The Lost Prince

by PsychVamp

Summary

The first Baratheon prince died in his crib, this is known.

Arya Stark comes to King's Landing when her father becomes Hand of King and her sister is set to marry the Crown Prince, Joffrey. Arya journeys to the street of steal and meets a handsome young blacksmith. Little does she know, that her relationship with this blacksmith could change the future of the Seven Kingdoms.

Notes

This idea came to me while seeing all those internet theories about what if Gendry was the child Cersei mentioned she lost to Catelyn. I'm setting this a little later in the timeline than the show about 22 years after the end of the rebellion. We are ignoring Daenerys (maybe she is just living a happy life as Khalesi and Drogo isn't murdered by a witch) and the White Walkers for this story. I am taking some liberties with a few different characters, making them slightly different from their canon characterizations, but I think they aren't completely OC if a few events had never happened to them. I have this story already 3/4ths of the way written, thought I'd start posting for some motivation to actually finish it. Hope you guys like what I've decided to do!
Warning: there is death of a baby in this chapter

See the end of the work for more notes.
Prologue: The Queen's Love

Cersei Lannister had been proud to find herself with child only months after the wedding, she was proving her worth to all those that had not been happy with her selection as the wife of the new King. When she held her son for the first time, she hadn’t been aware that she could love anyone as much as she did the black haired babe. The babe was the one thing in King’s Landing that truly brought her joy and she barely allowed the child leave her sight except for when her presence was required as part of her duties as Queen. She had managed to postpone the use of the wet nurse for over a month, but her duties could only be put aside for so long.

The worst night of her life had started innocently enough, she fed her son and placed him down for the evening before her handmaiden came in to help her dress. The wet nurse arrived just as Cersei was ready to go, the woman’s own child seemingly asleep in his basket. Cersei was still uneasy with the use of a wet nurse, even after having the woman around for near two months, but it couldn’t really be avoided. She knelt down and placed one last kiss on her son’s head, his breathing calm and steady before she headed down to the feast.

She returned to her room a few hours later, once the drink had started flowing heavily and the whores had begun their rounds, she took her leave. She entered the room quietly, hoping to not disturb her hopefully still sleeping baby, but was surprised when she found the room empty, the wet nurse and her child were gone. She immediately rushed to the edge of the crib, a sudden panic gripped her, it lessoned slightly when she saw the shape in the crib. Something still didn’t seem right though and she placed her hand on his head, the skin was cold. Her hand fell to his body, there was no movement of breath. The scream that escaped her throat summoned the guard from the other side of the door. He stopped in his tracks as he took in his beautiful Queen clenching her babe to her chest as tears streamed down her cheeks and she let out broken screams.

A second and third guard appeared, the first turned to them and gave orders in a voice barely above a whisper, “Find the King and the Maester, I think the prince is dead.”

The first guard didn’t feel it was right to approach the Queen, so instead he just lit a few of the candles in the room, brightening it slowly. The screams suddenly stopped and he looked over at her, her eyes were locked on the unmoving baby in her arms.

“This isn’t my son.” Her choked voice said, her eyes never leaving the child. Her green eyes slid up to him, “This isn’t my son! Find that whore and get my son!” She screamed at him, and he was terrified for his life before Ser Jaime burst through the door.

Ser Jaime didn’t even spare the guard a second glance before he was on the floor next to his sister. The guard choose that moment to return to his post outside the door, the business of the royal family was none of his.

Cersei looked into the eyes of her brother, “Jaime, this isn’t Stefon. This isn’t my son. Find my son. Find him.”

Jaime looked down at the baby still in his sister’s arm, it certainly looked like the babe to him, same black hair at least. Jaime had only held the babe twice and seen him maybe triple that, he was usually asleep whenever he visited Cersei, and that was alright with him. He sighed, “Cersei, you are in a lot….”

“Don’t tell me what I am Jaime. This isn’t my son!” She yelled at him.
They both looked up as Robert, Jon Arryn, and GrandMaester Pycelle came in. The Maester walked forward and gently asked to see the babe. Jaime had to pry her fingers from the babe before he was able to get it to the Maester. Pycelle took the baby and laid him down on a table, his fingers checking for a pulse. He looked up at the King, “My apologies Your Grace, the babe has gone with the Stranger.”

Robert let out a yell while he turned and punched the nearest wall. Jon Arryn placed on a consoleing hand on his shoulder before the King shrugged it off and stormed from the room. Jon sighed but turned to the Maester, “What befell the boy?”

“I see no signs of poison, illness, or smothering.” The Maester said, before adding, “It is unfortunately something that happens sometimes.”

“That isn’t my son.” Cersei quiet yet determined voice came from her spot on the floor, “Why will none of you believe me? We need to find the wet nurse, she has kidnapped my son!”

Jaime helped her get to her feet, and looked to the Maester for some assistance.

The older man stepped forward, “This is a difficult time for you, Your Grace. The loss of a child is something no one should have to suffer. It is not uncommon for the brain to refuse to believe such trauma.”

Cersei’s eyes snapped to him, and the man stopped dead in his tracks, “I know my son, and that,” She pointed to baby on the table, “Is not him!”

Jaime forced her to look at him, “Cersei, what you are saying does not make sense. Why would the wet nurse steal your child and leave a different baby in your crib?”

Cersei was silent for a moment, she could see Arryn and Pycelle whispering amongst themselves over by the table. She looked back at her twin, “Her baby must have died, and in her grief she stole mine and left her’s in his place.”

Jaime sighed, “That is madness Cersei.”

“Just, find the wet nurse Jaime. I know I’m right, find her, find her.” Cersei insisted, her strength suddenly leaving her.

Jaime guided her over to the bed, “I will send out the Gold Cloaks, we will find her. Right now, I need to you to try and sleep.” Pycelle handed Jaime a goblet of wine, and whispered something to him. Jaime nodded before handing it to Cersei, “Drink this. I will locate the wet nurse.”

Cersei drank the wine, which she was sure was laced with something to help her sleep, and looked at her brother, “Find my son.”

Jaime kissed her forward and helped ease her back onto the bed, “Sleep.”

Cersei did as she was bid, her eyes were closed before the men had even left the room, she only hoped her brother kept his word and found her son.

News spread fast in the capital, the prince was dead. Jaime did attempt to find the wet nurse, but it wasn’t easy to find one person in a city the size of King’s Landing, and she had disappeared. Jaime still doubted his sister’s insistence that the woman’s disappearance was proof of her guilt. Jaime believed the woman was simply hiding to avoid the wrath of the Queen, and for that he certainly didn’t blame her. A moon later and Jaime called off the search.
Cersei stopped trying to get people to believe her after a time, everyone would only see her as a hysterical, grieving woman and take no stock in any of her words. She knows the truth and one day she will find her son.
Wolf in the Streets

Chapter Summary

Arya ventures out into the city

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Starks had been in King’s Landing for four months now and Arya hated everything about it. The ladies at court found her odd and uncivilized, which made Sansa mad at her because as the future Queen, she needed the ladies to be on her side. Arya didn’t see why any of that was important but she had promised her mother and father that she would behave. She made a point to wear the stupid dresses and not talk about unladylike subjects. Then, as a reward for her good behavior, she was allowed water dancing lessons on her own time.

Today Syrio had given her a special lesson, sneak out of the castle, go to the street of steel, buy a dagger using only 15 stags, and then return to the castle, and to do all this without being caught. She worried slightly about how her father would react if she was indeed caught but Syrio had told her that water dancers did not fear reprimands from their fathers.

She broke her fast with Sansa and her father, as she did every morning, and when Sansa left for a morning stroll in the gardens with her stupid prince, Arya changed into some old clothes she had stolen from Jon, and once she was certain the coast was clear, she snuck down into the dragon vault. She had found the passage out of the castle of accident one day while chasing cats during her first few weeks of lessons. She was not too worried about getting out of the castle, it was finding the street of steel and then getting back into it without being seen that worried her. She had never been out onto the streets of King’s Landing except for when they first arrived and then a few trips to the Sept of Baelor as part of the preparations for Sansa’s wedding. It took her until well after midday to find the street she was looking for, the streets of King’s Landing were not well planned. She walked the length of the street once, checking out all the shops before she doubled back, not sure what she was looking for before picking a shop.

A man a few years her senior, with dark hair and blue eyes, was standing in front of one of the shops in the middle of street, he called out to her, “You aren’t trying to find something to steal are you m’lady?”

She stopped and looked him over, “I’m not a lady, and I’m not trying to steal anything either. I have coin.”

He looked her up and down, “It you are trying not to be a lady, you need to do better than a stolen tunic and breeches. What you looking for?”

“Who says I want to buy it from you?” She said, but stepped closer to his shop anyway, he was the only one who had even glanced at her so far.

He shrugged, “You’ve walked the street twice now. Might as well actually stop in and look at least.” He said, gesturing to the wares on display along the shop’s walls and tables.
She nodded, and gave him a small smile, “I need a dagger.”

His smile lit up his whole face, and made her realize just how handsome he was, even covered in soot, “Knew you wanted something. What kind of dagger do you want?”

She blushed with how he was looking at her, but tried to ignore it, “I’m not really sure. Do you have some I could look at?”

He walked over to a small table in front of a wall lined with swords, “These are the daggers we have, if you need something special, we can make it for you.”

She looked over the selection, she hadn’t realized there were so many different styles of dagger before. Most were similar to the ones she saw soldiers have in their belts along with their swords, others were smaller for concealment, and some were large, the blades almost half that of a short sword. She reached for one of the smaller daggers before she stopped herself, “May I pick it up?”

The man watched her for a moment before nodding, his face nearly unreadable.

She picked up one with a 2 inch blade, the handle was gray with lines of white. It would be perfect for her to hide in her boots or in the sashes of her dresses, maybe she’d make a sheath for her thigh. She spun it around her fingers a few times before setting it back down. She picked up a few others, they were all well made but the first one still called to her best. She looked back at the blacksmith, he was still watching her, “I’ll take this one.” She picked up the gray dagger and then grabbed her coin purse, “How much?”

He was quiet for a moment before saying, “20 stags.”

“How about 10?” She countered, knowing they’d meet in the middle.

He smirked at her, “Was just checking to see what you’d say. It is really only worth about 12.”

She smiled at his confession, “Thought I was a stupid little girl?”

“Little?” He looked her over, “Yes, but not a girl. You are clearly a woman, and a smart one too. You’d be surprised how easy it is to trick proper ladies into paying too much.”

“I told you, I’m not a lady.” She responded, but handed him the 12 stags anyway.

He tucked the coins into this pocket and then turned and dug around in a bucket before pulling back and handing her a small sheath. She took it and slipped the dagger inside, “Thank you…. I’m sorry, I never asked your name.”

“Gendry, m’lady.” He responded, giving her a sad excuse of a half bow.

She crossed her hands over her chest, “I already have told you, I am…”

“Not a lady. You are though. You talk to proper to not be a highborn and your clothes are too clean.” He said gesturing to the old, but basically spotless tunic she was wearing, and the same for the breeches. The only dirty thing about her was her shoes and maybe the bottom inch of the pants, the streets were filthy.

She sighed, “I’m Arya. I was trying to not gain any attention, I’m not really supposed to be out here.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll keep your secret, m’lady.” He said with a wink.
She fought her blush this time, she had never had anyone make her react like this before. She looked away and noticed the sky was starting to change color, “I need to go. Thank you for all your assistance today Gendry.”

“It was my pleasure, m’lady.” He said, seeming to enjoy making her irritated.

She shook her head and walked away, she stopped to glance back at him once she had gone some distance from the shop, and smiled to see him watching her before she disappeared back into the street.

Chapter End Notes

I looked at the wiki to get an idea how the coin system worked in Westeros, and that is some complicated math, so I just went with what sounded good for the price of the dagger. The chapters will be longer after this, I wanted to keep this one short, a bit of set up. Updates will probably be once a week on Fridays or Saturdays depending on my plans for the week.
The wedding was now four moons away, and Arya was being subjected to a family lunch between the Baratheons and Starks. She put on the dress Sansa requested and let the handmaiden style her hair in the proper fashion. She had not really spent much time with either the King or the Queen much during the time they’d been in King’s Landing, she decided to use this lunch to study them. Syrio said it was always good to study an enemy, so when it came time to fight she would know their weakness. She doubted she would be needing to fight either of them, but it was good practice. It also helped keep her mind from wandering to the blue eyed blacksmith, whom she had met a fortnight ago and had thought of him every day since.

Maybe thinking of the blacksmith even for the moment had confused her, because as she watched the King, she saw things in him that reminded her of Gendry. They had the same shade of eyes and though the King’s hair was starting to grey, the black he still had was just as dark as Gendry’s. There were even similarities in the face, once you tried to picture what the King might have looked like when he was young and in his prime, before all the drinking.

It wasn’t long before the men excused themselves, her father and the King had their duties to attend to, and the Princes had some lessons. Joffrey kissed Sansa’s hand in farewell, causing her sister to giggle and blush, while Arya rolled her eyes. She noticed that Myrcella was smiling like she just witnessed the most romantic thing in the world. Arya noticed there was a harshness in the Queen’s gaze, and Arya wondered at the reason.

Once the four women were alone the Queen spoke, “With Sansa’s wedding night soon to arrive, and with your mother not here to advise you, I have decided to take on that roll.” She looked between all of them, “If you have any questions about marriage, now would be the time.”

“Why do this with me here?” Myrcella asked, she was nearly 15 and not yet betrothed.

“You are of age now my love, soon your father and I will find you a good match.” Cersei said, placing a comforting hand of her daughter’s arm, “I thought you might be more comfortable asking
with Sansa and Arya here, but if you’d rather we talk later, we can.”

Mrycella looked at the older girls, “I’ll stay.”

Cersei smiled and then looked at the Stark girls across from her, “I know you have questions. Ask away.”

“Does the first time really hurt as much as people claim?” Sansa asked, and Arya was surprised that her sister had dared to speak up.

“That depends on your husband. Some men are quick to action and kind of just, shove it in, then yes, it will hurt. If you happen to find a more gentle man, perhaps it wouldn’t be as painful. No matter the type of lover, the first few times will be uncomfortable until you get used to the feelings.” Cersei answered truthfully, and after seeing their faces she tried for a joke, “As you know the King a bit, I think you can assume what kind of lover he is.”

Arya was the only one who laughed, because she had an idea. Mrycella looked a bit uncomfortable thinking about her father as a brute in bed and Sansa seemed almost confused. After a few minutes of silence, Arya sighed and asked the first question that came to her mind, “What about childbirth? I remember my mother screaming a lot when Rickon was born.”

The Queen gave her a small smile, “Giving birth is very painful, but afterwards, when you hold your baby for the very first time, you forget all about the pain because it was worth it.” She leaned over and kissed Mrycella on the head, “In my experience, girls are easier too. The boys were much more trouble to get out.” That got a giggle from all of them, “It also gets a little easier with each one. I don’t know if it is because the body is more used to the sensations, or if it just seems that way after. My first certainly seemed more difficult than the last.”

Sansa bit her lip in thought before asking, “What would the worst part of being a wife or a mother be?”

Cersei was quiet for a long time, and Arya couldn’t help but wonder if she was sad about something. Cersei looked up and said, “Losing a child is the worst thing.” The table fell into silence, and Arya didn’t need to know that Cersei was speaking from experience. They were all surprised when Cersei kept speaking, “I had a baby boy before Joffrey, his name was Stefon, he took after Robert in looks, blue eyes and dark hair. He died a little after two moons, for no reason that Maester Pycelle could find. It was the worst time of life.”

Mrycella reached over and hugged her mother, “It is okay Momma, you still have us.”

“Yes I do my sweet.” Cersei said and kissed her daughter on the head while returning the hug, “Hopefully none of you will ever have to experience such loss.”

Arya suddenly found a new respect for the Queen, it would certainly explain why she so protective of her children, she was just worried about losing them. They continued talking, about less serious topics, and Arya tuned them out. The description of the first prince had made Arya think about the blacksmith with the same features. She wanted to go see him again, but she knew that would only heighten her obsession with him. As much as she hated the rules, she knew she was trapped by them, she could not be friends with a blacksmith, and she certainly couldn’t be more than friends with him either. She needed to keep her maidenhead intact for her future husband, an idea she hated. She would be married off to some lord, expected to remain loyal to him and give him children, while he was allowed to do whatever he wished. Her father the best man she knew, but even he had betrayed her mother at one time. The King was notorious for sleeping around and enjoying the company of whores, it was suspected he had at least a dozen bastards. She wondered
if perhaps Gendry was one of them, it would explain the resemblance. She wondered why only one of his children with the Queen shared his looks, the Lannister shown through in the boys strongly but Mrycella had gotten the black hair, but she luckily took after her mother in the face.

“You’ve been quiet Arya, everything alright?” Mrycella asked, maybe she had felt Arya’s stare.

Arya nodded, “Sorry, sometimes my mind wanders.”

“What were you wondering about?” Cersei asked.

Arya looked away for a moment before saying, “Oh, I was just thinking how lucky Mrycella was that the only thing she inherited from the King was his hair. She basically looks like a copy of you, Your Grace, only with black hair.”

That caused the table to laugh, Mrycella twisting a strand of her hair, “You think I look my mother?”

Arya nodded, “You look how’d I picture the Queen at your age, only the hair is different.”

“I agree. You are both very beautiful and you are lucky to look like your mother.” Sansa assured the princess.

“You look like yours as well.” Cersei commented, giving Sansa a smile, which caused the red head to blush at the compliment.

Arya frowned a bit, she knew she was the one who started this conversation, but she was easily the least attractive person at the table. No one ever gave her a second glance, especially since she was always right next to her sister, a true beauty. The blacksmith had looked at her though, the way she had seen men looking at her sister.

She made a decision then, she would go see him again, even if all she gained from it was another smile, and the feeling that someone found her desirable for something other than her name.

They were slowly walking back to the Tower of the Hand from the royal apartments when Sansa looked at her sister, "Do you think Joffrey will be like his father in the marriage bed?"

Arya stopped in her steps and looked at her sister, "He doesn't seem like his father in any other way, so I don't know why’d he take after him in that way, but I honestly don't know."

"Have you ever thought about it before?” Sansa asked as the continued their walk.

"Sex?” Arya asked for clarification, Sansa nodded, and so she said, "Of course I have. I overheard Theon talk about it enough that I couldn't help but be curious about it."

"You haven't?” Sansa said and she stalled Arya with a hand on her arm.

Arya shook her head, "No, I haven't, but I did go to the Wintertown brothel once and talk to some of the women there. They had a lot to say. They even told me how to make moon tea."

Sansa sat down on one of the many benches, "You went to the brothel?”

She nodded, "It was interesting. It was the middle of the day, so they weren't any 'customers', and they were more than willing to talk for awhile for a few silvers." Arya eyes her sister, "Do you
want to know some of things they told to please a man?"

Sansa's cheeks reddened, "No. I....I will just figure it out myself when the time comes."

Arya shrugged, "I'll tell you later if you change your mind."

"I won't." The red head said and her eyes traced the tops of the buildings, "Have you ever been tempted?"

Blue eyes, dark hair, and a pleasant smile flashed before her, but she said, "No. I need to keep myself pure for my stupid future husband."

"Father will find you a good husband, like he did for me."

Arya hoped that was true, on both counts. While she hadn't spent a lot of time of with Joffrey, there was something in the glint of his eyes sometimes that concerned her. It reminded her of the time she'd met Ramsay Snow, he looked at women like a dog looked at a hare, when it came out about what he'd been doing to the servant girls of the Dreadfort, the look had made sense. Arya wasn't going to voice those concerns to her sister though, she was sure her Father would have made sure the Prince was a good man before agreeing to the marriage. She smiled at Sansa, "I'm sure your wedding will bring in many possible suitors for me."

Sansa smiled, "It is all getting so much closer, almost doesn't seem real. I am going to be the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms one day, my son will be the next King."

"Yes you will be. I hope you choose to use that power for the good of the realm."

"Of course." Sansa replied, "I will do my best to be a generous Queen. Maybe Joffrey and I will be known as King Jaehaerys and Queen Alysanne come again."

Arya laughed, "Those are some lofty goals Queen Sansa."

Sansa laughed as well, "I know but it would be wonderful wouldn't it? To have a romance worthy of tales and songs."

Arya smiled, that had always been Sansa's dream. Arya had once wished of running off into the wilds and becoming an outlaw, or maybe a warrior like Queen Visenya. She still had her sword lessons, but she wondered if her husband would allow her to continue those lessons. As she listened to her sister talk about all the ways she and Joffrey could be the greatest rulers the Seven Kingdoms had ever seen, she wondered if it wasn't too late to run away and be an outlaw. Her smile changed to a smirk, maybe she'd take a certain blacksmith with her.

Chapter End Notes

Thank for you reading!! Don't be afraid to let me know your thoughts, I love reading all the wonderful comments.

As for update schedule, it will be Friday/Saturday each week. Today is just a bonus because I took the day off of work for an event but then it got rained out and I don't feel like watching football with my boyfriend.
A Special Sword

Chapter Summary

Arya returns to Gendry's shop with a special request

Chapter Notes

Firstly, thank you everyone for the kind words! I really love reading your opinions on
the story.
Secondly, everything about the anatomy of swords I learned from watching lots of
medieval based shows, and a little bit of double checking with Google. If anything is
wrong, I apologize, but let's just go with it.
Thirdly, trying to find good descriptions of medieval sword forging was hard, so I just
went with what I could gather from the show and other shows. Again, lets just go with
it.
I hope you enjoy the next installment.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya had come up with perfect reason to return to his shop, she needed a sword. Jon had given her
a sword for her 11th nameday, but he had made it with her smaller size in mind, and while she was
still small, she had outgrown the sword. She had discussed with Syrio what sort of sword would be
best, and he’d given her some dimensions to make a sword that was between a rapier and a short
sword.

Her plan for the day went much the same as when she’d gone for the dagger, only this time it took
her less time to get to the shop. She walked into the shop with confidence, again he was the only
one there, only this time he was polishing a breastplate.

He looked up and smiled as he took her in, “Need another dagger m’lady?”

“Actually, I was hoping you could make me a sword.” She said walking closer to him, “It would
need to be custom.” She handed him the drawing she made with the dimensions that Syrio had
given her.

He looked it over, before glancing over her again, “What does a highborn lady such as yourself
need with a sword?”

“I like being able to take care of myself.” She answered simply, she was used to people not taking
her swordsmanship ability seriously.

He shrugged, “Good enough reason I suppose.” He rubbed his hand over his chin before saying,
“Do you want something special for the crossguard or the hilt?”

She looked at him confused, “You aren’t going to tell me that swords aren’t for girls or some shit
like that?”
“You got coin for this?” He asked, his blue eyes looking into her grey ones. She nodded, and he replied, “That is all that is my business.”

She smiled at him, “Good. What was that about the crossguard?”

“A sword this size, the crossguard will be pretty small, but I could still put a design on it if you wanted.” He said, walked over to the wall and taking down a few of the swords. He laid them out in front of her, “The crossguard can be simple, like this one, or it can be more fancy, like this one. Same goes for the pommel.”

She looked over the fancier sword, the crossguard was twisted antlers and the pommel was a stags head. She ran her fingers over the details, “Did you make these?”

