearing now that they were so close, and leaned in for a soft, teasing kiss, her delicate lips meeting his, ever so gently at first. He reciprocated immediately, feeling himself drawn towards her body, wanting to get as close as possible now that she was within reach.

Her kiss deepened as she pulled herself up towards him, and before he knew what was happening, she swung her shapely leg over his lap, her hips resting on his, her weight coming to settle on him in the most enticing way. Storm jumped up at the sudden movement, hopping off the back of the couch and retreating out of the room. It was probably for the best, Gendry thought. They didn’t need an audience.

She moaned softly into his mouth, her lips pressing harder, opening slightly against his own. He was dying to taste her, to let himself get lost in her mouth. He cupped her heart shaped face in his large hands, pulling back for a moment to at look her, breaking their kiss. She sucked in a breath, her eyes dragging up from his lips to his eyes, desire evident on her radiant face.

“I’ve been wanting to do that all night,” she gasped, her voice now ragged. He chuckled in response, thrilled to see how much she wanted him.

“Me too. I just didn’t want to overstep my bounds.” He caressed her cheeks with his thumbs, tucking her hair behind her ear on one side before pulling her face back in for a deeper kiss. He captured her mouth again, this time taking the lead and sucking her full bottom lip in his mouth, his tongue begging for entrance. She happily acquiesced, opening her lips for him, letting him explore her before meeting his tongue with her own gently. She tasted of the bitter beer but also sweet and honeyed. He supposed that was her own taste underneath. Gods he could stay there all night, drinking her in. She matched his rhythm, each of them taking turns to be the aggressor, their kiss pushing and pulling back and forth.

He felt her roll her hips down against his crotch, making his cock pulse and thicken immediately, as if he hadn’t been half hard since they had sat down on the couch, with thoughts of having her so close to him. She grinned into this mouth, clearly pleased with the evidence of his arousal so obvious now under her body.

“Is that for me? She teased, tilting her hips again, pressing her pelvis down and forward, making as much contact as possible through her jeans and his trousers. He groaned at the feel of her, wanting nothing more than to be skin to skin.

“What do you think? He teased back, thrusting his hips up, pushing his now achingly hard cock up towards her heat, hoping she could feel how incredibly turned on he was.

“I think I’d like to feel more of it please,” she whispered into his ear now, her breath sending shivers down his spine. She started kissing below his earlobe, licking and sucking the skin of his neck hungrily, making him moan in response. She was going to be the death of him. He wanted nothing more than to rip their clothes off and take her right there on the couch. But a little voice at the back of his mind spoke up, reminding him that this was not how he wanted their first time to be.

Arya continued her path down his neck, sucking and grazing her teeth on his stubble. It felt intoxicating, and was making his mind foggier and foggier. She pulled back a little to make room and began to undo the top buttons of his shirt, kissing her way down underneath his collarbones, all
the while grinding her little hips into his not very subtle erection. She hummed approvingly and kissed a path towards his chest.

“Gods I want you so much…” he managed to get out, desire now clouding even the most basic of brain functions.

“You can have me,” she groaned, licking his chest and nuzzling his light dusting of hair that began under his clavicle. “I want you too…” she arched her body into his, pressing her breasts against his chest for the first time, the lace of her shirt scratching his bare skin where she’d unbuttoned his top.

He grabbed her hips, pulling himself back to look at her. Her face was now flushed pink, her lips were swollen and full and her eyes danced back and forth between his lips and his eyes. “Arya I…” he tried to find the words, the last thing he wanted to do was hurt her feelings in this moment but he needed her to understand how much this meant to him.

“What? What is it?” she asked, hesitation sobering her expression immediately. “Did I do something wrong?” she looked lost for second, as if they weren’t on the same page.

“No! Gods no! This is perfect. You’re perfect,” he emphasised, dipping forward to kiss her again, sucking her bottom lip into his mouth and biting gently on it before releasing it. She hummed in response, her lips trying to take over. He pulled away again and she almost growled in frustration.

“What’s wrong then?” she searched his face, confused and desperately horny all at the same time, not seeming to follow him. She looked so wound up and inflamed, not wanting to stop at all.

“Arya I really like you. Like, really like you. I’ve liked you since the first day we met. I wanted to ask you out then, but I thought it wasn’t the right time. I don’t just want to have something physical. I don’t want to fuck this up before we’ve even started, you know?” he let out a sigh he hadn’t realised he’d been holding, waiting for her to process his words.

She took them in, her face registering the gravity of what he’d just told her. She looked frustrated but not angry. After a few seconds she sighed, pulling her head back further to look at him properly. He felt exposed under her stare. He prayed to all he gods that he hadn’t already fucked this up by admitting this much.

“Who says we can’t have both?” she teased, rubbing her hips against him again, delighting is his moan of response. “I really like you too Gendry. I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t. I haven’t been with anyone in a long time. It’s been hard to let anyone in after what happened last time.” She looked down, uncertainty taking over and making her look suddenly much younger and more vulnerable.

He lifted her chin up with his finger, looking into her huge eyes, trying to convey as much sincerity and emotion as he could with his words. “Let’s not rush this ok? I want to do this right. Take you out for a real date. Take our time.” He pressed a chaste kiss to her lips, sliding his hands up from her hips to her shoulder blades, rubbing her skin through the thin black fabric that covered her back. “I can’t just fall into bed with someone straight away, no matter how much I want you.” He rolled his hips up, rubbing his cock against the seam of her jeans, reminding her of his arousal.

She responded by tilting her hips down to meet him, dragging a groan out of him and smirking at his response. “Good to know you still want this.” She purred. “Or else my ego might have taken quite the hit.” She laughed, but he could tell she was slightly thrown off by his admission.

“Trust me, I want this. And when the time is right, I’ll show you exactly how much…” he nipped at her lip again, before brushing the hair that had fallen forward back behind her ear, following it
with his mouth. He nibbled her ear lobe, sucking it into his mouth and delighting at the involuntary
shiver that rolled through her. She hissed in a breath, tilting her neck to give him better access. He
sucked on the skin behind her ear, revelling in the taste of her. She tasted salty and sweet, and her
skin smelled like something earthy and floral that he couldn’t quite recognise.

“You’re a tease Waters…” she hummed gently, rolling her hips against him again. “You got me all
worked up with no pay off. It’s not fair.” She let him trail kisses down her neck, seemingly content
to enjoy his exploration. “Since when is the guy the one who wants to take things slow? Hmm?”

He stopped kissing her for a moment, pulling back and looking her straight in the eye. He needed
her to understand this. “Since I was conceived by a man who fucked his away around the country,
not ever giving a second thought to the damage he caused,” he held her gaze, all sensuality and
teasing momentarily paused. He needed her to know this was important to him. “I can’t just do
casual sex Arya, it’s too serious for me. I need to know you get that. Do you?” he looked at her
imploringly, begging her to understand this with him.

She didn’t flinch or look away, instead her eyes seemed to be registering the weight of his words.
Well he’s my cousin really but he was raised as my brother. He’s a bastard too. He felt the same
way growing up. He could never just be with girls the way my other brother Robb and his friends
could. He was always scared he might get them pregnant, or that he might accidentally sleep with
someone he was related to. Since he didn’t know who his mother was. It was very painful for him.
To carry that around… So I do understand,” she smiled at him, her expression warm and
reassuring.

He exhaled a sigh of relief, resting his forehead on hers. He felt himself relax, knowing she could
at least accept why this was so important to him. She brushed the back of his neck with her
fingertips, tracing the hairline there. It was such a light gesture, but it felt soothing to him, like she
was alleviating the weight of what he’d just confessed with her touch.

“Thank you, for listening. The last thing I want to do is hurt your feelings or make you think I
don’t want this. I just need it to mean more. I need it to be worth it,” he kissed her forehead, leaving
his lips resting there, loving the way they could be this intimate already.

“Oh it’ll be worth it,” she smirked, the teasing tone back in her voice. He rolled his eyes at that but
grinned at the same time. She wrapped both arms around his shoulders, caressing his upper back
with her hands. “Trust me,” she whispered, her mouth returning to his neck, nibbling at his ear
lobe, delighting in the way he groaned in response.

“Is tomorrow night too soon for our next date?” he asked hopefully. What was the point in playing
games and dragging this out for another week? He wanted to see her as soon as possible. “Are you
free?” He hoped he didn’t sound too needy, but he honestly couldn’t have done anything about if
he did.

“Hmm let me see, I’ll have to check my diary…” she giggled. “Of course I’m free you idiot!
Where are you going to take me then?” she continued nuzzling his neck, apparently enjoying the
way his stubble grazed her cheek. He fought the urge to keep kissing her, his mind trying to form a
coherent thought. He wanted to take her somewhere quiet, romantic. Somewhere they could talk
and get to know each other better.

“Leave it with me. I’ll surprise you…” he dragged his hands down to grip her hips again, this time
to pull her closer, wanting as much contact between them as possible. His body was screaming at
him to strip them both naked and just slide into her, but he knew if he gave in he’d only regret it.
He knew he wouldn’t be satisfied if all he got was a quick fuck. He wanted to know her first, to
win her trust and her affection. “What time will I pick you up?” he asked whilst simultaneously kissing his way back up to her jawline, edging his way closer to her lips again. It felt like hours since he’d kissed her, but it had been minutes. He pressed his lips to hers, not hesitating this time to deepen the kiss immediately, coaxing her mouth open, slipping his tongue in to meet hers. She hummed into his mouth before pulling away to speak.

“Let’s say 7 o’clock? Is that ok with you?” she asked, her eyes glazed over with lust again, making her look deliciously ardent. He forced himself to process her question.

“Yes. Ok great. I’ll pick you up at 7 o’clock and we’ll have a proper date. I won't be so caught off guard this time!” he joked. He had no problem with spontaneity, but his mind was already racing with ideas of where they could go tomorrow.

“How dressy are we talking? What should I wear?” she asked sceptically. “I’m not really a dress or skirt girl. I don’t know how to do formal.”

“Not dressy. Wear whatever you want. You’ll look amazing anyway,” he beamed, meaning every word. She could turn up in a burlap sack and he was pretty sure he’d find it attractive.

“OK I’ll surprise you too,” she spoke softly. “So are we going to sit here all night kissing? Not that I’m complaining. I just need to know how wound up you plan on getting me…” she ground her pelvis onto his still hard cock, apparently intent on torturing him. He supposed he deserved that.

“As wound up as possible,” he countered, canting this hips up in response, thrilled at the way she gasped as the contact. “Listen this has nothing to do with not wanting to fuck you, and everything to do with wanting to fuck you just right,” he slid his hand up her ribs, thumbs tracing her ribcage, getting dangerously close to the undersides of her breasts. What he wouldn’t give to feel her skin, to know how she felt cupped in his hands.

All in good time, he thought.

She clearly wants this as much as I do.

She moaned again imploringly, arching her back to push her chest into his. “Touch me please Gendry. Just put your hands on me. Anything…” She was about to grab his arms and move his hands onto her breasts herself, he could sense it. He rubbed both thumbs on the underside of her breasts, tracing the curves ever so lightly. It only seemed to spur her on. She kissed him again, teeth nipping not so gently at his bottom lip. He gave in to temptation and cupped both breasts in his hands, loving the way they fit easily in each palm. He could feel the rough lace of her bra under the softer lace of her shirt. Her breasts felt amazing, firm and full, her nipples hardening under his touch through the lace. She seemed to enjoy his teasing, pushing herself into his hands as much as she could with the lack of space between them, moaning into his mouth at the same time.

“Gods you feel amazing. So firm,” he groaned, feeling his earlier resolve start to weaken.

She moved her head to his ear again, whispering gently “Is there no way I can convince you take this further?” We can still have our date tomorrow as well.”

He shook his head, determined to stick to his original plan. “I meant it Arya, this has to be serious for me. I can’t do casual.”

She pulled herself back to look at him, eyes almost black now with lust. Frustration and fervor battling it out on her flushed face. Abruptly, she moved to stand up, taking him by surprise. He missed her heat and weight on his lap immediately. “What’s? Where are you going? Are you pissed off?” he knew he sounded pathetic but he didn’t care.

She grinned down him, enjoying the shift in dynamic. “No, I’m just getting way too turned on and
if nothing is going to happen tonight, I need to get home as soon as humanly possible so I can get myself off, because this is fucking torture Gendry! You’re killing me!” she laughed loudly, her desperation and frankness making him join in, chuckling. He hung his head in his hands, shrugging his broad shoulders.

“OK well, that’s fair enough I suppose. Can’t argue with that logic,” he grinned, his male pride thrilled at the effect he was obviously having on her, while his cock was aching to be closer to her again. He hadn’t been this turned on since he was a horny, frustrated teenager. He chuckled to himself, thinking what his younger self would make of this situation now. He’d probably think he was insane for dragging this out.

Arya pulled her phone out and began ordering an Uber, her attention now completely diverted away from him. He shifted uncomfortably on the couch. His cock was now straining against the waistband of his trousers. He tried, not very subtly, to adjust himself, which only garnered an amused side-eye from Arya.

“You’ll get no sympathy from me. Not when you’re so adamant about taking this slow,” she taunted, eyes still focused on her phone. “Right my Uber will be here in 5 minutes. Well it’ll be out on the main street, since cars can’t come down here, can they?”

He tried to focus on her question, his mind eventually catching up. “No they can’t. I’ll walk you out.” He stood up, taking her hips in his hands and pulling her to him, holding her gaze steadfastly. “This means a lot to me Arya. I’m not playing games. I want us to get to know each other first.” She smiled up at him, their height difference now much more obvious. He dipped down to meet her, kissing her forcefully enough, hoping to convey without words how sincere he was trying to be. She seemed to understand, if her response was anything to go. She all but melted into his kiss, wrapping her arms around his waist, pulling him flush with her much smaller body.

“I know. I do understand. I’m also incredibly turned on and I can’t sit on you like that all night without something happening. A girl only has so much willpower, you know?” she grinned up at him teasingly. He kissed her forehead again, pressing his lips softly into her hair line. Her hair smelled of coconut and something tropical that he couldn’t quite place.

“Believe me I know the feeling,” he all but moaned in response. He didn’t want her to leave but he knew the minute he got back home he’d be taking himself in hand, and pleasuring himself in record time.

Arya’s phone beeped and she checked the screen. “My Uber is here. Come on, let’s go.” She grabbed her jacket and he seemed to surprise her by taking it in his hands and holding it out for her to slip her arms into. She smiled coyly over her shoulder at him as she did so. He grabbed his keys off the the table and ushered her towards the door. They descended the staircase, him letting her walk in front again, her opening the front door before he got a chance to do it for her.

They stepped out into the quiet courtyard. It seemed very peaceful now, with hardly any noise coming from the pub. He took her hand in his and led them towards the laneway that led to the main street. She seemed surprised by his gesture, but gripped his hand firmly all the same. Her Uber was waiting at the other end of the lane, parked on the main street. She spun on her heel to face him, those big grey eyes wide with emotion. “I’ll see you tomorrow then?” she asked earnestly, all teasing and playfulness gone from her tone.

He smiled down at her warmly, cupping her face is his hands. “Tomorrow. I’ll pick you up at 7pm. Here, give me your phone and I’ll give you my number,” he offered. She unlocked the phone and handed it over. He typed in his number and she rang it for a few seconds before hanging up, slipping it into her back pocket.
She placed both her hands on his chest, tilting her head up to him. *I must be almost a foot taller than her,* he thought to himself. It meant kissing her standing up was straining on his neck, and he imagined the same must be true for her too. But he could live with it. He guessed they’d get used to it pretty quickly. He kissed her gently, wanting to communicate his affection without it slipping into lust again.

She seemed to have no patience for that though, as she grabbed the back of his head, pushing herself in and up further into his mouth, licking his lips with her own until he opened his mouth and let her in. She gave him one final, deep kiss, before she pulled away and moved towards the car. He grabbed the door handle for her, pulling it open before she could object. She slipped into the seat, never taking her eyes off him. “Goodnight Gendry,” she almost whispered it, her voice was so low.

“Goodnight Arya, see you tomorrow,” he answered, unable to keep the enthusiasm out of his voice.

“Don’t stay up all night,” she called out, glancing quickly to his crotch before giggling gently to herself. He rolled his eyes. It was all well and good for her, she could hide her arousal whereas his was very much obvious. He shifted slightly, hoping it wasn’t too visible to the driver, but finding that he really didn’t care at the same time.

He closed the door for her gently. He saw her speak to the driver briefly, but maintaining eye contact with him, as the car pulled off. She waved to him shyly as they drove away and he found himself waving back in turn like an idiot. He waited until the car was out of sight and turned to go back home.

As soon as he got back in through the door of his flat, he wasted no time, turning off all the lights as he passed. He went straight to his bedroom, pulling his shirt over his head as he walked though the door. He pulled his phone out his pocket and placed it on the bedside table. He unbuttoned his trousers, slipping them down over his hips along with his boxer briefs, kicking his shoes and socks off at the same time. He slipped in under the cool sheets, loving the feel of the crisp cotton against his bare skin. He took his straining cock in hand, finally giving in to the desire to touch himself. He knew this wouldn’t take long. His balls were aching with a dull pressure ever since he’d told Arya how he felt, as if his body knew there was no chance of relief with her tonight.

He hadn’t been this worked up in a very, very long time. He gripped himself firmly at the base of his cock, hand coaxing his flesh not so gently now. He pulled down on the shaft, thumb dragging over the engorged head, spreading the large bead of precum that had gathered there. He pulled his foreskin back gently, leaving him exposed and even more sensitive to his own touch. He imagined Arya’s hand gripping him instead of his own, the way her soft skin might feel wrapped around his hot flesh. The way she might tease it out of him slowly before speeding up and letting him thrust up into her delicate grip. He imagined her licking her lips and making her way down his body, taking him into her beautiful mouth. His phone beeped, and he considered ignoring it. It beeped again and he gave in, curious.

He picked it up with his free hand.

Arya: *Thanks for a wonderful night. I hope I haven’t disturbed you already? 😊*  
Arya: *I’m counting down the minutes until I get home and take care of myself…*  
He knew he shouldn’t be doing this but he couldn’t help himself. Although he had no patience for emojis at the moment.

Gendry: *You caught me just in time.*
Arya: If only you’d let me stay, I could have looked after you…

He groaned at the image in his head of Arya touching him, teasing him like this. Her breath on his neck, her body pressed into his as it had been only minutes before. He continued to grip himself, pumping down, circling the head before pulling back up again, faster this time.

Gendry: All in good time…

Arya: Please tell me you won’t drag this out for too long? I’m not known for my patience

He knew he should reply but he was having a hard time focusing. Her teasing words and the hours of sexual tension leaving him almost demented.

Arya: I take it I’m interrupting something???

Gendry sighed, pausing.

Gendry: Maybe…

Arya: What I wouldn’t give to be the one doing that for you.

Arya: Guess I’ll just have to imagine you sliding into me later once I finally do get home. Filling me up. Stretching me so well. Making me come around your aching cock.

Gendry: Fuck Arya…

That was it. He dropped his phone. He pulled the sheets back off his body, and gave himself one final hard squeeze and pull before he felt his orgasm tear through him, his balls pulling up tighter before he came with a force he hadn’t felt in a long time, pleasure coursing through his body, ribbons of his cum falling on to his panting stomach. His phone beeped again. He fought to catch his breath.

Arya: I take it that worked??

Gendry blushed. It was a little late for embarrassment. His body was still thrumming from the intense orgasm she’d just helped him achieve.

Gendry: It did… Thank you.

Arya: So polite for a man who just got himself off to my text! 😊

Gendry: I’m having a hard time forming words here…

Arya: Hard being the operative word.

Arya: Right just getting out of the Uber now. I won’t waste much time. Goodnight Gendry.

His face fell at her last words. He had been hoping he could return the favour.

Gendry: You don’t need me to reciprocate?

There was a 5 minute wait until she replied.

Arya: Sorry couldn’t concentrate on both things at once. 😃

Gendry: You’re done?! That was quick!
Arya: I wasn’t exaggerating when I said you had me worked up. Besides, it doesn’t normally take me long. Throw in hours of teasing and kissing and I was about to explode the moment I got into my room....

He sighed loudly. He could hardly blame her for being wound up. Not for the first time, he wondered if he was being overly cautious. He could have had her here in his bed right now, instead of settling for sexting and touching themselves like horny teenagers.

Arya: Getting very sleepy now. Goodnight Gendry. See you tomorrow. 😴

He chuckled at her words, feeling a delicious heaviness overtake him as well. He swept his hand over the side of the bed, looking for his underwear on the floor. He found them and mopped up his cum off his stomach, tossing them back on the floor to be dealt with tomorrow. He felt himself beginning to slip into a warm, inviting sleep. He dragged himself out of it for one last text.

Gendry: Goodnight Arya, sleep tight. Wish I was there with you...

He put the phone down and pulled the covers up over his now cooling body. After the events of the evening, he finally felt he could relax and slip off into a deep, replenishing sleep.

Chapter End Notes

You can find me over on tumblr at @icontainmultitides

I'm going to try and post a chapter every week, but don't hold your breath! Life keeps interrupting and dragging me away from this story...
I ignite

Chapter Summary

Sansa helps Arya get ready for her first proper date with Gendry. Gendry takes Arya somewhere special. They get to know each other a bit better. Arya puts Gendry's willpower to the test...

Chapter Notes

Well this chapter turned into a beast at 10k words! Not sure how that happened, except to say that it's quite dialogue heavy. What can I say? It seems they all love to chat!

I am still utterly thrilled by all the love you've shown for this story. Thanks to everyone who's left a comment or kudos. You're the best!

The incessant noise of her phone’s alarm woke Arya the next morning. For a moment she was confused, wondering if she needed to get up for work. She reached out blindly and grabbed her phone, turning the alarm off and bringing it up to her face and squinting at the screen. She had accidentally set her alarm to go off every day that week. She slung the phone back onto the bedside table and turned over onto her stomach, arms coming to rest under her pillow. She had not slept well the night before. A very vivid dream of riding Gendry on his couch had started off well, but she had woken up before either of them had climaxed and it had left her tense and unfulfilled, before eventually falling back asleep.

Her thoughts drifted back to the previous night. She’d never been in this position before. Having a man who was so obviously attracted to her but who wanted to wait. It made her feel uneasy, as if he was looking for something from her that she didn’t think she had to give. She let out a loud sigh. A soft knock on her door disturbed her.

“Arya I heard your alarm going off. Are you working today? Do you want some breakfast?” Sansa’s gentle voice made her feel marginally less pissed off.

“Come in Sansa” she grumbled, turning back over.

Sansa peeked her head in the door, eyes scanning Arya for a moment`. “Everything ok?” she asked carefully.
“Yeah. Just didn’t sleep well,” she sighed. She really didn’t feel like explaining what had happened the night before.

“Would you like something to eat? I’m making omelettes and I bought some of that nice bread you like yesterday.” Sansa’s face lit up as she spoke.

“Yeah, sounds lovely. I’m not working today. I just forgot to turn off my alarm for the weekend.”

Sansa observed her for a moment. “OK well, come out and join us in the kitchen room when you’re ready. I’m not bringing you breakfast in bed!”

She left the door ajar and went back out. Arya pulled herself out of bed and wrapped herself up in her robe. She shuffled into the kitchen behind her sister, pulling her hair back into a messy ponytail as she walked. Theon was sitting at the kitchen island, sipping a cup of coffee, scrolling through his phone. He looked up at her, amused.

“Morning sunshine! Sansa said you came in pretty late last night. Have a good time?” He seemed far too chipper for a Saturday morning. Arya shot him a withering stare. She wondered how much Sansa had told him about her drinks with Gendry. Sansa looked over her shoulder at her from the stove.

“I told Theon you bumped into a friend and ended up going to the pub after our meeting yesterday,” she explained, giving Arya a pointed look. Arya felt relieved. She was hoping Theon didn’t know, just in case it hadn’t worked out. Trust Sansa to be two steps ahead, as always.

“Yeah it was fine. Bit tired. Didn’t sleep well.” She grumbled, hoping her tone would discourage any further questions.

“I never sleep well after drinking,” Theon said absentmindedly, still scrolling on his phone.

Sansa walked over to them with two plates, putting one down in front of each of them. Arya’s stomach rumbled as the smell of the food hit her. She was going to miss Sansa’s cooking when they moved out after the wedding. “Thanks,” she hummed in approval. Sansa retrieved her own plate from beside the stove and joined them at the island. She seemed to be examining Arya, trying to gauge her mood. Arya ignored her as much as possible, concentrating on her breakfast.
“So you had a good night last night?” Sansa asked casually, her eyes scanning Arya as she spoke. Arya felt herself getting irritated before she even spoke.