“I did. I decided to start with a stag, honor for the King or something.” He said shrugging and she raised her eyebrows at him, he chuckled, “Okay, it was the only thing to come to mind at the time. You try staring at Baratheon banners your whole life and not get those fucking stags stuck on the brain.”

She laughed, and studied the swords, “I think just a plain crossguard will fine, as for the grip, just regular leathers will be fine.” She bit her lip, it would be nice to declare a little bit of her house on the sword, “Could you do a coined pommel and etch a direwolf onto the faces?”

“A direwolf?” He asked, and she could tell he wasn’t quite sure what that was.

“Have you see the House Stark banners?” She questioned, and he nodded, “Those are direwolves, so something like that.”

“Did you come down with the new Hand from the North?” He asked, as he made little notes on her drawing.

“I did and did not have much choice in the manner.” She smiled, he hadn’t figured out who he was yet, “The Hand is my father after all.”

His eyes went wide as she watched him process everything she said.

“You said yourself that you thought I was a highborn.” She teased.

“Aye, but I didn’t think you were that highborn as to have personally met the King.” He was finally able to reply, his brow then furrowed, “Are you the one marrying the Prince then?”

She laughed, “No, that would be my older sister Sansa. I feel for her, he is a twat.”

“My experience is that most highborns are twats.” He replied before his face went wide with fear, “I didn’t mean…”

She raised up her hand to stop him, “I don’t know if you have noticed, I am not like most highborns. Talk shit about all the highborns you’d like, especially Joffrey.”

“If I make you this sword you aren’t going to stab your future good-brother with it are you? I don’t want to somehow get my head on a spike for helping you or nothing.” He joked, going back to making small drawings on the larger one she had already given him.

“That is high treason, and I can’t go to the Wall, and I don’t think a life with the Silent Sisters would be good for me either, so I’ll avoid doing anything that would end with my head being removed from my shoulders.” She replied, and was happy to receive a chuckle from him.
"As you've talked most of the time I've known you, I would agree on that." He handed the
drawing back to her, "This what you wanted for the pommel?"

She looked down and smiled, "It is perfect." She looked up at him, realizing how close they were,
"How long will it take to make?"

"I've never done a blade like this, so I might need to do a few practice runs, that will add some
time." He paused, seeming to be thinking over things before saying, "3 weeks is my best estimate. I
have to work on other commissions too. The cost for something like this would be.... 15 gold
dragons,"

"I am in no hurry and that price seems fair to me." She said and decided to hop up on one on the
empty benches, he gave her a curious look but didn't say anything, "Do you own this shop?"

He seemed confused by the sudden change in questions, "No. I'm just a journeyman, but the owner
had to go to Bravos for a few months for business and he left me in charge."

"That is a lot of responsibility, he must have a lot of faith in you." She said, and looked around the
shop, there was a lot of good work to be shown off, "I can see why, you are very good."

"I appreciate the praise." He said before going back to polishing the breastplate he'd been working
on when she came in, "Don't you have something better to do with your time then spend the day
with me?"

She swung her legs, "Nope. There isn't a lot for highborn girls to do besides sit around sewing and
gossiping."

"I assume because you're commissioning a sword that you aren't a fan of all that." He said, setting
the plate aside and picking up some gauntlets.

"You can learn some interesting things from the gossips, but I am a terrible sewer." She
commented, she wondered what he would think of some of it, "For example, the Tyrells apparently
feel slighted by my sister's betrothal to Joffrey, as they wanted to have one of their own selected, so
to appease them, there might be a marriage between Lord Renly and one of the Tyrell roses."

"Is that supposed to be interesting?" He asked, glancing at her before going back to work.

"No, but the interesting part is that Renly is already bedding a Tyrell rose, only, this one is known
for using a lance." She said, raising her eyebrows with the insinuation.

Gendry seemed confused as he thought on her words before he said, "Oh. So he is fucking the
Knight of the Flowers?"

She shrugged, "That is what the rumors imply."

"Sure the King is a big supporter of that." Gendry commented before focusing on his work once
again.

"I think that might be why he pushing for a marriage, to a woman, to stop the rumors." She said,
she was enjoying watching him work. His arms were all muscle, and though he was only polishing,
she was enjoying the view.

He looked her up and down, "Worried it will be you?"

She wrinkled her nose, "No. There is already going to be one Baratheon/Stark wedding, they
wouldn’t do a second. I’m hoping they kind of just forget I exist so I won’t have to marry anyone.”

He stopped working to watch her, “Not a fan of marriage?”

She shook her head, “I don’t mind marriage, I just don’t like the idea of being forced to marry someone. I won’t have a say in it.” She let her mind wander to things, “Maybe I’ll get lucky with it being someone my own age or close to it, but I could also be wed to someone older than my father. I don’t think my father would do that to me, but, you never really know. Then my life will just become one thing, the Lady of some castle. I’ll be expected to run the household, act like a proper lady, and pop out as many children as my husband will desire. What I want won’t matter anymore.”

He leaned against the bench, “I never thought about how little say you highborns get in your lives. Just kind of have to do what your Lord father says.”

She nodded, and then looked away, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t complain to you about my life. Even with the eventual arranged marriage, my life is still better than most.”

There was something nice about the silence that followed Arya decided, her sitting on the bench and him leaning next to her.

“Every lowborn bastard thinks to themselves about being a lord or lady at some point in their lives. Living in a castle, having servants bringing you everything, never having to go hungry. Seems like a fantasy when you are sleeping on the streets and fighting for every meal. It isn’t until you are older when you realize that the highborns might have their castles and servants but not everything is easy. You learn a lot about highborns when you make all their weapons and armor.” He said, giving her a small smile, “And, I might be poor, but I will get to choose who I marry if I marry at all.”

She knocked her shoulder against his, “Thank you.” She noticed the sky starting to darken, and sighed, “I should be getting back before someone realizes I’m gone.”

“Worried they’d send out the city guard?” He said jokingly.

“Yeah.” She said, not joking, and got up, giving him a full smile, “I will see you soon Gendry.”

“Have a good evening m’lady.”

Gendry pulled the finished sword from the cooling bucket, he gave it one final look over before placing it on the table. Once it was fully cooled he’d get to work on adding the hilt, he already had that finished as well.

While he waited for it cool, he decided to get to work on creating Lady Arya’s sword. She wanted a thinner blade than anything they usually made, which was usually short, long, and even the occasional great sword. He grabbed the drawing she had made for the dimensions she desired and looked over the details. To make sure the steel was strong enough, while keeping the blade so thin would take some work. He wondered if perhaps a folding technique would work best for this. He could pour the steel into a short sword mold, then hammer it out into something longer and thinner.

As he got to work, his thoughts couldn’t help but drift to the woman whose sword he was making. Her beautiful grey, stormy eyes had haunted him for weeks, ever since she had bought that dagger from him. He had never expected to see her again, and had never been happier to be wrong about something before. He knew what he was thinking when he saw her were dangerous thoughts. She
was a highborn lady, he was nothing but a bastard blacksmith. There was just something about her that he found captivating. He didn’t think it was just her beauty, for even in the ill fitting boy’s clothes she’d been wearing both times he’d seen her, that had shown through. No, it was everything he had learned about her so far. She was confident, clever, funny, and most of all, she loved weapons. He could see it on her face as she had looked around the shop, she found the weapons fascinating, and he would love to make her weapons forever to see her face light up.

He couldn’t though. She had said so herself, eventually she would be forced into a marriage to some highborn twat. Gendry didn’t even know who that man would be, but he already found himself jealous. He would be the one seeing her stormy eyes and coying smile for the rest of his life, not Gendry. No, all Gendry could hope for was a few more of her smiles and laughs when she came to pick up her sword. He would make sure to pay extra attention to them, something to help him remember her years from now.

He didn’t understand why she was so ingrained in his mind after two interactions. He was not some green boy who didn’t know the touch of a woman, though, if he was honest with himself, those two encounters had not been the best. Most of his thoughts of her were not even lustful, though there had been a few nights where they certainly had been. He simply enjoyed her presence, and wanted to be around her. He only wished there was a way he could be around her forever, and for the first time in his life, he actually wished to the gods for something. He didn’t even really care for the circumstances, he just wished that he would granted more time with Arya Stark. The highborn lady with a fondness of swords, and, he hoped, the person making them for her.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!! Please don't be afraid to share your thoughts, they really make me so happy and are letting me know if I am going in the right direction.
It took her three days to sneak out of the castle again, even though the wedding was still months away, the guests had started to arrive. That meant there were many luncheons and dinners that Arya, as a lady of a great house, was required to attend along with her Father and sister. The only comfort that she had was that her Father was not enjoying any of it either. They were walking back to the Tower of Hand after a luncheon with some of the Vale Lords and Ladies, when Arya came up with an idea, “Father, do you think I could have the rest of the day to myself?”

“Are you feeling well?” He asked, concern coloring his features.

“Yes, it is just…..all of these lunches and dinners and teas, they are just too much. I don’t think I am cut out for life in the Capital.” She told him honestly, she hated everything about King’s Landing, well, except for a certain blacksmith.

He leaned over and kissed her on top of the head, “I completely understand my sweet girl. I will leave instructions to leave you be until morning.”

“Thank you Father, I really appreciate it.” She said giving him a hug.

“Enjoy your evening, but tomorrow you will need to put on the show again.” He told her, his voice indicating that the didn’t like it either, “All these craziness will be over once the wedding and tournament has ended.”

“Cannot wait.” Arya said, before heading up the stairs and into her room.

She asked for a servant to bring up some salted meats, fruits, cheeses and breads for her dinner. Once it was brought up she excused the girl for the rest of the evening, she then wrapped the food
up in some cloth and stowed it in a bag. She got out a water skin that she used when horse riding, she carefully filled that up with some wine. She then changed and headed out, making it to the street of steel unnoticed.

She had been thinking about nothing else but seeing him again for days. His blue eyes and how they watched her were never far from her thoughts. She had found that he had another hold over her as well. She had never been able to give herself pleasure before, something she had decided to attempt doing after her talks with the Wintertown whores. They said it made you feel good, very good, and it would be a good thing for her to learn if her husband was uncaring of insuring her release. The last time she attempted it had been after seeing Gendry work on the breastplate, his strong arms, and piercing eyes had finally given her something to imagine. The whores had been right, it had felt good. She wondered if Gendry would be able to make her feel even better, and hoped he’d be up for the challenge.

Gendry was with another customer when she arrived, so she shifted to the side of the shop and waited for them to be done. He was handing over the armor she had seen him working on the last day she was here, it was gleaming and looked perfect to her. The knight didn’t seem to agree and was arguing that the price was too high.

“Ser, you agreed to the price when you ordered it.” Gendry repeated, his arms crossed over his chest as he stared the man down. Gendry had a few inches on the man and was built much sturdier, Arya would have been a bit intimidated if she was the knight, but as she wasn’t, she found the show of strength very attractive.

“Your work isn’t as good as you claimed.” The knight said in return.

Gendry widened his eyes, “I showed you some of my work. You agreed to a price for the work. I did the work and now you pay to receive the work. If you think you can find better, you are welcome to go find another shop. I can easily hammer out the sigil on the breastplate and sell this to someone who will pay the proper price.”

Arya smirked from the corner, she knew what he was doing. There was no way this guy would get custom built armor made in time for the tournament, not with how many people had flooded into King’s Landing.

The knight looked about ready do something stupid, like maybe steal the armor when he noticed Arya sitting in the corner. His face somehow became ever angrier at her presence, she just smiled at him. He grumbled as he removed his coin purse and passed Gendry a handful of coins, “This is robbery, you shall not have my patronage again.”

“A truly sad moment for me, I’m sure. Have a good day Ser.” Gendry replied, slipping the coins into a pocket of his apron. His eyes not leaving the knight until he was out of sight of the shop. He turned and took her in, “Think that only went that well because you are here m’lady.”

“Do they always hassle you like that?” She asked, walking closer to him.

“Knights are arrogant and like to think they don’t have to pay because they are knights. Lords, it depends on the man.” He replied, and shrugged before looking her over, “You don’t usually come this late in the day, the sun is already starting to set.”

She smiled and pulled out the food and wine, “I was able to convince everyone to leave me alone until morning. I thought we could have dinner.”

His eyes furrowed, “Why would you want to have dinner with me?”
“I’ve spent the last three days having to deal with lords, ladies, and their spawn. I needed a break from all the bullshit.” She told him, giving him a shy smile “I like spending time with you, I don’t have to pretend to be a proper lady around you, I can just be, Arya.”

He smirked at her and nodded, “Alright, Arya. I just need to lock up the shop and then we can head up to my quarters and eat. It will be more comfortable than the forge.”

“Okay, can I do anything to help?” She asked, not wanting to seem useless.

He shook his head, “It will only take a few minutes.” He walked over to the front of the shop and closed the doors, cutting off the forge from the street. He then went over and doused the embers still in the forge with a bucket of water. He walked over to the back of the shop and opened a door, he turned back to her and inclined his head, “Come on then.”

She rushed to follow after him, excited for the new experience that will be tonight, whether her ultimate plan works or not. As they walked up the stairs to the upper level, she thought after all their interactions, and she was fairly confident that he was at least somewhat attracted to her.

His room was modest, a cot against the wall farthest from the window, which had a thin cloth for a covering. The wall that was shared with the door had a long, high table which had a few small boxes on top of it, a clay water basin and water jug. At the foot of the bed was a medium sized chest.

“Probably doesn’t seem much like what you’re used to.” Gendry said, noticing her silence as she took in his room.

She looked over at him as he stood next to the table, a lit candle now sitting next to him. She smiled, “Seems simple. I have so many things in my room that I never even touch.” She placed her bag on the table and took out the food, laying it before him. She likes how his face lights up at the offerings and she is glad she decided to bring the food.

He reaches for the food before seeing the soot on his hands, “I will be right back m’lady.” He grabs the water jug and disappears back down the stairs.

She finds it sweet that he would decide he needed to clean up for her. He returns a few moments later, and she smiles when she sees he had not only washed his hands, but his face and arms as well. She was thinking that it was a very good sign that her future endeavor might just pay off. She hands him the wine skin after he has settled against the table next to her, “I managed to snag some wine as well.”

“You highborns and your wine.” He teased before taking a sip of the offered liquid.

“What do you drink instead?” She asked, taking back the skin and having a gulp of the wine.

“Ale.” He replied simply before grabbing the food and putting it on a simple clay plate. He took the plate and sat on the bed, “I’ve been standing all day.”

She nodded before joining him, “I will do my best not to get crumbs all over your bed.”

He laughed, “I appreciate it m’lady.”

“You can just call me Arya you know.”

“I could.” He replied before taking another bite of the food, a playful smirk on his lips.
She narrowed her eyes at him, “You are very odd.”

“You are the highborn lady who’d rather spend time with a bastard blacksmith than in her fancy castle. I think that makes you the odd one.”

She shrugs, “Always have been.”

“You just like swords, nothing wrong with that.” He said with a shrug of his own.

“Proper ladies are supposed to like sewing, gossiping, poetry, long walks in the garden, maybe even the harp or singing if they have some talent.” She gulped more of the wine, “I’d rather ride a horse, shoot a bow, practice with my sword, maybe go for a hunt. I have nothing to talk about with the women in that fancy castle.”

“But you got something to talk about with me?”

She flashed him a smile, “You make weapons, I like weapons. Seems like a good place to start with a friendship.”

He laughed as he took the now empty plate over to the table, he leaned his back against it as she continued to sit on his bed, “Is that what are doing here, starting a friendship?”

“Of course. I brought you food and wine. Now we are talking to get to know one another.”

He smirked at her, “What you like to know then?”

“Do you have any siblings?”

He shrugged, “Not that I know of, but I don’t know my father, so I could. How many do you have?”

“Five. One sister and four brothers.” She answered, she leaned back so her back was against the wall, her legs stretched out towards him.

He settled against the head of the bed, his back against that wall, “Large family. They all come down here with your father?”

She shook her head, “My eldest brother Robb is the acting Lord of Winterfell. My younger brothers, Bran and Rickon, will be coming down with my mother for Sansa’s wedding. I think Father plans to find a place for them as some lords’ squires.”

“What about the fourth one?”

Arya bit her lip, “Jon. He joined the Night’s Watch when Father was named hand.”

Gendry frowned, “He do something bad?”

“What? No!” She said and moved so she was sitting on her knees facing him, “My Uncle serves in the Night’s Watch. Jon didn’t think he had anywhere else to go, even though Robb would never force him from Winterfell. I tried to convince him of that, but he went anyway.”

“Why would he be sent away if he hadn’t done anything?”

She sighed, “Jon is my father’s bastard. My mother has never really approved of him being around.” She focused on a hole in the wall behind him, “I have never really understood why my mother hated him so. Jon is a kind, honorable person. He actually gave me my first sword for my eleventh nameday.”
“He sounds like a good brother.” Gendry said, and when she looked at his face, she could see the understanding there.

“He is. I might never see him again though.” She told him, “Women aren’t allowed at the Wall and who knows where I might end up.”

His eyes furrowed, “What does that mean?”

She shrugged, “I doubt my sister’s wedding ends without me betrothed to some stupid lord I’d never pick for myself. It was the reason my mother insisted that I came down with my father in the first place, so I could be present at court.”

He handed her the now nearly empty wine skin, “I think you deserve the last of this.”

She took it from him with a laugh, “I really need to stop complaining to you about my potential marriage problems.”

“You do seem to have many thoughts on the subject.”

She returned his smile, “I will do my best not to bring it up again.”

She placed the empty wine skin on top of the chest at the foot of the bed before moving up to sit next to him at the top. The amount of wine was not nearly enough to make two adults drunk, but she could feel a nice buzz under her skin. She turned her head and looked at him, “You have complaints to share? Would only be fair.”

He laughed, and it caused his shoulder to bump into her’s, “Today has been a good day. Had good food, good wine, and good company. No complaints for today m’lady.”

She flicked her hand up and slapped his chest with the back of her hand, “You aren’t ever going to stop calling me that are you?”

He shrugged, “Probably not.”

She shook her head, but she was smiling, she really did enjoy his company, he made her feel safe and comfortable. She closed her eyes and laid her head on his shoulder. He tenses for a moment before he relaxes again, “I think this has been my favorite day so far in King’s Landing.”

“Really?”

She nodded against his shoulder, “I don’t have to pretend with you.” She opened her eyes and looked up. His blue eyes were focused on her lips, they flicked up to her eyes, and they just stared into each other’s souls for a moment. She broke the stare when she surged up and kissed him.

Gendry wasted no time in responding to the kiss, his hand coming up to cup her face. She slowly broke away and smiled a him, “Was that okay?”

His hand was still on her face as he smiled at her, “Yes, it was more than okay.”

She smirked and shifted so she was straddling him, her hands resting on his shoulders. His hands went to her waist, she leaned toward him but didn’t kiss him again, “How about this?”

He groaned when she wiggled a bit in his lap, his eyes stayed on her face as he asked, “Are you sure about this m’lady?”

She leaned forward and kissed him again, trying to show him how sure she was about this.
wasn’t even completely sure where her confidence was coming from, or why she was so desperate for him to be the first one she would ever do this with. Her future husband didn’t deserve her maidenhead, someone she had chosen for herself did, and Gendry was the only person that had ever elected this kind of feeling from her body. She had never been surer about anything before.

She pulled back from his lips and leaned her forehead against his, “If you don’t want me, we can stop right here, but I would love to do more with you.”

His grip tightened on her hips, “I want you. I just don’t be considered something you regret.”

She smiled, “There will be no regrets, I want you.” She ground her hips into his, ”I want this.”

He initiated the kiss this time and she allowed him to lead her the rest of the way.

Arya’s heart was beating faster than she could ever remember it doing before, her entire body felt like it was tingling. A strong arm pulled her naked and compliant body up against a hard body, she snuggled into his chest.

“Did you enjoy yourself m’lady?” His deep voice asked, still slightly out of breath.

She hummed in agreement, “I never imagined it would feel like that.”

“I would have to agree.” He said and leaned down to pull her into a kiss.

“Can we do that again?” She asked as their lips came apart.

“I don’t want to hurt you, aren’t you sore?” He said, his eyes full of concern.

She moved, ready to prove him wrong but something pinched and it showed on her face, she sighed, “I guess you’re right.”

He chuckled lightly, “We can do it again, if you'd like, just not tonight.”

Her finger ran along the muscles on his chest, “You don’t regret this then?”

“I should be the one asking you that, m’lady. You are the highborn lady who gave your maidenhead to a bastard blacksmith.” He said and he felt her tense a bit under his hands.

“You could tell?” She asked, and her face scrunched up with annoyance, she had been hoping he wouldn't notice that detail.

“Aye. If you had told me, I would have gone a little slower. I suppose I also should have assumed, but you were so bold.” He replied, running a soothing hand over her back.

“How could you tell?” She questioned.

He shifted under her, as if he was uncomfortable, “The few women I had been with before, they were not virgins….I could tell the difference.”

Arya shifted uncomfortably next, “How many women?”

“Two.” He admitted eventually.
Arya propped herself up, “Only two? You are so handsome though, I’d have thought girls would have just thrown themselves at you.”

He chuckled, “I appreciate the compliment m’lady, but many women don’t find a bastard blacksmith as good prospects. I am pretty sure those women took pity on me.”

Arya thought through his words and smirked, “So, if we have another night, I will be the only woman you have had twice?”

“Aye.”

She leaned up and kissed him, “I like that idea, makes me feel desirable.”

He gripped her tighter, and lowered her hand down to his cock, which was half-hard, “You are very desirable and anyone who tells you otherwise is a liar.”

She smirked at him as she lightly stroked his cock, feeling it getting larger in her hand and enjoying the small moans he was letting loose, “Are you certain we can’t do it again?”

“I don’t want to hurt you.” He whispered into her hair.

She let go of his cock and straddled his lap, rubbing herself against it as it laid on his stomach, “I am not made of glass, you won’t hurt me.” She leaned down and kissed him, “Please.”

Gendry was coming to the conclusion that there was nothing he could deny this woman. She had completely captivated him, she could ask anything of him and he would do it. He remembered how a few days ago he had only hoped for a few more smiles to remember her by and now she was moving naked on top of him. He shifted her hips so he could slip inside of her, her moans of pleasure would haunt his dreams for the rest of his life. He wasn’t sure how he was going to be able to let her go when the real world eventually caught up to them.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading all the way to end. As always, don’t be afraid to share you thoughts, whether you loved it or hated it.

If you’d be willing to share your thoughts, I have a question for you wonderful readers. I have the next chapter already mostly written, but it takes place with a time jump. I’m questioning if I should do a time jump or if you’d rather read what happens directly after this chapter? Any thoughts on the matter would be greatly appreciated.
A Day of Consideration

Chapter Summary

After a night of pleasure, what comes next?

Chapter Notes

I decided on directly after, but the next chapter will be a time jump. I like the idea of flashbacks to see their time together between this and the jump, so I will be adding those to some of the future chapters. This chapter took me awhile to come up with the right tone, I hope I did it justice and you like it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya woke to the sounds of people talking in the streets below, the room was still mostly dark except for the early morning light lining the windows. While the bed was one of the most uncomfortable things she had even slept on, she found she more than content to stay there forever. His arms were wrapped around her and she could tell from his breathing that he was awake as well.

She hugged the arm across her chest, “I need to get back before the sun fully rises and they realize I am gone.”

“I know.” He said before placing a kiss on her naked shoulder, “Still no regrets m’lady?”

She turned in his arms, smiling as looked at him, “My only regret is that I have to go but if I get caught out of my room, then I won’t be able to come back here.”

He leaned forward and kissed her, a slow sensual kiss, and she smiled into him. He pulled back and gave her a smile of his own, “I very much want you to come back.”

She reluctantly pulled out of his arms and stood up. She slowly began getting dressed as he watched her from the bed.

“You are beautiful.”

Arya turned to look at him, “Do you truly believe that?”

His eyes narrowed in confusion, “Of course it is. Do you not think you are beautiful?”

She didn’t look at him as straightened out her clothes, “Sansa is the beautiful one. I’m nothing but Arya Horseface.”

His hand lifted her chin and she looked into his eyes, she hadn’t heard him get up, “I’ve seen horses, and you don’t look like anything like one. I have never seen your sister, so I have no idea if she is beautiful or not, but that doesn’t mean you aren’t beautiful as well.”

She fought back the tears that threatened to fall at his wonderful words, “You’re just saying that
because I let you into my bed.”

He smiled, “I believe it was my bed, m’lady. I won’t ever lie to you Arya. You are beautiful but you are also smart, stubborn, and amazing.”

She placed her hand on the side of his face and leaned up to place a small kiss on his lips, “I think you’re rather amazing as well.”

“Come on m’lady, we don’t want you to get caught out of bed.” He said before quickly pulling on a pair of pants and a tunic.

She followed him down the stairs and back into the forge. He pushed open the doors and the morning sun streamed in, glinting off the steel laying around.

“I’ll try to come back as soon as I can.” She promised him, giving him one more kiss.

“I will be here m’lady. I do have a sword to make for you after all.”

“Yes you do. I expect it to be top quality work blacksmith.” She replied with a smirk before she disappeared into the mostly empty streets.

She didn’t encounter any trouble on her way back to the keep, the smell of freshly baked breads filling the air for once instead of shit. The tunnel into the castle was as easily accessible as usual, and she was safely in her room and in her nightclothes before the maidservant came to wake her.

“I would like a bath this morning please.” Arya said from her bed.

“I will have the water brought up at once m’lady.” The girl said politely as she pulled open the curtains, bathing the room in the morning light.

“Thank you Melly.” She replied, her eyes going to the window.

She continued to lay in the bed in thought as the maids brought in the tub and starting to fill it with water. The events of the previous night continued to replay over in her mind. His lips, his hands, his body moving against hers, his laughs. Everything had been perfect, he was perfect. She knew that she thinking dangerous thoughts, he was a bastard and she a highborn girl. Her father would never let them be together but she wasn’t ready to let him go either.

“The bath is ready m’lady.”

She turned to the maid, “Thank you, that will be all for now.”

“Yes, m’lady.” The girl replied before leaving the room.

Arya stripped and sank into the warm water, they had added a scent lavender oil to the water, the scent was calming. She took the rag and slowly ran it over her body, noticing that she had collected some soot on her skin, even though he had cleaned his hands. She also noticed a few bruises on her hips, she knew that had happened during the second time when she’d been on top, and did not mind at all. She couldn’t wait to go back and do it all over again.

The water started to cool and she got out of the tub, the warm water had helped loosen some of the muscles that had been used last night. She felt more content today than she had since they had left Winterfell. She looked over herself in the mirror, wondering if she looked any different now that she was no longer a virgin. Her skin was still pink from the bath, and she noticed there was a love bite near her left breast, but other than that she looked the same. As least when she had first gotten
her moon blood other changes had come along as well to help show she was becoming a woman, hair started to grow in new places and her breasts had grown larger. There would be no physical evidence of her time with Gendry for others to see.

Unless he got you with a child, a voice that sounded suspiciously like Septa Mordane whispered in her brain.

Arya pictured what a child that belonged to her and Gendry might look like, would it be a mix of the two of them, or it would take after one of them more heavily. Maybe they’d have more than one and they could teach them all about swords and armor. She could teach them to ride and Gendry could teach them his trade.

The gentle smile that graced her face at the thoughts dropped as she quickly grabbed her robe and covered herself. She and Gendry couldn’t have a child. Even though she didn’t know who it was, she would need to marry a lord, some lord that would probably never give her the pleasure her lowborn blacksmith did.

She slipped on her smallclothes before putting on her training outfit. She had a morning lesson with Syrio after she broke her fast and before there was an afternoon tea session with some highborn ladies she didn’t want to see. She knew there was a small council meeting at the same time as the tea. She would just sneak away at some point, break into Grand Maester Pycelle’s store room, and steal some moon tea. She doubted the old man would think to guard his stores and she couldn’t let Gendry’s seed take root.

As she braided her hair back, she wished she could share this with Sansa. While they had used to do nothing but fight, and that still happened, things had actually gotten better between them now in King’s Landing. This wasn’t something that Sansa would understand though. So, she would keep all of this to herself. Just a little secret she shared only with Gendry, and that would just need to be enough.

Gendry found his thoughts wandering to Arya whenever his focus dropped from whatever task was at hand. He managed to complete three swords, a dagger, and two epliets for a knight’s suit. It had been a very productive day for him for sure, but he couldn’t help the fear that at any moment the goldcloaks were going to come arrest him. He didn’t think it was actually a crime for a lowborn to consentually have sex with a highborn girl, but he was sure they would find some other crime to charge him with. Rape or kidnapping came to mind.

As the day wore on, he became less concerned about the goldcloaks, and more about how he had come inside of her. How could he have been so stupid? He hoped she would come back tonight, so he could tell her to get some moon tea. Maybe he could get some for her, for the next time. She was also smart though, he reasoned, and she would find a way to get some moon tea on her own.

What if she didn’t though, what if you got with her child? The negative part of his brain supplied as he dosed the forge for the night.

As he laid in his bed that night, the smell of sex still lingered in the thread bare blanket, and he wondered what the future could really hold for him and his lady.

Flashes of a little boy with his dark hair and her grey eyes and a little girl with her brown hair and his blue eyes playing in a field of wildflowers came to mind. Arya was sitting on a blanket watching the children run, a baby in her arms, and her smiling widely up at him. He couldn’t help
the smile that encompassed his face at the thought of the family in his mind, a family he
desperately wanted.

The smile fell though, it was nothing but a fantasy. He might be able to bed Arya a few more times,
maybe they could even get away with it for months, but eventually she would have to marry. She
had mentioned it herself more than once. Her lord father would never allow her to marry a
blacksmith, especially not a lowborn bastard blacksmith. She would marry some stupid lord and
live in some stupid castle. She would have children, but they would not be his. He would spend the
rest of his life here in King’s Landing, making swords and armor for those that could afford it.
After knowing Arya, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to feel that same way about another woman. He’d
be a bachelor, sleeping with the occasional tavern wench when the loneliness became too much,
until he died of some accident or illness or maybe even old age.

Their destinies were on different paths, he knew this, but he would enjoy whatever time he was
given to be with her. Loving Arya, there was no point in lying to himself about what he was
feeling, would be the highlight of his life and he was content with his fate, for at least he got to
spend some time with her. That would have to be enough because he couldn’t be selfish with her,
even if he wished they could just run away and spend the rest of their lives together.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!! As always, don't be afraid to share your thoughts. Until next
time my wonderful readers!
The wedding was six weeks away, and things were getting more and more stressful around the Red Keep. Arya hadn’t been able to get away for a week and she missed Gendry. She had also been feeling a little off lately, she’d thrown up more in the last week than she had in years (not counting that time she had too much wine with Gendry last month). She was considering asking to see the Maester, maybe she had caught some sort of cold brought in by some foreign lord or something.

“If I have it now, then I shouldn’t have it for my wedding night right?” Sansa asked Septa Mordane as they were breaking their fast.

Arya snapped back to the moment, something in her brain telling her to listen, “What do you have now?”

“My moon blood. Really Arya, if you want to be a part of the conversation then you should actually pay attention.” Sansa said with a roll of her eyes before looking to the Septa.

Mordane nodded her head, “You have regular cycles, you should be well past your next moon blood before the wedding.”

Sansa sighed in relief, “Good, that would have been a bit embarrassing.”

Arya dropped the grape she was about to eat back on her plate and got to her feet, “I….I need to go.”

“Arya?!” She heard both of them yell after her but she didn’t turn back. Once she got to her room, she locked the door and fell on her bed, her hand coming to rest on her stomach.

She hit her head back on her pillows a few times, mumbling ‘stupid’ very time her head touched the pillow.
A knock on the door had her sitting up, “Arya, open this door.” Septa Mordane’s voice yelled through the thick wood.

Arya got to her feet and unlocked it, knowing that the Septa would not go away until she had her say. Arya sat back on the bed immediately, urging herself not to throw up or admit the truth.

“Are you feeling alright?” The Septa asked.

Arya shook her head, “I’ve been having trouble keeping things down the last few days.”

“Why didn’t you say something sooner?” She asked, reaching forward and checking Arya’s forehead, “You don’t have a fever, so that is a good sign. Is it everything or only certain foods?”

Arya considered lying, not wanting to give too many symptoms, encase the Septa got suspicious, but decided to go in with the truth, “Everything, but it seems to come and go. Some meals I’m fine, and then others I throw it all up.”

The septa seemed to think for a moment before asking, “How long has this been going on?”

“A few days, I didn’t mention anything because I didn’t want to bother anyone. The wedding is just over a month away, everyone is so busy.” She said, which was the real reason she hadn’t brought it up, even if she does know the reason behind the sickness.

“Arya, sickness is an important enough reason to get someone’s attention. Now, I want you to stay in bed the rest of the day, and try to get some sleep. I’ll have a servant bring up some foods easy on the stomach for your dinner later. I’m wondering if maybe you are just a bit exhausted between all the events and your lessons. A full day of rest might do you some good.” Mordane said and got to her feet, “Just rest today, I will make sure no one disturbs you and I will check on you this evening.”

“Thank you Septa.” Arya said, laying back onto the bed.

Her mind began to race with all the problems she had just brought upon herself, and Gendry, and her family. She folded her hands over her stomach, amazed that there was a life growing within her, a life that in a few moons would be her child. She felt the smile on her face without even knowing had started doing it. This would be her child, and she’d be damned to the seven hells if anyone thought they would take it from her. It wasn’t going to be a bastard either, no, this was her child with a man she loved, and she just needed to marry him. The issue would be finding someone willing to marry them, she wasn’t sure she had enough money to be able to find a septon corrupt enough to marry her to a bastard blacksmith. The fear of her father’s wrath would make any septon with half a brain be wary of doing as she requested. She sighed, it meant she would just need to get her father’s permission.

She sighed and sat up, her feet dangling over the edge of the bed. There were really only three outcomes available, and neither one was going to go well for the reputation of House Stark. The first was that her father refused to let her marry Gendry, and she had a bastard child that was then either shipped back to Winterfell or maybe sent to an order, then she would be quickly married off. (She had heard something similar befell a younger daughter of House Swift.) The second, her Father allowed her to marry Gendry, therefore removing the stigma of having a bastard, but then facing the disgust for allowing her to marry one. Maybe she could convince her father to send them back to Winterfell, far away from the eyes of the court, and Gendry could work in the forge. Mikken was always complaining about how he couldn’t find someone he trusted the work too once he was gone. The third, her and Gendry run away from it all. They could go to the Stormlands or the Reach, find a small village in need of a blacksmith, and start a brand new life together.
Arya got to her feet and immediately started changing into her street clothes, before she spoke to her father, she needed to speak to Gendry. Any decision was sure to affect him in one or the other, she wasn’t positive that someone wouldn’t insist he had to be punished for defiling a daughter of a great house. If he didn’t want to marry her and be a family, then she would respect that and lie to her father about the child’s father. All he signed up for was some fun in the sheets, not a possible life sentence to be with her.

It didn’t take her long to get to his shop, over the last few months she had perfected her route. She had never felt as nervous as she did this time though, not even that first time she had come here with the intention of seducing him. This was much more life changing then losing her virginity could have ever been. She couldn’t help but wonder how this had even happened, she and Gendry had even taken precautions.

Arya was able to get away from the castle again the following day after she and Gendry had shared the night together. It had been just over 24 hrs since she had last seen him but he was all that occupied her thoughts. Luckily Syrio had allowed the lesson to end early today, saying she was too distracted for proper training and to come back tomorrow ready to learn. She was distracted, and usually the idea of something getting in the way of her training would have upset her, but if it was Gendry, she didn’t care.

She snuck into his shop as she usually did, he was busy beating a sword on the anvil, and she liked watching him work. It didn’t take him long to feel the eyes on him and he lifted his head to look at her. She loved watching the light shine in his blue eyes and the smile grace his features.

“Good morning m’lady.”

“Good morning blacksmith.”

He plunged the sword into the cooling water, watching her through the rising steam before he placed it down on the table. She walked over to where he was and once his hands were free of any weapons, he wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her flush against him. His other hand went up to cup her cheek, “I missed you.”

She smiled up at him, “I missed you too.”

He leaned down and kissed her, she melted into him. She really had missed this, even if she hadn’t even known this existed at this time two days ago.

He pulled back first, looking down at her, “I got something for you. Can you wait here and watch the shop for a moment while I run up and get it?”

“Of course.” She said, stepping back from him. She watched him disappear out the back door before she started looking around the shop. She’d never really paid much attention to it, she was usually distracted by the blacksmith. There were racks of swords lining one wall, then there was the table of daggers. She even noticed a few war hammers and some sample pieces of armor.

She turned back to the door when she heard it open, she had been expecting it to be her sword when he said he had a gift for her. But whatever he had was much too small for that, it looked more like a pouch.

He stopped before her, nervously playing with the pouch, “I hope I haven’t overstepped some boundary here, but I got this for you.”

She took it from him, opening it and giving the contents a sniff, “Is this...moon tea?”
He nodded, nervously shifting his feet now that his hands were empty, “I just thought… I did not want… I…”

She reached out and grabbed his hand, “Gendry, it is okay. I appreciate the gesture. I know a child is not something we want to happen.”

“I haven’t overstepped?”

She smiled at him, “No. If we are going to keep sleeping together, then this is something we are going to need. I already took some yesterday, so we should be safe from the other night.”

He sighed in relief, “I should have known you’d have it under control.”

She urged him to wrap his hands around her, “I was only able to steal one dose, so this will be helpful for next time. We wouldn’t want that maester to get suspicious.”

He groaned as he pulled her closer, “I wish I could have you now but…”

“You have to work, I understand. I just really wanted to see you.”

He leaned down to kiss her, his lips pouring in his desperation and desire, “You are so distracting now that I know what you look like without clothes.”

She blushed, “Remembering how you look naked is distracting for me as well. It is why I am here now actually, Syrio told me I was too unfocused for lessons today.”

“Glad to know I am not the only one affected by this thing between us.”

She ran a hand over his chest, “It is mutual. I promise you.”

He held her tighter, “When do you need to go?”

She looked to get a gage of the sun, “Soon. I am expected back for some discussion about my sister’s wedding. I wasn’t really listening.”

He chuckled and kissed her again before saying, “Royal weddings are complicated affairs I take it?”

She laughed, “You have absolutely no idea and be very thankful for that. I went to a wedding for one of our bannermen a few years ago in the North, it was nothing like what this spectacle is going to be.”

“Well, the tourney for the wedding is giving me an opportunity to make a lot of coin, so I have no complaints about it.” He replied, “When do you think you will be able to get away again?”

She sighed, “Probably not for a few days. I have to wait for the right opportunity to get away at night, but I promise to figure something out soon.”

“I want to show you something, come with me.” He said and lead her by the hand to the street, he stopped outside the shop and pointed up a window, “That is my room. If you come after the shop has closed up, just throw a rock or something. I’ll come let you in.”

“I’ll make sure to do that.” She said leaning up for one more kiss, “I need to go.”

“I understand. I shall see you soon m’lady.”
“See you soon blacksmith.”

She is glad the shop is empty of customers when she arrives, so without saying a word she starts closing up the doors.

“Arya, what are you doing? It isn’t even midday yet, I can’t close up.” Gendry asked, coming up to stop her.

“We need to talk Gendry and we can’t be overheard or interrupted.” She said, and her face must have told him not to argue, because he just started helping her close the doors.

As soon as the doors were locked and secure, Gendry grabbed her by the upper arms and turned her to look at him, “Arya, what is wrong?”

She could feel the tears starting to form in her eyes as she looked at him, she hated how she was just going to disappoint him, “I am so so sorry.”

He looked confused, “What are you sorry about? You told me you might not be able to get away as much the closer we get to the wedding.”

She shook her head, “No, that isn’t why. Gendry, I…..I…” She placed her head on his chest and let out a cry.

“Love, tell me what is wrong.” He whispered to her, gently soothing her back.

She took comfort in his arms for a few moments before saying, “I’m with child.”

His arms tensed around before he pushed her back a bit so he could look at her face, he seemed to be confused, “You’re with child?”

She nodded, “I have all the symptoms. I didn’t go see a Maester yet or anything, so I could be wrong, but I don’t think I am. I’m so sorry.”

He furrowed his brow and raised his hand up to her cheek, “Why are you sorry? I am just as much to blame as you are.” He leaned down and gave her a gentle kiss on the lips, “What do you want to do? I’ll do whatever you ask of me.”

“I’ve been thinking about it all morning. There are really two options, tell my Father and hope he will let us get married, or don’t tell anyone and run away.” She told him, letting her hands grip into his tunic.

He thought about everything she said and signed as he rubbed his hands up and down her arms, “I don’t want you to lose your family because of me.”

She tugged on his tunic, forcing him to look at her again, “You are my family too. You, me,” she grabbed on his left hand and placed it on her stomach, “And this child. If the rest of my family doesn’t want to accept that, then they aren’t the people I thought they were.”

“You want to tell your father.” He said, he could feel his heartbeat picking up.

She nodded, “I want you to know, that if you don’t want anything to do with me anymore. I’ll understand. You have your life here and I just come in being all…” His lips silence her words.
“I am with you Arya. I would love to be able to marry you, have a true family with you.” He told her, “But you need to remember. I am a bastard and you are the daughter of one of the most powerful houses in the Seven Kingdoms. People are going to have a lot of problems with you being with me.”

“The damage is already done because apparently I am too stupid to use moon tea correctly.” She told him, “People are going to be talking about me no matter what, there won’t be any hiding this. The best thing for my father to do at this point would be to allow us to be married and then ship us off to Winterfell to be away from court.”

“You are not stupid, sometimes moon tea doesn’t work. Marriage and Winterfell is what you are going to suggest to him?” He asked and led them over to sit on a bench near the front of the shop.

“I think it is the best choice.” She grabbed both his hands and placed them in her lap, “Are you okay with this? My father is going to want to talk to you, a lot of people are going to want to talk to you.” He nodded, but she continued before he could speak, “If he agrees to my proposal, you’ll be stuck with me forever, in Winterfell.”

Gendry smiled at her, “I’d go anywhere with you.” He reached over and gave her a long lingering kiss, “I love you Arya Stark. Knowing we have a true chance of being together means I don’t have to be afraid of saying it.”

“I love you too Gendry. I’ll do everything I can to make sure we aren’t separated.” She promised him, letting him kiss her again. She rested her head on his shoulder when the kiss ended, “When does your master get back?”

“Any day, he didn’t want to miss all the work gained from the wedding tournament.” He told her, holding her closer to him, “Lots of knights want new armor or new swords.”

She nodded against him, “I should let you get back to work and I should go talk to my father.”

“No matter what happens Arya, I am here for you and this child.”

“I know that Gendry. I love you.”

He tilted her head up for another long kiss, “I love you Arya.”

Leaving him with the news she had just delivered to him was hard, but they needed to worry about the next step, and it unfortunately had to be dealt with sooner rather than later.

Chapter End Notes

Even the best thought out plans don't sometimes works, especially when the seed is strong ;)
Don't be afraid to let me know what you think.
Arya was nervous as she looked at the door to her Father’s rooms, she knew he was in there, she had seen him walk back from the small council chambers an hour earlier. She had changed back into a gown, as befit a proper lady at court, but now that she knew to look, she could see the slight swell to her stomach. No one who didn’t know her body would ever think anything suspicious of it, she knew this, but she felt like it made her secret a public affair. Taking a deep breath she approached the door, the guard recognizing her and opening the door for her. She nodded her thanks and entered into the room of the second most powerful man in the kingdoms.

“Arya, to what do I owe this visit?” He asked, putting down the paper he had been reading.

She looked down at her feet, “I did something very stupid. I am so, so sorry.”

Ned got to his feet and walked around the desk to stand in front of her, “What did you do? I am sure whatever it is, it isn’t as bad as you fear.”

She shook her head, “It is bad.”

“Arya.” His command clear in the soft word.

She gulped and looked up at him, “I’ve been sneaking out of the castle to explore the city.”

He sighed, “While not the best behavior, as long as…”

She interrupted him, “I met a boy there, he was sweet and strong and funny.” She watched as her father’s face went from confusion to understanding, “I laid with him, many times, and I must not have used the moon tea correctly because I am pregnant.” When he didn’t say anything she kept talking, “I figured it out this morning, Sansa was worried about having her moon blood for her wedding night and then I realized, I haven’t had mine in over two moons.”

He sat down in the chair for the guests, “I never thought you’d do something like this.”

She felt the tears on her cheeks, she was used to disappointing everyone, but this was worse than anything she had done before, “I am sorry, I never meant for this to happen.” She kneeled down in
front of him, “Please, don’t take it away from me.”

He looked at her, his brow furrowed in confusion, “Whatever are you talking about?”

“Last week, Lady Helena was telling us about how a daughter of House Swift got pregnant out of wedlock and they gave her child over to the faith.” Arya explained, “Please Father, I don’t want that to happen.

He reached down and pulled her up into a hug, “I will not take your child away from you my sweet, but we will need to figure out a solution to this problem.” He pulled away and placed his hands on her shoulders, “This boy, tell me about him.”

She took the other chair, “His name is Gendry, he is a blacksmith that works in a shop at the top of the street of steel. I met him when Syrio gave me a test to get out of the keep and back without being caught, to prove I’d been out, he gave me some money and told me to buy a dagger.” She pulled the dagger out of her boot and handed it to him, “Gendry sold it to me. I then went back to see him later, and asked him to make me a sword, one designed for me and my style. I kept going back to check on the progress, but really, I liked spending time with him, he didn’t treat me special just because I was a lady. He just treated me like Arya, I didn’t need to be Lady Stark and pretend to care about sewing or dresses.”

He Father turned the dagger over in his hands for a few moments before passing it back to her, “How old is he?”

“He is twenty-one. His mother died when he was young and then he went to work as a blacksmith apprentice, he is a journeyman now.” She told him, worrying with her skirt, “He is a good man Father, I swear it.”