“It was fine,” she snapped, avoiding eye contact with her sister, hoping she’d take the hint.

“Got any plans for tonight?” Sansa enquired, looking like she was trying to keep a straight face.

“Yeah actually I’m going on a date,” Arya sighed, knowing she sounded somewhat exasperated.

Sansa’s eyebrows shot up, not even trying to hide her excitement.

“You don’t sound very happy about it!” she exclaimed.

Arya was nearly finished her food. She waited until she had swallowed before sighing loudly. “I have no idea what to wear tonight. I don’t know where we’re going.”

“I’ll help you! Let’s go through your wardrobe now and see what you can wear!” Sansa was practically bouncing on her seat at the idea. Arya wanted to kick herself for opening up. Now she was going to have go through the whole evening with Sansa. She already felt self conscious about Gendry not wanting to have sex and she really didn’t fancy the idea of recounting that conversation to her sister. It was embarrassing.

She knew it was partly because her ego was a bit bruised but there was more to it than that. Arya felt far too nervous about seeing Gendry again after what they had shared the night before. His admission that he needed whatever was happening between them to mean more had somehow made her feel inadequate and anxious.

Sansa grabbed everyone’s plates and took them to the sink to rinse them. Theon and Arya both looked at each other, slightly alarmed. They knew that when Sansa was excited about something, there was no stopping her. It was the same with the wedding plans. They could either hop on the train or get off the tracks.

Arya jumped off her stool and made her way back into her bedroom. She opened up her wardrobe, and started flicking through the hangers. Sansa came in behind her, pulling open the curtains and
“Right, let’s throw a bit of light on the subject!” she announced, standing beside Arya at the wardrobe and pursing her lips at the clothes hanging there. “So how did last night go?” she asked, examining a denim jacket that hung on the end of the rail.

Arya huffed a frustrated breath. “I don’t want to talk about it, alright?” She was looking for something at the back of the wardrobe, wishing not for the first time, that she was more organised with her clothes.

“But you’re going on another date tonight. So it must have gone well?” Sansa sounded perplexed.

“I thought it was going well…” Arya grumbled, deliberately ignoring her sister’s searching look.

“What happened? Did he upset you?” Sansa sounded so concerned, it almost made Arya want to confide to her how unnerved she had been by Gendry’s confession that he wanted something more than casual.

“No, I’m not upset. I’m just confused,” she managed to get out, cringing inwardly, wishing they weren’t having this conversation.

“By what? Something he said or did?” Sansa was so over protective sometimes it drove Arya mad. She knew it was only because she didn’t want to see her younger sister get hurt again but it made her feel like a child.

Arya turned to face her sister. “Everything was going great in the pub. We were getting on really well, you know?” Sansa nodded, letting her continue. “Then he said he had to go upstairs and feed his cat.” Sansa frowned.

“His cat?” Hang on, does he live upstairs?” she asked, trying to follow along.

“Yeah he has a flat above his shop. It’s very nice,” Arya trailed off, pulling a blue silk cap-sleeved shirt out and throwing it on the bed. She then found a pair of black skinny jeans that she thought would go well with it and laid them out on the bed as well.
“You went up to his flat?” Sansa asked, trying and failing to keep the excitement out of her voice.

“Yeah and I met his cat, who is adorable by the way. And I kept waiting for him to make a move, but he wouldn’t,” she sighed. “So then we were sitting on his couch, talking about Nymeria...”

“Nymeria?” Sansa asked, surprised.

“Yeah he wanted to know about my paw tattoos,” she shrugged.

“Right, go on.” Sansa encouraged, not wanting to distract Arya from the point of the story.

“So anyway, we were talking about lots of things. And it was really nice. It felt easy, you know? Even though we’d never been alone like that before.” Sansa nodded. “And he kept asking me questions about myself. And all I could think about was when were we going to kiss!” Arya buried her hands in her face for a moment.

Sansa beamed at her proudly. “So what’s the problem?” Did you kiss? Was he not a good kisser?”

She shot Sansa a dismissive look. “He’s a good kisser. That’s not the problem.” Arya paused. “I just want to say, this conversation is making me very uncomfortable, you know.”

Sansa slapped her arm impatiently. “Oh come on! Then what happened?”

“The kiss was good. Really good,” Arya smiled, momentarily lost in the memory of it. “And I ended up sitting on his lap.” She blushed.

“This is wonderful Arya!” Sansa exclaimed, hugging her sister around the shoulders before being shrugged off.

“He didn’t want to have sex with me!” Arya blurted out, hating having to admit it to anyone.

“What do you mean?” Sansa frowned at her sceptically.
“He said he wants to wait and get to know me better before we sleep together,” she grumbled, rolling her eyes.

Sansa didn’t say anything for a moment, the wheels clearly turning in her head. “Ok, well I can see why this might have bothered you. But I think it’s lovely that he wants to wait. Don’t you think it will be better in the long run?” Arya glared at her.

“For fuck’s sake, you sound just like him now! Why do we have to wait for some arbitrary point in time? Why can’t we have sex and get to know each other?”

“Maybe he’s not comfortable doing that?” Sansa offered. “I know it’s unusual but not all guys just want to get in your knickers you know.”

“I need to talk to Jon about this…” Arya huffed.

Sansa looked utterly confused now. “Why? Jon’s not going want to talk about sex with you of all people! In his head you’re still 10! And I’m about 12.” She laughed to herself.

“Jon’s the only other person I know who has a similar attitude to sex. Gendry grew up not knowing his dad, and I think that’s why he wants to go slow. Maybe Jon can help me understand. I need to understand.”

“OK well good luck trying to get Jon to have a conversation with you about it.” Sansa sat down on the bed, looking at the clothes Arya had laid out. “Is this what you’re wearing tonight?” She sounded less than impressed.

Arya whipped around defensively. “Yeah why, what’s wrong with it?”

Sansa backtracked immediately. “No, nothing. It’s very nice. It’s just… You always wear this kind of thing. Why don’t you wear a dress for a change?” She said it meekly as if expecting Arya to erupt in response.

“I don’t have any dresses! I hate wearing dresses. You know that.” Arya said defeatedly.
Sansa’s face lit up again. “I have an idea. Let’s go shopping and find you something! You don’t have to wear a girly dress! But it might be nice to try something new?” she asked gently.

“OK, fine. I’ll have a look. But if we don’t find anything then this is what I’m wearing.” She knew she sounded petulant but she didn’t care.

“Great. I’m going to hop in the shower and get ready. Let’s leave in about an hour.”

Sansa left, closing the door behind her. Arya stretched out on the bed, picking up her phone and pulling up Jon’s number. She hit call and it rang several times before he answered.

“Arya, hi. I can’t talk now, I’m just heading out the door with Ygritte. Can I call you later?” He sounded slightly flustered.

“Then why did you answer the bloody phone? I hate when people do that. Just let it go to voicemail if you don’t have time to talk.” She sighed, already hating this conversation.

“I thought it might be important!” he responded, amused.

“It is important… I need to ask you something.” she said reluctantly.

“Ask away,” he said unfazed.

Arya knew he was going to hate this question but she needed to know. “Ok. How long were you and Ygritte together before you slept together? And is she the only girl you’ve been with?” she got the whole thing out in one breath, wincing while she waited for his answer. There was a very awkward silence on the other end before Jon finally spoke.

“What the hell is wrong with you? I’m not answering that!” he responded, sounding equal parts mortified and furious. Arya couldn’t help but enjoy making her older brother squirm so easily. He had always been so uptight about sex and relationships.
“I’ve met someone. I really like him Jon. And I think he really likes me too. But he doesn’t want to have sex until we get to know each other better.” She explained matter of factly.

“Good! You shouldn’t be having sex at all!” he grumbled.

“I’m not a child Jon! I’ve had sex before. This is the first time this has happened to me and I don’t know how to handle it.”

“Arya, I don’t want to talk about this with you!” he said grudgingly, clearly uncomfortable with the idea of his baby sister sleeping with anyone.

“If you don’t tell me I’ll just call Ygritte instead. I know she won’t mind talking about it,” she shot back, knowing it was true. Arya loved Ygritte. They had bonded immediately when Arya had moved in to the house.

“She’s right here and she’s giving me a very strange look. She seems to think this is hilarious,” he muttered.

“It is hilarious how much of a prude you are!” Arya laughed now. She always enjoyed pushing his buttons.

“I’m not a prude! I just don’t think this is an appropriate conversation.” Arya heard him whispering to Ygritte for a second. She could just imagine Jon’s horrified face and Ygritte’s amused one in return. “Ygritte says it was about 6 weeks after we met,” he offered finally, clearly uncomfortable sharing this with her.

“And was she the first girl you slept with?” Arya asked, despite knowing this would just embarrass him further. There was another pregnant pause in the conversation.

“Yes, she was. Happy now?” he sounded utterly discomfited. “Can we never talk about this again please?”

“But I just need to know why? Why did you wait so long?” she asked imploringly.
“It wasn’t that long!” he raised his voice now defensively. “We were young Arya. We’ve been together for ages now.”

“Please Jon. This guy I’m seeing is a bastard too. He said he can’t just do casual. And you’re the only other person I know who’s ever been in a similar situation,” she begged. Jon sighed resignedly.

“I suppose it’s because I was very conscious that sex could have serious repercussions. I was always aware that every time I had sex, I could potentially get a girl pregnant and it made it hard to be with just anyone. The last thing I wanted to do was accidentally bring a child into the world. Also there was a tiny bit of me that was terrified that if I did sleep with a complete stranger, there was always the slight chance that she could be related to me and I wouldn’t even know it. Made it kind of tricky to just go out and sow my wild oats, you know?”

Arya listened to him, trying her best to empathise with her oldest brother. “Thanks Jon. I know you hate talking to me about this stuff. I appreciate it.”

“Yeah well let us please never speak of this again.” He paused for a moment. “And it sounds like you really like this guy. So, you know, no need to rush into anything…” she could practically hear him cringe, and she bit her lip to stop from laughing at him.

“OK thanks for the advice. Say hi to Ygritte for me.”

“She says hi back. She’s also laughing at me uncontrollably now, so thanks for that!” he grumbled but he sounded slightly amused at the same time.

“Ok, bye. Talk to you soon. Love you.” Arya added.

“Love you too.” Jon mumbled before hanging up.

Arya relaxed back onto her pillow. She thought maybe she had been looking at this situation all wrong. She really liked Gendry and she knew from the way he had talked about it last night that this was very important to him. She had tried her best not to take it personally, but a part of her couldn’t help but be slightly insulted that he was determined to wait. She supposed that was just her ego getting in the way. After what had happened on the couch and in their text conversation, it was clear that he was very attracted to her. She decided if he was intent on dragging this out, she was going to enjoy torturing him a bit first.
Later that morning, Arya and Sansa strolled through a small cluster of upmarket boutiques. Sansa had convinced Arya to try on some dresses in one of her favourite stores, despite Arya’s reluctance. They entered the largest shop on the narrow street, Sansa immediately scanning the rails for suitable dresses, flicking between the hangers with alarming speed. Arya perused a mannequin, scowling at the frills on the bottom of the dress.

“I don’t want anything frilly or too flouncy San,” she reminded her sister, who had already pulled three different black dresses from the rack, and was moving on to the next aisle.

“I know, I know. You’re not a dress person. But everyone needs a little black dress for nights like this.” She was focused on the clothes in front of her, not bothering to look up at Arya as she rifled through the dresses with almost clinical precision. She pulled three more dresses in quick succession and handed them to Arya. “Come on. Let’s see how these look on you.”

“I hate you,” Arya said sarcastically, following her sister to the changing rooms.

The first five dresses were a definite no. Arya didn’t even bother coming out of the changing room to show Sansa. The sixth dress had potential though. It was made of a soft, heavy jersey material and it hung from her shoulders, leaving her back completely bare. It hugged her hips and stopped half way down her thigh. It felt grown up and sophisticated, like nothing Arya had ever worn before. She stepped out of the cubicle. Sansa was sitting on a velvet armchair, flicking through a magazine. Her eyes went wide when she saw the dress.

“Oh wow! That looks amazing on you!” she almost squealed with delight. Arya frowned, looking at herself in the large mirror at the end of the row of changing rooms. She turned and looked over her shoulder.

“It’s backless though, which means I can’t wear a bra…” She also felt like the dress had the potential to slip off her shoulders at any moment, which made it hard to relax in it. As much as she wanted to torture Gendry a bit tonight, she didn’t fancy flashing everyone else. Sansa came to stand beside her.

“You don’t need a bra.” Sansa shrugged.
“Hey!” Arya grumbled. “Are you saying that because I have small tits?”

“No!” she replied emphatically. “I mean you’ll look great in this. And you’re lucky you can wear it without a bra. That’s all. Don’t get offended.” She pulled at the fabric of the dress, rearranging it so it sat just right on Arya’s hips. “And we can stick some tit tape under the shoulders in case you’re worried about it slipping down.”

“How did you know?” Arya asked, unnerved by how perceptive Sansa was sometimes.

“It’s my job! This is the type of stuff I do at work.” She adjusted the shoulders slightly as she spoke.

Arya looked at herself in the mirror. She did look good. She was just so unused to wearing dresses. She thought it might be good to move out of her comfort zone. “OK I’ll wear it. But I’m wearing boots with it. Can we go now?”

Sansa clasped her hands together, bouncing on her feet excitedly. “Oh I wish I could see his face when he sees you in this!”

“You can. He’s picking me up at seven o’clock at our house.” Arya deadpanned.

“He is? Why didn’t you say so?” Sansa exclaimed, giddy at the thought. “Oh this is so romantic Arya!”

Arya looked at her sister. Sometimes it felt like there were from two different planets, especially in moments like this.

“You know you’re getting married soon? Isn’t that enough romance for you?” she asked cynically.

“No such thing as enough romance!” When you fall in love you’ll understand…” Sansa sighed dreamily. “That reminds me, I have to pick up some wedding favours today from that lovely confectionary shop. Let’s pop in there on our way home.”

“Fine.” Arya went back into the cubicle and starting getting dressed in her own clothes.
They were almost at the street in question, when Sansa stopped suddenly, gasping and grabbing Arya’s arm dramatically and turning to her.

“What?” Arya asked suspiciously.

“I know what you should do! You should get a bikini wax!” Sansa announced enthusiastically.

Arya groaned. “But he said he doesn’t want to have sex with me yet! What’s the point?”

“Not for him, you idiot. For you! It’ll make you feel sexier.” She cocked an eyebrow suggestively.

Arya squirmed. Sansa looked far too excited about the prospect. “I don’t want to get one now Sansa! My skin will be all red and blotchy tonight. That’s hardly sexy!”

“Not if you go somewhere really good.” She pointed at a salon in front of them. “This is the place I go to. And they’re a walk in salon, so you don’t need an appointment.” She dragged Arya in through a white, nondescript doorway with several plaques on the wall.

Arya hesitated. “Sansa, I really don’t see the point…”

“Are you scared it’ll hurt?” Sansa challenged. Arya knew what her sister was trying to do.

“No! I’ve had them before. And besides my pain threshold is very high. I just think… I don’t want him to think I’m trying too hard.”

“He doesn’t even have to know! If nothing happens, he’ll be obvious. But it will make you feel more sexual. Which will give you the upper hand. Trust me.”

Arya wasn’t sure she wanted to feel more sexual, especially if nothing was going to happen
tonight. It might just leave her feeling even more frustrated. But she reluctantly acquiesced, and let Sansa drag her into the reception.

Later that afternoon they returned home, shopping bags in hand. Sansa had been right about the waxing salon. The woman who waxed her was very professional and had done exactly as Arya had requested, leaving some hair at the front so she didn’t feel too bare. It hadn’t been nearly as painful as the last place and her skin wasn’t too red. She thought it would be fine by tonight. She pulled open her underwear drawer and rifled through it, looking for her favourite thong. It was sheer and black and barely there, and she knew it would work well under her new dress.

Arya felt oddly exposed with her wax. It had been ages since she had one and she’d almost forgotten how conscious it made her of her own body. She hoped she hadn’t just done something that would make the whole night even more torturous for herself. She went about getting ready, showering with cool water and shaving her legs and underarms and exfoliating her whole body, before washing her hair. She was just in the process of blow drying it when Sansa knocked on the door, peaking her head inside.

“Need a hand? I could help you do your hair in a nice braid?” She looked so excited at the idea, Arya didn’t have the heart to tell her to piss off.

“Sure. It’s nearly dry now.” She continued to brush it as Sansa approached and took over, taking the hairdryer and the brush out of her hands and smoothing her hair back off her face as she worked. When Sansa was finished drying it, she started working some product into it and separating it into sections so she could braid it. It was just long enough to create a loose braid down her neck that ended at the top of her shoulders.

“How are you feeling? Excited? Nervous?” Sansa asked cautiously.

“Both” Arya replied. “I have no idea where we’re going. Gendry just asked me to send him my address earlier and said it would be a surprise.”

“Well, I imagine you’re going to go for dinner, right? Otherwise he would have told you to eat first?”

Arya hadn’t thought of this. Maybe she should just text him and double check.
“Yeah, you’re probably right. Hang on…” She grabbed her phone and stood up, walking away towards the window to type out a text to Gendry. He was supposed to be here in just under an hour.

“Why are you standing over there to text him?” Sansa asked quizzically.

“Because I don’t want you to see our texts.” Arya shot back.

“If they’re sexts I don’t want to see them either!” Sansa laughed nervously.

Arya: Hi. Just checking in ahead of tonight. Are we going for something to eat? If not I’ll have something quickly now

She hit send and waited, biting her lip. Three dots appeared almost immediately.

Gendry: Yeah I was going to take you to dinner. Don’t eat anything! Is that ok with you?

Arya: No no that sounds great. I just wanted to double check. See you at 7?

Gendry: Yeah I’ll give you a call if I have any trouble finding your house.

And then another three dots flashed for a moment.

Gendry: Really looking forward to seeing you.

Arya felt herself blush. Sansa watched on in silence, a smug smile forming on her lips.

Arya: Me too 😊

“Arya, are you actually blushing?” Sansa chuckled.
“Shut up. I’m not” Arya couldn’t contain the good mood that had swept over her.

“You are. You’re totally blushing. It’s so cute!” Sansa pinched her cheek, and Arya swatted her hand away.

“Piss off Sansa!” she couldn’t hide she smile that was forming on her face.

“OK, fine. I’ll leave you alone now. Unless you want me to help you with your makeup?” she asked hopefully.

“No, I can do my own makeup, for fuck’s sake!” she shook her head and pushed Sansa towards the door.

“Well, just let me know if you need a second opinion.” Sansa called back on her way out the door.

At seven o’clock on the dot, Arya heard a knock at the front door. Sansa and Theon were sitting on the couch in the living room, watching some reality show Arya didn’t recognise. They had just ordered a takeaway and Theon had just opened a bottle of red for them, leaving it on the coffee table to breathe for a while. Arya poked her head into the living room.

“Theon can you get that?” I’m not ready! Sansa I need your help in the bedroom,” she asked nervously, imploring her sister to follow her. Sansa jumped up, following her back into the bedroom.

“Theon love, can you entertain Arya’s date for a minute please?” she asked sweetly.

Theon looked around, uncomfortable. “But our show is just starting…” he scowled.

“We can watch it later on catch up!” Sansa whispered, getting annoyed. “Just answer the bloody door for the poor guy!”
Theon turned the TV off and marched out into the hall, opening the front door. His face when he saw Gendry standing there was priceless, a combination of bewilderment and alarm.

“Gendry! What are you doing here? Is this about Sansa’s ring?” he asked, utterly confused.

“Theon, hi. No, I’m here to pick up Arya,” Gendry explained, equally as confused by Theon’s tone. “Did she not tell you?” he asked, feeling slightly awkward now.

“She said she was going on a date. She didn’t mention it was with you. Come in, come in.” Theon ushered him into the living room. “Do you want a drink? Are you driving?” he asked, leaving Gendry in the living room and walking over to the kitchen, opening the fridge to check what they actually had besides the red wine he’d already opened.

“No, not driving tonight. I’m fine though. I don’t want to take any of your wine.” Gendry smiled, not quite sure what to do with himself. “Is Arya ready?” he asked expectantly, looking around the room.

“I have no idea. She just told me to answer the door and then Sansa went back into the bedroom to help her with something.” Theon shrugged, grabbing two wine glasses from the cupboard and bringing them into the living room, motioning for Gendry to sit down.

He poured them both a glass, which Gendry took reluctantly. He smiled at Theon awkwardly, trying to think of something to chat about.

“How are the wedding plans coming along?” he asked, hoping that would keep them going.

“Good thanks. To be honest Sansa is handling most of it. Not that I wouldn’t be happy to help, but she wants everything done in a very specific way…” He raised his eyebrows as if to say he didn’t quite understand but he was happy to go along with it. Gendry nodded, taking a sip of the wine.

Arya watched them interact from the other end of the hallway, not quite catching all of their conversation from where she stood. She wasn’t sure why she felt so nervous now, her stomach felt like it had a flock of pigeons in it, never mind butterflies.
Sansa poked her in the back. “Are you going to go out there and rescue him?”

Arya took one final look in the mirror. She’d given herself a dark grey smoky eye, lined with lots of black eyeliner. She’d also gone for a nude, rose pink lipstick, something that wouldn’t look too bad if it got smudged from kissing later. She was so annoyed with herself for feeling so nervous but she couldn’t help it. Sansa joined Theon and Gendry in the living room, greeting Gendry politely and pouring herself a glass of wine.

\textit{Stop being such a baby,} Arya thought to herself, grabbing her leather jacket and her neon pink clutch and walked into the living room. Gendry was nodding politely at something Sansa was explaining. Arya took a moment to take in what he was wearing. She had thought he looked good in his casual clothes but this was even better. He was wearing a fitted navy shirt under a dark grey jacket that made his shoulders look even broader, which she wouldn’t have thought was even possible. And he had on a pair of pale grey trousers that were hugging his thighs tightly. She caught herself licking her lips and hoped no-one else noticed.

When Gendry heard her approach his eyes shot to her immediately, taking her in. His gaze traveled up her bare legs from her black ankle boots to her new dress and finally landing on her face. His expression lit up when they made eye contact, and Arya felt a thrill of nervous energy run through her at the way he looked at her.

“Hi, sorry I kept you waiting,” she smiled, doing her best to hide her nerves.

“Hi,” he said, grinning widely, putting his glass of wine down and standing up to join her.

\textit{He looks so happy,} she thought to herself. \textit{Why is he in such a good mood?}

“You look great!” he said sincerely. He was looking at her now with such reverence that it was only making her nerves worse. She felt her heart start to beat a bit faster and willed it calm down.

“Thanks,” she replied quickly. “Will we head out?” She could feel Sansa and Theon’s eyes on them and she wanted to leave as soon as possible.

“Yeah, let’s go,” he nodded in agreement.

She began to put on her jacket, before he stepped in closer, taking it from her hands. “Here, let me
help you with that,” he offered gently, holding it out for her.

She turned around and slipped her hands into the arms, one at time, looking back at him over her shoulder.  She was pleased to see his eyes widening at her bare back and she swore she saw him gulp.  “Thanks,” she smiled back at him.  The leather felt very cold against her bare skin and made her very conscious of how skimpy the dress felt.  “Let’s go.” She headed towards the front door, checking her bag on the way to make sure she hadn’t forgotten anything important.

“Have a lovely time, you two!” Sansa called out after them, her face betraying her excitement.  Gendry smiled at her as he followed Arya out.

Arya held the front door open for Gendry.  He was about to pull it shut behind him when she swatted his arm away.  “It’s a bit tricky, let me,” she grunted as she tugged on the letterbox to close the heavy door properly.  She spun on her heel, about to step down onto the first of several tiled steps that led to the house, when Gendry grabbed her by the elbow, pulling her into his chest and taking her face in his two hands.  He brought his head down towards her and captured her lips in his, catching Arya off guard in most delightful way, before letting her face go and holding on to her shoulders.

“Hi,” he said warmly, his face flushed and his eyes dancing back and forth between her own.

“Hi,” she smiled, bringing her hands up to his broad chest and loving the way it felt under her palms.  “Couldn’t wait?”