Ned sighed and rubbed a hand over his face, “Do you understand what kind of problem this will cause for all of us?” He got to his feet and started pacing, “If I send you back to Winterfell, it will take longer for everyone to figure out why, but eventually the entire country will know. If you stay, it could also damage your sister’s reputation before the marriage. I don’t want to lie and claim you were raped, that would cause a different kind of issue. If we could even find someone willing to marry you in your current state, it would raise suspicions at the rush of such actions.”

“I won’t marry anyone but Gendry.” Arya spoke up, staring up at her father.

“Arya, he is a blacksmith and you are highborn lady, you can’t marry him.” Ned said, pausing his pacing to speak before returning to silence.

“Knight him, then I could marry him. Second and third daughters of lords marry knights all the time, even if they were lowborn before earning their spurs.” She said, the words coming out of her mouth just as the thought crossed her mind.

He sighed, “Arya…”

“Hear me out.” She said getting to her feet, “It could be like in a song. He saved me some from muggers who attacked me after I’d snuck out of the castle without the guards. In your gratitude you knighted him and then I fell in love with my savior, and unable to deny it, you granted our wishes to marry. Not wanting to distract from the royal wedding, you allowed us to marry in secret.” She placed her hand on his arm, “We got married in the godswood, so there was no need for a septon. It is the best way to save the reputation of our House that I nearly ruined for being a reckless child.”

He looked at her hand for awhile before searching her eyes, “You love this boy?”
“I do.” She said, not taking her eyes away from him, “You’ll like him too.”

He walked over to the door and opened it, “Ronald, I want you to go to the street of steel, find a shop at the top of the street, and bring one of the blacksmiths back with you. I need to speak to him.” Her father then turned to her, “Describe him for Ronald.”

“His name is Gendry, he is taller than you Ronald, with black hair, blue eyes, and built like a blacksmith. If you are coming up the street from the keep side, it will be at the top of the hill on the right side.” Arya explained, before retaking her seat.

Ned sighed as he sat down in his seat on the other side of the desk, “Does anyone else know about this?”

Arya shook her head, “Only the three of us.”

“How have you managed to sneak out the castle for months without anyone catching on?” He asked her.

“At first, I used a tunnel I found down by the dungeon, lets you out by the bay. Then, I tried just walking out the front gate. I had changed my clothes, tied back my hair, the guards never even looked at me twice.” She explained, “It was actually really easy.”

“Syrio supported all this?” Ned asked, and she could see where he was going to direct some anger.

“Only the first time, and he followed me the whole way.” She said with a small smile, “As far as I know, he didn’t know anything about any of the other times. He helped me design the sword, but I am pretty sure he thought I would have you commission it for me, not go do it myself.”

“This sword, do you have it?” Ned asked.

Arya nodded, “It is up in my room.”

“Go get it, I’d like to see it.” He said, his eyes sad as he looked at her.

She understood what he really needed was a few minutes to collect his thoughts, “Of course Father, I will return shortly.”

She took her time going up the stairs and collecting the sword, wanting to give her father time to process everything before Ronald returned with Gendry.

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Arya had managed to sneak out of the castle after an early dinner this evening, retiring to her chamber afterwards claiming an early night. She used the tunnels, knowing there was less foot traffic in and out of the gates at this hour. It was just as simple as usual, and Arya decided that once she no longer had a use for the tunnel, she would let her father know about it. It needed some proper guards, or at least a locked gate.

The sun was mostly set when she walked up to Gendry’s shop, the doors already locked up for the day. She grabbed a loose rock from the edge of the street and threw it at the window, the covering did nothing to stop the projectile from entering the room. She heard a curse before his head appeared in the window looking down at her.

“I’ll be right down.” He yelled before he disappeared back into the room.
She shifted with happy excitement as she waited for him, it had been nearly a week since she had seen him last.

The large door creaked open and she quickly rushed inside, the room only lit by a single candle. Gendry quickly replaced the bar to lock the door before he turned around and pulled her flush against him, laying a searing kiss onto her lips. She immediately responded, her body remembering how much it had missed his touch.

He pulled away eventually, resting his forehead on her’s, “I wasn’t expecting you tonight.”

“I was finally able to get away, I should be clear until dawn.” She shifted the bag on her shoulder, “I brought a little food and wine.”

“You don’t need to bring that everytime.”

She shrugged, “I like too, you need to eat something more than whatever the bowl of brown shit is.”

“I eat more than bowls of brown, you just wanted to know what it was like.” He told her, before pushing her away a bit, “Go up to the room, I have something for you.”

She narrowed her eyes at him, “What is it?”

“You’ll see in a few moments, if you go wait for me in the room.” He said, staring her down.

“Fine, it better be good, I hate surprises.”

He leaned in and kissed her cheek, “You’ll like this one.” He then turned her around and gave her ass a little swat to get her moving.

She walked up the backstairs to his room, she set up the food she had brought for them on his singular plate, and sat on the bed. She ran her hand over the blanket, and wondered if he’d be offended if she brought him something better, she had the means to spoil him and a part of her wanted that. She had spent a few nights in the bed now, and she was planning on spending many more, was it wrong of her to want a blanket that wasn’t so scratchy? The door creaked open, removing her from her thoughts about the bed. Arya watched as Gendry entered the room, a long wrapped package in his hands.

He smiled as he kneeled before her and held up the package for her, “I hope this meets all of your expectations m’lady.”

Arya felt her heartbeat increase, she knew what was under the wrappings. It was the sword she had commissioned, the one he told her he was still working on past the expected date because it wasn’t right yet. She took it from him and slowly began unwrapping it, starting at the tip of the blade. The steel was smooth, perfectly polished, and the blade was just as she requested, thin, strong, and the perfect length for her height. The crossguard came next, and while not elaborate, he had scalloped the metal, it almost resembled waves. She had told him once, purely in passing, that the waves of the bay were her favorite part of the weather in King’s Landing. The grip was leather that had been dyed a grey color with smaller strips of white leather folded in. The pommel was what caught her breath the most, one side of the coin was the direwolf head of the Stark banners and the other side was a running wolf. She stood from the bed and held the sword out in front of her, testing the balance before she quickly did a few forms.

She turned to him, the smile on her face full and true, “This is perfect, better than I was even imagining. Thank you.”
He fidgeted nervously on his feet, “I wanted to make it special for you.”

She carefully placed the sword down on the table, “I love it.” She stepped forward and kissed him, hoping he could tell it wasn’t only the sword she loved, even if she couldn’t say the words aloud.

She blamed Sansa for the stupid thought to have him knighted and them secretly married for months. She had always had a fondness for those stupid songs, and so Arya had been forced to listen to them too. When she returned to her father he was slowly writing something. She knocked on the open door to announce her presence before walking in, “I brought the sword Father.”

He nodded, looking up from the letter he was writing and reached for the sword, he examined it in silence for awhile. He then placed it down on his desk, “This is some very good work.”

“I was thinking he could run the Winterfell forge for Mikken, I remember hearing him complain many times about how ‘none of these summer boys know what they are doing and don’t want to learn neither’. Gendry does know what he is doing.” Arya explained, running her finger over the wolf etched in the pommel.

“I am not agreeing to anything until I have met him, and talked with him, alone.” He said, staring at her, trying to urge her to understand.

“I understand, but you’ll like him.” She assured him, giving him a sweet smile, “What do you want me to tell Sansa and Septa Mordane?”

“Nothing.” He said quickly then took a breath, “Nothing until I decide what the next course of action is. You are still early enough along that you can hide it for a few more weeks.”

“What about Mother?” She questioned, looking down at her feet.

He pointed to the letter, “I was writing to her now, but I don’t know exactly what to say. She should be arriving a fortnight before Sansa’s wedding, weather be good, maybe we will just wait to tell her then.”

A knock on the door interrupted the conversation, it opened and Ronald walked in with a very nervous looking Gendry. She tried to flash him what she hoped was a reassuring smile, but his eyes were locked on her father. Her father looked to the guard, “Thank you Ronald, please get Jory please, I’ll need to speak to him.”

The silence stretched between them after Ronald closed the door, and Arya decided it was best to break it, “Father, this is Gendry Waters. Gendry, this is my Father, Eddard Stark, Hand of the King.”

Gendry bowed, “It is an honor to meet you m’lord.”

“My daughter has told me about you boy. Before I consider her scheme, I need to get a better idea of what kind of man you are.” Ned said, looking him over, before turning to Arya, “Go wait out in the hall, I’ll call you back in when we are done.”

“Yes Father.” She turned to leave, quickly giving Gendry’s hand a squeeze of reassurance before exiting the room.

She leaned against the wall across from the door, she closed her eyes, and prayed. She prayed that
her father would allow her to marry the man she loved, the man who would be the father of her child. Above all, she prayed that her recklessness would not get him killed.

Chapter End Notes

More characters are going get involved in the story more heavily now. Ned and Gendry's talk is next. Stay tuned ;)

I have a question for you all. I wrote a piece about what the wet nurse was thinking that night from the prologue. Would you like to read it? If so, should I just make it an insert chapter and post it in here? Or should I make it a companion piece? I can't decide which would be best, I'd love your thoughts.
Eddard Stark stared at the young man standing before him, he was a large man, tall and muscular, and his face reminded him of someone else. The features of his nose, chin, cheeks, with stunning blue eyes and coal black hair, the boy could almost be Robert Baratheon at 20 minus the beard. Ned let out an inward sigh, of course of all the men in a city with nearly 1 million people, Arya would manage to fall in love with a bastard son of the King. He steeled himself, and filed those thoughts away for later, and said, “Arya says you are blacksmith?”

“Yes m’lord.” The boy answered quickly, his eyes dropped down, "I work for Tobo Mott."

Ned was sure he had been trained to not look the highborns in the eye, he knew a lot who took offense to that kind of thing, "Arya showed me the sword you made for her. It is very good work."

"Thank you, m'lord."

Ned studied the boy carefully, trying to see if he was putting on a show, “What of your family?”

“Don’t have one m’lord. Mother died when I was little, didn’t know my father.” He responded, still looking down.

“Take a seat.” Ned ordered and sat down in his chair first, the boy was hesitant but followed suit, “How did you meet Arya?”

The boy finally looked up at him, confused, “She didn’t tell you?”

“She did. I want to know if you have the same story.”

Gendry nodded, “I saw her walking up and down the street of steel a few times, I called out to her, asking if she was going to buy or steal something. We got to talking and she bought a dagger. Didn’t think I would see her again. She showed up a few weeks later and asked if I would make her a sword. She kept coming back more frequently after that.”

“Did Arya discuss her plan with you?”
“She said we had two options, run away or tell you and hope for mercy.” He replied, “I didn’t want to be the reason she no longer had a family.”

“You realize that if I so wanted, that I could have you sent to the Wall for this?” Ned asked, he was going to do no such thing, but he wanted to judge the boy’s reaction.

“Aye m’lord, I knew that was a risk.” He replied, looking back at his feet.

“Yet you risked it anyway, so Arya wouldn’t lose her family?” He questioned, wanting the verification.

“Aye. I don’t have a family. Arya is the closest I’ve ever had to one, I didn’t want to be the reason she lost it. I love her too much to hurt her like that. She would hate me eventually if we ran away.” He explained, his voice low and sincere.

Ned could see the clear affection the boy had for his daughter, “If I was to go ask around about your character. Would I find out that you’ve a few bastards running around or a woman waiting for you somewhere?”

A flash of anger crossed the boy’s face, and it instantly made Ned think of Robert, but where Robert would have yelled the boy took a deep breath and calmly said, “I was only ever with two other women besides your daughter, and I can promise that neither of them got a bastard from me.”

Ned was surprised by the low number, he was a handsome young man surely women were interested, but he ignored that train of thought, “How can you be so sure?”

“I know those women, I’ve seen them since, neither one had a child.” He answered simply.

Ned could see the logic in that answer, “If you were to choose, what would you like the future to hold? And I want the truth, not just what you think I want to hear.”

“Arya.” Gendry said without hesitation, “All I want is to be with Arya, and our child. Arya is the most stubborn, annoying, smart, beautiful woman I have ever met, and I would like nothing more than to spend the rest of my life with her.”

Ned studied the boy, listening to not just the words but how he said them, and his body language as he did. This boy truly loved his daughter, it was clear in all the ways that Ned could test. He knew what he’d have to do, he sighed and got to his feet. He walked to the door and opened it, “Arya, come back in here.”

Arya walked in and took the chair next to Gendry’s, she instantly reached over and grabbed his hand. Whether for her own comfort or to reassure her lover, Ned didn’t know but he felt a small smile tug at his lips before he silenced it. He returned to his own chair before he started speaking, “I need some time to think about the proper course of action, but for now, I will take your suggestion into consideration. We need to handle this quickly, so I will have made a decision by morning. Gendry, you are going to stay in one of the guest rooms tonight. We’ll get you a bath, a change of clothes, and some food.’

Arya smiled, “Thank you Father.”

“I haven’t made my decision yet.” He warned her.

She just continued to smile, “You know you have, otherwise you wouldn’t be cleaning him up. If we do my plan, you can knight him and we could get married tonight, and then you wouldn’t be lying so much. I hate making you do so already.”
“Knight me?” Gendry asked looking at Arya with confusion.

“I forgot I didn’t tell you that part. It came to me earlier, a proper lady might not be able to marry a blacksmith, but she can marry a knight.” Arya explained, a sweet smirk on her lips.

“What I have done to be worthy of knighthood?” He asked, the confusion still clear on his face.

“Saved me from muggers.” She said simply.

“Are you talking about that man I punched at the tavern?” He looked at her with surprise, “I am pretty sure that isn’t knighting worthy.”

She patted him on the arm, “It will be once we work on the details a bit.” She then turned back to Ned, “I can steal Sansa’s maiden cloak, she will never notice.”

Ned placed his head in his hand and sighed. He knew that her stubbornness was mostly his fault, she was too much Stark in that aspect of her personality, but she certainly inherited her mother’s wits. He looked up at the young couple sitting in front of him, he noticed that their hands were still joined and the boys thumb was rubbing small circles into the back on Arya’s hand. He couldn’t remember the last time he had seen Arya smile as much as she had since Gendry had come in the room, he was sure it was back in Winterfell. He made his decision, “Arya, go fetch you sister. She will be present for your wedding, you will ask to use the cloak, no stealing. She can help you get ready, we will do this as the old traditions set forth, at the hour of the wolf.”

Arya jumped to her feet and ran around the table throwing her arms around his neck and kissing his cheek, “I promise you won’t regret this Father. I’ll go find Sansa.”

He watched as she ran around to Gendry, placed a kiss of the boy’s cheek as well before rushing out of the room.

Jory put his head in then, “Ronald said you wanted to speak with me m’lord?”

Ned nodded, “Jory, this Gendry Waters, he helped Arya out of a bad spot, she has been sneaking out to explore King’s Landing.”

Jory dipped his head in Gendry’s direction as acknowledgement.

Ned got to his feet, “I’ll need you to witness this Jory.” He then picked up the sword that this man had made for his daughter, she had forgotten to take it with her in her excitement, from where it was resting and stood before Gendry, “Kneel.”

Gendry did as he was told quickly, and Ned got see how heavy the boy was breathing.

“Do you Gendry Waters swear before the eyes of gods and men to defend those who cannot defend themselves, to protect all women and children, to obey your captains, your liege lord, and your king, to fight bravely when needed and do such other tasks as are laid upon you, however hard or humble or dangerous they may be?” Ned asked as he rested the blade on Gendry’s shoulder.

“I do my lord.” Gendry replied, his eyes staring straight ahead.

Ned moved the sword to the left shoulder, “Then rise, Ser Gendry Waters, a knight of the Seven Kingdoms.”

Gendry slowly got to his feet and took a deep breath before he raised his eyes to meet Ned’s. Jory clapped the boy on the back, “Must have gotten her out of really bad spot to get a knighthood out
of it.”

Gendry didn’t seem to know how to respond so he simply looked at Jory before nodding and then looking back to Ned, “What now, m’lord?”

“Jory, take Ser Gendry to the guards’ rooms, give him a bath, food, and some clean clothes. I want you both back here in two hours.” Ned said, trying not to focus on how many people were going to have problems with this.

“Right away m’lord. Come on Ser, I’ll show you the way.” Jory said, giving Gendry another pat on the back before leading him from the room.

He paced for a few moments, wondering about how he could have been so blind as to missed Arya disappearing at nights for months. He sighed and ran a hand over his face, he wondered who Catelyn would kill first, him or Arya.

Ned sat down and pulled out a roll for a raven’s scroll, he picked up the quill and began to write, the Citadel had some records to add to the ledgers of House Stark, he would worry about his wife in the morning.

Gendry followed Jory through the halls of the Tower of the Hand, not even really paying attention to his surroundings. His thoughts were unable to focus as he walked, he really hadn’t thought this was the way his life would ever go. He wasn’t a knight, he was a blacksmith. But to be with Arya, and their child, he was going to have to be Ser Gendry. He looked at the man walking in front of him and wondered if the man would be able to teach him how to wield a sword all proper. If he was to be a knight, he would need to be able to at least act the part. His eyes widened for a moment, he hoped he wouldn’t be expected to participate in a tourney, that would be a sure way to never see his child be born.

Jory opened a door and lead him into what was clearly the guard food hall, “Take a seat lad. I’ll see if we got anything left from dinner, otherwise we will need to flag down a servant.”

“I don’t want to be any trouble.” Gendry said automatically as he sat down.

“Not a trouble.” Jory said, picking up a few rolls and some salted meat and placing them in front of him, “Want some ale?”

Gendry nodded as he took a bite of the meat, his body working on instinct. He was unable to focus his thoughts, they wandered from Arya, the babe she was carrying, Lord Stark, and what his master was going to say about all this.

Jory returned with a horn of ale, “Take your time lad, we are in no rush. I’ll make sure the bath has some water in it.”

Gendry watched the guard exit to another room and he allowed his body to untense. He wasn’t sure he was going to be able to pull off being the husband of a proper lady. He could barely read and write, and he only knew enough of numbers to properly sell the wares from the smithy. Gendry downed the ale in one go, coughing as he finished, not used to the strong taste.

“Take it easy lad, plenty more if you need it.” Jory said, appearing in front of him again, “Got the bath ready for you. I’ll leave you to it and I’m going to try to find you some clothes.”
Gendry nodded and followed the man into the other room, the bath room was nothing special, just a large basin that could probably fit like six guys at once. Jory patted him on the back and left. Gendry stripped and climbed into the large tub, he noticed a rag and a bar of soap near the edge. The soap was nothing special, but it was still the first time Gendry had actually used some, it was a luxury he couldn’t afford. His baths were usually taken down in the bay, if he felt he finally gotten dirty enough to warrant it, which it had the more Arya had taken to sharing his bed. His usual bath was just wiping down with a wet rag, he supposed he could get used to things like regular baths and soaps now. He ducked his head under the water and washed as much as the soot and ash out his could, noticing the dark cloud forming around him in the bath. He moved away from it and washed it out again, glad to see the water wasn’t dark this time as he did.

He looked up when he heard the door open and Jory walked in, “Think I found some stuff that will fit. Lord Stark can get something better fitted later.”

Gendry nodded and got out of the tub, slipping on the pants first, they were a little big around the waist, but they fit in length. The tunic was a bit of the opposite problem, it was tight across his shoulders and chest, while too long. The black jerkin Jory handed him next was also tight, he had to leave it barely tightened.

Jory shrugged, “Best I could do. Come on lad, let us get you back to Lord Stark.”

Gendry just followed behind, trying to get used to the new clothes. They weren’t anything fancy, he guessed the pants and plain tunic came from one of the guards, as they looked similar to what Jory was wearing under his leathers. The black jerkin tied up the center, not to unsimilair from his normal look, just done in better quality, and at least the length was good, falling at midthigh.

They arrived back at Lord Stark’s room and Gendry hoped he wouldn’t fuck all of this up, he was just a blacksmith after all.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. I know a lot of you are eagerly waiting for Cersei, and I promise she will be popping up soon. As a hint, here are the next two chapter titles:
Chapter 9 --- A Wedding for the Old Gods
Chapter 10 --- The Queen Meets a Knight ;)


A Wedding for the Old Gods

Chapter Summary

Time for a wedding, plus Sansa gets involved

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for the wonderful comments, they truly are the best motivation and are a highlight of my day whenever I receive them.

I hope everyone enjoys the wedding chapter, I had to watch the youtube clip of Sansa and Ramsay's wedding more times than I would have liked to get the words right.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya got out of the bath slowly, her nerves were starting to come in. She wasn’t even sure what part made her so nervous, she had already bedded him and told him she loved him. Those seemed like the hardest things, but this, actually marrying him, could change so much. She wrapped the dressing gown around her and sat at the vanity, she reached for the comb when the door opened and Sansa came in, a gown and cloak in her arms. She placed both items on the bed before turning to look at Arya. Arya was still surprised at how well Sansa was taking all of this, she had maybe thought Sansa would be angry at her, but after the initial shock had worn off, she had been nothing but supportive.

Sansa smiled as she approached her sister, “Let me do that.” She said and Arya handed her the comb, she began brushing out Arya’s long, dark locks, “I can’t believe you are getting married tonight.”

“I am having trouble with it myself.” Arya agreed, wondering if she could trust her sister with the truth, “I wasn’t sure Father would agree.”

“He just wants you to be happy. He knows who you are, once you get your mind set on something, it is nearly impossible to change it.” Sansa replied before putting the comb down. Arya felt her sister’s fingers in her hair and the gentle feel of the hair being parted and twisted. They were quiet for a moment when Sansa said, “Tell me about your knight.”

Arya couldn’t stop the fond smile on her face, “His name is Gendry, he is a blacksmith. He saved me from some men that wanted to rob me.”

“Very gallant of him. What does he look like?” She asked as her hands continued to work.

“Tall, blue eyes, dark hair, strong.” She said, and felt a fond smile come to her lips, “I’m sure you’ll approve.”

Sansa put some pins in her hair before stepping away, “As long as you’re happy.” Sansa came to stand in front of her, “Hair is perfect, now, let’s get you into the dress.”
Arya nodded and walked over to the bed as Sansa picked up the dress, it was white with little grey and silver snowflakes embroidered along the trims. Arya marveled at the details, “Sansa, this is beautiful. Are you sure you okay with me wearing it?”

Sansa rolled her eyes, “Of course I am. I have been making it for you.”

Arya looked at her with confusion, “Why would you be making me a dress?”

“I knew that it would be only a matter of time before you’d be needing your own wedding gown, and I know that you would never be willing to make one yourself. I just honestly wasn’t it expecting it to be so soon.” Sansa replied, “And since the Queen is insisting that my dress be professionally made, I had some time on my hands once I’d finished the maiden cloak.”

Arya nodded and allowed her sister to help her into the dress. It fit perfectly, and Arya was sure she had never worn something so beautiful. She looked down at the dress, her hands running over the smooth fabric, she looked up at her sister, “Thank you so much Sansa.”

Sansa then grabbed the maiden cloak and draped it over Arya’s shoulders, “This I will need back.”

“I promise not to ruin it.” Arya said, trying to control her emotions. She and Sansa had never really been close, they were just two very different people, but she was so happy her father had forced her to include Sansa in this night. She decided that once things were less hectic, she would tell Sansa the full truth one day, “Sansa, I hope you know that I’m not doing any of this to distract from your wedding or anything. I….I just really can’t imagine a life without him.”

“If you were trying to ruin my wedding, you’d be having this wedding in the sept, in front of the entire court. Instead we are doing it in the middle of the night, in the godswood, were maybe five other people are going to witness it.” Sansa adjusted the dress a bit, “I just hope you don’t come to regret this, it is all very sudden.”

There was a sudden knock on the door, Sansa smiled at her before going to open it, their Father on the other side. Sansa opened the door wider and let him enter. Arya watched him pause when he looked at her, his grey eyes taking her in before he smiled at her, “You look beautiful.”

Arya blushed and ran her hands over the dress, “Sansa made the dress.”

Ned turned to his eldest daughter, “You did a wonderful job.”

“Thank you Father.” Sansa replied, and Arya could see she was trying not to cry. Arya was fighting off a similar impulse.

Ned turned back to Arya, he walked closer and gripped her hands, “You are sure this is what you want?”

Arya smiled at him, “I have never wanted anything more in my life.”

Ned nodded with a sigh, “Then your groom is waiting for you in the Godswood.”

“We shouldn’t keep him waiting much longer then.” Arya replied and placed her hand on his arm. Together they left the room, Sansa following behind them, and Arya was amazed this was really happening.
Sansa walked ahead of them when they reached the Godswood, while not nearly as grand as the one in Winterfell, it would have to do. Arya had always chosen to follow the ways of the Old Gods, and it didn’t seem right to give them up now to marry in the Light of the Seven. The godswood of the Red Keep was made up of elm, alder, and black cottonwood trees, and all were visible this night with the help of the full moon overhead. The heart tree was no carved weirwood tree, those were all cut down in the south, instead it was a large oak tree. As they approached, she saw Gendry standing nervously under the great tree, Jory was talking slowly to him, while Sansa stood off to the opposite side her eyes studying the man. A few torches had been lit and placed in the ground, giving an almost eerie light when mixed with the moon.

Jory stood up straighter and took a few steps away from Gendry when he noticed them. Arya was sure he was explaining the words he was to say, any weddings he would have seen would have those done in the tradition of the faith. Her father nodded at Jory as they came to stop in front of him and Gendry.

Gendry’s eyes were taking her in, and she could see how much he appreciated what he saw, his face was always so easy to read. She gave him a loving smile and took in the cloak on his shoulders, it wasn’t some flimsy southron thing, it was a thick, fur lined cloak, one she had seen before. She glanced over at her father in confusion, he just smiled at her and nodded.

Jory cleared his throat, “Who comes before the old gods this night?”

“Arya of House Stark comes to be wed, a woman grown, trueborn and noble, she comes to beg the blessing of the gods.” Ned answered, “Who comes to claim her?”

“Ser Gendry Waters comes for her hand.” He said slowly, clearly trying to remember the lines, “Who gives her?”

“Eddard of House Stark, who is her father.” Ned answered and smiled at her.

Jory turned to Arya next, “Lady Arya, do you take this man?”

“I take this man.” Arya replied, smiling at the man in question. She reached out and grabbed his hand, and then together turned him and they kneeled in front of the heart tree, praying to the gods for a long and loving marriage. She tugged on his hand and together they rose. She gave him one more smile before turning around.

She felt the tremors in his hands as he removed the maiden cloak, handing it to Jory, before he removed the cloak from his shoulders and placed it on hers. She turned and smiled at him, then leaned up and placed a short kiss to his lips. That was more a tradition of the faith, but they were in the south, no harm in changing things a little.

Sansa clapped for them and came up and wrapped Arya in her arms, “I am so happy for you.” She whispered into her ear before pulling away, stepping up next to their father. Jory had walked a few steps away, giving the family a small feeling of privacy.

Arya fingered the cloak wrapped around her, “Why this cloak?”

Ned smiled, “Gendry has no house. You are of course able to make your own house, but until that time. You are both going to be members of House Stark.”

Gendry’s face scrunched in confusion, “I don’t understand.”

“From now on, I want you to introduce yourself as Ser Gendry of House Stark.” Ned replied, and he grabbed Sansa’s hand, placing it on his arm, “We are all a family now. Everyone should know
Arya led Gendry up to her room, she guessed it would their room now, after they had returned to the Tower of the Hand. He was nervously standing just inside the door as she removed her cloak and hung up on a hook, she’d return it to her father tomorrow. She turned to look at him, “You can come into the room. We are married now, so it is your room too.”

He nodded and stepped forward, his eyes taking in the large bed with an elaborate canopy, the small sitting bench at the foot of the bed, the chest and wardrobes. His eyes fell to a small table in front of the fire, two chairs accompanying it, and the dagger that was lying on top of it. He walked forward and picked up the dagger, “Hard to believe that this little thing started this all.”

Arya walked over to him, “I never really asked you if were okay with any of this. I know we briefly discussed it this morning.” She let out a little laugh and shook her head, “Gods, that was only this morning.”

He put the dagger down and placed his hands on her shoulder, “I would do anything asked of me to be able to be with you.” He moved one hand to her stomach, “The both of you.”

She wrapped her arms around him, burying her head in his chest, “So many things have happened today. We are married. We are going to have a child. You are a knight.”

He nodded, “I don’t know which one is harder to believe.”

“For me it is that my father agreed to let us get married. He is a good man, so I never really believed he would send you to the Wall, but it was a worry. Shock and anger can make people do unthinkable things.”

His hands moved over her back, “That didn’t happen. We are married now, before the gods, no one can pull us apart.”

She smirked against him before pulled back to look at his face, “The marriage is not official unless we consummate it.”

“I don’t know what that word means.”

“It means, you need to take your wife to bed.” She said, pointing to the large featherbed in the
center of her room.

He looked from her to the bed and back again, “Isn’t that the attitude that got us into this situation?”

She smiled at him, “We don’t need to worry about any of that now.”

“It won’t hurt the babe?”

She rolled her eyes, “It will not hurt the babe.”

His eyes moved over her body, “How do I get you out of this dress?”

She turned around and pulled her hair over her shoulder, “Just unlace it, try not to rip it. I think with a little alterations I can wear it again to Sansa’s wedding.”

He deftly undid the laces, she lowered her arms the dressed pooled around her feet, leaving her standing before him in only her small clothes. She turned around and started undoing the laces of his borrowed jerking, “We will need to get some clothes made for you, this does not fit.”

He laughed, “I think it was the best Jory could find on short notice.”

“All the better reason to get you out of it then.” She teased, finally done getting the strings unlaced.

Gendry quickly took over the process, stripping out of his jerking, tunic, and pants while Arya watched his movements. When he was finished, she slowly walked toward him, and something in her gaze caused him to take a few steps back until the back of his legs hit the bed. She smirked then and pushed on his chest, causing him to fall backwards.

Gendry groaned when his back hit the mattress, “The is the most comfortable thing I have laid on in my entire life.”

Arya climbed on top of him, completely bare of any clothes, “Just one of the many pleasures you’ll now get to experience as my legal husband.”

He eyed her naked flesh hungrily, he doubted he’d ever get tired of the sight, “There is one pleasure I want to indulge in first.”

She leaned down to kiss him, “Then indulge, husband.”

He surged forward, his lips claiming her’s hard, “I love you, wife.”

Arya smiled, “And I love you.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!! Our newly appointed knight and member of the Stark clan gets to meet the Lion Queen next chapter, I know a lot of you have been waiting for it. Stay tuned :)

Interlude: The Wet Nurse's Grief

Chapter Summary

The thoughts going through the head of the wet nurse who started this whole tale with her choices

Chapter Notes

I know I promised the next thing would be Cersei meeting Gendry, and that is coming up in the next chapter. As I was finishing off that chapter, I realized that this would be a good place to have this little extra backstory come in. Hope you don't mind.

Small warning, lots of mentions of death in this update.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She did know what had possessed her to steal the prince, leaving the body of her own son in his place. The grief had driven her to a madness she had never known she was capable of.

Her beautiful boy had never awoken from his afternoon nap, his body already starting to chill when she had gone to wake him for his meal. She was still just holding his unmoving body when the other wet nurse, Jenna, returned from the morning shift with the Prince, her own babe giggling in the carrying basket. Lyra barely acknowledged her presence as she placed the body of her son in her own basket and walked out of their shared room to go to the Queen’s rooms.

The Queen spoke curtly to her, informing her of the Prince’s last meal, and that she had already put him down for a nap. She watched as the Queen smiled down at her babe in the elaborate crib, decorated with stags and lions, before she walked from the room. Lyra cried as she watched the sleeping prince, he looked so much like her own child, who she had still not removed from the basket at her feet. She wondered if it was because the prince and her boy shared a father, or so she assumed.

She had lost everything in the sack of King’s Landings by the Lanisters soldiers. Her parents, her betrothed, her livelihood, it had all been taken from her in blood and fire. Leaving her nothing to hold onto but ash. The King removed all the servants from the castle that had served the Mad King, this opened up opportunities for many to find a new life working in the Red Keep. She found work in the castle to be a lonely affair, while she was surrounded by people, she had no friends. Robert was no Aerys, looking for traitors everywhere, but people were still afraid to trust one another in this time of transition. She was a simple serving girl delivering food and drink to the occupants of the castle. Her loneliness led to her having intimate relations with a member of the guard for a short while, before she caught the eye of the King after delivering him wine late one night. While he had been married to the Queen for months, he had not given up sharing his bed with many other women. Lyra did not think she was anything special, just someone the King desired to bed. He was strong and handsome, so she found no reason to refuse him. Her night with the King had not been what she had been expecting, he was drunk through most of it, and it was over quicker than she
would have liked.

A few moons later the announcement was made, the Queen was with child. Lyra discovered her own pregnancy not long after, the panic that took over her was intense, she would lose her position for sure. She hid it for as long as she could, but at some point there is no more hiding. The Steward told her that she would be a good candidate for a wet nurse, with her pregnancy being on time with the Queen’s. She was moved to the service of the Queen’s household, helping prepare the nursery for the arrival of the future babe. It was there she met Jenna, who would be the second wet nurse, and she gained a friend for the first time since the sacking. Life was looking brighter than it had in a long time.

The prince woke then, his cry bringing her back to the present. She reached in and brought him to her breast on instinct. He was a sweet child, with blue eyes and rich black hair.

Why should the Queen be allowed such a babe while Lyra lost her own? Did the Queen not already have enough? Why were the gods so cruel as to allow this kind of suffering?

The prince detached from her breast and smiled at her, his eyes struggling to remain open. The smile that touched her lips seemed foreign in her despair. She gently placed the prince back in his crib before finally reaching for her son. His body was colder now, the skin no longer showing the color of life. With tears in her eyes she placed the body next to the sleeping prince. She looked at them together, the resemblance between them clear, near identical. When she reached back into the crib, it was the prince she picked up and placed into her basket. With one final look at her son, she picked up the basket and left the room.

Lyra managed to sneak into her room without waking Jenna or her daughter, she grabbed her small bag of earnings, a cloak, and disappeared into the night.

She walked the dark streets of Flea Bottom, a place she knew well. She went to a tavern that she had once frequented with her betrothed and their friends. The owner remembered her and after a little convincing on her part that she and her son would be no trouble, she was able to secure a room and a job.

There were many times in the following weeks that she regretted her decision, especially as rumors of the Queen’s grief trickled into the tavern. The babe also liked to cry more than she could remember him doing before, like he knew something was wrong and that she was not really his mother. Then there would be times that he would smile and giggle at her, and she knew she would never be able to give him up. She named him Gendry, to honor the babe she had lost and her father. As time continued on, she almost forgot that he was not her own blood, for she loved him as though he was.

Two years later the announcement came, the Queen had another son, the kingdom had an heir once again. Lyra knew then that she was truly safe and everything would be alright. As the years continued to pass, she noticed that her Gendry was a solemn child. He did not seem to fit in with the other children, always serious and stubborn. The children gave him a nickname to suit the attitude, Bull, but to her he was always her Little Prince.

A summer sickness spread through the city soon after Gendry’s sixth nameday, and she prayed to all seven gods to spare her son. He does not fall ill with the sickness, but she does. In her final moments, as the tavern master’s daughter wipes at her feverish skin, she wonders if this was the gods’ way of punishing her for stealing the prince. She hopes her Little Prince will be fine without her. She should have returned him to the Queen as soon as she felt the first pull of illness start in her belly. He would have been happier in the palace, with his brother and true mother, instead, her selfishness would leave him another orphan of King’s Landing. She hoped one day he would find it
in his heart to forgive her, even if she did not deserve it. Her final thoughts were of all those she had lost and how she hoped the gods would allow her to see them again.

Chapter End Notes

As the gift for probably teasing you all when you saw the update for this story, I will tell you that I have finished the next actual chapter and will have it up sometime tomorrow after I do a little bit more editing. Which means I am triple posting this weekend.
When a Knight meets the Queen

Chapter Summary

Queen Cersei meets Arya’s new husband and he leaves her many questions

Chapter Notes

Here it is, the chapter many of you have been waiting for. Cersei and Gendry talk face to face. It probably isn't going to go the way you think. Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It didn’t take long for the news of Arya’s marriage to spread around the Red Keep, she wondered if had been the guards or the servants that had given them away. Gendry was never far from Arya’s side, unless she had to go do ladies things, and he joined her in her rooms every night. It did not take much imagination to know what was going on.

Arya, Gendry, and Sansa were walking among the gardens one evening about a week after the wedding, Sansa asking for them to join her and to talk about anything other than her upcoming wedding. Gendry was telling her about Flea Bottom, as the future Queen, it would be good for her to know about those that would be her people, or at least that is what Sansa had said to get him started. Her husband was slightly intimidated by her sister, who was much more a proper lady than Arya could ever hope to be.

Arya had only been lightly paying attention to the conversation, she was worried about her mother was going to react to Gendry. She would be here within a few days, having decided to come to King’s Landing earlier than expected thanks to Arya’s marriage. Her thoughts about her mother were abruptly stopped when she heard a voice calling them.

“Sansa, there you are my little dove.” Cersei said as she approached them, “I needed to speak to you about the wedding feast.”

Sansa sighed at Arya quickly before she put on her smile for the Queen, “Apologizes Your Grace, I did not think there was anything left to discuss, and thought to enjoy the evening with a stroll.”

Cersei smiled at them, “Yes, it is always good to find your moments of peace when you can.” The Queen eyed Gendry carefully, the furrow of her brow indicating deep thought, “I don’t believe I know you.”

“This is my husband Your Grace, Ser Gendry.” Arya said, and Gendry quickly dipped into a bow with a muttered, ‘Your Grace.’

Cersei looked surprised for a brief moment, “I had heard rumors of such a thing but I was unsure on whether or not to believe it as there was no announcement.” Her green eyes turned to the other Stark, “Sansa, my dear, why did you not share the glorious news?”
Sansa shifted a bit before saying, “Father was hoping to keep the news between as few people as possible until my mother arrives, Your Grace. She has decided to come earlier than originally planned.”

“That I shall be sure to keep it to myself until then.” The queen replied and studied the man before her, “Ser Gendry was it?”

“Yes Your Grace.” He answered, the nerves clear in his voice.

“Where are you from ser?”

Gendry glanced to Arya, who gave him a small smile and nod, “Flea Bottom, Your Grace.”

Cersei eyes went wide, “Flea Bottom? How did a boy from Flea Bottom not only gain a knighthood but also the hand of a lady of a great house?”

“I was foolish Your Grace.” Arya cut in, feeling the need to save her husband from the queen’s curiosity, “I snuck out of the castle and got lost upon the streets. A group of men tried to rob me. Gendry heard my pleas for help and fought them off. He took care of me until the next morning, saying it wasn’t safe to travel the streets until daybreak. Then he brought me back here, safe and sound. Father rewarded him with a knighthood, and granted the marriage when I begged it of him.”

“Love at first sight then little wolf?” Cersei asked, though her eyes didn’t leave Gendry.

Arya stood straight and looped her hand through her husband’s elbow, “Something like that Your Grace.”

“I see.” She said, her eyes flicking between all three of them before landing on Gendry once again, “Shall your family be joining you here then?”

Gendry licked his lips, and looked away, “I have no family Your Grace.”

“Such a shame, what happened to them?”

“Never knew my father, Your Grace, but my mother worked in a tavern, she died of a fever when I was little.” He told her, feeling uncomfortable with the amount of attention, but he didn’t think he had the right to refuse a queen’s questions.

“You have a new family now and I’m sure it won’t be long before it grows.” The Queen said, eyeing Arya’s flat stomach.

Arya had to resist the urge to place a hand over her growing belly, knowing there was no way for the Queen to actually know what was going on within it, “We look forward to having children one day Your Grace.”

The queen smiled at them, “The wishes of the young. How old might you be ser?”

“One and twenty, Your Grace.” He replied, and was surprised at the look of shock on the Queen’s face.

“I shall leave all of you to your stroll.” Cersei said, suddenly ending the conversation and walking off.

Sansa turned to her sister, her face furrowed in confusion, “That was odd right?”

Arya nodded, “I could get why she’d be curious about my sudden marriage, but…”
“She just left, she didn’t ask me to come with her to discuss the feast or anything.”

“I didn’t offend her or anything right?” Gendry asked as they began to walk again.

“I don’t see how, you were very polite and did nothing but answer her questions.” Arya said, her mind replaying the interaction, “I kept getting the feeling she was trying to place you. Like you had met before but she couldn’t remember when.”

“I had never even seen the Queen before today.” Gendry insisted.

“We believe you my love.” Arya assured him, “You don’t know who your father is though, maybe you happen to look like him, and he has met the Queen.”

Sansa nodded, “I am sure it is nothing to worry about. After the wedding you both are going with mother to Winterfell, and the Queen won’t be of any more issue.”

“Do you think we should mention it to Father?” Arya asked, she started playing with the edge of her sleeve, the Queen's behavior had unnerved her.

“You should tell him that Queen knows about your marriage. He would want to know.” Sansa said, and the three of them began the walk back to the Tower of the Hand.

When they arrived, Sansa bid them goodnight and headed toward her chambers while Arya and Gendry went to talk with her father. He was sitting at the desk in his room when they entered.

He looked surprised to see them, “Is everything alright?”

Arya assumed their faces must have gave away some of their misgivings, “We encountered the Queen while out in the gardens. She knows that Gendry and I have gotten married, I am not completely sure she bought our story. She made a mention of our family soon growing.”

Ned sighed, “She found out sooner than I would have liked, but it is not completely unexpected, secrets are hard to keep here.”

Arya shifted her feet nervously, “There was something else.”

Ned looked up at them, “What is it?”

“I don’t really know, it was just….Cersei was acting strange after she talked to Gendry a bit and she just kept staring at him.”

Ned looked down, “Both of you take a seat.” Once they had he sighed and said, “I have a suspicion about who Gendry’s father may be, and it would not surprise me if the Queen has reached it as well.”

“Who?” Gendry asked after a moment.

“King Robert.” Ned said firmly.

Gendry’s eyes went wide, “You think the King might be my father?”

Ned nodded, “I knew Robert when he was your age, and as soon as I saw you, that was what came to mind. Robert is also not known for his fidelity, he has many bastards out there across the kingdoms.”

“Should we worry about the Queen taking offense at having one of the king’s bastards here?” Arya
asked, she could really care less about who his father is, but she knew that others would.

“You and Gendry will be leaving for Winterfell soon, she would probably rather leave this quiet than want to bring attention to it. However, should you feel like anything is wrong, I want you to come to be immediately.”

“Of course Father.” Arya replied and got to her feet, “Good night.”

“Good night my dear, Gendry. I shall see you both in the morning.” Ned said with a smile.

Arya linked her hand with her husband’s as they walked toward their chamber. She could tell from his silence that he was deep in thought, most likely about the King and Queen. Arya would try to be patient and not push him, he would tell her his thoughts on all of this when he was ready.

Cersei felt as if her heart was going to beat right out of her chest as she waited for Jaime to join her in her chambers. She had already downed a full pitcher of wine and had sent her handmaiden out for more. That boy, he was like the Robert of her wedding day had appeared before her once more. He was the right age, he could be him, her baby boy, hidden from her in Flea Bottom this whole time.

There was a knock on the door before it opened and Jaime entered. He took one look at her sitting on the edge of her bed and ran to his side, “What is wrong?”

“I meet Arya Stark’s husband today.” She replied, looking up from the floor to her brother’s face, “I think he might be him Jaime, after all this time, I might have finally found him.”

Jaime sighed and moved to sit next to her, “Cersei, it has been over twenty years.”

“I know how long it has been!” She yelled and got to her feet, turning to look at him, “That boy could be Robert’s fucking twin at that age.”

“Robert probably has a dozen bastards walking around this city.” Jaime said and stood to place his hands on her shoulders, “I know you’ve never accepted it, but your son died that night in his crib. The wet nurse did not steal him, she probably ran for fear of losing her head, not because she had swapped her child for yours.”

Cersei narrowed her eyes at him, “Go see him for yourself and then tell me that I am being unreasonable in my belief.”

The handmaiden chose that moment to return, she quickly placed the wine down on the table and left again. Cersei went and poured herself another glass, she kept her eyes focused on the liquid, “I know what people thought of me then. The Grief Queen. I heard the whispers, the servants are not as quiet as they should be. How the grief drove me mad.” She looked away from the glass and back at her brother, “I know that he is my son. I know it in a way that only a mother would know.”

Jaime came to stand beside her, “There is no way to prove that he is your son. He may very well look like Robert, but that does not make him the babe you lost, it just means that Robert fucked some woman and got her pregnant around the same time as he did you.”

“Why are you being so cruel?”

“It isn’t cruelty, that is what you are allowing to do to yourself.” Jaime said, removing the almost
empty glass of wine from her hand, “You have three, beautiful, alive children, why can you not just be happy with them?”

“I love all my children Jaime.” She forcefully picked the glass back up from the table and finished it, “You failed to find my son the last time, don’t fail me with this as well Jaime.”

Jaime sighed in defeat, “I will go see the boy tomorrow, but I don’t know what you expect me to be able to do about him.”

“Just see him. Speak to him. You’ll see what I do.” Cersei assured him, a small smile on her face, “It is him Jaime, I swear it by all the gods.”

Jaime leaned forward and placed a kiss upon the crown of her head, “Try to get some sleep sister. I will come see you after.”

“Goodnight brother.” Cersei replied as her twin left her. She sat down in the chair at the table, the glass of wine still in her hand.

Cersei couldn’t help the smile that came to her lips, this Gendry was her Stefon, she knew he was deep in her soul. It had taken her a few moments to realize that it was a face similar to Robert’s that she was looking at. Another one of his bastards she had originally assumed, especially after she asked about his family. Then, he told her his age, and her mind instantly went to her child of Robert’s that would be the same age. The one that had been stolen from her by that treacherous wet nurse. He was finally back within her reach, he might be a grown man now, with a wife too, but she would not lose him again. No, his place was here with her. She had already lost the last twenty one years of his life, she didn’t want to miss anymore.

She assumed the rush of the wedding to Arya was because the girl was foolish enough to get with child and Ned Stark was many things, but stupid was not one of them. Marrying the girl to a knight before her pregnancy was discovered would stop the whispers. Many at court were not stupid enough to actually believe it, but announcing the marriage before the pregnancy was even rumored, would make it harder to dispute. She would not let the Starks steal her son and grandchild and hide them in the North.