“You look amazing,” he said appreciatively, looking at her hair for a moment and brushing a strand back from her face, before his eyes darted down to her dress.

“Thanks,” she smiled.  She wasn’t sure anyone had ever looked at her like that before.  Apart from boosting her ego, it made her feel warm inside, in her chest, to think that he was impressed by her.  “You look very sexy in your jacket,” she noted, smoothing his shoulders and taking a moment to enjoy the feel of his muscles underneath.

“My jacket?” he asked, perplexed.

“Yeah it looks really good on you.  I haven’t seen you dressed up before.  I like it.” She took a second to appraise him, enjoying the way he seemed to grow self conscious under her stare.
“Thanks,” he shrugged, putting his hands on her hips, pulling her body in towards him and giving her one more quick kiss.

“So where are we going?” she asked playfully, looking up at him.

“I told you, I’m taking you for dinner,” he replied, as they walked down the steps to the street below. Arya looked around expectantly. “Did you drive here?” she asked.

“No I took a taxi. I thought we could walk for a bit,” he explained, taking her hand and leading her down the street. She was glad she had worn her boots then, especially since she wasn’t sure how long this walk was going to be.

“Gendry?”

“Yeah?” he looked down at her, eyebrows raising slightly.

“Where are we going?” she asked suspiciously.

“I told you, I thought it would be nice to go a walk first.” He replied mysteriously.

“A walk around my own neighbourhood?” she asked, her suspicions only increasing.

“Mm-hmm”.

They continued down the tree lined street, kicking through the piles of red and gold leaves that lay at their feet. Autumn was Arya’s favourite time of year, and not just because her birthday was coming up. She always loved the way the trees changed colours and became so vivid at this time of year, as the days grew shorter and the air grew colder and crisper. “How long have you lived here?” he asked, seemingly intent on keeping up the mystery. Arya was intrigued.

“I originally moved in when I started university, but the others were already living here.”

“The others?” he asked, curious.
“Yeah Sansa and Theon were living here with my eldest brother Jon. I told you about him last night, remember?” she asked, thinking back to their conversation the night before.

“The one who’s really your cousin?” he said, looking down at the ground as he walked.

“Yeah. They were all sharing the house, as well Jon’s girlfriend Ygritte. Although she wasn’t his girlfriend when she moved in. That’s how they met.”

“And you? Have you been living here this whole time?” he asked.

She paused for a moment, not sure how much she wanted to reveal to him. “More or less. I moved out briefly for about a year but it didn’t go very well.” She felt him squeeze her hand more firmly but he didn’t push for more information. She was grateful for that.

“So now it’s just the three of you?” he asked, keeping his eyes ahead.

“Yeah Jon and Ygritte moved up north to be closer to her family for a while. Jon got a job in private security. They seem to be really happy up there. I miss him though.”

“You and Jon are close?” he asked gently.

“Yeah we’re really close. He’s the one I usually go to first to when I need to talk about something.” She thought about her conversation with Jon earlier, and how awkward it was.

“I told him about you actually,” she confessed, looking up to see his reaction. He looked down at her, his eyes widening a little.

“Yeah? What did you tell him?” he smiled, his eyes crinkling again, and Arya thought it might be her favourite thing about his smile. She cleared her throat.

“Oh I just wanted to get his advice on something…” she said, thinking it might be weird if she told him the details of the conversation.
“And did he give it?”

“Yeah. Sort of. Anyway it helped.” She laughed, thinking of how flustered Jon had gotten.

Gendry’s phone beeped and he took it out of his pocket. “Sorry I just have to reply to this really quickly,” he explained apologetically.

“That’s ok,” Arya replied, missing the contact as he dropped her hand temporality to read a message onscreen before typing a short reply and pocketing it again. He took her hand in his again.

“That was my best mate. He’s just back from holiday and wanted to catch up. I told him I’d give him a call tomorrow.”

Arya liked how he was letting her in to his life.

They turned the corner from the residential street on to the busier high street and made their way down to the other end. “It’s a great area around here.” Gendry said, eyes scanning the row of old shop fronts and restaurants. Arya was intrigued. He seemed to be looking for one in particular.

“It is, yeah.” she said, watching him carefully.

“Do you spend much time up here?” he asked, leading her towards a small restaurant on the corner. Arya was curious.

“Not really to be honest…” she answered, watching him closely. They stopped in front of the restaurant. Arya had never really paid it much notice before. It had a faded awning over the window and although the name of it, The Tattered Prince, was lit up in light bulbs, many of them were broken so it was slightly hard to read. Gendry was looking at her amused.

“Have you ever eaten in here?” he asked, his face giving her the impression he knew something she didn’t.
“No, can’t say that I have. It never looked very good to be honest,” she replied defiantly.

“I thought as much. You posh types move into an area, gentrify it, make it trendy.” His tone of voice was teasing and Arya felt herself on the defensive for some reason, even though she knew he wasn’t serious. “But you never get to know the best places to eat. Not glamorous enough for the likes of you!” He laughed and Arya raised her eyebrows, feigning insult.

“Did you not see how much I enjoyed our dinner in the pub last night? Why do you assume I like fancy restaurants, Waters?”

“I’m not assuming anything. But when you sent me your address, I had a feeling you wouldn’t have tried this place out.” She looked at him sceptically. “It’s been here for generations.”

“Mmm,” she replied, trying not to react to his teasing.

“Do you like Pentoshi food?”

“I’m not sure I’ve ever had it, to be honest,” she admitted.

“Come on.” He led her up to the door, holding it open for her. She stepped through the doorway into a curtained off porch. Arya couldn’t see anything. Good thing I’m not claustrophobic, she thought to herself. Gendry stepped up behind her, putting his hand on her lower back and nuzzling her neck for a moment, sending shivers down her spine again.

“You smell delicious,” he murmured, into her ear, and Arya felt herself throb with desire. She was acutely aware of how turned on she was, just from the sound of his voice in her ear.

Gendry pushed the curtains back to reveal a narrow space filled with as many small tables as could just about fit, each lit with a small candle, giving the room a warm glow. The walls were tiled with small, colourful mosaic tiles and there were wide pillars throughout the room that helped break up the space and make it feel more intimate. Arya had never been to Pentos but it felt like she had been transported to another time and place. Mellow music with a slow tempo played in the background. The host led them to their table which was right at the back of the restaurant, the most secluded one as far as Arya could tell.

“May I take your coat madam?” the host asked. Arya’s eyes flitted to Gendry for a split second,
before he stepped in between her and the host.

“I’ve got it thanks,” he said assertively, earning him a polite nod from the host, who left them to seat themselves.

She unzipped her jacket and Gendry helped pull it gently off her shoulders. For a split second she had a momentary panic that the jacket might get caught on the shoulders of her dress but thankfully, Sansa’s tit tape seems to keep them firmly in place. Gendry pulled out her chair for her and she took a seat, scooting herself in to the table as he hung her jacket on the back of her chair.

They took a minute to examine the menus. Arya didn’t recognise anything on them but it all sounded delicious.

“OK you’re going to have to help me out here. What’s good?” she asked, scanning the descriptions of each dish.

“Everything is really good here. You’ll have to be more specific,” he replied, looking at her for a second over his menu.

“OK well I’m definitely having the cheese bread and figs to start, because that sounds yummy.” Arya licked her lips. She was starting to get really hungry with the delicious smells wafting around the room.

“I think I’ll have the mushroom one.” Gendry said enthusiastically. “What about your main course?”

“That second dish. I like the sound of the pork sausage with garlic and hot peppers,” she remarked.

“Do you like spicy food?” he asked, intrigued.

“Yeah I love it.” She answered immediately. “What about you?”

“Yeah I like it. As long as I can still taste whatever it is I’m eating.”
“What are you thinking of having then?” she asked, continuing to scan the menu.

“The saddle of lamb sounds good,” he remarked. “But it says it’s for two people.”

“I’ll share it with you,” Arya suggested immediately.

Gendry smiled brightly. “You will? Excellent!” He sounded thrilled at the idea. The waiter approached their table to take their orders and they ordered a bottle of Dornish red to go with the lamb.

Gendry slid his arm across the small table, taking Arya’s hand in his own, rubbing his thumb across her wrist. “I was really looking forward to seeing you tonight.” He smiled shyly, and the action made Arya’s skin come alive under his delicate touch. She watched his thumb trace back and forth across her wrist. She didn’t think she’d ever been so turned on by someone merely touching her hand before. Her mind immediately imagined his hands gliding over the rest of her body, and she felt herself becoming wet and swollen. She shifted in her seat and Gendry watched her, curious.

“Everything ok?” he asked quietly.


“Is this turning you on?”

“A little bit.” She admitted, feeling herself flush at the admission.

“Want me to stop?” he asked, his eyebrows raised suggestively.

“No. Don’t stop. It feels really good,” she looked up at him, her momentary embarrassment fading and being replaced with greedy desire. His face registered what she was telling him and she watched him go from amused to ravenous.
“Thank you for last night,” he said softly, his eyes never leaving hers. He cleared his throat.

“My pleasure,” she replied smugly, remembering their sexting conversation and how she had thoroughly enjoyed sending those sexs knowing he was getting himself off to her words. Her orgasm afterwards had been fucking intense.

“I haven’t come that hard in a long time,” he admitted, and his honesty startled Arya.

“Good… Me neither,” she looked down at the table, hoping she wasn’t blushing too obviously.

“How did you sleep afterwards?” he asked. The question threw Arya for a moment. She thought about lying and telling him she had slept great but something else inside of her made her want to be honest with him.

“Not well, actually.” She looked up at him. He was staring at her intently.

“No?” he asked, concerned.

“No. I had a very intense dream about us but I woke up before I got to the good bit” she huffed.

Gendry laughed easily. “Oh! I’m sorry. I feel partly responsible.”

“Partly? You’re fully responsible!” she shot back. “I have never been this horny and frustrated before in my life Gendry!”

He sighed, biting his lip, and Arya had the intense desire to be the one biting it. “What happened in your dream?” he asked, continuing to rub her hand with his thumb gently.

Arya considered telling him but then had a better idea. “I’ll tell you later.” She smirked and watched his face fall in disappointment.

Their starters arrived and Arya thought to herself that she was going to thoroughly enjoy teasing Gendry throughout the rest of the night.
After they had finished their desserts, Gendry asked for the bill, insisting that he pay, despite Arya’s protests. “You can buy me dinner next time, what about that?” he asked diplomatically. Arya’s heart soared at the idea that there would be a next time.

“OK you’ve got a deal.”

They stood up and Arya took her jacket off the back of the chair, ready to leave, when Gendry stopped her, putting a hand on top of hers. “We’re not leaving yet,” he said grinning. She frowned, tilting her head at him.

“What do you mean?” He took her hand and led her towards a set of stairs at the other side of the restaurant that Arya had assumed led to the toilets. “Are you taking me for a quickie in the loos?” she joked nervously.

“No, but I am taking you downstairs…” He guided her in front of him and she stepped carefully down the narrow, steep steps that seemed to lead to nowhere. When they got to the bottom, Arya stood waiting, intrigued. Gendry slid his hands around her waist, pulling her in closer and dipping his head down to capture her lips in a swooping kiss. She moaned into his mouth, loving the way his stubble grazed her lips. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders, playing with the hair on the back of his neck. He had seemed to like that the night before.

“You taste like those black cherries in your dessert,” he hummed appreciatively, sucking her lower lip into his mouth.

Arya could feel herself beaming. He couldn’t get enough of her and it was making her feel amazing. She pulled back to look at him. His blue eyes were practically twinkling with delight.

“What are we doing down here?” she asked happily.

“You see that plate on the wall?” He pointed behind her over her shoulder and Arya pulled herself back to study the area of the wall he was pointing at. She was confused but intrigued.
“This one?” she said, pointing to an engraved brass plate hung on the wall. It seemed to stand out from the others, which were not as ornate.

“Push it.” Gendry said, his face taking on a rather smug expression. Arya pushed the plate and it gave way as if it was a large button. A panel in the wall slid open, revealing an old wine cellar that had been turned into a cocktail bar. Her eyes went wide. It was so dark and moody, with people sitting closely at high tables.

A statuesque woman dressed in a shimmering gold gown stood behind a narrow desk. Arya suddenly felt very underdressed in her boots. The woman’s deep mahogany skin glimmered in the low lighting. Arya realised that this woman was probably the same age as her own mother but she was incredibly glamorous. She eyed them both carefully for a moment.

“Password?” she asked invitingly. Arya was utterly lost. She looked to Gendry.

“The night is dark and full of terrors’” Gendry replied, and the woman’s expression softened.

“It’s good to see you Gendry.” The woman smiled at them both warmly, coming around her station and kissing him on both cheeks. Arya was almost jealous. She wanted to be the only one kissing those cheeks.

“Arya this is Chataya, she owns the whole place, including the restaurant upstairs. Chataya this is Arya, my date,” Gendry explained. Arya felt a warm thrill run though her at the pride in his voice.

“Lovely to meet you Arya. Come, I’ll you show you both to your table.” She walked them over to a cosy booth, with had a deep red velvet banquette seat. It was small, which meant they would have to squeeze in closely together to get comfortable. Arya took a seat. Chataya handed them their menus and said she would send someone over in a minute to take their orders.

“This place used to be an old Pentoshi speakeasy, back in the day,” Gendry explained, as he hung both his and Arya’s jackets up on a small hook on the wall. He slid in beside her, resting his arm nearest to Arya behind her on the back of the seat. Arya shuffled in to get as close in to his body as she could. She realised she could feel his body heat radiating off him like a furnace. She felt as if she couldn’t get close enough to him and she thought about how good it had felt to sit on his lap the night before.

Arya was fascinated that this place could exist right under her nose and she’d never heard about it.
“How did you know about it?” She asked.

“My friend who rang earlier, Grey?”

“Your friend’s name is Grey?” Arya asked sceptically.

“It’s just a nickname. His girlfriend used to work here years ago.” Gendry brushed her upper arm with his hand, sending goosebumps over her skin. Arya turned to look into his blue eyes.

“Ever taken a girl here before?” she asked, dreading his answer.

“No,” he laughed, “I’ve only been here a few times. Years ago, when they started going out, Grey asked me to come with him so he could have a reason to visit her. Always felt a bit out of place here, back then.”

“And now?” she asked, relief taking over and allowing her to relax again.

“Now I have a much better reason to be here.” He was looking at her with that intensity again and Arya had the strong desire to straddle him like she had done the night before in his place. But she supposed that would be probably be frowned upon, so instead she put her hand on his thigh, squeezing the firm muscle there and enjoying the look of surprise that took over his face.

“Thank you for taking me here. I really like it.”

He bent his head down to nuzzle her neck and she focused on how good he smelled, masculine and smoky, and it only served to make her even more turned on. She wasn’t sure how she was going to last the rest of the night in public with him if he kept touching her and leaning into her the way he had been at every opportunity. Her knickers were already soaked.

A waitress approached the table to take their order and they both laughed and realised they hadn’t even looked at the menu yet. Arya scanned the list of drinks and found one with rum that sounded good. Gendry ordered something bitter that Arya had never heard of before. She was finding it more and more difficult to concentrate with his body so close and his hand grazing the skin of her upper arm.
When their drinks arrived, Arya took a sip of hers and considered something. She wanted to be open with Gendry but she wasn’t sure where to start. “OK promise not to laugh?” Arya asked hesitantly.

“Ok...” He trailed off warily.

“I think is the first proper grown up date I’ve ever been on.” Arya confessed self consciously.

“What do you mean? Why would I laugh at that?” Gendry asked dumbfounded. “But you’ve been in relationships before, right?

Arya winced internally before deciding to be upfront. “I dated a few boys in school and uni but nothing serious. But then I was with someone for a while, the older guy I told you about?” Gendry nodded. “But we… He never took me out like this. That’s not the kind of relationship we had.”

“What kind of relationship did you have?” he asked gently.

“The kind that was really not healthy in hindsight. It was mostly based around sex, to be honest. He was my first… He played a lot of power games with me that I didn’t even realise we were playing until afterwards.” Gendry’s expression grew darker and his brow furrowed. Was he jealous? “It was a very fucked up relationship and it took me a long time to come to terms with the reality of it, after it ended.”

“Ok, can I ask you something personal?” Gendry looked very serious now.

Arya felt herself stiffen. But she wanted to be open with him.

“What, that wasn’t personal enough for you?” she said sarcastically. She paused for a moment before nodding. “Go ahead.”

“Is he the only man you’ve been with?”
“Yes.” She felt herself flush with embarrassment. “Why what about you? How many women have you slept with?”

“Three,” he answered without hesitation. “Have you ever been tested?”

Arya’s face dropped. She hadn’t been expecting them to have this conversation, but she knew it was important.

“Yes I have. I found out he had been sleeping with someone else.” The memory still made her furious. “That’s why it ended. And I got tested afterwards, just to be safe. I was clean. Thank the gods,” she smiled bitterly. “What about you?”

“I got tested after my last relationship ended too. Not because I thought I had anything but just to be safe, like you said. I was clean too.”

“Good.” Arya didn’t know what else to say now in the wake of such a serious topic. She looked down at her lap, self conscious.

“I’m sorry he hurt you.” Gendry said tenderly. She felt her heart lighten at his words. He took her hand in his, squeezing it gently.

“Thank you.” She smiled, touched by his kindness. “To be honest, it put me off guys and relationships for a long time.”

“And now? How do you feel about getting into another relationship?” Arya felt her pulse race. He was looking at her with that same intensity again, and it should have terrified her. But instead it thrilled her to think that he was that interested in her.

“Now the idea doesn’t seem so scary.” She smiled at him gently and he grinned back at her enthusiastically. She leaned in to him and pressed a soft kiss to his lips, hoping to show him how big a step this was for her.

“You know what you said last night about not letting anyone in for a long time?” he asked when they broke apart. She hummed in agreement.
“It’s been a long time for me too. I’m not just talking about sex.” She laughed easily at this, and he continued. “It’s not easy for me to trust new people. I think because I grew up without a lot of people in my life, I’ve learned to rely on just myself.”

“That makes sense” she nodded, squeezing his knee reassuringly. “I suppose I don’t trust people easily either. After everything that happened.” They stared at each other intensely. Arya felt stripped bare before him now, as if he was really seeing her clearly for the first time. It terrified her to let someone in like that. But it felt right.

Gendry’s phone beeped but he didn’t move to look at it. Instead he took her cheek in his hand, slipping his fingertips into her hair and pulling himself forward to kiss her more forcefully this time, eliciting a low moan from Arya. She twisted her upper body towards him and he took the opportunity to run his other hand from her shoulder blade down to the exposed skin of her back, creating ripples of pleasure down her spine and once again making her achingly aware of how little she was wearing. She was finding it harder and harder not to jump him. Her knickers were drenched with her own arousal.

“Your skin feels so soft,” he murmured, running his palm along her back, squeezing the flesh appreciatively and making Arya arch her back in pleasure. That’s it, she thought, he’s having far too much fun teasing me. She returned her hand to his thigh, but this time edging her way up and in, achingly close to his groin. She loved making him squirm under her touch, and he almost groaned before containing himself and shooting her a warning glance.

“Arya, what are you doing?” he asked warily.

“Me? I’m not doing anything,” she grinned, thoroughly enjoying turning the tables on him and watching him react to her ministrations.

“Your hand is getting dangerously high there,” he chuckled, looking slightly flushed around the neck.

“Mmm, so?” she asked innocently, digging her fingertips into the meat of his thigh, knowing that she was merely inches away from his cock now.

“Arya, if you don’t stop, you’re going to give me a massive erection in a second!” he exclaimed under his breath.
“Massive? Don’t make promises you can’t keep, Gendry…” She decided to be bold and grazed her fingertips higher. Sure enough she could feel the outline of him, hardening under the fabric of his trousers, creating an impressive bulge. He flinched and tried to pull away from her touch.

“We’re in public,” he whispered in mock outrage, but the glint in his eye told her that part of him was enjoying her daring to touch him so intimately.

“So? No-one can see what I’m doing in this light…” she looked up at him bashfully, knowing he was growing harder under her featherlight touch. “You don’t like it?”

“Of course I bloody like it,” he groaned, shifting his hips.

She cupped her hand over him fully and gave him a firm squeeze. “You wanted to know about my dream last night?” she asked playfully.

He nodded and stared into her eyes intensely.

“Tell me.”

She smirked, delighting in the way his breathing grew deeper and his nostrils flared. “We were on your couch. Like last night. Except we were both completely naked and covered in sweat,” she went on, continuing to rub and squeeze his cock as she spoke, tracing the length of him. He was rock hard under her hand now. She leaned in to his neck, nuzzling him as she spoke and whispered into his ear.

“And I was riding your cock. And you felt so good deep inside of me.”

“Fuck!” he growled. His hand at her back suddenly squeezed harder, pulling her in towards him and he kissed her so fiercely, she felt as if he was trying to devour her. When they finally parted, Arya gave him one more hard squeeze and let go, moving her hand back down to his thigh. She took a sip of her drink and realised it was nearly finished. And so was Gendry’s, she noticed.

“Want to get another drink?” she stared into his eyes, his pupils blown wide.
He stared at her, his chest heaving. “Not really…”

“Want to get out of here?” she asked.

“Arya you’re really testing my will power tonight,” he threatened. Arya felt a swell of female pride that she could have this effect on him.

“Gendry, last night, you said you couldn’t fall into bed with a stranger and I respected that.”

“You did…”

“But am I still a stranger now?”

“No. You’re definitely not,” he said. Arya grinned at him wolfishly and Gendry grinned back in return.

“So what do we do now?” she asked innocently.

Gendry paused for a moment, breathing deeply, clearly torn. He met her gaze, staring into her eyes fiercely, passionately. Something had shifted between them in that moment. She could feel the spark between them ignite.

“Fuck it, let’s get out of here.”
Almost

Chapter Summary

Arya and Gendry get closer and closer to crossing that line... Smut ensues...

Chapter Notes

Thanks as always for all the love and support you've shown this fic! It's been a labour of love and I can't believe I've written nearly 50k words!!!

It will probably end up being more than 10 chapters at this stage, so stay tuned...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry had never thought of himself as someone who would be comfortable with PDAs before. But somehow he had found himself in the back of a taxi with Arya wrapped around him, both of them completely oblivious to the driver up front. He was drunk, not on the wine from dinner or the cocktail afterwards, but on desperate lust for the woman currently kissing and sucking his neck, leaving a trail of love bites in her wake.

Her confession that she had only been with one other man had taken him by surprise and awoken something primal in him. She seemed so confident in her sexuality when he first met her, but now he could see the vulnerability underneath and it only made him want her more. He wanted to drive all memories of this past lover from her mind. He needed to know how she would feel under him, how she would taste on his lips, how it would feel to finally slip inside her, how she would look as she fell apart. He knew now he had never felt this strongly for someone. He wanted to claim her as his own. And he wasn’t going to wait any longer.

She was pressed into him as closely as possible without being on his lap, her hands frantically roaming over his shoulders and neck, seemingly unable or unwilling to stay still. One of his hands gripped her waist and the other held her head by the nape of her neck, fingertips digging into her braided hair. She pressed her chest into him and he was suddenly very aware that he could feel her pert nipples grazing his shirt. Of course, she’s not wearing a bra under this fucking dress. He slid his hand up from her waist to her ribs, aching to touch her perfect tits.

As if reading his mind, she whispered eagerly in his ear, “Touch me, please.”
He wasn’t going to refuse. He let his hand glide over her breast, gently at first. She gasped into his ear. He could feel her nipple was rock hard under his palm. He teased it with his thumb, earning a whimper in response, and then squeezed her whole breast firmly, which only made her whimper again.

“You like that?” he asked gently. She merely hummed her agreement, too caught up in the sensation.

“You have amazing tits Arya. I can’t wait to get my mouth on them, he whispered into her ear as her nuzzled her neck. She gasped again.

“Gods, what are you doing to me Gendry?” she panted, grabbing his head in her hand and kissing him fiercely. He continued to squeeze her firm flesh and thumb her nipple, delighted to know it was giving her so much pleasure.

“Alright, you two love birds, here we are!” the taxi man shouted back at them genially. They broke apart, taking a moment to get their bearings. They had pulled up at the same spot of the Street of Steel where Arya had gotten into her Uber the night before.

They thanked the driver and Gendry slid out of the car first, holding the door open and offering his hand to Arya to help her stand up. She smiled up at him softly as she took it and stood before him.

“You’re such a gent!” She leaned up to kiss him quickly.