She looked at her glass of wine, swirling the liquid around as she thought. Claiming the boy as her child, as the legitimate child of her and the King, could cause a succession issue. He was older than Joffrey, but Joffrey had been raised to be King while the boy had been raised in Flea Bottom. She sighed and finished her glass, she had a lot of decisions to make before she went public with her new discovery. She did not want to start a war within her own household.

Chapter End Notes

Was it everything you wanted it to be? Jaime became a much bigger part of this story than I originally intended, but, that sometimes happens where Cersei is involved, you'll see. Also, Catelyn is coming for a motherly chat. Don't be afraid to let me know what you think!!
Mothers' Madness

Chapter Summary

Jaime meets Gendry and there are a few arrivals from Winterfell

Chapter Notes

By kudos this is officially my most popular story!! Thank you everyone for all the wonderful support.

Just an extra note, the way I have Jaime written is a version of his season 1 character, cocky and smug, because that was the Jaime that works best for this story I think.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jaime didn’t see what checking on this boy that Arya Stark had married would achieve, he very well could look exactly like Robert, but he wasn’t going to be the child Cersei lost 20 years ago. He wondered what it was about the boy that had gotten Cersei’s mind to jump to this conclusion, he had thought she had moved past the belief that her child had been stolen. He knew that she had even engaged Varys for a short while to attempt to find the wet nurse, but she had escaped even Varys’ web.

Jaime found the boy with the head of the Stark household guard in the training yard. The guard was attempting to teach the boy how to properly defend himself with a sword. Jaime stood to watch, the boy was large, it was clear that whatever he did before marrying the Stark girl involved something with the upper body. His grip on the sword was good, but his form was horrible and his movements were all off. Jaime shook his head, if this boy was supposed to be a knight, he would need to improve his swordsmanship. He turned away from the boy’s lack of fighting ability, and focused on his appearance. The boy was definitely one of Robert’s, he reminded Jaime of the first time he had ever set eyes on the King, the boy was just missing a beard.

The boy stood up straight, the sword at his side, “Can’t I just use a warhammer? I don’t think swords are for me.”

“Warhammers are good for melees or battles, but in a close fight, a sword is best.” The guard said, and Jaime scoffed, that was an understatement.

“Warhammers are also a pain to carry around, can’t just leave it on your hip.” Jamie said, walking over towards the two.

“M’lord.” The guard said, giving a bow, and the younger man followed suit.

Jaime ignored the guard and focused on the boy again, “I heard that Arya Stark had married a knight, would that be you then?”

“Yes m’lord, I’m Gendry...Ser Gendry.” He corrected quickly.
“A knight who forgets he is one and doesn’t know how to use a sword. How did you happen to become a knight?” Jaime asked.

The boy looked like he was reigning in his temper, “I saved Arya from some men that wanted to hurt her, Lord Stark rewarded me with a knighthood.”

“How’d you save her without a sword?” Jaime questioned.

“I’m a blacksmith, I used a hammer.” Gendry replied, his blue eyes staring daggers at Jaime.

“A blacksmith married to a daughter of a great house.” Jaime said, his voice displaying amusement at the idea, “What a wonderful turn of events for you.”

The boy stood up to his full height, placing him at about Jaime’s height, “Is there something I can help you with m’lord?”

As the boy stared at Jaime, it wasn’t Robert that the boy reminded him of, no, it was his father. He had seen Tywin Lannister give that exact stare too many a man that had irritated him, a glower to make any man realize that the conversation was over. Tywin might be able to intimidate Jamie, but he would not allow a boy of twenty or so to do so. He sent the boy a glare of his own, “I just wanted to see what the newest member of House Stark was made of, now I know.”

He went to walk away but then turned to the guard, “You need to work on the stances before you get into the swordwork, he has a long way to go.”

Jaime walked quickly back toward the White Tower, he would need to get his thoughts together before he went to Cersei. He wondered if perhaps her madness was wearing off on him. There was no way to know if the boy was Cersei’s son, all you could assume was that he was Robert’s, of that there was little doubt. The seeds of doubt had been planted in his mind, that boy could....

“Everything alright Ser Jaime?” A voice called to him, and he looked up just in time to avoid running into the Master of Whispers.

“Just wasn’t looking where I was going.” Jaime replied and went to move past him.

“Strange how much Arya Stark’s husband looks like a young King Robert, is it not? Seeing them together, you’d almost think you were looking at Robert and Lyanna reborn.” Varys continued to speak, “The gods like their jokes.”

Jaime narrowed his eyes at the man, “What do you know of the boy?”

“I know a great many things, that is my job.” Varys replied, “Was there something special you wished to know?”

“Who is the boy’s mother?”

“From what I have uncovered, the boy’s mother died when he was about six. She was a tavern wench in Flea Bottom.” Varys said, “Those that remember her, said all she cared about was making money to provide for her child, who she liked to call her ‘little prince’. The boy’s father was never identified.”

Jaime scoffed, “We all know who’s the boy father is by taking one look at him.”

Varys smiled, “Yes, the resemblance is quite strong. No look of the mother at all in the boy.”
“My sister has taken a special interest in the boy, as I am sure you remember, her lost child would be the same age as Ser Gendry is now.”

“Has she resumed her insistence that her child was stolen and replaced with the wet nurse’s child?” Jaime nodded, and Varys continued, “I had been unable to find the wet nurse, as were you. Do you take stock in the Queen’s belief?”

“I have always believed that her mind latched onto the idea as a way to avoid her grief.”

“But?”
Jaime shook his head and looked up at the man before him, “This boy, he makes me question it.”
Varys nodded, “I shall see what I can find out my lord.”
Jaime nodded in return, and called out to the Spider as he walked away, “This stays between us.”
“Of course.”
Jaime watched the man walk away, and hoped he hadn’t made a mistake in sharing with the Master of Whispers.

Arya was nervous as she stood in the courtyard with her father, sister, and husband. Her mother would be arriving any moment, deciding to come a fortnight earlier than planned after she had learned of Arya’s marriage.

Gendry squeezed her hand, “Everything will be fine.”
“I hope you’re right.”
“I’ve won over your sister and your father, I am sure I can do the same with her.”
Arya shook her head, “She will be harder than both of them combined.”
He kissed the top of her head, “Then I will do my best to be extra charming.”
“A few weeks, and you’re already acting like a proper knight.” She said shaking her head with a laugh.
“I have had some good teachers.” He smirked.
“You’re still shit with a sword.” Arya joked, smiling up at him.
He blushed and looked away, “Jory says I’ll get better with practice.”
Arya laughed, “You certainly can’t get any worse.”

Horses came through the gates before he could respond and Arya instantly tensed up again. She knew her mother wouldn’t make a scene here in the courtyard, but once they were in the privacy of Tower of the Hand, she would be getting yelled at. On two of the horses were her younger brothers, Robb would have had to stay behind as there must always be a Stark in Winterfell. The wheelhouse pulled up and Arya took a deep breath as their mother climbed out, while Bran and Rickon dismounted.
Ned walked up to his wife and pulled her in a hug, he gave her a light kiss before moving on to
Bran and Rickon. Cat walked over to her daughters, giving Sansa a hug before coming up to Arya.

Arya smile at her mother and gave her a hug, as they pulled apart she said, “Mother, this is Gendry,
my husband.”

Gendry gave her a bow, it was finally looking proper as Sansa had been helping him, “Pleasure to
finally meet you Lady Stark.”

Catelyn studied him for a moment, “You as well Gendry. I look forward to getting to know you
better.”

Ned came up to them then, “Come, let’s get you settled. We will have time to talk later.”

Once they were out of earshot Gendry said, “That wasn’t so bad.”

“She wouldn’t do anything where there are so many eyes. Dinner will be an intense affair.” She
said but tugged his hand, “Let’s introduce you to my brothers, they should be very easy for you to
win over.”

The seven of them were quiet as they ate. Sansa kept looking up from her plate to her mother and
then to Arya, before looking back to her plate. Arya was keeping her gaze firmly on her mother,
waiting for her to speak. Gendry was keeping his head down, not really looking at anything in
particular.

Rickon broke the silence first, “Which weapon is hardest to make?”

Gendry looked up, clearly shocked at the unexpected question, “Oh, hmmm, not really meant as
a weapon, but a trident. The spikes can be hard to get even.”

“Didn’t think a lot of knights and lords would be wanting tridents.” Ned commented, glad that
someone had broken the silence.

“Mott wanted to make sure I knew how to make everything. We sold those down at the docks for
extra coin.” He explained, “Warhammers took the longest, they needed extra time to cool and you
need to work them in sections since they are so large.”

“Do you think…” Bran started to say when their mother stood up, causing all eyes to look at her.

“I think we have all had our fill of dinner. Arya, Ser Gendry, I would like to speak to both of you,
please come with me.” She said, not waiting for a response before walking from the room.

Arya got to her feet, “Knew it was only a matter of time.”

Gendry followed behind her, his hand resting on the small of her back. Her father was further
behind, having said something to her siblings, but she hadn’t cared to listen.

They walked into her father’s rooms, the table was just as messy as it had been the last time. Her
mother was standing behind it. Her expression furious, “Sit, the both of you.”

Ned closed the door behind him, “Cat…”

“No.” She glared at him, “You should have never allowed this to happen.”
Arya moved to stand, but Gendry’s hand on her wrist stopped her.

Cat turned her eyes to her daughter, “I want the truth. I don’t buy this story your sister told me at all.”

“I snuck out of the castle, starting fucking him, and got pregnant. Is that what you wanted to hear? I came to Father when I found out about the child in my belly, and he agreed to my plan to keep the name Stark from being dragged through the dirt six weeks to Sansa’s wedding.” Arya said, giving her mother her own look of disdain.

Catelyn’s eyes went wide, “You are pregnant?”

Arya looked at her father quickly before back to her mother, “Yes. I’ve been wearing loose dresses to hide it.”

Cateleyd sat down and took a deep breath before looking at her husband, “You didn’t tell me that bit in your letter.”

Ned sighed, “I didn’t trust this news to a letter.”

Arya spoke up, “Don’t be mad at Father. Everything he did was to protect me and our family. I was being careless, but the damage is done now.”

“How many people know about the marriage?” Cat asked.

“Most of King’s Landing,” Arya said, “We tried to keep it as quiet as we could, but the rumors got out, then the Queen found out.”

“And the baby?” She questioned.

“Only the people in this room.” Arya assured her, “But I think the Queen suspects something.”

“She is a smart woman.” Catelyn commented, her eyes distant as she thought, she looked at her husband, “You want to send them both back to Winterfell?”

Ned nodded, “Arya can hide the pregnancy awhile longer. No one here needs to know until the babe is born, and hopefully no one will do the math or believe it came early. Gendry can work in the forges, take over when Mikken retires.”

“I am disappointed in your choices here Arya, but you are right, nothing we can do about it now besides follow through.” Catelyn got to her feet, and walked toward her daughter, Arya got to her mother and hugged her, “I am looking forward to my first grandchild.”

Arya smiled when they pulled apart, “Truly?”

“This is not how I was expecting your life to go, and I was expecting a child from your sister first, but you were always trouble.” Catelyn said smiling at her before turning to Gendry, who had also gotten to his feet. She studied him for a moment before saying, “I assume my husband did his fare check on your character before allowing this marriage. I am going to trust his judgement, and my daughter’s, while we get to know each other better.”

“I hope I do not disappoint Lady Stark.” He said with a small bow.

Arya watched as her mother smiled at her husband, surprised by such shyness from a man his size
no doubt.

“I hope that as well Ser.”

Chapter End Notes

I know Catelyn's reaction might seem a little calm, but I actually based it off how she reacted to Robb marrying Talisa in the show. Angry but resigned, especially after learning of the pregnancy because there is no going back now.

The next chapter will be adding a new character to the Gendry mystery. Stay tuned to find out who it will be.

Hope you liked it. Don't be afraid to comment, I love hearing it all!!
The Lion's Roar

Chapter Summary

Jaime goes to someone for some advice, it does not go as planned

Chapter Notes

Another double update weekend, this one brought to you courtesy of the stupidly early snow fall today.

Hope you enjoy!!!

Content warning: Mentions of animal abuse in the last section

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ser Jaime.”

Jaime turned as the voice approached him in the hallway, “Lord Varys.”

“I was wondering if you have a moment, there is something I wish to discuss with you about an important matter.”

“Of course.” Jaime replied and followed the Spider to his rooms.

Once they safely away from prying eyes and ears, Varys spoke, “I looked into the blacksmith’s mother. It seems that she just appeared one night at the tavern, seeking employment and room for her and her child. That night, would be the same night that the prince died. The woman’s name was Lyra, which also happened to be the name of the wet nurse.”

Jaime ran a hand over his face as he thought on the Spider’s words, “It could all just be a coincidence.”

“It could be my lord, but I also spoke with the tavern master’s daughter. She sat on Lyra’s sick bed, she said the woman was crazed in her final hours, saying things like ‘gods’ punishment’, ‘the Prince’, ‘the Queen’, and ‘I’m sorry’. Very strange final words indeed, could lend some credibility to your sister’s instincts.” His voice just as calm as ever even as he said words that could disrupt the kingdom.

Jaime sat in one of the chairs in the room, “I am not the person who can make this decision.”

“If I may suggest my lord, your father has arrived for the wedding. Maybe you should discuss this with him before bringing it to the Queen’s attention.”

Jaime looked up at the bald man, “I believe you have the right idea again Lord Varys.” Jaime got to his feet and walked toward the door before turning to Varys.
“Just between us my lord, unless you tell me otherwise.” Varys said before Jaime could remind him of the need of secrecy.

It did not take him long to locate his father, he was never one to let his responsibilities get away from him, even when he was here for a wedding. He sat down in the chair before his father and wasn’t sure what to say.

“You came to me, what do you want?” Tywin said as the silence stretched on.

“I think I have found Cersei’s son.” Jaime said, letting out a sigh as he finished.

“Were either of them missing and I was unaware?”

“Not Joffrey or Tommen. Stefon.”

“Stefon died in his crib. I know you sister had trouble accepting the death, but I thought she’d be past that by now.” Tywin said, finally setting down the quill to look at his eldest son.

“She was, or so I thought. She had an encounter with Arya Stark’s new husband, a knight, Gendry. He is the spitting image of a young Robert, he is Robert’s son no doubt. He also happens to be the right age to be Stefon.”

“Robert has never been known for his fidelity, but he was much more careful about it when I was in the capitol.” Tywin mused before gesturing for his son to continue.

“Cersei is convinced that this boy is Stefon. I meet with him, on her insistence, and….”

“And what?”

“Something about him reminded me of you.” Jaime said, meeting his father’s eyes, “I asked Lord Varys to look into this mother.”

Tywin sighed, “Did the Spider find anything useful in his web?”

“The woman has been dead for years, but, those that remembered her that he could find do tell a tale that would suggest she could have been Cersei’s wet nurse.” Jaime explained, and watched as his father thought.

“You said you met with this boy?”

“I did.”

Tywin nodded, “I will as well. I will not disrupt the kingdoms with such knowledge without seeing the boy for myself. Could you bring him to me here?”

Jaime shook his head, “Lord Stark is very protective of the boy and he is rightfully suspicious of everyone not working for the Starks.”

Tywin sighed, “I guess there will be one more thing for me to discuss with Lord Stark then.”

Jaime raised an eyebrow at his father, “Why are meeting with Lord Stark?”

“It is expected of us to have a chat.” Tywin said as he got to his feet, “He is Hand and I am the Warden of the West.”

Jaime followed his father from his chambers toward the Tower of the Hand, “Will you tell Lord
Stark of our suspicions?"

“I’d rather speak to the boy first, take measure of him myself.”

Jaime nodded and looked to his right when he heard a laugh. The knight in question had his wife tucked in his arms and she giggled and tried to escape him. He turned back to his father, “This might be your chance, he is right over there.”

Tywin looked over and walked toward the young couple. Arya noticed them first, the smile fell from her face instantly when she saw them and Gendry released his hold.

Jaime spoke first, “Lady Arya, Ser Gendry, allow me to introduce you to my father, Lord Tywin Lannister.”

“M’lord.” Gendry said, doing a bow.

“My lord.” Arya returned, a clumsy curtsey.

“Congratulations on your marriage, it was certainly unexpected news to receive.” Tywin said, looking between the two young people before him.

“Thank you my lord.” Arya replied, and Jaime could see she was itching to grab her husband’s hand and flee.

Tywin turned to the boy, “How long have you been a knight then?”

“A month, m’lord.” The lad replied, his eyes staying on Tywin’s face, which surprised Jaime, as just a few weeks ago the boy was much more nervous. Jaime wondered if his stubborn little wife had been rubbing off on him or if he’d just finally realized the power he held.

“Shall you be competing in the upcoming tourney?” Tywin asked, and Jaime wondered at this line of questioning.

“No, m’lord, I don’t know how to joust or shoot a bow.”

“Yet.” Arya piped up, her grey eyes almost glaring at the older lord.

Tywin smiled at her, “You’re a wild one, I can tell.”

“My father says it is the wolf’s blood.”

“Yes, all Starks are wolves, just as the Lannisters are lions, and the Baratheon’s are stags.” He made his eyes were on Gendry as the last bit came out of his mouth, “I have a meeting with your Father, enjoy the afternoon air.”

Jaime followed after his father’s quick departure, he was sure he shared the same look of confusion on his face that adorned the face of the couple as well.

Ned was not really in the mood to deal with the Lord of Casterly Rock today. The wedding was now only two weeks away, and he’d been roped into more involvement since Catelyn had arrived. If he had known how much work went into a royal wedding, he would have made sure that his family was never involved in one.

There was a knock on the door and his guard poked his head, “Lord Tywin Lannister to see you m’lord.”
“Let him in.” Ned said and got to his feet, faking a smile as the older lord walked into his solar, “Welcome Lord Tywin.”

“Lord Eddard.” Tywin replied and took a seat in the spot before the desk.

Ned followed suit, trying to not sigh, “I would like to thank you for all the money…”

“I do not care about the money for the wedding at this moment.” He said and leaned forward, “I happened to run across your new good-son on the way here. I couldn’t help but notice a certain resemblance he shares with the King.”

“Lord Tywin, I can assure you that Gendry is just a humble knight.”

“A ‘humble’ knight that you allowed to marry your daughter and looks like the King. I would accuse you of planning to somehow have the king legitimize the boy so he could contend for the throne. But your other daughter is only weeks away from marrying the crown prince, so that would not make a lot of sense.” Tywin said, his cold stare watching Ned closely.

“There is no plot for the crown my lord, Joffrey is the heir and shall be king.”

Tywin sat back in his chair, “Were you aware that Joffrey had an older brother?”

“Aye, the babe died in the crib a few months after his birth.”

“What is less common knowledge outside the Red Keep is that my daughter was convinced that the wet nurse had stolen her baby and replaced him with her own. My son spent a month combing this city for that wet nurse but never found her.”

Ned scowled, “She believes that Gendry could be her son?”

“Yes. She has had Jaime and Lord Varys’ looking into him for the last few weeks.” Tywin explained, usually he would not reveal such information to a rival house, but this was a unique situation.

Ned was silent for many moments as he took in all the information provided to him. He looked back at Tywin, “What would you have us do? He is Robert’s clear enough, but there is no way to know if he is the Queen’s son.”

“We do nothing.”

“I am not sure the Queen will allow that outcome if she has become convinced enough to send Varys out after the truth.” Ned said, surprised at how easily Tywin would want to have this situation dismissed.

Tywin’s eyes narrowed, “She will do as I tell her. Once the boy is out of sight, he shall be out of mind. Hopefully your daughter is quick with a child, a grandchild should help distract her.”

“You know your daughter better than I do my lord, but if she has held onto this belief for twenty one years, then she is in a dangerous state of mind.”

“Throwing a new prince into the mix at this stage would only cause chaos within the royal household. Who would be the heir, this boy or Joffrey? I will make her understand.” Tywin said and rose to his feet, “It will be best if things remain as they are.”

“I agree my lord.” Ned said, also getting to his feet, “In less than a month he will be at Winterfell,
about as far from the Queen as he can get. Joffrey will be King.”

“I am glad we can agree on this my lord.” Tywin said, before walking out the door.

Ned sat back down into his seat, his hand in his head as he thought about the trouble all this would cause if it got out.

Arya laid back on the bed, her hand resting on the slight swell of her stomach as she watched Gendry undress. He pulled off his tunic, leaving his top half bare before, she always loved the sight of him but she could see the tension in his shoulders. She frowned at the idea, “Is everything alright my love?”

Gendry turned to look at her, “I am fine.”

She shook her head, and leaned up on her elbows, “No, you aren’t. What is it?”

“Lord Tywin.” He said, kicking of his boots and undoing his pants, “He gave me that look, just like the Queen and Ser Jaime did the first time I meet them.”

Arya tried not to get distracted by his nakedness, as he liked to sleep naked, “Father said…”

“I know, that I look like the King.” Gendry replied, crawling into the bed beside her, “I just can’t help but feel it is more than that.”

Arya turned and placed a hand on his chest, “What do you think it might be then?”

He shrugged, “I don’t know. These fucking Lannisters though, I don’t trust them.”

“We cannot trust anyone but ourselves in this rat’s nest.” She replied and leaned up to place a kiss on his cheek, “You are a member of the pack now, we protect our own.”

He smiled at her, his arm wrapped around her and pulling her flush against him, “I was blessed by the gods they day you walked into my shop.”

Arya blushed and looked away from him, “All I did was throw your life into disarray.”

“No, all you did was show me everything I was missing.” He reached up and turned her head so she was looking at him, “I’ll never regret marrying you.”

She smiled and swung her leg over his, settling on his lap, “You say that now. All warm and cozy here in the Red Keep. You might it regret it once winter arrives and you’re freezing in Winterfell with your weak southern blood.”

“Hmmm,” He said his hands pushing up the skirt of her nightdress as his moved his hands to her hips, “Good thing I’ll have my beautiful little wife to keep me warm outside of the forge.”

“I love you. Don’t worry about those stupid Lannisters, they cannot do anything to you. I will protect you.” Arya promised him, shifting so she could lean down and kiss him.

He smiled as they pulled apart, “As you wish m’lady.”

A knock on the door caused Ned to look up, Sansa was standing there, tears streaming down her face, he got to his feet, “What is wrong?”
She rushed forward and wrapped her arms around him, “I don’t want to marry him.”

These were not the words he’d been expecting to hear, “What happened? You seemed so excited about the prospect before?”

“I saw him…..” She choked on the words and buried her head in his shoulder.

“Saw him what?”

“He had a cat. He was slowly cutting off its fur, while it was still alive, and laughing about it.” She managed to get out between sobs, “The poor thing was screaming. How can he be so cruel?”

Ned cradled her against him as she cried, he did not know what to do. He did not want his daughter married to a man who tortured animals for fun, but he couldn’t break an engagement like this without good reason, and he did not believe that animal cruelty would be enough to sway Robert. All he wanted was to join their houses, he cared for little else, but Ned would try to find some way to save his daughter. He just did not know what that way would be yet.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! The plot is moving quickly towards the identity reveal, just needed a few more people in the know first.

Per the Joffrey bit, it is canon in the book that Joffrey enjoyed torturing animals, and I needed a catalyst to break Sansa of her infatuation.

If there are any interactions between characters you want to see, don’t be afraid to ask. I aim to please wherever I can.

See you next weekend for more!!!
Arya loved nothing more than waking up wrapped in Gendry’s arms. The first few nights had taken some getting used, neither was used to sleeping through the night with another person, but now they had a steady rhythm. She had been initially afraid of what her mother might say, but the week she had been in the capital, she had been at least polite to Gendry, which was really all she could ask for. She knew her mother’s opinions on bastards, she had seen how Jon had been treated as less because of his status, she would not allow Gendry to be treated as such.

His arm tightened a bit around her, “Must we get up?”

“I am afraid so.” She replied but made no movement to rise from the bed.

“What if I claim illness today? I have no responsibilities, and Jory is too busy with his job to train me today.”

“You’d leave me to fend for myself?” She said, mock insulted.

He laughed, “You have your ladies garden lunch thing all day, as you were reminded about last night, I am not welcome there.”

She groaned and buried her face in his chest, “I had forgotten about that. I have to go, Mother and Sansa will insist on it.”

He ran a hand up her naked back, “Is your sister alright? She has seemed…. different the last few days.”

Arya shrugged and pulled back to look at him, “I asked her if she was alright, she said she was just stressed with the wedding stuff. I don’t believe her but I haven’t had a chance alone with her since.”

“Maybe you’ll get a chance today.” He replied, placing a kiss of her head.

She sighed into him again, “I think everything will be easier once the wedding and tourney are over. Then we can go to Winterfell and start preparing for the baby.”
“Because a baby will make things easier.” He joked.

She lightly hit him, “You know what I meant, stupid.”

“I do.”

A rapid knocking on the door interrupted their peaceful morning. Gendry sighed and got to his feet, slipping on some breeches before throwing her dressing gown at her. He waited until she had it firmly wrapped around her before opening the door, revealing her little brother.

He smiled at them, “Father is taking Bran and I with him as he inspects the tourney grounds, do you want to come with us?”

Arya smiled as she continued to sit on the bed, she loved how much her little brothers had taken to her husband.

“I suppose I can, I have nothing else to do today.”

“Excellent, I will tell Bran and Father.” Rickon replied before running down the hall.

Gendry laughed as he shut the door, “I don’t know how that boy has so much energy.”

“Youth.” Arya joked and pushed herself from the bed. She opened her wardrobe and looked at the dresses within, “I am not sure any of these will work to hide the bump.”

Gendry walked up behind her, wrapping her in his arms as a hand landed on her stomach, “Then don’t hide it, we are married, children are expected.”

“I shouldn’t be showing if we’ve only been married a month.” She reminded him, running her hands over her stomach.

He kissed the top of her head, “I think they’ll figure it out when the baby is born a few months too early love.”

She sighed, “I just don’t want to take any of the attention away from Sansa, this is her big moment, marrying the crown prince and all. Her dreams coming true.”

Gendry just grunted.

She turned, “Do you not agree?”

“There is something about the prince that I don’t trust. I just saw him the once, he was watching my training with Jory. Something about it was wrong.”

“You think all your interactions with the Lannisters are wrong.” She said, pulling out a light blue dress, she would just have to risk it. Hopefully no one would pay much attention to her anyway.

He was changing into his own clothes, things similar to what her father wore, but without the leathers, it was too hot for that, “They seem confused by me. I get that it is weird to see a bastard married to a highborn lady, but it seems different than disgust for my station. I’m used to those looks, these ain’t that.”

“Lace my dress.” She said, she liked having him help her with this instead of the maids, “Do you best to ignore them. Once we leave, they probably won’t ever think about you again.”

His hands finished lacing her up and moved down to rest over her stomach, “I don’t think it is
noticeable at all."

“Mother will let me know if it is I’m sure.” She turned in his arms and leaned up for a kiss, which he happily gave, she pulled away with a sigh, “Come on, let us break our fast before there is no food left for us to eat, your babe is especially hungry today.”

Gendry had never actually been to a tourney before, there had been many in King’s Landing during his lifetime, but he had to work during them all. He walked along the lists with Bran and Rickon while Lord Stark talked with some of the men in charge. The three had just been making small talk about the grounds when they noticed the Crown Prince approaching, flanked by a Kingsguard and the Hound. Gendry immediately tensed up, glad he had chosen to wear his sword today, something Bran told him would help show he was a knight.

“Your Grace.” Gendry said, giving a bow, the two boys following his lead.

“Two wolf pups and a bastard knight.” Joffrey said, looking them over, “What brings you out here? Are you competing to prove you’ve actually earned your spurs for more than fucking a highborn girl?”

Gendry’s hands were in fists behind his back, he knew he’d lose his head if he punched the prince, “I do not compete in tourney’s Your Grace.”

“Too cowardly?” Joffrey said, laughing as he looked them over.

“Are you competing then Your Grace?” Bran asked, and Gendry was surprised at the anger on the young boy’s face.

“I’m the prince, I don’t have to prove my worth in tourneys.” Joffrey spat.

“Prince Rhaegar own the tourney at Harrenhal, the one that started the war.” Rickon piped in, “He named our aunt the Queen of Love and Beauty instead of his wife.”

Gendry intervened before the Prince said anymore, “Lord Stark told me he doesn’t fight in tourney’s because when he fights a man for real, he doesn’t want that man to know what he can do. I think that is a good way to go about things.”

Joffrey sneered at him, “Just an excuse. I’ve seen you in the practice yard, you can barely even hold the sword right. You are just a cowardly bastard.”

Gendry had to act quickly to grab the back of Rickon’s tunic before he rushed the Prince, “If you would like to challenge me, Your Grace, all you have to do is ask. I am not afraid to show what my true skill is.”

Joffrey’s face paled for a moment before letting out a gruff laugh, “I think it would be bad luck to kill my bethroed’s good-brother before the wedding. Wouldn’t you agree dog?”

“Doubt it would be considered good luck, Your Grace.” The Hound responded, looking completely disinterested in the whole thing in Gendry’s opinion.

Joffrey nodded, “After the wedding though. We might just have to see what you are made of bastard.”
His grip tightened on Ricken’s tunic, and he was glad that Bran had better sense than to attack the prince over an insult, but his glare was murderous. Gendry kept his face grim as he replied, “Anytime you’d like. Your Grace.”

Gendry saw something flash on Joffrey’s face, and then he gave him a look just like his mother, uncle, and grandfather had done. He was really getting sick of all the stupid looks. He was getting ready to ask what the fuck it was, when Lord Stark walked up.

“Your Grace, I was not aware you had come to see the grounds.” He placed his hand on Bran’s shoulder, while he glanced at the hand Gendry still had on Rickon’s tunic.

“I wanted to check on the progress.” Joffrey replied, “And I have. No need to spend anymore time here.”

Gendry was both shocked and not at all about the rudeness the Prince displayed to his father’s Hand and his own future good-father. Gendry just shook his head and removed the hand holding back his youngest brother.

Rickon turned to look at him, “You should have let him kick him.”

“No, he shouldn’t have.” Lord Stark said, “Why did you want to kick him in the first place?”

“He kept calling Gendry ‘bastard’. He shouldn’t speak to him that way.” Rickon said, crossing his arms over his chest.

Lord Stark sighed, “No, he shouldn’t, but he is the Prince, and you cannot hit the members of the royal family. Not if you want to keep your hand.”

“He is awful Father.” Bran said, “You shouldn’t let Sansa marry someone like that.”

“I cannot back out of a marriage with the King just because you don’t like the man your sister is going to marry.” He explained to them as he started leading them from the grounds, “Your sister is going to be Queen, that is a great honor for our family.”

Rickon huffed, “I don’t think he will be a good king.”

Gendry couldn’t help but agree, he was just glad he’d be far away from the Prince soon enough, though it was unfortuante that Sansa would have to spend the rest of her life with the prick.

Arya really hated these stupid things. She was not someone made for sitting idly for hours on end, talking about nonsense, and eating sweets. She wasn’t really complaining about the sweets, but everything else, she hated those things. There were so many more people to pretend to be a proper lady around now. The Queen and Princess Mrycella she had gotten used to during her months in the capital, but not the rest. Tyrells, Martells, other Lannisters, Stormland, Vale, Riverland and other ladies from places she couldn’t name. It seemed that every house in the Seven Kingdoms had sent their daughters to King’s Landing for this wedding.

Sansa had seemed to become friends with Margery Tyrell, the woman who had been the next choice for Queen after Sansa. Arya wanted to like her, if the rose married Renley then she would most likely live with him here at King’s Landing, and it would nice if Sansa had a friend once Arya returned home.
“I feel as though the tale of your marriage was misleading.” A woman said, taking the empty chair next to Arya’s table.

“I’m sorry my lady?” Arya stuttered out.

The woman gestured to Arya’s stomach, “You got a bun in the oven.”

Arya glared at the woman, “I’ve only been married a month my lady, you are mistaken.”

The woman laughed, “I like you, you got spunk.” She grabbed one of the sugared figs, “You are also pregnant. Smart of your lord father to marry you off so quickly.”

“Who are you?” Arya asked, frustrated at this woman’s presence.

“Lady Olenna Tyrell.” She introduced before eating her fig, “I only came to this silly affair to try and find Margery a husband. Your whirlwind marriage seems to be the talk of the court though, all I hear about.”

Arya was nervous with this woman watching her so closely, she looked around for her mother, but she was not in sight. Arya sighed, before saying, “What is it you are hoping to learn from this conversation Lady Olenna? You seem to have come to a few conclusions yourself already.”

“I get bored at these things. You looked bored as well. I was hoping we could chat, be less bored together.”

Arya didn’t believe the woman for a moment, but was thankfully saved from further conversation by Margery and Sansa coming over. Margery was overly bright, “There you are Grandmother. I was just telling Sansa how she must meet you.”

Olenna smiled at her sister, “Pleasure to meet you my dear. You truly are a beauty. I was just having a little chat with your sister, also a beauty.”

Arya blushed, only Gendry had really called her beautiful before. She certainly didn’t think herself beautiful around women such as Sansa and Margery. She decided to sway the conversation, “Your Grandmother was telling me about your search for a proper husband. He wasn’t able to attend, but our brother Robb is available.”

“Arya!” Sansa scolded, she turned to Margery, “I apolog…”

“Your brother you say?” Lady Olenna interrupted Sansa’s attempt to silence her sister, “Tell me about him.”

Sansa and Margery quietly took the available seats after Olenna nodded at the chairs.

Arya took a sip of her drink before saying, “He is quite handsome. He takes after our mother with his coloring, but his hair isn’t as bright as Sansa’s. If you happen to see our brother Rickon, he is basically a younger version of Robb in appearance. Robb takes after our Father in personality, honorable and good natured. He is easier with a laugh though.”

“He hasn’t witnessed the horrors I am sure your Father did thanks to the war.” Olenna said, before glancing at Sansa, “Do you agree with your sister’s assessment of of your brother?”

“I do my lady. Robb is a very good man.”

“You say he is good natured, is he intelligent?”
Arya nodded, “Our Maester said that Robb has an excellent mind for lordship, and would make a great battle commander should the need ever arise.”

“Let us all hope it does not.” Olenna said before taking a long drink of wine, “Would Margery enjoy the North?”

Arya looked the woman over, the skin as her waist was showing, “Not in that dress.”

That caused the table to laugh.

Sansa took over then, “Life in the North is very different than here in the South. Less need for court politics and the like. Things are much simpler.”

“A simple life in the North, certainly something to keep in mind I would say. Wouldn’t you agree grandmother?” Margery said with a fond smile, then her eyes caught someone in the distance, “Oh look Sansa. It is Arianne Martell, I must introduce you to the future Princess of Dorne.”

Arya watched the two of them walked off to talk to a tanned skin, dark haired woman, who Arya thought might actually be the same height as herself.

“I assume you are returning to the North after the wedding?”

Arya turned back to the elder woman, “Yes, my husband and I will be returning to Winterfell with my mother after the wedding.”

“Smart. You should be able to hide the pregnancy well enough for the next few weeks.” Olenna ate another fig, “Stop trying to deny it child. I will keep your secret. There is absolutely no reason to reveal it.”

Arya blinked at her in confusion, “Why not? You could damage the reputation of house Stark, perhaps even get the wedding called off.”

“Sweet child. I tried for years to get that fool of a King to marry Joffrey and Margery, but he was dead set on marrying his son to a Stark. I don’t think you could do anything that would cause him to call off this wedding.” Olenna said, her gaze wandering the crowd, “Margery likes all this nonsense, she would have been a good Queen. I have considered your brother as a marriage prospect before, but I fear she would grow bored in the North.”

“I had heard she was going to marry Renly Baratheon.”

Olenna eyed her, “You are a smart girl and you have been here long enough to catch onto the secrets of the Red Keep. I would also like Margery to marry someone that will at least enjoy her presence.”

“The way Renly enjoy’s Loras’?” She suggested with a smirk.

“See, a smart girl. Too bad you’ll be wasted in the North.”

“I won’t be wasted. I will be happy, with my family, and free of all these vultures.” She said gesturing to the crowd, “Now, if you’ll please excuse me Lady Olenna. I really should find my mother.”

“Of course my dear. I’m sure we will have a chance to talk again before you go North.”

Arya gave the elder woman a curtsy and walked off into the gardens, she really needed to get away
from the Queen of Thorns, who had certainly earned her moniker. She was so distracted by her thoughts that she didn’t even notice how the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms was watching her every move.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't stop myself from adding Lady Olenna :)”

Not even going to pretend otherwise, the next chapter will up tomorrow.
Cersei was looking for her brother, he had more than enough time to figure out if the blacksmith boy was her son. He should have reported back to her by now, and she wondered what had been keeping him away. She had spent most of the day watching Arya Stark during the ladies lunch, the girl was pregnant, Cersei was sure of it. She had suspected that right away, of course, why else would Stark of allowed a blacksmith to marry his daughter, but it held a new meaning to her now. It was her grandchild the girl was carrying after all and Cersei would be damned to the seven hells if anyone thought of keeping her from the babe. Arya was a willful girl though and while Cersei had never met Lyanna Stark herself, she had heard her description enough to know the girl took after her aunt. She shook her head as she walked, the Baratheon men certainly seemed to have an attraction to the women of House Stark.

Ser Meryn has said he had seen Jaime walking earlier with their father, and so she was headed toward his quarters. When she arrived at the door was ajar and she knocked as she entered, surprised to not see only her father and brother but Lord Varys.

“I did not mean to interrupt, the door was open.” She said, looking at the three of the slowly before stopping at her brother, “Jaime, I need to speak to you.”

“I guess this as good as time as any.” Tywin said and got to his feet, he pulled out a chair, “Take a seat Cersei.”

She did as she was commanded, but she had a suspicion that her brother had betrayed her confidence. She sat up straight, “What is this about?”

Tywin resumed his seat, “Jaime came to me about the delusion you’ve been having about the Stark’s blacksmith knight.”

She glared at her brother before eyeing the Spider, “What are you doing here?”

“Ser Jaime asked for my assistance in finding out information about the young man.” Lord Varys explained, his voice the same easy tone it always was.

“How many people did you tell about this dear brother?” Cersei said, and she enjoyed seeing her twin squirm.
“Enough.” Tywin shouted and all three turned to look at him, “Ceresi, it has been over 20 years. Your son is dead. You need to get over this paranoia.”

“Have you met him?” Cersei asked her father, she had been through too much for her to still be afraid of him.

“I did. I have no trouble believing he is Robert’s son, but there is no way to know if he is yours. And even if we could prove without a doubt he was your first son with Robert, what would you have us do? Announce to the court who he is? All that would do is cause problems with the succession. Joffrey has been taught how to be the King since he was a boy. This Gendry has been taught how to be a blacksmith, who managed to gain knighthood by getting the younger Stark girl with child.” Tywin explained, keeping his eyes focused on his daughter.

Cersei quietly thought on her father’s words, and something about them registered the opposite, “He is my son. Isn’t he?”

Tywin sighed, “Cersei…”

“No. You would not have given me this little speech if you had learned he really was just one of Robert’s many bastards.” She turned to Varys, “Tell me Spider, what did the good people of King’s Landing tell you?”

“You are the Queen, in case anyone in this room as forgotten. I will not be spoken down to like a child.” She said, staring at all three of the men before her with malice, “If you want to keep your position Lord Varys, I suggest you tell me what you found.”

Varys’ eyes flicked to Tywin before back to the Queen, “The tavern keeper at which the blacksmith’s mother worked possessed a great memory. He remembered the woman as young, blonde hair, and that she carried a sadness. She came in one night asking after work, as well as a place to stay for her and her babe. She was a hard worker for the years she was there, she died some 15 years ago of a fever that afflicted many in Flea Bottom. The tavern keeper had grown fond of the boy, and didn’t feel right throwing him out on the street, so he set him up as a shop boy with Tobo Mott.”

“What was her name?”

Varys’ once again looked at Tywin, “I did not catch it Your Grace.”

“This tavern keeper had a great memory but forgot her name? Do not think me a fool. I remember that treacherous wet nurse’s name. I doubt she was clever enough to change it.”

Varys sighed, “It was Lyra, Your Grace.”

She turned to look at her father, “What a horrible coincidence that the name is the same. I say the chances of this boy being my son have greatly increased.”

“You shall not do anything with this suspicion of yours. You could cause a war.”

Cersei raised her eyebrows at her father, “How would it start a war?”

“Changing the line of succession is dangerous.”

“Why would the line of succession need to change? Stefon, or Gendry, whatever name he chooses,
can abdicate. Joffrey can still be King. Perhaps he can be the Lord of Storm’s End instead, as I
don’t see Renly marrying, and Stannis only has his daughter.” Cersei explained, her father might
think her as a grieving madwoman, but she had thought through all the possibilities of outcomes for
revealing the blacksmith as her trueborn son.

Tywin rubbed the bridge of his nose, “We need to keep this information to ourselves and allow the
boy to go to Winterfell as Lord Stark intends.”

Jaime leaned forward at looked at his sister, “Cersei, think of the realm. This information could
throw it into chaos.”

She scoffed, “I doubt the realm would care very much.”

A knock on the door interrupted them, all four heads turned to see as Tyrion walked in. He stopped
as he looked at the four sets of eyes staring at him, “Have I come at a bad time? I was told you
wanted to speak to me about something Father.”

“Yes Tyrion. I did. We were just finished here.” He said, his stare focused on his daughter, “Not a
word.”

“As you say Father.” She replied before storming out of the room, not even bothering to greet her
little brother, he was the least of her concerns today. No, if she could not get help from her blood,
well, she would see what the King and his Hand have to say about her findings.

Ned followed the servant through the halls, the words the boy spoke to him still ringing in his ears
‘the King and Queen wish to speak with you m’lord’. He couldn’t help but feel like this had
something to do with what Tywin had come to speak to him about a few days ago. He sighed to
himself as they walked, I should have sent Arya and Gendry to Winterfell as soon as Lord Tywin
had spoken the Queen’s concerns to me. It didn’t take long to reach the King’s chambers, one of
the Kingsguard standing guard outside. The servant knocked and pushed open the door, “Lord
Stark as you requested Your Grace.”

“Ned, we got ourselves a situation.” Robert said, sitting behind his desk, a goblet of wine in his
hand.

Ned walked toward the desk, and looked at Cersei, who was also sitting with a goblet of wine,
“What situation?”

Robert looked to his wife, “Go ahead, tell him your nonsense too.”

“It is not nonsense.” She snapped before turning to him, “I believe that your daughter’s new
husband is actually Stefon Baratheon, my first born son. He was stolen from me as a babe.”

“He died woman. I saw his body myself.” Robert roared, taking a long gulp of his wine.

“You saw a body, it was not his body. I told you at the time that fucking wet nurse stole our son
and left her dead baby in his place.” She turned from her husband, “Lord Varys has done some
digging. What he found strongly suggests that Gendry is Stefon.”

“Your Grace. I have always felt that Gendry is of Robert’s seed, the resemblance is much too
strong to be otherwise. The odds of him being this son that you lost, are…” Ned wasn’t sure how
to finish his thought.
“Nearly impossible. I know, but I know it to be true in my soul.”

Robert groaned from his seat, “What does your soul tell you to do with this feeling? Are we to march this boy in front of the court, declare him Stefon Baratheon, the new Crown Prince of the Seven Kingdoms?”

“I want to get to know my son, as my son. I have spent the last twenty-one years being told I was crazy for believing my son was alive. Being told that my grief made me believe what I wanted to believe. Why is it so hard to believe that I could look at a baby and know it was not my baby?” She placed her goblet on the table, “That babe I found in the crib was not mine. He had similar features, but he was not my son.” She glared at her husband, “Maybe he was yours though, maybe that was why she felt it was alright to replace my son with her’s. One of your whores stole my son and you didn’t even care.”

“My son died too Cersei!” Robert roared from his seat, “Unlike you, I went to the funeral as his little body was laid to rest in the crypt. You locked yourself in your room, unwilling to see anyone but your brother until I had to drag your father here to talk some sense to you. I thought you’d gotten over this delusion 20 years ago.”

Her green eyes narrowed at her husband, “I might have stopped talking about it, but I never ‘got over’ it.” She leaned back in her chair, “As for what I want. Yes, I want him declared Stefon Baratheon, but he has been raised a blacksmith, he doesn’t have the right education to be King. With the right teacher, he could be a decent lord. We all know the chances of Renly fathering children unlikely. Stefon can be the heir to Storm’s End.”

“What reason does anyone have to believe it?” Robert asked, his voice having lost its anger.

“Because we tell them it is true. The smallfolk are easily deceived.” Cersei replied.

“Have you thought about how this would affect Gendry?” Ned spoke up, seeing no other way to try and see them to see sense, “You want to destroy his entire identity.”

“Surely, my lord, you would rather have your daughter married to a prince of the Seven Kingdoms, and perhaps be the Lady of Storm’s End, than just the wife of a common blacksmith.” Cersei responded, “His current identity is a lie, would it not be better for him to know the truth? He was not some unwanted bastard, but the much missed child of the Queen.”

Ned was amazed at the amount of thought that the Queen had put into all of this, she had thought through every argument. He thought through his options, and decided to indulge her a moment, “Would you make it a formal announcement or keep it private for now?”

The Queen shifted, “I was thinking we would keep it just between our two families, and then, after enough time has passed after the wedding, we share the news with court.”

“Your Grace, please, talk with Gendry first. You’ll see, he is not a man cut out for the life of the capital, he will be much happier in Winterfell as a blacksmith.” Ned pleaded, over the month that he known Gendry, he had come to care for the boy. He knew this was a dangerous path, one he did not want for Gendry, Arya, or their future children.

“Yes. Let’s talk with the boy. The three of us and those that have helped you in your scheme.” Robert announced, “Ser Meryn!”

The knight opened the door, “Yes, Your Grace?”

“Find a page boy. Tell him to go tell Lord Tywin, Ser Jaime, and Lord Varys we are going to have
a meeting in the small council chambers.” Robert told the knight as he got up from the chair, he then turned back to Ned, “Go fetch the boy, we will get to the truth of this soon enough.”