“I try to be,” he replied modestly, shrugging. “Come on.” He pulled her along and they half walked, half ran down the cobblestoned lane that led to the courtyard. As they ran, Arya looked up to him, giggling, and Gendry felt giddy at the sight of her laughing so freely.

They made it to the downstairs door of his flat. As he fished in his pockets for his keys, Arya’s hands came sliding around his waist from behind. Her left hand dipped lower to palm his cock, which was rapidly hardening again, just as it had when she first starting touching him under the table in the speakeasy.

“Arya, wait!” he laughed, “let me get the door open, for fuck’s sake!”

Arya hummed into his back “I can’t wait. I need to touch you.”
He managed to get the key in the lock and pushed the door open, both of them falling through on wobbly legs. They rushed up the stairs and he fumbled again with the keys as Arya continued her teasing, this time grabbing his arse and squeezing hard.

The door opened and he pulled her through, slamming it shut behind him. Arya dropped her handbag on the floor and pushed him up against the door, kissing him hard and sliding her hands up his chest. Gendry noticed Storm sitting on the couch, staring at them, as if he’d been waiting for their arrival. He didn’t try and approach them, as he must have sensed now was not the time.

Gendry grabbed Arya by the hips and quickly slid his hands down to her wonderful bum, squeezing both cheeks firmly. She moaned into his mouth and pressed her body into him, rubbing herself along his straining cock. She pulled back to look up at him, eyes glazed over with desire.

“Where’s your bedroom?” she asked, panting hard.

“Are you sure?” he said, searching her eyes. “We don’t have to yet, you know?”

She grinned wickedly at him. “Oh I’m very sure.” She paused then and looked up at him in earnest. “Are you sure? I know you said you wanted to wait. We don’t have to have sex tonight, as much as I’m dying to. There’s other things we can do…” She was so sincere in her words that it made Gendry’s heart swell to know she was willing to wait, as they’d originally discussed. In that moment, he knew for certain that he couldn’t wait any longer. He had to have her now.

“You’re amazing, do you know that?” he asked, taking her angelic face in his two hands. She beamed up at him.

“I don’t want to wait Arya. I haven’t felt like this about anyone before.” He looked into her wide eyes. With her smoky makeup and the low light they looked more black than grey now.

“I know the feeling,” she said softly, looking almost embarrassed. “Maybe you thought I… I don’t know what you thought, actually. But I haven’t let anyone in for a long time. And this means a lot to me too Gendry. I told you why I don’t trust people easily, but I trust you.”

He leaned down to capture her lips again, wasting no time in dipping his tongue into her mouth and tasting her. She slung her arms around his shoulders and jumped up into his arms, wrapping her strong legs around his waist.
“Come on then,” she said eagerly. “Let’s go to bed!”

He walked them down the short hall towards his bedroom, never breaking eye contact with her and grinning at her like an idiot. She didn’t seem to mind. Her own face was ridiculously happy too. When they got through the bedroom door, he didn’t stop, walking straight to the foot of the bed and turning to sit on the end, with Arya straddling his lap. She was still wearing her leather jacket, so he began to pull at the shoulders get it off. She sat back up to let him and he pulled it down her arms, letting it fall to the floor. She returned the favour, grabbing his jacket by the lapels and yanking it off his shoulders. He finished pulling it off himself and threw it away. He leaned in, dotting kisses along her collarbone, as he tried to pull the shoulders of her dress down. He paused when he met resistance. The dress seemed to be stuck to her skin.

Arya snorted in laughter. “Oh yeah, I forgot about the bloody tit tape!”

“The what?” he asked, flummoxed.

“Tit tape. Sansa gave it to me to make sure my dress didn’t slip down,” she explained, as she peeled at the areas that were attached to her milky skin. Once freed, sure enough, both shoulders started to slip down a little, and Gendry’s mouth started to water at the thought that he was about to see her naked body for the first time. She pulled back and got off his lap, pulling off her boots and standing between his legs. He looked up at her in awe, not quite sure how he got to be so lucky to have this beautiful woman in front of him, offering herself to him. He put a hand on each delicate shoulder, thumbs playing with the dress, looking at her pleadingly, asking for permission to continue. She nodded gleefully and he brushed his hands over each shoulder.

The dress fell down, revealing her upper body and catching on her hips. His eyes went straight to her breasts, her chest heaving in anticipation. They were even better than he had imagined. He knew from touching them through her clothes that they weren’t big but they were full and firm. Her rosy nipples were soft and delicate now. He brought a hand up to cup one, thumbing the nipple and marvelling at how it puckered and hardened almost immediately under his touch. He repeated the action with the other one, and bent forward, nuzzling his face between them, then taking one nipple into his mouth, first licking, then sucking on it gently. Arya gasped at the contact, then moaned her approval, grabbing him by the back of the head and holding him there.

“Gods, that feels so good!” she moaned, lost in the sensation of it. Gendry’s mouth and hands on her tits were creating waves of pleasure that shot straight to her clit, making her cunt throb. She felt another flood of arousal coat her already soaked knickers. He let go of her nipple in his mouth to look up at her.
“Your body is amazing,” he whispered into her skin, continuing to palm and squeeze both breasts as he spoke.

Arya smiled down at him softly and pushed at both shoulders so she could reach for the collar of his shirt. She began unbuttoning it hastily. He was more than happy to let her. She made quick work of the buttons and then ran her small hands underneath, squeezing his firm flesh as she went and skimming her hands up his stomach and chest, and pushing the shirt off his wide shoulders. She already knew his body was strong, but seeing it laid bare before her was different. He was beautiful. His broad shoulders flexed impressively as he pulled the sleeves down his arms and discarded the shirt on the floor.

He looked up at her through his dark lashes, his lust evident in his bright blue eyes. He took her waist in his large hands, gripping her hard and tugging on her dress.

“How do I get this off?” he asked desperately and she giggled at his urgency.

“Here, let me,” she answered, finding the little zip at the back and tugging it down, loosening the dress away from where it had been hugging her hips. His hands did the rest, yanking it down forcefully until it fell in a pool around her feet. His eyes wandered over her hips and legs, taking her in. She was practically naked now, save for the small black thong she was wearing. His gaze continued up her body and he looked up into her eyes intently.

“You’re beautiful Arya,” he said adoringly. No-one had ever looked at her with such devotion before. He kissed her stomach gently, and made his way up to the arrow tattooed across her rib, making her skin tingle under his touch; while he ran his hands up along the outside of her legs, travelling up to her bum and squeezing it appreciatively. Her whole body was buzzing. She felt drunk on this man who was worshipping her so thoroughly.

“Got any more tattoos?” he murmured into her skin, his lips never leaving her flesh as he once again sucked a sensitive nipple into his mouth, igniting another wave of pleasure inside her.

“You’ll just have to find out…” she replied, her body thrumming deliciously.

She put one knee on the bed for balance and threw her other leg over his hips, straddling him and wrapping her arms around his neck. She caught his bottom lip in her teeth, sucking it into her mouth and deepening the kiss. His strong hands came up to hold her hips, clutching her hard against him. She felt his cock, straining hard behind the zip of his trousers, pressing into her swollen pussy lips for the first time. She rolled her hips experimentally, delighting in the friction it created between them. She let herself moan into his mouth at the feel of him between her legs. She
looked into his eyes, his pupils so dilated they appeared almost black now.

“Gendry…Fuck you feel so good,” she moaned, rolling her hips again, grinding herself down onto him.

A very loud bang came from somewhere out in the living room and Arya nearly jumped out of her skin. Gendry jumped too, and she clutched his shoulders reflexively, holding on to him for support.

“Seven hells! What the fuck was that?” she gasped, her heart racing for a completely different reason now.

“I don’t know,” Gendry said, dazed. He was blinking rapidly and looking around the room as if he had just woken up.

They heard another loud bang and Arya realised where it was coming from.

“Someone’s at the door downstairs,” Gendry whispered dramatically.

“Why are you whispering?” Arya whispered in response.

“I don’t know,” he laughed.

They heard a muffled voice from outside, shouting.

“Gendry! It’s me mate! Let me in!” Arya looked at Gendry’s shocked expression, his brow creasing in confusion.

“It’s Grey Worm. But what the fuck’s he doing banging on my door?” Gendry asked, confounded. He pulled his phone out of his trouser pocket and hissed. “Shit! I have nine missed calls from him. I had it on silent.”

Arya looked down at him, her lust clouded brain trying to catch up.
“Arya, I’m so sorry, do you mind if I go see what’s wrong with him?” he asked remorsefully. “It must something important,” he added.

Arya shook her head, trying to clear her head. “No, of course not.”

She slid off his lap and stood on the floor again in front of him. He picked up her dress and handed it to her and she quickly slipped back into it. Gendry stood up and put his hands on her waist, turning her so the backs of her legs hit the edge of the bed.

“Why don’t you stay in here for a minute? Hmm? Make yourself comfortable.” He kissed the top of head and walked out into the living room to the intercom at the front door. He pressed on the button.

“Grey Worm? Is that you mate?” he asked tentatively.

“Gendry! I’ve been trying to get a hold of you all night! Where the fuck have you been?” His voice sounded slurred and Gendry realised he was very drunk, which wasn’t like him. He normally drank a bit but not to excess.

“I was out. I just saw all your missed calls. What’s wrong?”

“Missandei called off the engagement! She said she can’t marry me! I don’t know what to do mate!”

“Hang on I’ll come down and let you in.” Gendry sighed, resting his head against the door. He heard the floorboards creak and looked to the hallway. Arya was standing outside the bedroom, listening intently, a look of confusion clear on her face. He made his way back over to her.

“Arya I’m so sorry. I have to let him in. I’ve never seen him like this before,” he explained.

Arya took a deep breath. “Yeah I understand, he’s your best friend.”
“I’ll try and get rid of him as quickly as possible.” He grabbed his shirt off the floor and pulled it on as he made his way to the front door again. Arya sat down on the bed, resting her head back on the pillows and crossing her legs. Storm appeared at the bedroom door and promptly jumped up on to the bed and lay down beside her, looking for rubs. Despite her frustration, she couldn’t help but give him an affectionate scratch behind his ear. He started purring loudly.

After a minute, she heard the front door opening and the sound of the two men entering the flat.

Gendry led Grey Worm into the living room, motioning for him to take a seat on the couch. They sat down, facing each other. Gendry looked at his best friend. He was utterly distraught and quite clearly shit-faced drunk.

“I’ve never seen you like this.” Gendry said carefully.

“The engagement is off, mate!” Grey Worm sighed shakily, his voice wobbling as he spoke.

“What happened? I never even knew it was on!! You never texted me. Thought maybe you’d gotten cold feet and hadn’t proposed yet.”

“No, I did propose. It was beautiful, man. I did it on her favourite beach, with the sunset. She cried. I cried. It was perfect.” Grey Worm’s lip wobbled now and Gendry could tell he was on the verge of tears.

“Then what happened? Did Missandei change her mind or something?”

“Yesterday, on the last day of the trip, we went back to her parent’s house to tell them the good news, you know?” Gendry nodded. “And they let it slip that I had talked to them about proposing to her. And she freaked out. She thought I had asked their permission, which is how her father made it sound to her. And you know how she hates how conservative they are?” Gendry nodded again, afraid to interrupt.

“Well, she went nuts! She said I must not respect her as a woman if I felt the need to ask her dad’s permission. We had a huge fight and her parents were listening. Her dad tried to step in and defend me and that only made it worse. We had to leave to catch our flight back here. We landed early this morning and when we got home we had another huge fight and she said she thought we should call off the engagement.” He broke down now, head in his hands, sobbing.
Gendry reached out and grabbed him in a tight hug, trying to offer some comfort to his poor friend. He hadn’t seen him cry since they were children.

“Hey, look, it’s going to be alright.”

“I don’t know what I’m going to do. I can’t lose her,” Grey Worm sobbed into his neck.

“You’re not going to lose her. You guys just had a misunderstanding. And her stupid fucking dad didn’t help matters. You just need to…”

Arya’s voice broke them both out of their shared moment.

‘Gendry, I think I should go,” she said resignedly from the hallway. She already had her boots back on and she was holding her jacket and her handbag in her arms.

Grey Worm looked at her in shock, then looked at Gendry, realisation dawning on his drunken face.

“Oh shit! I didn’t realise you had someone else here with you,” he said, sounding embarrassed.

Gendry stood up, walking over towards Arya, putting his hands on her shoulders. He couldn’t help but notice the tension he felt there. He gave them a reassuring squeeze before turning back to Grey.

“It’s ok mate. This is Arya. Arya this is my best mate Grey Worm.”

Arya smiled tightly at Grey, who was looking at both of them, wheels obviously turning in his drunken brain.

“Fuck, were you guys on a date? I’m so sorry! Gendry never goes on dates. It didn’t even occur to me.”

“Hey you wanker, I do go on dates sometimes!” Gendry replied angrily.
“No, you don’t! You haven’t been on a date since you broke up with Willow. And that was fucking ages ago! What was it, like over a year ago or something.”

Gendry glared at him. Arya fought the urge to laugh at this when she saw Gendry’s angry reaction.

“Willow is the ex I told you about.” He explained, embarrassment causing him to flush slightly.

“Yeah I gathered that,” she replied, awkwardly.

“Look,” she whispered. “I think it’s best if I go and leave you two to it,” she said tightly.

Gendry’s face fell. “No Arya, please don’t go!”

Arya looked at Grey Worm on the couch. He looked completely miserable. And he didn’t look like he’d be cheering up any time soon. Their night was ruined. She knew it had been too good to be true.

“Can I talk to you in the bedroom for a minute please?” Gendry whispered. Arya nodded at him tensely. She led the way back down the hall. Once inside, Gendry shut the door softly behind them.

“Arya, please stay. I’ll sober him up and get rid of him as soon as I can,” Gendry begged.

Arya huffed in frustration. “No, he looks like he needs you tonight. He’d clearly very upset. You can’t get rid of him.”

Gendry sighed loudly, resting his forehead on the top of her head. He looked up and stared down at her, defeat clear on his face. “You’re right. It’s not going to happen tonight, is it?” he asked sadly, looking her up and down and groaning at the lost opportunity. Arya stared at him, shaking her head.

“I’m afraid not,” she said, rubbing his chest with her palms soothingly. He rested his forehead
“So much for being spontaneous,” he groaned, holding her hips and pulling her in to his embrace.

“I was so fucking horny Gendry, you have no idea!” she laughed and he chuckled along with her.

“Oh I think I have some idea, love,” he grinned, looking into her eyes to see how she would react to that term of endearment. She looked momentarily shocked but brushed it off.

“I even got a bikini wax this morning! For fuck’s sake!”

Gendry gulped. “Arya, you didn’t have to do that for me…”

He felt her tense in his arms and pull out of his embrace. “I didn’t do it for you, you stupid idiot! I did it for me!”

She pulled her phone out of her bag and began ordering an Uber.

“When can I see you again? Are you free tomorrow night?” He asked desperately.

She let out an exasperated breath and looked up from her phone. “I have a family dinner tomorrow night at my Mum’s house. I can’t not go. What about tomorrow morning?”

He hung his head. “Normally I play football on Sunday mornings, but I actually promised my Mum I’d take her furniture shopping tomorrow. I can’t cancel either.”

Arya sighed again but didn’t speak.

“Monday then?” he asked desperately. She looked at him, irritated.

“I’m working late every night next week.”
“How late?” he asked, desperate for a solution.

“I won’t get home until after midnight. It’s just for this week. I normally work the day shift. I’m just covering someone else’s holidays,” she explained, the frustration evident in her voice.

“So when will you be free then?”

“Not until next Saturday,” she said, shortly. Gendry could tell she was pissed off. He didn’t know how to fix it. Apart from his mounting desire to fuck her, he just really needed to see her again, as soon as possible. He didn’t think he could wait a whole week.

“Can I call you in the morning? We can figure something out?” She was staring at his chest now, not willing to meet his eyes. He lifted her chin up, and saw the disappointment in her face.

“Ok. Call me tomorrow morning,” she pouted dramatically, and Gendry couldn’t resist kissing her beautiful lips. But it didn’t cheer her up and he could tell from her body language that the mood was ruined.

“Come on, let’s wait for your Uber in the living room with Grey Worm.”

“What kind of a nickname is that anyway?” she asked, annoyed.

“His real name is Torgo Nudho, it’s Valyrian. No-one could pronounce it properly at school so he went by the translation. And it just got shortened to Grey.”

“Ok. That makes more sense now.” She grumbled.

“He’s a great guy. You’re just seeing him at a bad moment. He’ll be mortified tomorrow when he remembers this,” Gendry said, as he opened the bedroom door for Arya and followed her back out.

They came into the living room to find Grey in the kitchen, hanging out of the open fridge door. Gendry rolled his eyes and went to join him. Arya took a seat on the leather armchair facing the
“What are you looking for there?” Gendry asked once he got to the fridge, placing his hand on Grey’s shoulder affectionately.

“Something else to drink.” Grey replied, morosely. Gendry could tell he’d entered into the depressed stage of drunk. It was probably just as well Arya was leaving. He didn’t want Grey saying anything weird to her…

Grey found the beers Gendry had left over from the night before and grabbed one, trying and failing to twist the cap off. Gendry took it from him and got the cap off easily, handing it back.

“You want one?” he asked Gendry drunkenly, starting to sway slightly.

“No thanks mate. And this is your last drink. I’m cutting you off.” Gendry slapped him on the shoulder. “You’ll thank me in the morning.”

“What about Arya, does she want one?” Grey asked blearily, looking over at her on the armchair.

“No, she’s going home now. We’re just waiting on her Uber.” Gendry explained, patiently. There was no point getting angry with his friend right now for ruining the moment with Arya. And he knew Grey would be gutted when they talked about it tomorrow. “Come on, let’s sit down again.” He pulled him along and they took a seat on the couch.

Grey stared at Arya obliviously in the way only a drunk person could, not realising he was staring. Gendry nudged him with his foot, and Grey snapped out of his reverie.

“So you two are dating then?” he asked, slurring his words slightly.

“Yes, we were on a date tonight.” Gendry muttered, trying to keep his frustration at bay.

Grey put his hand on his chest dramatically. “Arya, I’m very sorry to have ruined your date with Gendry.”
“It’s alright Grey Worm.” She forced a polite smile.

“You can call me Grey,” he hiccupped.

“Grey, then.” She smiled more sincerely now and Grey looked to Gendry.

“She’s lovely Gendry. Where did you find her?” Gendry felt himself flush, and he could feel Arya’s eyes on him too.

“My sister is getting married and Gendry is making her wedding rings.” Arya explained gently.

At the mention of marriage, Grey’s face fell into despair again. “Is she? That’s great. Congratulations to your sister. I hope she’ll be very happy!” He took a long swig from his beer. Arya and Gendry exchanged a pointed look. Arya shrugged apologetically, not knowing what else to say. Gendry merely rolled his eyes at his friend, as if to say, ‘don’t worry about it’.

“I proposed to my girlfriend, you know?” Grey piped up.

“Yes, I heard the story from the other room.” Arya offered kindly.

“I really love her!” he exclaimed, breaking down into tears again. Gendry rubbed his friend’s back, trying to comfort him. He cringed inwardly for his friend. Grey was normally so calm and collected. He wasn’t one to wear his heart on his sleeve. He was going to be so embarrassed tomorrow when he realised he broke down in front of a virtual stranger.

“She loves you too, mate! You know she does,” he said soothingly.

Suddenly Grey lifted up his head and stared at Arya intensely.

“Have you ever been in love?” he asked, innocently.
Arya froze, then looked over to Gendry. He looked equally caught off guard by the intimate question. Arya felt like her heart was in her throat. She wasn’t sure how to answer such a personal question. If someone had asked her that a few weeks ago, she would have answered ‘no’ without hesitation. But now after what she and Gendry had shared, she wasn’t so sure. That idea scared the shit out of her and she swallowed, feeling her mouth going dry.

“You don’t have to answer that!” Gendry said quickly, slapping his friend on the back of the head reproachfully.

Arya’s phone pinged and she looked down, seeing a notification that her Uber had arrived. She stood up to leave.

“I’ll walk you out.” Gendry stood as well.

“Gendry it’s fine. You don’t have to.”

“I insist Arya,” he replied. “That laneway is dark and it’s late.” His tone left no room for argument.

He walked her to the door and helped her put her jacket on, as he had before, but this time it was more a gesture of courtesy rather than one of intimacy. Arya looked over at Grey Worm. He looked so forlorn, sitting alone on the couch, staring into space.

“Goodnight, Grey. And good luck with your girlfriend. I’m sure it will all work out,” she called out to him. He looked up at her, smiling sadly.

“Night, Arya. It was lovely to meet you. Sorry again for ruining your date. Gendry will make it up to you.”

Gendry smiled awkwardly down at Arya. “Come on. Let’s get you home,” he said softly.

They made their way downstairs and out into the courtyard. Just like the night before, Gendry took her hand in his and they walked in silence out through the laneway to the main street. Gendry didn’t know what to say this time, and he could tell Arya was lost in her own thoughts. Her Uber was parked in the same spot as before. Arya waved briefly to the driver and turned to face Gendry. Her face looked so dejected that it made Gendry’s heart ache. He took it in his hands tenderly, rubbing her cheeks with his thumbs. She smiled sweetly at him and he bent down to kiss her
gently, trying to communicate all the things he couldn’t say with words.

“I’ll call you in the morning, alright?” he asked tenderly. She nodded.

“Alright.”

“I really am sorry Arya,” he sighed.

“I know. It’s not your fault. You’re a good friend.”

“I’ll make it up to you.”

“You bloody better! I told you I’m not known for my patience, Waters.”

“It’s a promise, Stark,” he grinned at her, pulling her in and giving her one final deeper kiss to say goodbye.

They broke apart and Gendry opened her door for her. Arya got into the car.

“Goodnight Gendry,” she smiled softly.

“Goodnight Arya. Talk to you in the morning.”

He shut the door for her and watched her speak to the driver before the car pulled away.

He turned back towards the lane. Once he got back into the apartment, he found Grey curled up on the couch, a fresh bottle of beer in hand, watching some melancholy music video in the tv, sobbing into his sleeve. He was going to kill his best friend in the morning.
Arya entered her house as quietly as possible, hoping not to disturb Sansa or Theon which might lead to questions which she didn’t want to have to answer. Apart from feeling frustrated and disappointed at the evening’s ending, she was feeling oddly unsettled. Grey Worm’s question and her reaction to it had caught her off guard. She wasn’t ready to deal with those feelings tonight. She poured herself a large glass of water and went straight to her bedroom.

She went into the en suite bathroom and quickly took off her make up and brushed her teeth, before peeling off the new dress and hanging it up haphazardly in her wardrobe. She pulled off her knickers as well, leaving them on the floor and slid into bed, naked.

She was so incredibly wound up after their amazing foreplay had come to a sudden halt. She needed the quick release of an orgasm to tide her over and allow her to fall asleep. She slid her hand down to her swollen folds and starting rubbing circles over herself, not wasting any more time. She could feel how tense her whole body was and she could tell that despite being so horny, an orgasm wasn’t going to come easily tonight by just her hand.

She reached into the drawer of her beside table and pulled out her favourite bullet vibrator, switching it on to full power, not wasting any more time. She held it against her clit, applying pressure in a circular motion and felt the deep vibrations against her over-sensitive flesh. With her free hand she pinched her nipple, and tried to imagine it was Gendry’s hand pinching her, and Gendry’s fingers working her clit so furiously. She felt her orgasm build immediately like clockwork, and within less than a minute it peaked and crashed over her, causing her pussy to contract in waves. She gasped and did her best not to make any noise, panting as she came down from her high. But instead of feeling satisfied, she felt even more frustrated. Her orgasm had been mechanical and it left her feeling empty. She rolled over on to her side and curled up in a ball, hoping her body would let her fall asleep quickly. Soon enough, she dozed off into a fitful, restless sleep.

On the other side of the city, Gendry eventually managed to convince his best friend to lie down on the couch and go to sleep. He threw a blanket over him and turned off the TV and lights in the living room. He left a glass of water and some painkillers on the coffee table for Grey and finally fell into bed, too knackered and pissed off to even bother getting himself off. *That can wait until tomorrow*, he thought to himself, as he began to drift off. Maybe if he was lucky, Arya would be willing to send him some more filthy texts in the morning…

Chapter End Notes
Ok so this chapter is just part 1 of 2! I wrote a mammoth 12k chapter and realised I better split in half! But have no fear, the second half is already written and I'll be posting it in a day or 2. And we'll finally be getting to the main event. No more teasing...

Come say hi on Tumblr in the meantime! I'm at @icontainmultitudes and sometimes I post updates on my writing... Or we can just bond over Gendry and Arya...
The next morning, Arya awoke with a dull headache, the alcohol from the night before catching up with her, not to mention the anticlimactic end to the night. She tossed and turned for a while, trying to fall back to sleep. Eventually she made her way into the bathroom and took a hot shower, hoping the water would wake her up and help melt away the tension. It didn’t. She still felt that tight knot of frustration inside, not just from the way things had ended prematurely with Gendry, but from the question Grey had asked her, unwittingly making her feel unsure and panicked.

“Have you ever been in love?”

She felt a wave of apprehension wash over her at the thought. Things between herself and Gendry had escalated rather quickly, but still… She had only met him a month ago. They had their first kiss on Friday and their first official date last night, which his friend had fucking ruined. Now it was Sunday and she didn’t know where they stood. She had been so ready to fuck Gendry it was ridiculous. She had never felt this kind of connection with a man before. She felt laid bare before him every time they talked. She felt safe with him. Her gut was telling her she could trust him not to hurt her. But there was a delicious tension between them too. The way he touched her, kissed her and even just looked at her had her beyond ready to fuck him. The fact that he changed his mind last night and was ready too had thrilled her completely.

She stepped out of the shower and dried herself off. She brushed her teeth and combed her hair through. She had slept naked so she went to her chest of drawers and started looking through it, finding her oldest pair of cosy pyjama bottoms, her favourite old t-shirt that was beginning to fall apart and an oversized hoodie that Jon had left behind when he moved out. She noticed there was a coffee stain down the front of the hoodie but she couldn't bring herself to care. She wasn’t going anywhere until tonight. She planned to make some breakfast and chill out on the couch for the rest of the day until she had to get ready for dinner.

Sansa and Theon were in the kitchen, sharing a pot of tea. But they were dressed to go out, and
from the smart clothes they both wore, Arya had a feeling they were on their way to a wedding errand. There was no other reason Theon would be so dressed up on a Sunday morning. He was wearing a crisp white shirt and slacks, and he had his smartest black blazer hanging on the back of his chair. Sansa was wearing a stunning fitted green wrap dress and knee-high tan leather boots. Her copper coloured hair hung in soft waves down her long back and she wore a selection of fine, delicate gold jewellery. She looked effortlessly chic as always.

“Where are you two off to then?” she asked grumpily.

“Morning!” Sansa piped up, lifting her head from the bridal magazine in front of her and smiling brightly. “We have an appointment with the photographer. So exciting! We haven’t actually met her yet. She’s going to take some test photos of us today. As a sort of rehearsal for the big day.”

“Great,” Arya mumbled, halfheartedly.

Theon gave Arya a pained look behind Sansa’s back. He was clearly not as excited by the prospect of having this photo taken today as his beautiful fiancée. Arya crossed over to the fridge and poured herself a glass of orange juice. She started looking through the fridge for something to eat. She had hoped Sansa would cook her something for breakfast again, but they looked ready to leave.

“So we’ll be gone for the rest of the day and the photographer’s studio is closer to Mum’s house than here, so we’ll just go straight there, ok? Meet you there later? 7 o’clock. Don’t be late!” Sansa rambled, gathering her phone and her keys and putting them into her tiny designer handbag.

“Oh and I want to hear all about how your date went last night!” she added excitedly, heading towards the door. Theon followed behind her, shrugging his blazer on.

“Hmm,” Arya grunted from the fridge, not looking forward to that future conversation. She felt there was a pattern developing; two nights in a row she had returned home from dates with Gendry in a very bad mood.

Sansa was clearly distracted. “Ok we have to dash! See you later at Mum’s!” She grabbed her cream trench coat and marched out into the hall, heels clipping on the tiled hallway. Theon looked back at Arya briefly.

“See you tonight,” he said, following Sansa out to the hall.

She waved him off but didn’t reply, her head still stuck in the fridge. She heard the front door shut and she was left in peaceful silence. After rummaging through the fridge and not finding anything appealing, she had settled for a stack of toast and a strong cup of coffee, figuring she’d be eating lots anyway later at dinner.

She settled herself on the largest armchair in the living room, curling her feet up and turning on the TV. She checked her phone. It was 10:33am. Gendry had said he’d call in the morning. But it had been pretty late when she left him last night and she supposed he had stayed up even later with Grey. She’d wait and distract herself with some mindless gameshow that was running a marathon.

Twenty minutes later, the gameshow was over but another episode was coming up after the ad break. Arya went into the kitchen to put the kettle on, doing her best not to check her phone every minute. Her headache had faded now and she felt a little less knackered from her hangover and little more awake.

She was just about to make herself a cup of tea, dropping the tea bag into her mug and waiting for
the kettle to come to the boil when there was a loud knock on the front door, which startled her. She groaned, wondering who could possibly be calling on a Sunday morning and hoping it wasn’t someone looking to ask her if she’d found The Lord of Light yet. She’d had enough of those religious zealots who periodically called to the house, trying to spread the word of R’hollor.

She padded out to the hall, her fuzzy socks keeping her feet warm on the chilly floor, and swung open the front door, fully prepared to shoot down any solicitous callers. Her eyes went wide. Gendry was standing there, head hung low, looking at her like a lost puppy.

“Hi.”

“What are you doing here?” she asked, dumbfounded and unable to keep the smile from forming on her lips.

“I couldn’t wait ’til next week to see you again,” he smiled bashfully, rubbing his neck with his hand. He was wearing the same casual t-shirt and jeans that he had worn when Arya had first met him, and his black bomber jacket that he had worn to the pub. She noticed he’d shaved as well since yesterday, and it made him look younger, more boyish. Arya thought he looked fucking fantastic. She suddenly remembered she was in her least attractive clothes, with a coffee stain down her front and probably some crumbs too. She stared at him, trying to form words.

“I thought you had to take your Mum shopping or something?” she said eventually.

“I did, but I told her something came up and I had to go see you instead,” he grinned happily. “I’ll take her tomorrow instead.”

“You told your Mum about me?” she asked, stunned. Gendry had told her how his mother had raised him singlehandedly and how close they were. The idea that he’d already told his mum about her made her stomach flip.

“Well, I told her I met someone amazing and that our date got ruined last night because of Grey Worm. She knows Grey since he was 5 years old. And I told her I needed to see you and make it up to you because you’ll be working late all week and we wouldn’t have time to hang out together.”

“You told her all that?” she asked, still taken aback by his honesty.

“I did,” he nodded. “Can I come in?” he asked, smiling cheekily.

Arya realised they had been standing at the hall door. “Yes, of course. Come in.” She stood back to let him enter, closing the door behind him. He turned to face her and they were suddenly very close to each other, her head level with his chest. She looked up at him, feeling the tension build between them again, her breathing growing shallow and her pulse quickening.

“Sansa and Theon have gone out for the rest of the day…” she said, and the unspoken implication hung in the balance. He looked down at her intensely, his gaze darting down to her lips and back up to her eyes. He didn’t say anything in return, continuing to stare at her hungrily.

“You said you’d call me on the phone. Not call over! If I’d known you were coming I wouldn’t have worn this!” she swept her hand down, referring to her sloppy ensemble. He chuckled.

“I think you look perfect,” he said, brushing her hair back off her face. They held each other’s gaze for another beat. Finally the tension broke and they both crashed into each other, lips battling for dominance as they kissed frantically. Gendry pushed Arya back against the wall, knocking a picture frame loose. Arya moaned into his mouth, not wanting to break contact with him. He was the first to pull back, sucking in a breath and looking into her deep grey eyes.
“I want you so much Gendry,” she said pleadingly, her hands roaming the hard expanse of his muscled chest.

“I want you too,” he replied huskily, his voice growing deeper with desire. He pressed his hips into her stomach and she could feel his hardness evident through his jeans.

She pushed off the wall and he took a step back, clutching her waist. She grabbed his hand in hers and led him through the open plan living room to the other side of the house, towards her bedroom. They tripped through the door in their haste, Arya coming to a halt and Gendry all but crashing into her.

He slammed the door shut behind them and began pulling off his jacket as he stepped forward towards Arya, who was simultaneously pulling her hoodie up over her head and getting caught in the neck of it. Gendry laughed and reached out to help her tug it gently up and off, expecting her to have something on underneath. But to his delight, her t-shirt had come off with it, leaving her topless. She looked down at herself in momentary shock, and then giggled as his hands went straight for her bare breasts, caressing them enthusiastically and thumbing the nipples again as he had done last night, making them harden instantly under his touch.

Arya stood and let him touch her for a moment, revelling in the wonderful sensations he was eliciting. Growing impatient herself, she started pulling his t-shirt up. He let go of her and let her pull the shirt up and over his head and down his outstretched arms. She wasted no time in stepping into him, kissing his firm chest and sliding her hands around his waist so she could get her hands on his broad back.

He reciprocated by grabbing her petite hips and laying a trail of rough kisses along her shoulder, in towards her neck and up to her ear, sending goosebumps over her whole upper body. His hands dropped to her arse, palming it roughly through her pyjamas. Arya realised in that moment that she had no knickers on either and she grinned, grabbing his hands and pulling them away from her so she could take a step back. She looked up at him though her heavy lashes and whispered breathily, “Take your bloody jeans off.”

He nodded at her and together they began unbuttoning his jeans, Arya working on the buttons of his fly and Gendry letting her take over. When they were undone, she slipped her hands under the waistband and began pulling them down over his hips. Gendry kicked off his shoes and socks as she yanked his jeans down and let them fall to the floor and stepped out of them. His cock was solid and straining behind his black boxer briefs, pointing upwards at an angle towards his belly. Arya grasped it in her delicate hand, stroking up the length of it, appreciating how thick it felt in her hand. He sucked in a heavy breath at her touch, temporarily frozen by her actions. She looked up at him hungrily, loving that she could have this effect on him.

He grabbed her then, walking them backwards towards her bed. Her legs hit the edge of the bed first, and she sat down, her eyes now level with his hips. She kissed a trail from his navel down the fine line of dark hairs that led to the waistband of his underwear. She looked back up at him reverently and tucked her finger tips into the elastic, waiting for his permission.

He gulped and nodded emphatically as she pulled the waistband down off his hips, freeing his swollen, throbbing cock for the first time. It bobbed in the air as she continued to pull his underwear down and off his legs and she didn’t hesitate in taking it her small hand, gripping it gently and giving it a firm squeeze. He was impressively thick and she immediately thought of how good he would feel once he was finally inside her. Gendry moaned at her touch, placing his hands on her shoulders lightly and momentarily losing all further motor functions.

Arya grinned up at him smugly and took his distraction as an opportunity to reach her tongue out
and taste him, running it up the length of him, causing him to hiss with pleasure.

“Fuck Arya!”

She didn’t stop her journey and once she reached the head, she slipped her soft lips over it, taking it into her mouth for the first time and massaging it lovingly with her tongue, rolling the delicate foreskin back as she went, tasting the salty drop of pre-cum that was beginning to leak into her mouth, all the while continuing to grip and squeeze his length with her hand. He was moaning loudly now, clearly enjoying her attentions. It was making her pussy throb and clench to bring him this much pleasure and it spurred her on.

She began to suck him harder, drawing him deeper into her mouth and working him faster with her hand, her other hand reaching around to grab his wonderful arse, squeezing the firm muscle there. She took him as deep as she could into the back of her mouth without getting lost in it.

With that, he seemed to come to his senses, looking down at her bobbing head taking his length in and almost losing it at the sight of his cock disappearing into her beautiful mouth. She looked up at him then, her huge grey eyes meeting his and it was almost enough make him come. But he didn’t want the first time he came to be in her mouth, not today. It took all his willpower but he pushed her shoulders back and urged her to let go of him.

“Arya wait! If you keep that up I’m going to come!” He explained breathlessly.

“So?” she asked playfully, her hand still gripping him and moving up and down, teasingly. He swatted it away, smiling widely.

“Need to be inside you first,” he said fervently, pushing her gently so she would lean back on the bed. She scooted her body up and back to lie down fully, head on the pillows. He crawled up over her, knees either side of her and his thick muscled arms flexing as he balanced over her, not putting any weight on her yet. He kissed her then, fiercely, diving down to capture her lips and quickly deepening the kiss with his tongue. She groaned up into his mouth, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and clutching his neck.

He broke away and began trailing open mouthed kisses down her throat and onto her heaving chest. Resting his weight on his elbow, he brought his hand over to play with her breast, pinching and rolling the nipple and making her squirm underneath him in rapture. He kissed his way to the other nipple and nuzzled it with his nose and then sucked it greedily into his mouth, fully aware of the wonderful sensations it was creating in Arya’s body.

“Fuck Gendry, you make me feel so fucking good!” she groaned, arching her body up towards him, offering herself to him like a sacrifice to the gods. His attention on her nipples was creating a spike of pleasure that shot down straight to her throbbing cunt.

“What do you want Arya?” he asked breathless, looking up at her panting face imploringly. “Do you want me to go down on you? I’m dying to taste you.”

She felt a flush wash over her at his words. She didn’t know how to tell him.

“You don’t have to, it’s ok.”

He frowned, confused. “I want to. Do you not like it?”

“I’ve never…” she couldn’t bring herself to say it.

“You’ve never had someone do it for you?” he realised, anger dawning on his face as he realised
her ex must never have given her that pleasure.

“IT’s fine Gendry, honestly.” She was definitely blushing now.

“Arya, listen to me. I want to make you feel good. Please let me taste you. I promise you’ll enjoy it,” he smirked and she slapped his head.

“Don’t get cocky!” she said, irritation masking her self-consciousness. “Ok…” she said shyly.

He grinned smugly and sat back so he could pull her pyjamas off. She sucked in a breath as he got them off her hips and down her legs, leaving her bare before him. He looked at her adoringly, eyes tracing the length of her.

“So beautiful,” he whispered in awe. It made Arya’s heart swell to have him look at her with such wonder. She squirmed, rubbing her thighs together, feeling the copious wetness that was gathering between them. He noticed her movements and smirked, bending down to kiss one hip and then kissing a line across her skin to the other.

He shuffled down the bed a bit and placed one hand behind each knee, gently pulling them open and up so that they were bent and splayed wide, revealing her pussy to him for the first time. She was unbelievably wet and swollen already. Her bare lips were glistening with arousal and he could see everything clearly, except for the patch of short hair at the top.

“Gendry, you’re staring,” she giggled, blushing.

“Sorry,” he murmured. “Just admiring you. I like your bikini wax.” He grinned up at her ravishingly.

“Mmm, I though you might,” she said, laughing at his predictability and rolling her eyes.

“It’ll make this all the more sensitive,” he explained, and he traced a featherlight finger over her puffy pink folds, loving the way her body jerked involuntarily at the touch.

“Oh…” she gasped, feeling every tiny touch as he made his way down her lips to her centre and back up again.

“You ready?” he asked gently, looking up at her from lust glazed eyes. She nodded, biting her lip. In that moment, Gendry thought she was the sexiest thing he’d ever laid eyes on. He was dying to get his mouth on her for the first time and knowing no one else had ever had the pleasure before him only made him even more ravenous for her.

He dipped his head in, nuzzling her mound with his nose first, breathing warm breath onto her skin. Arya gasped. She was so sensitive, her skin felt as if it was supercharged. His breath on her was incredible. He pressed a soft kiss to her mound and edged his way over to the crease in her leg. Without any further warning he licked a wet stripe along the crease, causing Arya to whimper and buck her hips. His tongue felt fucking amazing on her skin, igniting all her nerve endings and making her whole body sing.

He sucked on the delicate flesh of her inner thigh and laid sloppy kisses to her silky skin, deliberately avoiding her slick and swollen folds, knowing he wanted to tease her properly first. She whimpered again and he looked up, grinning devilishly.

“Feel good?” he asked softly.

“Fuck yes!” She moaned, squirming and reaching her hand down to stroke his cheek adoringly.
He continued kissing her thigh, leaving her skin wet from his mouth. He could feel her hips shifting under him and he slid both hands up to hold them down against the mattress. Arya slid her arms up behind her head, gripping the headboard, needing to anchor herself somehow. She felt his kisses edging inwards towards her pussy and sucked in a breath in anticipation.

The first thing she felt was his hot breath on her lips. She didn’t know whether to curse or praise Sansa for persuading her to get that wax, because her pussy felt as if it was going to explode from the sensation. The next thing she felt was Gendry’s soft lips pressing a light kiss to her slit, before he opened his mouth and slipped his tongue between her swollen folds for the first time. The pleasure was instant and incredibly intense. Arya heard herself let out a loud moan, filling the room.

Gendry took it as an invitation to lick her deeper, lapping at her soaking wet lips as if he was drinking her up. She bucked and thrust her hips towards his mouth, clearly enjoying every second of it. He had to hold her down more forcefully now, else she would have thrown him off. Finally his tongue licked upwards and found her clit, already engorged from the intense pleasure he was bestowing on her. He circled it carefully and Arya’s upper body nearly flew off the bed.

“Seven hells! Gendry, fuck!” She gasped in shock. She was no stranger to the pleasure found in that tiny bundle of nerves but his tongue on it was bringing her to new levels of arousal. He didn’t let up and she let herself flop back down, her back arching up now as her hands returned to the headboard. He sucked it into his mouth and she yelped, overcome again. He chuckled to himself, thrilled he was able to give her so much intense pleasure.

He thought it was time to deepen the experience for her, so he brought his hand between her open legs and drew his two fingers down over her lips, coating them in her wetness and teasing her at the same time. She whimpered again and he gently pressed his fingertips down and into her cunt for the first time, finding her slick and inviting. She moaned again and rolled her hips, encouraging him. She was so incredibly tight that he wanted to ease in gently, allowing her walls to adjust to him. His fingers slipped in further and he crooked them upwards, pressing into her soft flesh, eager to find all the places inside her that would bring her more pleasure. She gasped again and he returned to sucking and teasing her clit with his tongue as he explored her. He wanted to feel her come for him.

Arya was in heaven. She’d never felt pleasure this intense before. Gendry worked her with his mouth and fingers in rhythm now, and she began to feel the familiar coil of her orgasm tighten and build in her lower body. But this was unlike any pleasure she’d ever experienced. The sensations he was evoking in her were overwhelming. She could feel his fingers curled deep inside her, pushing up on something fucking wonderful, while at the same time he kept licking and sucking her clit, making her buck up into his mouth. She clung to the headboard frantically, not knowing what else to do as she felt the powerful waves of ecstasy rise.

“Gendry, aw fuck! Don’t stop, that feels so fucking good!” she managed to pant out, having a hard time forming thoughts, let alone words. Her breathing was rapid and shallow, her chest rising and falling quickly now. Gendry moaned loudly into her pussy, and she felt the deep vibrations against her clit. She felt the swell within her cunt, and the nerves in her legs and pelvis were screaming in pleasure.

“I’m so close! I’m…” Her orgasm crashed over her, sending wave after wave of pleasure through her core. She could feel herself pulse around Gendry’s fingers and her clit felt like it was about to explode. Her back arched off the bed and she let out a wail. Gendry kept up the same pressure and rhythm, trying to make her orgasm as intense as possible for her. It brought him no small about of joy to know he’d given her such an amazing climax. He gradually slowed his speed down, letting
her come down from her high, kissing and sucking her clit and lips softly now and very gently pulling his fingers out of her and pressing them down on her soaking wet folds.

He looked up at her. Her chest was heaving and she was flushed pink. Sweaty hair clung to her face and he thought she looked like a fucking goddess. He slid his hands up to her hips, then pulled himself up and held his weight off her on his elbows. His cock was impossibly hard now, made more so by the incredibly loud sounds she had made as he’d brought her to climax. It pressed into her hip, begging for attention.

He laid a tender kiss to her cheek as she lay gasping for breath and smiled down her adoringly. Eventually she noticed him leaning over her and met his eyes, her own eyes wide and dazed.

“That was…” she trailed off.

“Good?” he asked, amused by her inability to speak.

“Incredible!” she answered at last. “I’ve never come that hard before.” She added, still panting slightly.

“You sounded amazing. So fucking sexy.” He said, kissing her cheek again, and Arya could feel his mouth and chin were soaked with her arousal. She tilted her head and caught his lips in hers, tasting herself on his lips. She groaned into the kiss. He pulled back and grinned widely. “You like tasting yourself?” he asked, clearly impressed.

“That’s the first time I’ve ever tried.” She said bluntly. He grinned again.

“You taste so fucking good Arya…” he dipped his head forward again and they shared another sloppy, wet kiss, tongues slipping over each other lazily. Eventually, Arya felt she could move her body again and she slid her arms down to capture his head in her hands as they kissed. She could feel his cock hard against her belly. She needed to know what he would feel like inside her. She broke the kiss, pulling back to look him in the eyes.

“Gendry, fuck me. Please!” she moaned, and he dropped his forehead to hers, sucking in a breath. “I need to feel you inside me…”

“What about protection?” he asked hastily and it took Arya a moment to follow him. “I didn’t know what you would want, so I brought some condoms with me,” he explained, his breath heavy on her forehead.

“I’m on the pill. We don’t need condoms,” she whispered. “We’ve both been tested.”

“Are you sure?” he asked desperately. She nodded.

“We both know it will feel way better without them…. Unless, you’d prefer them anyway. To be extra safe?” she asked worried. He shook his head.

“No, I trust you. If you’re on the pill then that’s enough, right?”

She nodded. “I’ve been on it for about 5 years to regulate my cycle. I never forget to take it anymore.” She tilted her hips up towards him, trying to tease him with her body.

He dropped his hips down between her legs, shifting his weight so they were lined up. She was ridiculously wet now after the pleasure he’d given her, and his cock slipped effortlessly over her lips, the thick shaft now rubbing up against her clit. They groaned in unison at this first contact. Arya slid her arms down to grip his hips, urging him closer. Her knees were still bent and she
rolled her pelvis, trying to angle herself to take him in. He grinned at her impatience, and continued to tease her, rubbing himself between her slippery folds, grinding his cock against her sensitised clit.

“Gendry, please!” she whined. “Want to feel you.”

He kissed her again, deeply, tongue plunging into her mouth, mimicking what his cock was about to do inside her. He pulled back to look down at her beautiful face, her eyes shut in pleasure.

“Arya, open you eyes,” he whispered lovingly. She took a moment to register his words, her eyes blinking open dazedly.

“I want to see you,” he said softly. She stared up at him, pleasure clouding her brain. He brought the head of his cock down and found her entrance. It slipped easily into her with the generous wetness already there. She gasped, locking eyes with him. He was thicker than she’d imagined and it felt amazing as he worked his way in slowly.

He was breathing heavily now, obviously straining not to thrust himself hard into her. Eventually he felt himself slide home, buried to the hilt. She felt exquisite wrapped around him, gripping him tightly, making him gasp at the pleasure of it. She rolled her hips up, testing and they both groaned at the angle.

“Gendry, ah! So good!” Arya panted, caught up in the sensation of it.

He thrust forward, creating an amazing friction between his pelvis and her mound, before slipping back out halfway and thrusting forward again.

“Fucking hell, Arya. You feel amazing!” he panted, resting his forehead on hers again, concentrating on taking it as slow as he could. It had been far too long since he’d had sex and he wanted to draw this out for as long as possible, to make this good for her too. They rocked back and forth, finding their rhythm easily. Arya wrapped her lean legs up around his waist, trying to pull him in deeper, making him moan in approval. He grabbed her thigh in his strong hand, fingers digging into her flesh.

He sped up his thrusts now, taking her harder, eliciting loud appreciative gasps from Arya under him. Having him fuck her so thoroughly was making Arya delirious with pleasure. Gendry’s strong body over her, inside her, taking her so forcefully was driving her mad. She’d never felt this passion before during sex. She felt like a wild animal, their two bodies joined, bringing pleasure to each other with every thrust. She felt him speed up again and she could sense he was losing the tight rein of self control he’d been desperately clinging to since he first slipped inside.

“You want to fuck me harder until you come? Don’t you?” she whispered into his ear, sweat now dripping from both of their faces.

“Fuck!” he grunted, his rhythm now faltering at her words. “I will if you keep that up!” he laughed breathily.

“Before you do, I want to get on top. Want to fuck you into the bed…” she panted, unwrapping her legs from behind his back and planting her feet on the bed again. He looked up at her, eyes wide, realisation dawning on his face.

“Oh fuck yes!” he groaned, slowing his thrusts down immediately, and taking his weight off her body. He pulled out and Arya whimpered at the loss. He rolled off onto his back, pulling her upper
body with him and they giggled at the floppiness off their limbs, both of them already starting to feel the effects of their fucking. Arya swung her leg over his hips and kneeled over him, settling herself on his lap, his cock pressed hard between them, slick with their juices. She put her hands on his broad shoulders and lifted her hips, wasting no time in taking him back inside her body, moaning wantonly at the new angle he hit in this position. He was so deep inside her, she could feel him right at the back of her cunt, filling her so unbelievably well.

He looked up at her in wonder, marvelling at the expression on her heart shaped face. She was lost in the pleasure of it, eyes half shut, letting her pussy adjust to this new angle. He brushed a strand of hair off her sweaty face and her eyes opened, looking down into this beautiful blue eyes, almost black now with arousal. He took her tits in his hands, palming them roughly and pinching the nipples, earning a delighted gasp from her in response.

“Arya… Perfect…” he said adoringly, tilting his hips up experimentally, and delighting when her mouth dropped open in response as she felt him thrust up. She grinned wolfishly down at him then, rolling her little hips down onto him, feeling the exquisite sensation of riding him for the first time. He groaned loudly, now lost in the pleasure of it, his eyes nearly rolling back into this head. She smirked, thrilled that she could take the lead now.

She began grinding slowly, experimentally, until she found a rhythm and speed that felt the best for her. Her clit was pressed hard against his pubic bone and the pressure felt fantastic. She dropped her arms down and rested her weight on her elbows, keeping their chests pressed tougher, rubbing her aching nipples against his chest with every thrust.

“Gendry! Fuck! Never felt this good before!” She mumbled, lost in the pleasure of it. He gripped her hips, pulling them hard against his own, thrusting up into her at the same time as she ground down onto him.

“Me too. I’m so close…” He panted into her ear. “But I want to see you come again for me…”

At his words, she sat back up, planting her hands on his hard chest, arching her back and taking him in even deeper, before lifting up and dropping back down repeatedly, and watching his face closely now, wanting to bring him to his fall. His mouth dropped open and he groaned loudly.

“Arya, oh fuck! I’m gonna come…”

“Come for me then…” she grinned widely, speeding up her thrusts, feeling him swell even larger inside her before he let out a very loud yell, and let go, filling her with his seed, his chest heaving hard. Arya continued her thrusts, slower now, feeling his release inside her, impatient for her own release now.

She brought her fingertips down to her engorged clit, rubbing tight circles over it, desperate now to join him in climax while he was still achingly hard inside her. She felt the familiar knot of tension begin to build in her legs, and she clenched her pussy walls hard around him, grinding down with her hips and knowing she was about to come hard. Gendry was still catching this breath, heart pounding in his chest when he realised what she was trying to do. He grabbed her breasts, squeezing hard and rolling her nipples in time with her thrusts.

“You want to me touch you?” he asked eagerly, ready to lend a hand between her legs.

“No just keep touching my tits!” she gasped. “I’m so close!”

She kept her rhythm up, fingers slipping over her clit, sensing the wave of pleasure about to crash over her. She keened loudly, her rhythm faltering as she reached the edge. The orgasm hit her
suddenly, pleasure bursting though her cunt, her walls milking Gendry’s still hard cock, her whole body overcome with the wonderful waves. She collapsed onto Gendry’s chest and he caught her, muscled arms coming up to hold her, rubbing soothing circles over her back as she rode the wave.

They caught their breath together, chests rising and falling until they calmed down. Arya rested her head on Gendry’s chest, listening to his thumping heartbeat. He continued to rub her back. His strong hands felt wonderful on her skin.

“That was amazing,” she gasped, smiling gleefully. She looked up into his face, his eyes were partially hidden under heavy lids but he smiled warmly at her, creases forming on his temples.

“Yes… Amazing!” he nodded, still catching his breath. “You are fucking amazing.” He pressed a kiss to her head and she hummed happily. She pulled herself up his body a bit so that she could kiss him properly, lips slipping softly over his, the two of them both too spent to deepen it further.

“Are you cold?” he asked, running his hands down her back to her hips and up again.

“Not yet.” She said quietly. “But I do need to go to the loo,” she added.

She lifted herself up and Gendry’s softening cock slipped out her, their warm wetness leaking out between her thighs now. She found she didn’t mind the mess at all. They’d made it together. But she really did need to pee. She got up and stood beside him on the floor looking down at him. This beautiful man who’d just worshipped her so well. He looked up at her, smiling sleepily, and folded his arms behind his head. Arya found she loved the sight of his strong arms flexing like that. She could get used to this view, she thought to herself.

She padded into her bathroom and shut the door. After a minute, she re-emerged into the bedroom. Gendry watched her appreciatively as she crawled over him to get on her side of the bed. She prodded him to lift his body up so she could pull the duvet out and up over them both, before curling herself into his side and bending her knee up to hug his leg with hers. He was so wonderfully warm. His arm came down to grip her waist and she tucked her head into his shoulder. He nuzzled her neck affectionately.

“You have to go out later? Dinner with your family?” he asked softly.

“Mmhmm..” She hummed. “But not until about 6. That leaves us plenty of time to do that again.” He chuckled. “But first I need a nap. Still knackered from last night, you know.”

“Me too. I didn’t get much sleep… I could’ve fucking killed Grey last night,” he groaned.

“Well, we made up for it today,” she murmured into his skin, tracing her fingers on his chest, admiring the light hair that grew there.

“That we certainly did,” he grinned.

They lay there in silence then, enjoying the comforting feel of each other’s bodies, until eventually they both drifted off into a soothing slumber.

Chapter End Notes

Well! How was it? Please leave me a comment and let me know it was worth the wait!
You may have also noticed that I've upped the chapter count from 10 to 12. It'll more than likely be longer than 12, but I'm being cautious not to promise too much too soon.
Arya woke slowly some time later, with a warm, strong body curled up behind her. It took her sleepy brain a moment to remember where she was and what had just happened. Gendry was wrapped around her from behind, as they lay spooning on their sides.

She grinned to herself, remembering the amazing sex they’d just had not that long ago. The heat radiating off his body was delicious, and she felt cocooned in his embrace, with the fluffy duvet tucked up over them, sheltering them from the chilly autumn air in her bedroom. She realised then that she’d forgotten to put the heating on that morning when she first got up.

No matter, she thought, we kept each other warm enough…

She snuggled down into the bed, wiggling her small body in closer to Gendry’s large frame. He was breathing softly into her neck, his chin tucked in close to her shoulder. She shifted again, and felt his cock twitch, half hard, realising it must be nestled in behind her bum. She chuckled to herself, shifting her hips deliberately now, arching her lower back and pressing her cheeks back into his hips, revelling in the feel of his waking member coming to life for her now.

He stirred behind her, groaning softly in his sleep, his strong arm that was curled around her waist squeezing her tightly as he began to wake. She kept up the rolling of her hips as he woke up slowly. His cock twitched again and she felt it harden and thicken as she moved ever so slowly, delighting in the easy way she could bring it to life. He was fully engorged now and pressed hard against her arse, digging into her cheeks. It was then that she felt him thrust his hips forward, and grab her waist firmly at the same time. He grinned against her neck, fully awake now.

“Morning,” he murmured into her ear, nuzzling her hair out of the way with his nose.

“Mmm, it’s not morning silly. It’s after lunchtime, I’d say,” she hummed, continuing the slow roll of her hips, enjoying the feel of him pressed into her. She could feel her pussy swell now in anticipation, and a warm wetness spreading from her centre. He groaned at her movements, his arm coming up now to cup her breast, rolling the delicate nipple in his fingers and kissing the spot where her neck met her shoulder.
“You want to go again?” He asked, thrusting his hips forward as his cock slipped down slightly to nestle between her cheeks.

She nodded and hummed again, tilting her hips just so to let him slip between her legs, the head of his cock now brushing up against her wet centre for the first time in this position. She gasped and he groaned, and they slowly slid against each other, teasing the other for a while, as Gendry continued to pinch and roll her nipple and suck on her neck.

Arya moaned then, feeling her arousal coat her lips and the tip of Gendry’s cock, and wanting him fully inside her now. “More, please Gendry…” He slid his hand down from her breast to her hip and lifted her top leg up to slide it back over his own, enabling him to thrust more fully and slide home inside her tight, wet cunt. They both groaned at the sensation of him filling her so well.

Arya gasped again, pleasure washing over her. “Gods, you feel so fucking good…” She kept up the rolling of her hips to meet his gentle thrusts, the two of them somewhat limited in their range of motion in this position. But it felt delicious to have him take her like this, with his body wrapped so closely around her, enveloping her.

His hand moved from her hip down to reach between her legs, and she felt his fingertips slip gently over her puffy lips, until he found her clit and began rubbing soft circles over it, all the while nuzzling and nibbling her earlobe.

Arya was lost in the blissful sensations he was evoking. She had never felt this much pleasure during sex before with Jaqen. She had thought that had been good at the time, but she had had nothing to compare it to and it had been a purely physical connection, with Jaqen preferring to control their encounters and Arya getting off on the rather fucked up power dynamic, not knowing any better as a naïve young woman having her first sexual experiences.

But this was entirely different. What she was sharing with Gendry went beyond the amazing physical connection they obviously had. He was worshipping her with his body and soul, and making her feel like a fucking goddess every time he touched her.

She was in heaven. Sex with Gendry felt like an expression of their rapidly growing feelings for one another and it thrilled her completely to know they were sharing something very special with each other. And it made her unbelievably happy to have this man, who clearly knew what he was doing, devote himself so fully to her pleasure.

Gendry’s rhythm sped up and he groaned into her neck. “Fuck Arya…” His fingers continued rubbing tight circles on her as she ground back on him. Her own hand came up to pinch and roll her nipple, taking over where he had left off. He looked down at her touching herself and groaned loudly.

“You are so fucking sexy,” he whispered into her ear. She whimpered in response, caught up in the multitude of sensations flooding her body. She could feel the pull of her orgasm beginning to build as he thrust into her and worked her clit.

“She’s not done yet.” he groaned, sliding his hand to curl around her g-spot. She cried out in pleasure, her body convulsing as she climaxed for the second time in as many cycles.

He took her in his mouth, his lips sucking on her pussy, his tongue swirling around her clit. She felt her orgasm building once more, her walls tightening around his cock. He groaned, his hips pumping into her, and she came again, this time with a scream of ecstasy.

He pulled out of her, his cock still hard and pulsing with cum. He kissed her, his lips pressing against her own, and she kissed him back, her tongue entwining with his in a passionate kiss.

“I love you, Gendry,” she whispered into his mouth. He kissed her again, his lips pressing against hers, and she knew that she loved him too.

They continued to kiss, their tongues entwining in an endless dance, as they made love on the bed, their bodies moving in perfect harmony.

And as they climaxed once more, they knew that they had found something special in each other, something that would last forever.
orgasm so close.

“Come on Arya, love. Come for me now…” he whispered breathily into her ear and that was it, her climax crashed over her, her cunt pulsing and contracting around his thrusting cock in wave after wave of exquisite pleasure. She cried out hoarsely in ecstasy and Gendry thought it was the hottest fucking sound he’d ever had the pleasure of hearing in his life.

He kept up his rhythm, pumping harder into her now, his hand leaving the oversensitive nub to grip her smooth hip and get a better angle for himself. He held onto her hip tightly and used it for leverage as he thrust into her harder, deeper, wanting to join her in her amazing release. Arya was still riding the waves of her wonderful orgasm but she quickly joined him, pushing back on him, deepening their thrusts, wanting to make this as good for him as it had just been for her.

“Yes, come with me now,” she said, panting.

He merely grunted in agreement, too caught up in his thrusts as his orgasm approached. She felt him swell bigger within her, his rhythm faltered and let out a loud, primal cry as he peaked. His orgasm barrelled through him, sending waves of pleasure coursing through his whole body and he spilled deep within her, as Arya hummed her approval and slid her hand up behind her head to cup his face adoringly.

They lay there panting heavily as they recovered. Arya felt Gendry’s seed begin to leak out of her now as his cock softened slightly, although she was impressed to realise that he did not immediately return to his normal size. She wondered if in the future, they might be able to fuck again straight away and the thought sent a delicious thrill through her still pulsing cunt. Gendry’s deep chest heaved behind her back as he caught his breath. He nuzzled her neck, laying featherlight kisses to her sweaty skin, enjoying the salty taste of her.

She hummed approvingly as he worked his way up her neck towards her ear, nibbling on her lobe. “Gods that was fucking perfect… You’re perfect,” he said worshipfully. He had already released his tight grip on her hip and now moved his arm up to pull her in by the waist closer to him, before cradling her breast in his large hand, gently rubbing his thumb over her nipple eliciting a whimper from Arya in response.

She twisted her head around to catch his lips in hers, but the angle was too awkward for a proper kiss, so she pulled herself from his tight embrace and twisted her whole body around to face him properly, his cock slipping easily out of her and leaving a wet trail on her thigh.

She took his strong jaw in her small hand, staring into his deep blue eyes. “That was… I’ve never had this before Gendry. It’s never been this good,” she smiled up at him, her wide grey eyes glinting with emotion. Gendry felt his heart swell at her admission.

“Me neither,” he breathed, unable to hide the joy spreading across his face.

Arya looked at him, dumbfounded. “Really?” she asked softly. She found it hard to believe that he hadn’t already felt this wonderful during sex, given how well he had just fucked her.

“Really,” he said smiling. “I mean it’s been good obviously, but nothing like this…” He stared intensely into her eyes, hoping she knew what he meant but couldn’t put into words yet.

“Yeah…” She didn’t quite know what to say to that, so instead she kissed him, deeply, passionately, pouring everything unsaid into her movements. They lay there kissing for what seemed like an age, letting the other take the lead in the push and pull, pressing their damp bodies flush against each other. Arya’s hand rested on his chest and his arm wrapped around the curve of
her back, keeping her as close as possible as he kissed her.

Eventually they broke apart, coming up for air and grinning at each other. Gendry nuzzled her forehead.

“We need a shower,” Arya hummed. “I’m so sticky…” She giggled and he laughed along with her.

“Me too…” he added, although the fact that they were now both covered in each other’s juices made him feel something deeply primal and satisfying, like they had marked each other. After their two rounds, he could smell himself on her and her on him, their scents mingling to create something new.

“You smell like me now,” he whispered, “And I smell like you…”

She hummed in agreement. “I love it…” she whispered back. “Knowing you’re all over me…”

As they whispered to each other, Arya felt Gendry’s cock twitch again and begin to stiffen. She giggled at the movement, and wiggled herself closer, amused.

“Again?” she asked, in mock surprise. “So soon?”

He smirked and pulled her flush against him, his cock now pressed hard into her belly.

“It’s just a reflex from having you so close, whispering those things in my ear,” he spoke in a low tone, almost a growl. Arya felt herself swell and tingle, and wondered if they’d ever tire each other out.

“Come on silly, let’s have that shower first.” She rolled away from him then and he groaned as she slipped out of his arms, standing up on her side of the bed and walking around to his. His eyes followed her around the room appreciatively.

She watched him watch her, admiring her lithe body as she padded nearer to him again, standing in front of him, completely at ease now to be naked before him. All shyness or hesitation seemed to have left her. He sat up and swung his legs out of the bed, and took her small waist in his large hands, tugging her towards him to stand between his opened thighs.

“You are so beautiful Arya, do you know that?” he asked softly, Arya felt herself blush. No one had ever looked at her or called her beautiful like that before, with such awe. She didn’t know what to say.

“No one’s ever told me that before. Not like this…” she said quietly, looking down at him. His eyes were dark in the dim light of the curtained bedroom and he looked up at her through thick lashes, a hungry expression on his beautiful chiseled face.

“Well…” he said forcefully, as he pulled her torso in towards his face and dotted kisses on her flat stomach, edging his way upwards between her pert breasts. He stood then, crowding her space and looking down at her from his significant height advantage. “I can be the first…” He kissed the top of her head and pulled her into a tight hug, wrapping his strong arms around her shoulders. She snuggled into him, wrapping her slender arms around his waist and pressing her cheek into his scruffy chest. They stayed there for a moment, enjoying each other’s embrace. Arya pulled back and looked up at him, her eyes heavy with emotion.

“Thank you.” She said softly.

“For what?” He asked, smiling down at her.
“Just for being so lovely…” she said joyfully. They stared at each other for a beat, not needing to speak. “Come on. Let’s get in the shower…”

He stood and followed her into the en suite bathroom. It was small enough but like the rest of the house, furnished well with glossy white tiles and expensive looking towels hanging on a heated towel rack. Arya’s collection of toiletries was crowded into a hanging rack inside the shower.

She stepped in and turned the waterfall shower head on, waiting for the water to heat up before standing in under the generous spray. Gendry stood watching her, the water running down her beautiful body in cascading rivulets over her delicate curves and beginning to wash the evidence of their sex away down the drain. She closed her eyes, lifting her head up to rinse her face and getting her hair wet. She blinked then and looked up to see him staring at her ardently.

“Are you coming in? Or are you just going to stand there, staring at me?” she laughed. He shook his head and stepped into the space, sliding the glass door shut behind him. It was tight fit with his large frame crowding her. She didn’t seem to mind.

“If there’s room?” he asked huskily, wrapping his arms around her waist and pushing them both under the water.

“We’ll make room…” she said, grinning and sliding her hands up to his shoulders. She reached behind him and grabbed a sponge, pumping some shower gel into it.

She began massaging Gendry’s shoulders, working up a creamy lather and moving around to his front to soap his chest and stomach too. Gendry thought whatever it was she was using on him smelled divine, citrusy and fresh, making his skin tingle slightly. He was still half hard and she smirked at him as she stepped back a bit to reach lower, caressing his hips and groin with the soapy sponge.

“Turn around…” she whispered, and he obeyed, resting his arms above him on the tiles in front. She washed his broad shoulders and rippling back, then his armpits and outstretched arms. She stepped into him and pressed her small body up against his broad back, letting the bubbles rub onto her front and allowing them to slip against each other easily. He groaned at the contact, feeling her soft belly and breasts against his back.

She slid her free hand down to his cock and took it in her hand firmly, gripping gently and squeezing the base before pulling downwards and circling the head. He groaned again and bucked in her hand. He turned swiftly then, grabbing her head in his hand and swooping down for a fierce kiss, his tongue immediately seeking out hers. She melted into his kiss, forgetting her task and nearly dropping the sponge. She smiled into his mouth and he felt her lips move against his own. When they broke apart she resumed her attention, soaping his cock and balls and reaching around to wash his firm arse as well, allowing herself a hard squeeze. She thought he must have the best bum she’d ever seen on a man, the muscles hard and taught under her touch. He let her continue, all the while rubbing his cock up against her belly, the lather making everything wonderfully slippery and smooth.

“My turn now,” he grinned cheekily at her then and took the sponge from her. “Soap?” he asked and she pointed behind him to the bottle. He pumped a bit into the sponge and began by lathering up her breasts, making her moan and lean into his delicate touch. He continued his journey up and over her shoulders, washing her arms.

“Turn around,” he whispered now, mirroring her earlier words, and she did, steadying herself by leaning her hands against the tiles. He worked the sponge down over the long line of her back,
admiring her porcelain skin as he went. She was so small and delicate but there was a strength underneath her soft skin. He couldn’t quite believe his luck to have this amazing woman offering herself to him like this. He wasn’t sure what he’d done to deserve it, but he offered up a silent thanks to whatever had seen fit to bless him with this moment.

“Your body is so perfect Arya,” he said softly, continuing down and washing her slim hips and pert bum, gently caressing her soft cheeks and earning another moan from her in response. He worked his hand around to the apex of the thighs, lightly brushing her folds and earning a gasp. Arya spread her legs slightly to allow him access, and he washed all traces of their earlier encounters away.

He placed the sponge back on the rack then and stood in closer to her, pulling her body flush against his. He ran both hands up her torso to cup each soft, firm breast in his hands, the lather still coating her body in a thin layer of suds.

Arya arched her back, pressing her bum into his hips now, trying to make contact with his cock. But she was too short and soon grew frustrated at the angle, groaning angrily. Gendry shushed her and nuzzled her neck, continuing to massage her breasts, his fingers working her nipples to stiff peaks and making her moan loudly. She could feel her pussy swell and pulse in response and she ached for him, her cunt literally throbbing at the thought of him filling her again soon…

“Gendry… Want you again…” She moaned as he slipped one hand down to her core, fingers slipping easily into her wet folds. The soapy lather had all but rinsed off them both now, but Arya was still achingly wet with her own arousal. As his fingers found her lips puffy and swollen, it was his turn now to moan into her neck. He found her clit easily, and began circling it ever so lightly, teasing her to begin with. She gasped and arched back further, allowing him more room. With his other hand he continued to pull and pinch her nipple, creating the most wondrous combination of sensations inside Arya. She was growing more and more aroused, her body desperate for him to enter her again.

“Please…” she moaned, twisting her head to the side and kissing him hungrily. He didn’t let up his rhythm on her clit, rubbing tighter and tighter circles on the sensitive nub. Her legs began to shake as the pleasure built and built…

“What do you want Arya?” he asked desperately, his cock thrusting against her lower back.

“Want you to fuck me… Now please!” she said eagerly, her body writhing against him, wanting nothing more than to be joined again as they had been earlier.

His hands left their positions and gripped both hips tightly, pulling her back away from the wall slightly as Gendry tried to get the angle right. He twisted them both so they reversed position, Arya leaning against the other wall and Gendry standing behind her, pulling her hips out so she was at more of an angle and the water was no longer hitting her directly, instead it was washing down his back. She looked over her shoulder at him quizzically.

“The water will get in the way, make it less comfortable for you,” he explained, and she nodded in understanding.

“Oh yeah, I didn’t think of that…” she said breathily, already anticipating his next move.

“Bend forward…” he asked and Arya happily obliged. Gendry put his palm flat on her lower back for a moment, lining them up as best he could. They’d have to figure out a better angle for standing, he thought to himself. Maybe just have her wrap her legs around his waist and hold on?
He bent his legs slightly, his cock slipping between her spread legs and beginning to tease her from behind. He thrust his hips forward, letting his shaft glide up between her lips and rub over her swollen clit. Arya groaned in harmony with him, tilting her hips just so to let him slide along her folds. His hands returned to her tits, squeezing more firmly now as she leaned against the tiles. His fingers pinched her sensitised nipples and the pleasure shot straight to her cunt as if he was flicking a switch.

“Yes, fuck!” she moaned, desperately trying to angle herself to take him in. “Want you inside…” she begged, growing almost irritable now.

He took his cock in hand and lined it up with her entrance, teasing the head against her for a moment before letting himself slip inside her tight walls. They both groaned in unison now, her cunt gripping him so tightly in this new position. He had to ease his way in slowly, allowing her to adjust to his girth. She gasped as he finally slid in as deeply as she would allow, feeling him hit the front of her cunt at this tight angle.

“Oh gods!” she moaned, delighting in the feel of being filled so well. He brushed her hair away from her face and kissed her shoulder, holding her hips in his hands and thrusting experimentally into her. She whined and pushed back on him carefully, clearly enjoying the way he moved. “Just go slow please. Need to get used to you like this…”

“Arya… You’re so tight,” he grunted, wanting more than anything to fuck her in earnest but knowing she wasn’t ready for that yet. She hummed in approval, moving back on him ever so slightly, earning a loud groan from him.

“You can move. Just, gently please…” she said, her words coming out low in her throat, too focused on how well he filled her. He began to rock his hips slowly into hers, his cock pulling out halfway and pushing in to the hilt, hitting her at just the right angle to make her whimper with pleasure.

They found a rhythm quickly that worked for them both, Arya keeping her lower back arched and Gendry holding her by the hips for leverage. She was able to take more thrusting now and he sped up, relieved to be able to move more freely.

Arya’s left hand came down to touch herself, rubbing her clit at a quick pace. Gendry realised what she was doing and swatted her hand away, taking over and pressing into her with more enthusiasm than before, making her knees nearly buckle and her legs almost give out. She began to shake, the orgasm promising to travel through her whole body.

She spurred him on with needy whines and whimpers, his hand working furiously to draw the climax out of her. “You like that?” he asked, breathlessly, his mouth close to her ear. She nodded vigorously, arching into him.

“Yes, fuck! I’m so close!” she whined, feeling the pull of her orgasm gathering in her body and focusing in towards her core. He kept up the exact rhythm, not thrusting too hard but keeping his cock buried deep inside her and rocking forward to hit against her g spot. Her legs began to wobble more noticeably and Gendry grinned, male pride filling his chest at the thought that he could do this to her. He wanted to feel her pulse and throb around him in this position where she already gripped him so tightly, but he let her pleasure come first for the moment, determined to bring her over the edge first…

“As soon as you come, I’m going to fuck you so hard…” he whispered into her ear and she groaned, arms now beginning to tremble as well, with the effort of staying upright.
“Please Gendry!” she gasped and he pressed his fingers in harder, finding just the right point to push on and she lost it, her orgasm ripping through her body and causing her pussy to contract around him in wave after wave of bliss. She would have collapsed in a heap if Gendry had not caught her then, her body losing the battle to hold itself up. He let her ride the wave of pleasure for a few more moments before beginning to thrust harder now, Arya immediately whimpering helplessly.

“I can’t! Have to lie down! Legs won’t work!” she managed to get out, still gasping for air. He chuckled at that and scooped her up in his powerful arms, holding her horizontally.

“Open the shower door then, and let me bring you in to the bed so I can fuck you properly…” he said commandingly, and she quickly did as he has asked. She shut the shower off and he stepped carefully out of the shower sideways making sure not to hit her off the glass. They didn’t stop to dry themselves off, and Gendry reached the bed in a few long strides, dropping her unceremoniously on the mattress, and letting her bounce slightly.

She giggled up at him and pulled herself up the bed before he crashed down on top on her, Arya’s legs coming up straight away to wrap around his hips as he slid back into her and began thrusting deep, not wasting any more time. Arya cried out loudly as he hit something high inside her, which only spurred him on further. Her legs came up higher around him to pull him in further, and he grunted into her neck.

“Kiss me Gendry’” she pleaded, and he immediately met her lips, tongue dipping into her mouth and finding hers eagerly.

He grunted again as she tilted her hips up, trying to keep him in as deep as she could.

“You said you were going to fuck me properly…” she whispered into his ear, and he pulled his head back to look at her questioningly.

“What, this isn’t properly enough for you?” he asked incredulously. She smirked up at him defiantly.

“I want you to fuck me harder, I want to feel you hit that spot inside me again,” she said teasingly, knowing he would take the challenge. She was not wrong. She’d sparked something base and instinctual in him then.

He pulled her knees up higher, making her thighs almost meet her chest and thrust harder than ever, watching her jaw drop in shock as he hit something new inside her. He smirked then, knowing this is what she had meant.

“How’s that?” he asked, holding her knees open and continuing to thrust in and pull back almost until he was out of her, before pushing back in fast, forcing her whole body up the bed.

“Yes! More please! More!” She cried out hoarsely. She had never been fucked so throughly before in her life and it felt glorious. To have him take her so hard but with so much care was making her delirious. He continued this rough pace, the force of this thrusts causing her whole body to shake, her breasts bouncing with every pass. He reached down and took one in his hand, rolling the nipple and enjoying the way her mouth dropped open.

“You want to come again?” he asked, moving his hand lower towards her clit. She nodded enthusiastically, bringing her hands up now to palm her own tits, pinching the nipples hard now that she was so far gone. He bit his lip at the sight of her, so wanton underneath him. He wasn’t going to last much longer so he rubbed her with more pressure than before, hoping it would be
enough to bring her to her peak again soon. She began to writhe out of sync with his thrusts, throwing her head back and arching her back.

Her moans spurred him on and he kept up the pressure on her clit, trying to find the same spot as he had before that seemed to tip her over. After a minute her legs began to shake again and he knew she was close. Her mouth hung open in pure pleasure and he wanted to see her eyes this time as she came.

“Arya, look at me…” he leaned down until they were face to face, keeping his hand tight between them and the rhythm on her clit never wavering. She locked eyes with him then, and the intensity overtook her. Her climax crept up on her and hit her more forcefully than the others, pulsing and rolling through her cunt, squeezing him tighter.

She cried out a wordless noise, her voice almost breaking. After a moment she looked up at him, and smiled at the look of concentration tight on his features. It was her turn to grin now as she realised he was so close.

“Can you feel me coming around your cock?” she asked him, and he shut his eyes in pleasure.

“Yes! Fuck you’re so tight…” he grunted, his thrusting faltering now at her words. He had come hard just reading her filthy texts the other night. If she started speaking to him like that now, he was done for.

“You want to fill me up, don’t you?” she asked brazenly, knowing it would get him closer to his own orgasm. He grunted again, her words nearly sending him over the edge.

“Come on Gendry, let go! You’ve fucked me so well,” she whispered into his ear, arms coming up to wrap around his shoulders, holding him close. She felt him swell even bigger inside her then and knew he was about to come. He pushed in as deep as he could go and Arya felt him hit that delicious spot again.

He let out a sound that was somewhere between a yell and grunt and Arya clenched purposefully around him, wanting to milk him with her cunt. She felt his release inside her, hot against her walls, his cock flexing as he came. He collapsed on top of her then and for a second she was worried about his significant weight, but he had the sense to hold himself up and fell slightly to the side, still resting most of his body on her but not crushing her completely.

He was spent now, his breathing fast and deep as he fought to recover. She rubbed her hands up and down his sweaty back, loving the feel of his muscles under her touch. He was obviously knackered now from the exertion, and he rolled on to his back, disengaging from her heat in the process, pulling her with him. She draped her leg over his hips, not wanting to break contact with him. They’d left a large wet patch where she had lain, but she couldn’t have cared less.

Arya snuggled into his chest and listened to his heart beat as it gradually calmed down. She found it soothing to hear his heart beating under her ear. His arm came up to hold her, his fingertips pressing into the flesh of her lower back affectionately.

“Bloody hell, I think you broke me this time!” she panted, and kissed him softly for emphasis. It wasn’t a deep or fierce kiss, but rather a tender, light kiss, meant to soothe them both.

“That makes two of us then, I suppose…” he said finally, his chest rumbling with laughter. She lifted her head and looked into his cerulean eyes.

They lay there in silence, enjoying the afterglow for a while, before the cold started to creep into
Arya’s body and she shivered. Gendry lifted his head and realised she was starting to get goosebumps along her back.

“You cold?” he asked tenderly, as he pulled the duvet up over them both. Arya was beginning to doze but shook herself out of it at his words.

“Mmm? Yeah, a bit. But I’m also thirsty. I need some water. What about you?” she asked sleepily.

“Yeah I could do with a drink too.”

She lifted her body up then and dragged herself off the bed, feeling the weight of her own body now as the effects of their exertions began to creep into her muscles.

“Would you like anything else? Cup of tea or something to eat?” she asked quickly.

“No thanks, just a glass of water please.” She grabbed her robe that was hanging on the back of the door and wrapped herself up in it, before slipping out of the bedroom and down to the kitchen. She quickly filled two pint glasses with water and brought them back to the bedroom.

Gendry was lying with his arms behind his head again, his lower body covered with the duvet but his upper body bare. She couldn’t help but admire his beautiful sculpted body. She placed one glass on the bedside table on his side and returned to her side, taking a long swig of the water before setting the glass down. She discarded the robe and climbed back in to bed, wrapping herself around him again and tucking her head in under his chin.

“What time is it?” he asked, absentmindedly, his eyelids drooping.

Arya checked her phone.

“It’s almost half four,” she said quietly. The idea of getting up and getting ready to have dinner with her family seemed like the least appealing thing she could think of right now. What she wouldn’t give to spend the rest of the evening curled up like this with Gendry, just enjoying the feel of him under her.

She was pretty sure she was done with sex for the night. Her body had that pleasant ache in all her joints, and she knew she’d be stiff tomorrow, since it had been so long since she'd had sex. Besides, she had never been so thoroughly fucked before. The memory of it made her blush.

“Do you want a lift to your mum’s house later?” Gendry asked, and it brought her out of her thoughts.

“What? No, it’s ok, you don’t have to do that…” she said quickly.

“I don’t mind, honestly. I drove over here so I’m happy to drop you there.” He smiled at her sincerely.

“But it’s not even on your way home,” she said incredulously.

“Why, where is it?” he asked curious.

Arya winced internally, suddenly self conscious about the area when her mother lived.

“Rhaenys’s Hill,” she said, cringing, waiting for Gendry to react.

“Why am I not surprised that a rich girl like you grew up on Rhaenys’ Hill?” he asked, chuckling.
“I didn’t!” she was quick to explain. “I grew up on our family estate at Winterfell! I only came down here when my dad became deputy Prime Minister. I hated it here at first.” She added.

“Arya, relax. I was just teasing.” He drew circles on her back with his hand, hoping to soothe her.

“Mmm, well anyway. I’m from Winterfell. That’s my home…”

“Well, I’m more than happy to give you a lift later.” He said again, brushing the hair out of her face so he could look at her.

“Ok... Thanks.” She said at last, looking up to him and smiling slightly. “I’d like to take you there some day…”

“To your mum’s house?” he asked, confused by her serious tone.

“No stupid! To Winterfell! I’d like to show you where I grew up.” She laughed, slapping his chest lightly.

“Oh! ...I’d love that.” He said gently, touched at her words. He’d never fallen for someone this quickly before. It felt like they’d known each other for years. The fact that she wanted to show him her home made him feel inexplicably warm inside.

“We’ll go when it snows. It’s beautiful up there when it snows…” she said wistfully. “Have you ever been that far North?” she asked.

“No. The farthest North I’ve ever been has been the Riverlands. My mum’s family are from there,” he explained.

“I’d like to show it to you,” she said gently and he kissed her forehead.

“I’m looking forward to it,” he whispered into her hair.

They lay there, dozing for a while before Arya realised the time and supposed it was time to get ready. She pulled herself out from under the duvet, extricating herself from Gendry’s warmth. After a quick shower, alone this time, she grabbed the outfit she had planned to wear on her date the day before and began dressing. Gendry watched her through heavy lids, admiring the graceful way she moved as she went around the room.

“Are you getting up?” she asked, laughing.

“I suppose it’s inevitable,” he said remorsefully, reluctant to remove himself from the warmth of the bed. He pulled the duvet back and stood up, walking towards her and wrapping her up in his arms.

“You look lovely,” he said, taking in her outfit.

“Thanks,” she smiled. “This is what I was going to wear yesterday, before Sansa persuaded me to buy that dress…”

“Oh. Well I’m glad she did. You looked fantastic in that dress last night. Especially with your bare back…” he said enthusiastically. Arya giggled. “But you always look beautiful... Because you are beautiful,” he spoke softly into her ear, his breath brushing her hair. Arya hummed in response.

“Mmm. All I want to do is crawl back into bed with you for the rest for the rest of the night…” she whined and Gendry chuckled.
“Believe me love, me too.”

They stood there, locked together for a moment until Gendry pulled back and let her go.

“I better let you finish getting ready.”

“Are you hungry? I could make you something quickly? Toast!” she offered, and Gendry laughed at her eagerness. “Sansa is the mother hen around here, but I know how to toast bread!” Gendry shook his head.

“No thanks, it’s fine. I’ll grab something when I get home.”

He bent down to pick up his clothes off the floor and began to dress. Arya watched him appreciatively.

“You don’t want a shower?” she asked curiously.

“No.” He smirked at her. “Don’t want to wash you off again. Want to be able to smell you on me when I get home…” Arya blushed at his admission, but the thought thrilled her completely.

She continued getting ready, moving towards her dressing table and pulling out some make up. Gendry was ready before her of course, and he lay back down on the bed, watching her again. She looked at him in the mirror, catching his eye as she had first done that day in his shop. He was staring at her with that look of reverence again. It made her stomach flip.

As they pulled up to her mother’s house on Rhaenys’s Hill, Arya felt a wave of apprehension. She didn’t want their difference in class to come between them but she wasn’t sure how Gendry felt about her family’s wealth and status, particularly with his own complicated history with Robert Baratheon as his absentee father. Her expression must have given her fears away, as Gendry lifted her chin towards him, searching her face.

“Hey, what’s going on in there?” he asked.

“Just thinking. Does it make this weird? Me being the daughter of Ned Stark. You know, with your dad and everything? Is this weird for you?” she asked nervously.

“No. I didn’t know Ned Stark or my father. Why should it be weird for me? I haven’t been thinking about it that much since you told me... We met on our own terms anyway,” he said easily, and Arya felt a bit of the apprehension lift from her shoulders.

“Ok, good. Because it doesn’t matter to me either.” She said sincerely, taking his face in her hand and kissing him firmly now. “How is your friend Grey? Have you spoken to him today?”

“Yeah well I spoke to him briefly this morning before I left to come see you. But he was pretty hungover! As you can imagine, after last night. I’ve never seen him so plastered before! I left him curled up on the couch, so hopefully by now he’ll have recovered a bit. We might order some food and just hang out for the night. That’s if he hasn’t already gone home to Missandei...”

“Do you think it will work out between them?” she asked gently.
“Yeah they’re made for each other. Missandei is his dream woman!” he said, causing Arya’s eyebrows to shoot up sceptically.

“Really? What’s so special about her?” she asked, intrigued.

“She’s just perfect for him. She brings out the best in him,” he shrugged, finding it hard to put into words. “She’s his soulmate.”

Arya flinched at the word and recoiled a bit, looking at him cynically.

“Do you really believe in soulmates?” she asked, trying but failing to keep the scepticism out of her voice.

“I think so,” he said, honestly. “Maybe for some people anyway,” he added, holding her gaze. Arya felt herself grow uncomfortable under his intense eyes. She smiled and broke eye contact, looking down at her phone to check the time.

“I should go…” she said.

“When can I see you again?” he asked longingly.

“I’m working late every night. I don’t know if I’ll be up for much this week. What will we do? You’re working all day presumably?” she asked, disheartened. The idea of not seeing him seemed impossible now, after everything they’d just shared.

“Come over after work tomorrow night. You can sleep in the next morning, and I’ll just be downstairs. Nothing has to happen…” he added cautiously.

She smiled gleefully. “Oh I think we both know what’s going to happen, if today is anything to go by…”

He smiled too, his face lighting up with joy.

“I can pick you up after work if you want?” he offered.

“No it’s ok. I have to drive there tomorrow morning, so I’ll just make my way over to your place when I finish work. It will be after midnight by the time I get there though?”

“Doesn’t matter. I just want to see you again. I’ll be up,” he said seriously.

“OK, great.” She said excitedly. She gave him one final kiss, letting him deepen it for a moment before pressing her hand into his chest to break their contact. She grabbed her handbag and opened the passenger door, letting herself out and coming around to his window, which he was rolling down for her.

“See you tomorrow then!” She tried to keep her voice light and breezy, but she had a feeling it was anything but. He smiled up at her happily.

“Tomorrow!” he added in agreement. She walked away towards the path, looking back at him over her shoulder as he rolled up his window again. The street was lined with bronze coloured sycamore trees, and the dry leaves crunched under her feet as she turned back and entered her mother’s wide, ornate gate. She heard Gendry’s car pull off and she steeled herself to face the chaos that was her family’s Sunday night dinner…
I really appreciate your lovely comments here and on tumblr!! Your support means the world to me! So thank you!! xxx
Floating

Chapter Summary

Arya has dinner with her family and fields questions about her love life. Gendry and Arya both look forward to seeing each other again...

Chapter Notes

Hello!!

So first of all, I have to apologise for disappearing for the past month! This chapter has been weeks in the making and I fear it won't live up to your expectations! Thank you to everyone who left a comment or sent me a kind message on tumblr about it. I sort of got stuck on fleshing out the backstory for a while, before I could move forward with the plot. But I've finally worked through it!

This chapter is a bit uneventful but fear not! The story will pick up momentum again in the next chapter! Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya walked into her mother’s spacious dining room to find most of her siblings already gathered there. Robb and his wife Talisa sat opposite each other, with Talisa cradling their baby son Ned, who was busy chewing his own chubby fist.

Sansa sat beside her, cooing adoringly at her little nephew. Theon sat beside Robb, the two men chatting animatedly about something, but Arya couldn’t quite hear their conversation. Her younger brothers Bran and Rickon sat together, deep in conversation and laughing conspiratorially under their breaths.

“Arya, late to the table as always!” Robb teased her. His cheeky grin lit up his face. Arya rolled her eyes at him.

“Lovely to see you too Robb. Not my fault you’re all ridiculously early.” She leaned over and kissed Talisa on the cheek and then gave baby Ned a soft kiss on his curly auburn head. He was like a miniature version of Robb and it never failed to amuse Arya how much he took after her big brother. She took a seat beside Sansa then, who turned to face her.

“You seem in better form now?” Sansa asked, her astute eyes scanning Arya as she spoke.

Arya knew Sansa never missed a beat. Her sister was the most perceptive person she knew. She fully expected Sansa to pick up on her ridiculously good mood, brought on by the amazing day spent in bed with Gendry. But no one knew about that part. Yet…

“Just had a nice relaxing day,” she replied, purposefully avoiding Sansa’s eyes.
“Mmm,” Sansa said, “Good. That’s good…” Her sister squinted at her but didn’t push.

Catelyn Stark glided into the room, carrying a bottle of wine in each hand and placed them down in the centre of the long table, which was laid out elegantly with fine porcelain dishes and crystal glasses. Their mother had obviously gone to great lengths to set the table and prepare a full meal.

It pleased Arya to see all of her siblings together, save for Jon, who was technically her cousin but who she would always consider her brother. She knew Jon and Ygritte were happy up North, working for Ygritte’s father Mance, but it didn’t mean she didn’t miss him terribly. She looked forward to seeing him over the upcoming winter holidays at home in Winterfell.

“Arya darling, you’re here! Oh, good! I can tell Nan to begin serving the food,” her mother didn’t stop to greet Arya, but kept walking back out of the room towards the kitchen. Theon poured Arya a glass of red wine. Sansa resumed her conversation with Talisa, which turned out to be about the wedding photographer.

Arya zoned out at that point, her mind wandering back to her afternoon spent wrapped around Gendry. Her body was still buzzing from the wonderful sex and she could feel the effects of their exertions beginning to creep into her limbs. She was also starving and couldn’t wait to eat whatever her mother and her personal housekeeper Nan, who’d been with the family since before Arya was born, had prepared.

She grabbed a warm bread roll from the centre of the table and tore into it, buttering it liberally and taking a large bite out of it. Sansa watched her carefully.

“Are you that hungry? You’re eating that bread like a savage!”

Arya ignored her, relishing in the taste of the freshly baked bread and salty butter. The rest of the food was brought in, helped by Bran and Rickon who had been roped into serving.

A large platter of juicy roast beef, carved and ready to serve, along with several platters of vegetables and crispy roast potatoes were laid out, along with various condiments and most importantly, Nan’s famous gravy. Arya’s stomach started to rumble and her mouth watered. Everyone began to serve themselves and pass the dishes around the table, chatting amicably as they went.

Arya piled her plate high with meat and vegetables before pouring the rich gravy liberally over the top. Sansa eyed her carefully, filling her own plate with a much more modest portion of everything.

“What’s with the giant portions?” the older sister asked, her perfect eyebrows arching ever so slightly. No one else at the table seemed to have noticed.

Arya scowled at her, about to shovel half a roast potato into her mouth.

“I’m just hungry, alright? Is that a crime?” she asked defensively.

Sansa shrugged, adjusting her linen napkin on her lap.

“Not at all. You must have a healthy appetite…”

“All I’ve eaten today is toast and coffee. And I was out late.”

“I want to hear all about that, by the way!” her sister said her under her breath, careful not to let the rest of the table overhear.
“Later. When we get back home.” Arya promised, and the two sisters shared a mutual grin.

“Have you heard from him today yet?” Sansa whispered.

“Yes. Of course!” Arya’s mind immediately conjured up the image of her opening the front door to find Gendry standing there that morning, looking ridiculously hot and apologetic. Her mind then skipped to them crashing into each other in the hallway and stumbling over to her bedroom, before landing on a succession of rapid beats of the incredible sex they’d then had. Not just once, but three times that afternoon.

She could still feel Gendry’s lips on hers, his large hands gripping her flesh and his powerful body over her, under her and pressing into her from behind. She felt a rush of blood flow into her cheeks at the memory and hoped Sansa couldn’t see it. Her sister merely smiled at her.

“Later. Tell me later…” Sansa winked at her then, and kindly changed the subject.

“Oh, by the way, keep next Saturday free, will you? We’re all going for a dress fitting. Well, you all are. I’ll be there to supervise, obviously…”

“By all, I presume you mean us bridesmaids then?” Arya groaned.

“Yes, that is what I mean,” Sansa replied curtly.

Arya absolutely dreaded spending time with Sansa’s other bridesmaids and avoided it at all costs whenever she could. Two of them, Jeyne and Beth, had grown up with them near Winterfell and they’d made Arya’s life miserable at the time, constantly belittling her and excluding her from all their older girls’ activities, making Arya feel insecure and unwanted in her own home.

To make matters worse, they were both tall and gorgeous like Sansa, and the age gap had only served to heighten tensions between Arya and the others over the years. Arya had done her best to avoid them since then, but the engagement and wedding preparations had forced her to have to spend time with them again socially and it made her want to pull her hair out every time.

The only one of Sansa’s bridesmaids she could actually stand was Margaery, whom Sansa worked with at the atelier of her grandmother Olenna Tyrell, an esteemed fashion designer. Margaery was insanely glamorous too but crucially, she was always warm and friendly with Arya and never condescending towards her, and Arya appreciated it greatly. They didn’t have a lot in common but compared to the other two bridesmaids, they were like peas in a pod. Arya honestly didn’t know if she’d have been able to get through this engagement as maid of honour without Margaery there to act as a shield against the snide comments and dismissive looks of Jeyne and Beth.

“So we’ll be meeting at the atelier next Saturday at 10am. Don’t ask me how but Margaery’s managed to get us a Saturday appointment for a fitting with Olenna herself! They’re like hen’s teeth!”

Arya nodded politely but didn’t interrupt. Sansa had clearly gone into bride mode and Arya had learned the hard way it was best not to get in the way when this happened.

“So you’ll need to bring a nude strapless bra and thong along with you, to wear underneath. And spanx too if you have them? But you’re so skinny you probably don’t even own spanx, do you?”

Arya wasn’t sure if that was supposed to be a compliment or an insult, so she merely shrugged indifferently. The nude underwear wouldn’t be a problem. She had plenty of it from her dancing days.
“Sansa you’ve seen my clothes. Do I look like I own spanx? Where the hell would I be wearing them to, anyway!”

“Not to worry, I can pick you up a pair this week. You’ll need them just in case we need to smooth out your silhouette.”

Arya’s sex brain immediately flashed back to Gendry’s hands roaming her body. He certainly didn’t seem to have had any problems with her silhouette earlier. The thought made her body hum with pleasure. She looked away from Sansa and resumed eating her dinner, greedily tucking into everything with relish. I wonder how many calories we burned in bed today? She thought to herself absentmindedly.

Thankfully Sansa’s attention was soon taken up by Talisa asking her if she and Theon had booked their honeymoon yet. She happily launched into their plans to take a three week cruise from Braavos to Old Valyria, before finishing off for a week in the Summer Isles, where they planned to just chill out on a beach and relax. Talisa nodded her approval and offered a few helpful tips about where to visit in Volantis, if their cruise was to stop there.

Arya ate in silence, savouring the delicious food in front of her. It was just like one of their family dinners at home in Winterfell when they were younger. Nan’s food was always made with love and it warmed her heart to be able to enjoy it now as an adult.

A sudden pang of grief hit Arya as she thought of her beloved father Ned, and the wonderful family dinners they had all shared together every Sunday.

Before we came to King’s Landing…

Before Robert fucking Baratheon had come calling on his oldest friend and ruined the rest of his short life… Not for the first time, Arya cursed that man for asking her father to be his deputy and run for election with him that day. She had only been a child herself at the time, but she was astute enough even then to know that her father was a good man, kind and honest to a fault. And she knew that his oldest friend Robert was anything but.

How those two men had ended up best friends she’d never know. She supposed it had to do with the bond they’d formed at war in their youth. Some things can’t ever be explained anyway. You had to have lived through them.

And the civil war had been over long before Arya was even born. That war had left her father and Robert celebrated war heroes, lauded for their bravery and for helping bring an end to the bitter violence that had torn the country apart. It was what had won Robert the election years later, the glorious image of he and Ned reunited, pledging to serve their country again in peace and prosperity.

Now they were both dead and the country had survived without them, led by Tywin fucking Lannister of all people. Arya made a point not to pay too much attention to politics these days, especially since it had been his involvement in politics that had ultimately brought Ned Stark to his death.

If he’d never become Robert’s deputy, then he’d never have been in the bloody car that fateful day. The day a terrorist blew them off the road in an attack meant for Robert. The day her father had assumed the PM’s official duties because Robert was too shit-faced to appear in public. The day her world stopped turning and she lost the person she’d loved more than anyone else in her young life…
Arya’s thoughts turned back to Gendry then, and the gravity of his parentage hit her for the first time. She’d lost her father that day. He’d been a good man, the best kind of man really. She had grieved for him for years. They all had. She knew she would always carry the wound of his death inside her. But she had most of her childhood full of warm, loving memories of him to keep her company in her grief.

Gendry had never known the love of his father. The thought made her blood boil. How Gendry had turned out so kind and sweet was mind-boggling to Arya.  

*His Mum. His Mum must be the reason he turned out that way,* she thought to herself.  

Arya offered up a silent thanks to the old gods and the new for Gendry Water’s mother, the woman who raised the man she couldn’t get out of her head. At that moment she felt her phone vibrate and discreetly checked it under the table.  

**Gendry:** Back home. Grey has gone home to Missandei. They seem to have patched things up. I’m about to collapse from exhaustion! What did you do to me today Stark???

Arya felt her cheeks warm. She could say the same thing, she thought. Her body was pleasantly sore all over and she knew she was going to be knackered tomorrow.  

**Arya:** Me? I seem to recall you’re the one who showed up at my door this morning unannounced Waters… 😊

**Gendry:** Mmm… You do have a point…

**Arya:** I’m knackered too. Wondering how soon I can get out of this dinner and crawl into bed… 😴

**Gendry:** Wish I could crawl in there with you…

**Arya:** To sleep stupid!

**Gendry:** Who says I meant anything else?

**Arya:** I’m utterly spent after today! Don’t think I’d be up for anything else anyway. My body needs time to recover… 😞😞

**Gendry:** Well rest up love. I’ll be waiting up for you tomorrow night… Xxx

**Arya:** xxx

She was broken out of her reverie by the sound of her mother’s voice.  

“Arya, darling. What have you been up to lately? How’s work?” Catelyn was making a point lately of asking about her younger daughter’s life. Arya knew with no uncertainty that her mother didn’t approve of her choice of job. She thought her daughter was wasting her expensive degree working in the animal rescue centre and liked to remind Arya that she could have been a vet if she’d just worked a little harder at school.

Arya had absolutely no regrets about her path in life though. Despite the ugly year she had spent abroad studying in Braavos, where she has met Jaqen and entered into her first relationship, Arya has thoroughly enjoying studying anthropology and dance at university. She has been a gifted dancer, until a knee injury at 19 had eliminated any hopes she might have had at a professional dance career.
But she had still loved to dance, even if she knew she had no future in it. And anthropology has been the subject she’d never known she needed in her life. Her natural love of other cultures and people had drawn her to it and she had excelled at it. She didn’t intend to work at the animal rescue centre for the rest of her life. In fact, she fully expected to return to anthropology at some point. Maybe even return to university and further her studies in it…

“Work is good, thanks Mum…” she replied, avoiding her mother’s eyes.

“And how go the maid of honour duties?” Bran asked, amused. He knew how much Arya detested weddings and having to spend so much time with Sansa’s awful friends.

“Fine thanks!” Arya responded curtly, hoping she wouldn’t be drawn into another wedding conversation.

Rickon scoffed and Catelyn shot him a furious look. He snorted but averted his eyes, staring down at his plate.

“Arya has been a wonderful maid of honour!” Sansa added proudly, squeezing Arya’s knee gently. Arya smiled up at her big sister. It still felt relatively new for them to be able to spend this much time together and actually get along so well. As children, they’d been complete opposites. But losing their father so tragically had bonded them immensely, and the years they’d spent living together as adults had only cemented that bond. Now Arya couldn’t imagine not having Sansa in her life every day. She still missed Jon more than anything, but her sister’s unconditional love and support meant the world to her.

“We’re actually going for a fitting for the bridesmaids’ dresses next Saturday. Do you want to come Mum?” Sansa asked politely.

Arya’s face dropped. Just when she thought this upcoming day couldn’t get any worse…

“Oh darling I’d love too!” their mother exclaimed joyfully, and she and Sansa both beamed in unison. Arya groaned internally and caught Bran’s eye. He grinned, amused. She glared at him for a split second and then averted her eyes before the two of them ended up giggling like little kids and getting themselves in trouble.

“Oh good! We can go all go for lunch together afterwards! Just us girls!” Sansa beamed. Arya had been wrong, this upcoming day could indeed get worse…

“Arya how did your date go last night?”

Theon’s innocent question came out of nowhere and gave Arya momentary whiplash. She couldn’t quite believe that he was bringing this up in front of her entire family. She cursed Sansa silently for not warning Theon that this was off limits before they arrived.

“Fine Theon…” she said through gritted teeth, praying he would pick up on her tone and drop the subject immediately. But of course, being Theon, he was as dense as ever…

“You got in quite late…” he added, all the while oblivious to Arya’s death stare.

“What date?” Robb asked quickly, his tone of voice a stark contrast to Theon’s innocent naivety. Robb was understandably protective of Arya. After what she had been through with Jaqen, they all were. And Arya understood why. They were worried she was going get hurt again. But she hadn’t been on a date since that ended, so they hadn’t really had much to worry about. Now that was all about to change and Arya wasn’t sure she was ready to let her whole family into that part of her life again yet…
“Arya had a big date last night!” Theon continued obliviously, before yelping and looking down at his foot under the table, where Sansa had apparently kicked him in the skin.

“A date? With whom darling?” her mother called out, her face suddenly alert to this new information. Arya felt her pulse speed up, this time from anxiety not excitement. She really didn’t want everyone to know about her and Gendry yet. It was far too soon.

“Oh it was nothing. Just a casual thing…” she said, trying to keep her voice neutral.

“Didn’t look that causal to me. You spent all day getting ready for it!” Theon said, this time knowingly butting in and looking at Sansa defiantly, who was shooting daggers at him across the table.

Bran and Rickon were both staring at the others, devious glee across both their faces. They suddenly looked so much younger, like the mischievous little boys they’d once been back in Winterfell. Talisa was the only one not obviously desperate to know the identity of Arya’s date.

“So who is his mystery man Arya? Come on, we’ll find out eventually! You may as well just tell us now…” Robb said cockily, and Arya groaned, a brick forming in her stomach. She looked over to her mother’s expectant face. It was so full of hope and excitement on her behalf that she couldn’t help it.

“It’s Gendry Mum.” She said softly, waiting for the name to resonate with her mother.

“Gendry? Who’s Gendry?” Robb added, but Arya ignored him, waiting instead for her mother’s reaction. Then it dawned on Catelyn.

“Gendry? The young man who’s making the rings? That Gendry?” she asked, dumbfounded but not disapproving.

“Yes, Mum! How many men called Gendry do you think I know?” Arya asked petulantly. Her mother ignored her tone.

“Oh Arya, this is wonderful news! What a lovely young man he is!”

“I’m sorry but is anyone going to tell me who this Gendry is? What’s his surname?” Robb asked, growing irritated at being ignored.

Talisia elbowed him but he deliberately ignored it. He was wearing his “Ned” face now, Arya thought to herself.

He thinks he’s head of the family now, she thought to herself. But he’ll never be. Not really. Mum is. And then Jon…

But she’d never tell Robb this. Since becoming a father himself, it seemed more important to him than ever to take on the role of the patriarch. It didn’t normally bother Arya, until now.

“Waters, Robb. His name is Gendry Waters.” She spat, annoyed.

“He’s a very accomplished jewellery designer. He’s won lots of awards. And he made my engagement ring too!” Sansa announced. Talisa’s face lit up at this and the two women shared a moment of approval.

“That’s brilliant Arya!” Talisa exclaimed, genuinely happy for her sister in law. Arya was grateful for Talisa’s warmth and tact.
“Gendry is a wonderful young man Robb.” Catelyn added, nodding authoritatively at him. Arya had to restrain herself from rolling her eyes. Her mother had met Gendry all of once and suddenly she was acting like an expert on him. But Arya was ultimately just relieved that her mother seemed to approve and wasn’t asking any follow up questions. Yet…

“So when do I get to meet this wonderful man then?” Robb asked, fixing his gaze on Arya and she was suddenly hit by a wave of deja vu. It was as if her father was still there with them.

“Seven hells Robb! I’ve literally just started seeing him this weekend! Give me a minute!” she huffed, her patience wearing thin. She hated being the centre of attention and this was torture for her.

“Alright, but I need to meet this chap sooner rather than later. I need to make sure he’s good enough for you…..”

“What about his family dear? What do they do?” Catelyn asked, innocently. It was the kind of question her mother always asked about new people, but this time it made Arya’s heart leap into her throat. She took a sip of water to steady herself. She definitely wasn’t ready to share that with them all yet.

“He doesn’t actually have a lot of family. He’s an only child and his mum raised him on her own. I’m not sure what she does now. But she works.”

“Really? Well, she obviously did a great job raising him.” Her mother concluded, and Arya found she couldn’t help but agree with her mother, something that was a rare occurrence for them both…

“And what about his dad?” Robb asked, and Arya could have killed him then.

“He’s never met his father,” she replied, shortly.

Robb seemed to pick up on her tone and thankfully dropped it.

“Well, we all look forward to meeting him,” he replied politely.

Arya felt herself growing irritated again.

“Sansa, Theon and Mum have already met him! And Jon knows about him. Ygritte too probably…”

“What? Arya! You tell Jon about this man but not me?” Robb’s voice sounded genuinely hurt and Arya knew she had hit a nerve. Robb had always been slightly jealous of the bond Arya and Jon had shared growing up. Arya thought it was highly hypocritical of her bother, since he was also extremely close with Jon, and he had always been closer to Sansa than her growing up, but she let it slide this time.

“That’s enough interrogation Robb!” her mother announced, and it was clear from her tone that that would be the end of it. “Arya darling, we’re very happy for you. Take your time dear.” She said gently, and Arya was actually grateful for her mother’s natural diplomacy.

“Thanks Mum. Can we please talk about something else now?” Arya pleaded, and her mother took the hint and swiftly changed the subject, asking Sansa about her photoshoot with the wedding photographer. Arya sighed in relief and resumed eating her dinner, deliberately avoiding everyone else’s eyes.
Later than evening, Arya, Sansa and Theon finally took their leave to go home. It wasn’t that late, only about 10pm, but Arya was absolutely exhausted. When they arrived back at their house, she slumped onto the couch, not even bothering to take off her jacket. Sansa moved into the kitchen and quickly filled the kettle.

“I’m making some tea before bed. Would you like some?” she called over to Arya on the other side of the open plan room.

“Sure. But make it a herbal one please. I’m so knackered! I’m about to fall asleep right now and I don’t need any caffeine to wake me back up…”

Theon poked his head in the door from the hallway.

“Sansa I’m going to head up to bed. No tea for me thanks.”

“Ok love, I won’t be long. I’ll be along shortly.” She called out to him sweetly.

Sansa waited for the kettle to finish boiling and grabbed two mugs, dropping a herbal tea bag in each of them and pouring the boiling water over them, performing the ritual in content silence.

Arya watched from the couch, her eyelids already beginning to droop heavily. She could feel the weight of exhaustion beginning to descend upon her and for once, she was grateful not to have to get up early for work. She could catch up on her sleep tonight. This weekend had been both thrilling and exhausting. She’d barely slept since Friday night…

Sansa joined her on the couch, pulling her boots off and tucking her long legs up under her to face her sister, a look of joyful glee spreading across her beautiful face.

“OK, so out with it! I want all the juicy details! Start with last night! How did dinner go?”

Arya felt a thrill of excitement run through her at the thought of telling her sister everything, but she forced herself to play it cool.

“Dinner was great. He took me to…”

“Wait hold on! What about your dress? Did he have anything to say about it? His jaw practically hit the floor when you walked out here in it yesterday!”

Arya’s mind flashed back to that moment from last night and her heart swelled at the look of pure joy on Gendry’s face as he took her in. It made her feel wonderful to know that he was that happy to see her. She couldn’t help the beaming smile that formed on her face in response.

“Oh yeah! He was a big fan of the dress! He may as well have swept me off my feet the moment the front door closed!” she grinned at the memory and Sansa squealed.

“Oh, Arya this is so exciting! I’m so unbelievably happy for you! You have no idea!” her sister said, squeezing her shoulder hard enough for Arya to pull away.

“So then he said we were going for a walk…” she continued, trying to focus on the series of events and not get too caught up in the emotions swirling around her at the memories.

“A walk?” Sansa asked, perplexed.

“Yes. So he took me up to the high street and then started acting all cagey until he found that Pentoshi restaurant. You know, the one that looks a bit shit from the outside?”
Sansa nodded, sipping her tea.

“Well it turns out it’s not shit at all. It’s wonderful! Very romantic atmosphere and the food was amazing! You and Theon should definitely go there…”

“Oh Arya! Maybe we can all go together! Wouldn’t that be so lovely?” her sister exclaimed, her face lighting up at the thought. Trust Sansa to think of a way to make this even more sappy, Arya thought to herself, but this time she found it rather difficult not to get excite at the idea herself. What the hell is happening to me?

“So we had a fantastic meal. We even shared a main course.” Sansa squealed at that again, but didn’t interrupt. “And then, I thought we were finished but he took me downstairs…”

“Downstairs? Why? What’s downstairs?”

“A speakeasy bar! Well, it’s a cocktail bar, really. But it used to be a proper speakeasy back in the day…”

“Oh my gods, how did I not know about this before?” Sansa asked, clutching her chest dramatically and looking slightly horrified at being so out of the loop.

“Gendry said it’s a well known secret.” Arya said nonchalantly, sipping her tea. She was suddenly hit with a wave of pride that he knew all about this cool place that neither of them had ever heard of. “Anyway so we sat down and had a cocktail. It’s really dark and sexy. Velvet booths, low lighting, lots of privacy…” She winked suggestively at Sansa, and delighted in her sister’s shocked reaction.

“Arya Stark! I don’t want to know what you got up to in there!” she exclaimed in mock shock, before the two of them descended into a fit of girly giggles. This was new for Arya. She so rarely let herself be this soft and vulnerable, not even with her family. She had spent years building up these walls around her, even from the people she loved the most.

After the death of their father, she had steeled self to be hard on the outside, to not let anyone in all the way. Jaqen had temporarily broken through her defences but he had only hurt her more, and further cemented her resolve not to let anyone in again. Now she could feel her defences starting to crumble and it didn’t actually feel as terrifying as she’d once thought. Maybe it’s alright to be happy…

“Oh, ok! No details! So we only stayed for one drink and then things were heating up…” she said carefully. Sansa nodded.

“Yeah, yeah. I get the idea!”

“So we took a taxi back to his flat. It was all going wonderfully. We ended up in his bedroom. I was on his lap and my dress came off…” Sansa squealed with excitement but just as quickly her face fell when she saw the look of annoyance cloud Arya’s features.

“Yes, and then what?” she asked impatiently.

“And then the whole night was fucking RUINED by his drunk best friend at the door!” Arya grunted, the frustration still fresh in her memory.

“What! What do you mean?” Sansa asked incredulously, her mouth dropping open in shock.

“I mean his stupid drunk friend showed up banging on the front door and crying about a fight he’d
had with his fucking fiancée and Gendry let him in! And then the mood was obviously ruined!” Arya spat out, still angry at the thought…

“Oh my gods! What happened with his friend’s fiancée?” Sansa gasped.

“Sansa! That’s not the point of the fucking story is it? The point is Gendry had to calm him down and look after him for the rest of the night! So I went home. That’s why I was in such a bad mood this morning…” she grumbled, her bottom lip jutting out comically. Sansa fought the urge to laugh at her little sister.

“But you’re not in a bad mood this evening…. So something must have happened since I saw you last?” she decided, her eyes narrowing and her voice taking on that inquisitory tone.

“Well, aren’t you little miss clever clogs!” Arya shot back, her eyebrows raising suggestively.

“Come on Arya, the bloody suspense is killing me!”

Arya laughed, thoroughly enjoying teasing her sister like this.

“OK fine! So this morning, after you and Theon left…”

“Yes…”

“He turned up at the front door unannounced!” she grinned.

“Oh my gods! Go on!” Sansa’s eyes were like saucers as she hung on every word…

“He wanted to apologise for how last night ended.”

“Good boy!” Sansa nodded.

“And he’d already told me he had plans today to take him mum shopping. But he’d even told her about me and what happened and so he didn’t have plans after all…”

“And???” Sansa’s voice grew impatient.

“And so I brought him in and well, one thing quickly led to another…”

“Yes???”

“And we had the most amazing sex of my life!!” Arya’s face couldn’t hide the pure joy and delight. Sansa screamed with excitement, grabbing Arya and squeezing her surprisingly hard.

“Oh Arya!!! This is amazing!!! I’m so beyond happy for you!!” she squealed.

Arya let her sister hug her fiercely for what seemed like forever, before she finally let go and looked into her eyes, unshed tears pooling in Sansa’s ice blue eyes. Arya rolled her eyes at the overt display of emotion. Her big sister was such a softie.

“After everything you’ve been through with that other shithead! You deserve this so much!” she sniffed, wiping her eyes delicately. She even cries gracefully, Arya noted to herself.

“Sansa, calm down! We’ve only just started seeing each other! For gods’ sake!” But she couldn’t hide the happiness in her own voice. Being able to share this with her sister meant the world to Arya. She’d never had this before. Her relationship with Gendry felt pure and natural.
“I’m just so happy for you!” her sister said softly, squeezing her shoulders once more. “Ok so tell me, without going into too much detail please! The sex was really good?”

“It was unbelievable! I’ve never… It was never like that before, you know?” she said shyly, suddenly overcome with bashfulness. Sansa nodded in understanding.

“I know. It’s different when you’re with someone you really care about. Who treats you right…”

“And I have to tell you, you were right about the wax! It was amazing!”

Sansa squealed again. “See! What did I tell you? You should listen to me more often.”

“Maybe I will! Because those were the best orgasms of my life! I’d never had someone go down on me before but I can only imagine being bare made it even more intense!” Arya exclaimed, all previous shyness gone. Sansa blushed.

“Oh Arya! Bloody hell! I said no details…”

“Alright, that’s all I’ll say…” she smiled smugly.

“Wait, you’ve never had someone give you oral before?” Sansa asked incredulously, her disapproval evident on her face. Arya felt a wave of embarrassment wash over her.

“No…” she replied, ashamed.

“Oh well! About bloody time then, isn’t it?” her sister grinned and Arya beamed.

“I didn’t expect this to happen!” Sansa exclaimed, her eyebrows raised as high as they would go.

“Well neither did I! Not after his speech about wanting to wait!”

“Arya that’s not fair! You should respect his feelings!”

“Well his feelings obviously changed since then, didn’t they?” Arya said cheekily, her face taking on that petulant expression she wore so often in their youth. Sansa rolled her eyes at her.

“You are incorrigible! I don’t know what Gendry sees in you, to be honest…”

Arya slapped her arm playfully before reaching over and grabbing Sansa in a bear hug. “Thank you Sansa. For everything,” she whispered sincerely into her sister’s ear. They broke apart and smiled warmly at each other for a moment before Sansa glanced at her watch.

“It’s getting rather late! I have to be up early for a meeting. Not all of us can have a nice lie in tomorrow!” she teased.

“Hey I will be working until all hours tomorrow night, so don’t envy me! Oh and by the way I’ll be staying at Gendry’s tomorrow night, just so you know.” She tried to say this as casually as possible, but Sansa picked up on her tone immediately, humming in response.

“Oh really? Missing him already, are we?” she asked, amused.

“Shut up!” Arya blushed.

“I think it’s lovely!” her sister replied, before standing up and kissing her softly on the forehead. “Ok, goodnight. Go to sleep soon. You look knackered!”
“Thanks a lot!”

Sansa put her mug in the dishwasher and left the room to go upstairs to her own bedroom. Arya followed suit, moving to her bedroom and undressing and slipping on her baggy pjs. She brushed her teeth and washed her face, slipping into bed. She could smell Gendry on her sheets and the thought sent a rush of blood to her core. She checked her phone. It was nearly 11pm. She thought he might still be up…

Arya: Just going to bed. Wanted to say good night to my new lover…

Three dots flashed on her phone for moment before disappearing. Then her phone rang, Gendry’s name appearing onscreen. She answered immediately.

“Hi,” she said softly. “This is a nice surprise.”

“Hey. I wanted to hear your voice.” He sounded sleepy but content. Arya immediately missed his presence in her bed and wished he was there with her.

“I thought you might already be asleep, or I would have just called you myself.” She felt the need to explain.

“No it’s good. I was just about to go to sleep. But I was hoping you’d call. I missed your voice…” She could almost hear his smile down the line. It made her stomach flutter with nervous excitement.

“So how was the rest of your day?” she asked, attempting to sound calm.

“Fine, yeah. I got back here and Grey and I talked for a while and then he left to talk to Missandei. That’s all cleared up now, thankfully! And then I just ordered some food and chilled out on the couch for the rest of the night. What about you? How was your family dinner?” he sounded so happy and relaxed. Arya’s mind immediately flashed to her family’s, namely Robb’s, interrogation of her about Gendry and her stomach twisted in a knot for a very different reason. She was loathe to tell him now and bring his spirits down, so instead she carefully avoided the truth without straight out lying.

“Oh, fine, the usual. It’s just big families, you know? They can be stressful…”

“Not really,” he said jovially, and Arya could have kicked herself. Of course he wouldn’t know what it’s like to have big family. How thoughtless could she be?

“Sorry! I totally forgot you don’t have a big family!” she cringed.

“Arya it’s fine! Honestly, I can use my imagination…” he chuckled, seemingly unaffected by her words.

“Well, anyway, some of them were just getting on my nerves, that’s all. Happens all the time. No big deal,” she sighed.

“Want to talk about it?” he asked gently, and once again she was reminded of his softness. Fuck, she was falling hard for this boy…

“No really, it’s fine. I’d rather talk about tomorrow…. I can’t wait to see you tomorrow night…” she said shyly, feeling her face flush slightly and relieved that no one could see this time.

“Me too,” he replied immediately, his warmth and sincerity evident in his voice. “I’ve been
thinking about you all evening. You’ve wrecked me Arya Stark… I don’t know how I’m supposed to get any work done tomorrow…”

Arya’s heart swelled at his words. The idea that he was just as smitten with her as she was with him made her feel ridiculously happy.

“Hello, are you still there? Or have you fallen asleep already?” he joked, laughing softly.

“I’m here, I’m here. Just at a loss for words,” she replied gently, pausing for a moment. “I feel the same way, Gendry. I can’t wait to see you tomorrow night. Although I’ll probably be knackered though!” she added.

“That’s ok. We can take it easy…” he said, the affection clear in his voice. Arya felt herself falling a little deeper every time he said something so caring. It thrilled her.

“Well, I better let you get your beauty sleep, eh?” she joked, listening to his corresponding chuckle and imaging his eyes crinkling as he laughed.

“Ok, you’re probably right. Good night Arya,” he said gently.

“Good night Gendry. Sweet dreams…”

“You too. Now you have something more to base those dreams of me on…” he laughed and she found herself joining him. He was right, of course.

“Mmm, that’s true. Night…” And she hung up, before they descended into an endless back and forth.

She was just about to turn off her light when a thought struck her. She reached for her phone again.

Arya: Rest up. You’re going to need all your strength and stamina again tomorrow night… 😊

Three dots flashed immediately.

Gendry: Bloody hell Stark! How am I supposed to rest now?

Arya: Oh I’m sorry! I just thought you’d like to know what I’ve been thinking about all night… 😄

Gendry: Go on…

Arya: It’s just that I can’t stop thinking about getting my mouth on you, finishing what we started this morning. You tasted so good…And you were so generous with me. I’d love to return the favour… 😊

Gendry: Fucking hell Arya! Now what am I supposed to do?

Arya: Oh I think you know… 😊

Chapter End Notes

So, how was it? Let me know what you think! It was bit of a filler chapter, but I had to get from A to B. Next chapter will be more eventful!
And hopefully I'll get it out much sooner this time...

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