Chapter End Notes

Preview for next chapter: Gendry learns the truth.

Thanks for reading. Don't be afraid to share your thoughts!!
An Identity Revealed

Chapter Summary

Gendry gets some world changing news

Chapter Notes

And we are back. This is the chapter many of you have been waiting for, Gendry learns the truth.

Thanks to everyone who has been reading and commenting, I love hearing you thoughts.

I also feel the need to apologize for any grammar or spelling mistakes made throughout the story so far, I don't have a beta, so all those are my fault. I do my best to catch all the errors but sometimes they slip through.

Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry wasn’t sure what was about to happen as he followed Lord Stark through the halls of the Red Keep. He had been practicing his swordsmanship with Jory, Bran and Rickon when his good father had arrived. He had a depressed look on his face, like whatever was about to happen was not what he wanted. Gendry worried if maybe the ruse they’d made up had been discovered, or if perhaps Lord Stark had been wrong about the Queen’s intentions to keep quiet about him being one of the King’s bastards. There were many possibilities, but Lord Stark had been quiet on the reasons for this, only saying, “I will be there to support you.” That had done nothing to ease his worries.

A kingsguard was standing in front of a set of doors, and opened it for them as they approached. Gendry walked into the room, a long table set up before him. Sitting at the table was the King, Queen, Lord Tywin, Ser Jaime, and a bald headed man that Gendry had seen around but had never spoken to. There was a chair placed before the empty side of the table, as well as an empty chair on the King’s right side.

Lord Stark gave his shoulder a comforting squeeze before walking to take the seat next to the King.

“Take a seat.” The King said, gesturing to the empty chair.

Gendry carefully took the offered seat, unsure if he was supposed to say anything.

“Do you have any idea why you are here Ser?” The bald man asked.

“No, m’lord.” Gendry asked his eyes slowly moving across those people at the table. He stopped
on the Queen, surprised to see a look that he would only describe as fondness on her face, and that confused him even more.

“You are here,” The man began again, “Because we have reason to believe that you are not who you say you are.”

Gendry glared at the man, “If I was going to lie about who I am, I think I would have come up with something better than a bastard blacksmith. My lord.”

“Oh no, you misunderstand. We don’t think you are the one that did the lying, but the woman you knew as your mother.”

Gendry felt his anger deflate, “My mother? She has been dead for a long time.”

“What Lord Varys is pussyfooting around saying is, the Queen has come to the conclusion that you are in fact our first born son, Stefon, who died in his crib at only a few moons old.” The King said, earning a glare from Lord Tywin.

Gendry opened his mouth to ask a question but the words stuck in his throat because he had no idea how to respond to this. He wished Arya was here, she always knew what to say. They were all watching him, so he knew he had to say something, “If he died, how could I be him?”

The Queen spoke then, “I believe that the wet nurse, Lyra, switched you for her own child. She had a son born a week before mine, and the two children looked very similar. I have always believed that her child must of died and in her grief she took my child and fled with him. Those at this table considered it madness when I suggested it upon finding a dead baby in my son’s crib. They were unable to ever find the wet nurse, but I never stopped believing this to be true. When I spoke to you a few weeks ago, I knew the truth.”

Gendry had to look away from the faces looking at him, what did they expect from him? This all seemed like madness to him. He wasn’t a prince, he was a blacksmith. His mother hadn’t been a woman he would have considered cruel enough to do what the Queen was suggesting. She was always kind and liked to sing him to sleep, every night she would kiss his forehead and whisper, ‘I love you, my little prince, sleep well.’ How could a woman like that possibly have done what the Queen suggested? Little prince . That was the nickname she had always called him. He had never thought anything of it before, but now. Had she been telling him the truth to his identity all along? His hands squeezed into fists, he had never felt so much anger before, he wanted to go to the forge and hit steel until it shattered. Instead, he took a deep breath, and said, “You cannot know any of this for sure.”

“Lord Varys has uncovered a lot of evidence to support the theory.” Ser Jaime spoke from his spot next to his father, who was sitting next to the Queen.

Gendry turned his eyes to the lord in question.

“I spoke with both the tavern keeper and his daughter, who was with your m...Lyra during her final moments. She said that Lyra was speaking nonsense in her final hours, the fever having made her hysterical. Lyra spoke of a punishment from the gods, her little prince, and the Queen.” Lord Varys stated, “It does lend some plausibility to the Queen’s claim.”

Gendry looked away from the bald lord and turned to look at the Queen. Her green eyes were looking at him with kindness but what was he to say about all this? He looked to Lord Stark then, the man was watching him with a sad expression, and Gendry knew that everything that was happening was beyond his power to control. Gendry closed his eyes and took a deep breath before
opening them and saying, “What happens now then?”

Lord Tywin spoke then, “Do you want something to happen?”

“I doubt you brought me here, told me all of this, and that you did it all without a plan for what happens next. If you were going to do nothing, and let me continue as a blacksmith, you could have done that without ever speaking to me. So, what happens now?” Gendry replied, his eyes moving from the elder lord, his grandfather he guessed, and landed on the King.

“Good to see you aren’t simple lad.” The King said with a laugh, “This causes a wrinkle, for all of us. If you are actually Stefon Baratheon, that would mean you would technically be the heir to the throne, as the eldest trueborn son of the Queen and myself.”

Gendry did not want to be King one day and he was sure that Arya did not want to be the Queen. He wondered if the panic of the idea showed on his face, because the King then continued speaking.

“We would have you abdicate your claim to the throne. Joffrey has been raised to be King, he knows what is expected of him. The Queen has suggested that instead you could be the heir to Storm’s End. My brother Renly is currently the lord there but he is unmarried, and I don’t see him changing that state of affairs anytime soon. Your wife is a noble lady, that will help when we choose to declare your new name and station. She can also help to teach you in private all the things you’ll need to know.”

“You want me to the Lord of Storm’s End?” Gendry asked, this was all too much. All he wanted to do was go to Winterfell, he knew how to be a smith, that was what he should be doing. What did he know of being a lord? Arya and Sansa had to help him learn how to even use the cutlery properly. He could barely read or write beyond what he needed to know to run the shop for Mott, how was he going to run a castle?

“Not right away.” The Queen spoke, “You would stay here in the capitol for a few years first. There is a lot for you to learn, and Renly is rather young still. There is no need to rush anything.”

He looked at the Queen, “How do you know you are right Your Grace? Lord Stark told me a share a strong resemblance to the King, but that doesn’t mean I am your child.”

“I know. I cannot explain it to you in a way that makes sense but I know.” She replied, “Any official announcements will wait until after Joffrey and Sansa’s wedding. Until then, we can spend more time together, and I’m sure you’ll agree with me.”

Lord Tywin’s voice broke their stare, “This meeting was for everyone to get a chance to speak with the boy. Not for everyone to suddenly start declaring him a Baratheon prince. The evidence is all based on the word of tavern keeper and his daughter, we don’t know that this wasn’t all some elaborate plan.”

“Elaborate plan for what my lord?” Gendry asked.

“To get the throne of course. You already managed to get a knighthood and a highborn wife, why not push it farther and go for the throne.” Twyin replied, his eyes glaring at Gendry, “You can’t just fuck your way into that chair boy.”

Gendry had to grip the arms of the chair he was sitting in to not get up and punch the man in the face. He was insulting Arya, and he could stand for insults directed at himself, but not his wife. He looked quickly to Lord Stark, who was looking equally furious, before turning his attention back to
the Lord of Casterly Rock, “I do not know what you believe to be the truth, my lord, but I would suggest you not insult my wife again.”

The King laughed, breaking the tension in the room as everyone turned to look at him, “He has the Baratheon fury for sure.” Once the laughter died he said, “This is what we are going to do. We will keep the information to ourselves for now. Stannis should be arriving shortly for the wedding. Once he does, we shall explain the situation to him, Renly, and whoever else needs to know before we announce it. This also gives Lord Tywin some time to come around to the idea.”

“I know this is a lot for you to process Gendry, but I hope you and Arya will join me for dinner tomorrow. I want to get to know you both better.” The Queen said.

Gendry didn’t know what to say, he just wanted to escape this entire conversation, not repeat the strangeness again tomorrow. He needed to speak to Arya, she would know what to do, she always knew what to do. Everyone was looking at him though, so he said the only thing he thought he could, “We will be there Your Grace.”

“Now that that is settled. I need a drink.” The King said, standing up and strolling from the room faster than Gendry thought a man his size could move.

Lord Tywin also rose to his feet and walked from the room without a word to anyone. Lord Varys excused himself, leaving Gendry with Lord Stark, the Queen, and Ser Jaime.

Lord Stark walked up to him, “Come on Gendry, let’s go back to the Tower.”

“Lord Stark, I’d like a quick word if you would.” Ser Jaime said suddenly, separating Gendry from his good-father.

The Queen quickly took over his attention as she walked up to him, “I know this is a lot and I know you do not know me. That is something I want to change very badly. I missed out on the first twenty-one years of your life because you were taken from me, I do not want to miss the next twenty-one because we missed out on this chance. I’m sure your brothers and sister would love to get to know you as well.” She rested her hand on his arm, “Please, give all of this a chance. That is all I ask.”

Gendry didn’t know what to say to such a plea, so he just nodded quickly.

She smiled at him, “Good. I will see you tomorrow then Ser.”

Gendry watched her head toward the door, Ser Jaime breaking off his conversation with Lord Stark to follow her. His eyes were stuck to the door that they left through all after they were out of sight. He barely registered Lord Stark urging him to walk, his legs acting on instinct as he walked beside his good-father, his thoughts stuck in a single loop, I am a prince.

Chapter End Notes

Some heavy stuff for Gendry. I know I’ve been doing a lot of double update weekends lately, do not expect that this week. I have written the next chapter, but I don’t really like about half it, so I am probably going to rewrite those bits. Which will push that chapter to next weekend. But, you never know, maybe I’ll get in a very good writing grove later today and all of that stuff I just said will mean nothing.
As always, you guys are the best!!! Hope you liked it.
Arya was finally able to find her sister sitting in the godswood, which was a pathetic thing when compared to the one in Winterfell. She had been trying to find a time to talk to her ever since the lunch the day before, but there had never been a chance. She had been going to observe Gendry’s training when she had noticed Sansa walking off alone, deciding this was her chance so she followed.

When she approached her sister, she noticed that she wasn’t praying, but looking out over the wall to watch the ships. She put on a smile, “Sansa, I was hoping we could talk.”

Sansa turned at her name, “Of course we can.”

Arya nodded and sat on the bench nearby, Sansa walked over to join her, “You know you can talk to me right?”

Sansa looked at her, “Is there something I should be talking to you about?”

“I don’t know, is there? You haven’t been acting yourself lately and I can’t help but feel like it is more than just wedding stress.”

Sansa looked away and shook her head, “Things will be fine once the wedding is over.”

Arya watched her sister in silence, she had never been a good liar, and it was clear to her that Sansa was hiding something. She sighed, there was one thing that was for sure to get Sansa talking, “I’m pregnant.”

Sansa whipped her head back to her sister, “How could you know already?”

Arya laughed and shook her head, “I was already pregnant when I got married, it was why Father allowed it in the first place. What we told you and everyone else is a lie. I have been seeing Gendry for months.”

“Arya.” Sansa whispered, her breath trailing off as her mind raced.
“I know.” Arya replied, “I was reckless and stupid, but honestly, I am not sorry. I love Gendry, completely, and this is the only way to my happiness.”

Sansa was quiet for another moment, “Why are you telling me all this?”

Arya shrugged, “I’ve wanted to tell you for awhile, but it never seemed like the right time, this did.”

Sansa reached over and pulled her little sister into a hug. Arya returned it fully and started rubbing circles into her sister’s back when she felt her start to cry. Arya choose not to say anything and let Sansa take her time.

Eventually the tears stopped and Sansa pulled away. She wiped at her eyes with a handkerchief, “I shouldn’t have fallen apart like that.”

“If this is what you needed to do, then yes you should have.” Arya smiled, “You have to let your emotions out to stay sane.”

Sansa nodded and then let out a long sigh, “I don’t want to marry him Arya.”

That had not been what Arya had been expecting, for months marrying Joffrey was all she could talk about, “Why not? What has changed?”

Sansa looked heavy in debate before saying, “I was walking back from a meeting with the Queen when I heard a noise, a horrible inhuman noise. I turned a few corners, following the sound, when I saw him, Joffrey. He was in an alcove, Ser Meryn standing a few feet away, watching with a smug grin, he had a knife in one hand, and the other….the other was holding down a cat. He was cutting away the cat’s fur, the poor creature was screaming, struggling to get away, but Joffrey must have hurt it some other way, because its back legs weren’t moving. The cat tried to bite him, but Joffrey just laughed and kept on cutting.” Sansa shook her head, tears once again falling down her face, “It was the worst thing I have ever seen. He is a cruel monster. If he is willing to do that to a cat, what might we want to do with me?”

“Have you told Father?” Arya asked, the only thing she could think to say at the moment. She had known for awhile that Joffrey was an entitled prat, and that he could be cruel with words, but she never thought he’d be violent.

Sansa nodded, “There isn’t anything he can do. The King wants a union of our houses, he doesn’t care about anything else.” She wiped at her eyes again, “Even if I don’t love my husband, I can love our children.”

Arya squinted at her sister then, “What?”

Sansa shrugged, “It was just something the Queen told me after I mentioned feeling a little hesitant about the marriage lately, but I didn’t tell her why.”

“I am sorry you have to go through this Sansa. I wish I could get you out of this, but short of murdering Joffrey, I don’t know how.”

“There is nothing you can do Arya, there is nothing anyone can do. All that we can do is hope that Joffrey’s cruelty is reserved for animals.”

Arya knew that what her sister was saying was right because highborn girls were nothing more that broodmares to be sold to the best bidder. It was one of the reasons she had rebelled in the first place, bedding Gendry as she did. But that wasn’t her sister, Sansa was always the perfect lady,
ready to do her duty since they were nothing more than children.

“Then we shall pray to old gods and the new. If that doesn’t work, I can also tell you where the
best place to put the dagger would be.”

Sansa laughed, “I am sure it won’t come to that.”

Arya laughed along with her sister, but she wasn’t joking. If Joffrey hurt her sister, she would find
a way to make him pay, and that was a promise to all the gods as well.

When the sisters return to the Tower of the Hand, it is clear that something was wrong. They find
their brothers sitting at the dining table, alone, talking in whispers.

“What is going on?” Arya asked, causing both of them to look up.

Bran shook his head, “We don’t know. Father came and took Gendry away from training, they
return over an hour later and Gendry looked like he’d seen a ghost. He didn’t even acknowledge us
before he went to your room. Father told us not to worry about it before going into his own room.
Neither one has come out since.”

Sansa sat down, in one of the empty chairs, “That is very strange.”

“I am going to go check on my husband.” Arya said, worried about her husband after her brother’s
words. She rushes up the stairs, and wonders what could have happened this afternoon to cause this
reaction.

When she pushes open the door, the only light is coming from the window, barely lighting the
room. She could see him lying on the bed, motionless as he looks up the canopy, she closes the
door behind her before asking, “Gendry, what is wrong?”

He doesn’t reply, just continues to stare.

Arya moved to the bed, taking a seat on the edge, “What happened?”

He slowly turned his head to look at her, “I don’t know where to start.”

She placed her hand in his, “At the beginning is usually best.”

He nodded and closed his eyes, “Your father came to get me. He took me to a room where the
King, Queen, Ser Jaime, Lord Tywin, and Lord Varys were waiting. They said… they think…”

She waited for him to continue on his own, she didn’t want to press him, whatever it was had
clearly shaken him. She just squeezed his hand in comfort and after minutes of silence he said,
“The Queen thinks I am her son.”

Of all the things she had considered in the last few minutes, that had never been a possibility,
“Why would she think that?”

He sighed, “She says the wet nurse stole her child, replacing him with the dead body of the wet
nurse’s child. All the stuff they said Arya. Why would my mother do that?”

Arya crawled into the bed and wrapped her arms around him as he began to cry. He only needed
her comfort right now and she would gladly give it. Once the tears had subsided, the silence
returned for awhile before Arya asked, “What else did they say?”

“They want to claim me, make me the Lord of Storm’s End.” He sat up then, leaning his back against the headboard, “Said we would stay here for a few years before heading there, needing time to train me. I don’t know how to be a lord, I know how to be a blacksmith.”

She leaned against him, his one arm automatically wrapping around her. She placed a hand on his chest as she looked up at him, “I will help you. I will be with you every step of the way.”

He picked up the hand from his chest and kissed her fingers, “I am sorry.”

“Whatever for?”

“You married a blacksmith, now I might be a prince and a lord. I know that isn’t what you wanted.”

She sat up and turned to look him in the face, “I married you. No matter what. If you don’t want to be the Lord of Storm’s End, then you won’t be, we will figure something out.”

“I honestly don’t know. This is all just so much.” He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her against his chest again, “They say I’m a prince.”

Arya nodded, “I don’t know about any of that but what I do know is that you are a good man. You’ll make a wonderful lord, but only if you want to be.”

He shook his head, “I don’t think there will be really any choice, the Queen, she was very insistent about it.”

“I don’t care what Cersei thinks is going to happen. It isn’t up to her.”

“We are having dinner with her tomorrow night.”

Arya pulled away from him to look at him again, “Why did you agree to that?”

“I didn’t think I was in a position to say no.” He replied and sighed again, “She says she is my mother Arya, shouldn’t I give her a chance?”

Arya nodded, she couldn’t even imagine how hard this was for him, “Only if you want to, I don’t want you to be forced into anything.”

His eyes closed again, “I don’t know what I want, this is all so much.”

Arya just rested against his chest, letting him take the time to process everything, as breathing evened out she knew he had fallen asleep. She didn't move, not wanting to wake him, he had had difficult afternoon and rest was a good thing. She took the silence to process everything herself. Her husband could be a prince, a Baratheon prince, and it meant he had a claim to the throne. She ran a hand over her stomach, her child had a claim to the throne. She sighed, they should have just run away when they had chance before anyone had every laid eyes on Gendry. With his skill they easily could have a found away to live anywhere, a name change for her, and no one would have ever found them. Maybe one day they could have gone to Winterfell and reconnected with her family. That was all a potential dream for the past, they hadn't run away, and now they had to live with the consequences. She felt a determination take root in her gut, she would not let Cersei, Robert, Tywin or anyone else in the capital hurt her husband. They would only go to Storm's End if Gendry wanted to, she had long accepted that she would have to be a lady of castle even if she didn't want to be, and would happily help him rule the Stormlands if it came to that. She had been
looking forward to living in Winterfell with her blacksmith husband and their child, but if that wasn't what the gods wanted for them, then so be it. But this would their decision, no one elses, and if anyone tried to hurt her husband over his new identity, they would have to go through her first.

When Catelyn returns to the Tower of the Hand after having some tea with a few of the Riverland ladies she had grown up with. It was time for dinner by the time she walks up the stairs, entering the main room expecting to see her family already eating without her, but instead she sees Sansa, Bran, and Rickon barely touching the food in front of them.

“Where is your father, Arya, and Gendry?” She asks them.

“Arya and Gendry are in their room, she said they’d be staying in there the rest of the night when I asked her if she was coming down for dinner.” Sansa answered.

“Father is in his room too, hasn’t come out for a few hours.” Rickon provided.

Cat nodded before walking off, she would check in with her husband before seeing her daughter, maybe he could tell her what as bothering the young couple enough to keep them to their room. She knocked twice on the door before opening it, not waiting for a response. Her husband was not at his desk and it took her a moment to realize he was standing on the balcony.

“My love?”

Ned turned to look at her and the look on his face scared her.

She rushed forward and joined him on the balcony, “What happened?”

He sighed, “A few days ago Lord Tywin approached me. He told me that the Queen was under the impression that Gendry was the child she lost before Joffrey. She held onto a belief that the wet nurse had stolen her son after leaving the body of her own in the royal crib.”

“That sounds mad.” Cat whispered.

Ned nodded, “I thought so too. Gendry clearly shares a resemblance to Robert, he must be one of Robert’s children, but there is no way to know he is Cersei’s son.”

Catelyn had an idea where this was headed, “That didn’t stop her though, did it?”

He shook his head, “She told the King of her suspicion. He forced me to bring Gendry before him and they told him everything. Cersei is convinced he is her son and so she decided that he shall be. She wants to name him Stefon Baratheon and have him become the Lord of Storm’s End.”

Catelyn leaned against the balcony railing for support as she processed everything. It certainly explained why Gendry and Arya had locked themselves in their room, she was sure this was harder on her good-son than it was for herself. It did solve an issue she’d been having with her daughter’s marriage however, the Lord of Storm’s End was more than a proper suitor for a girl of her highbirth. Much better than a blacksmith. Catelyn looked back at her husband, “Are they planning to make a formal announcement then?”

“They are going to wait until after the wedding.” He replied and shook his head, “I should have sent them to Winterfell days ago, before he was told.”
“He will be a lord, much worse things to be.” Catelyn commented, “Gendry is older than Joffrey.”

“They all agreed that keeping Joffrey the heir would be better for everyone.” Ned walked back inside, slumping into his chair.

Catelyn knew her husband well enough to know he was not telling her everything, “Is there something else?”

“They all know Arya is pregnant, that it was the reason I allowed them to marry. Tywin didn’t exactly come out and say it, but he heavily implied it.”

Catelyn sighed, “They are not stupid, we shouldn’t be surprised that they figured it out.” She sat in the seat across from him, “When will they leave for Storm’s End?”

Ned looked up, “Cersei wants to keep them here for a few years so Gendry can get a proper lord’s education before sending him to Storm’s End.”

“Years?”

“Renly is young still, it will give time for him to learn.” Ned said, placing his head in his hands, “How has everything gotten so out of hand?”

Cat got up and walked over to her husband, “Arya was always a troublemaker, even in the womb she moved more than any of the others. Only she would have been able to find the lost Baratheon prince in a city this large and fall in love with him because he was a blacksmith and not a prince.”

Ned looked up at her, “Gendry is a blacksmith Cat. A good one. He is not cut out for life as a lord, let alone a Lord Paramount.”

“If the Queen is right about him, and he is half a Lannister, then he should be clever enough to figure it out.” She replied, “He will have Arya to help him.”

“Arya was finally happy. She will not be happy about any of this, she hates this castle.”

“No, she will not be. I will talk with her in the morning, give her the night to come to an understanding about all of this.”

Ned wrapped his arms around his wife, laying his head on her stomach, “I never should have let the Queen see him.”

“It is too late for that now my love. All we can do is help them the best we can.” Catelyn replied, running a soothing hand through his hair.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I love you know what you think, you guys are the best!!!
Dinner with the Queen

Chapter Summary

Sansa and Joffery take a walk; Gendry and Arya have dinner with Cersei

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for all the support and comments, even if I am not responding to them all, I am reading them and loving them.

I found the dinner conversation for this pretty difficult to write, so let me know how you think it turned out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry was nervous as he got ready for their dinner with the Queen. He didn’t even know what they were going to talk about. How was she so sure that he was her son? What would happen if he did something that somehow changed her mind? He still wasn’t sure that he wanted to be her son. He’d locked himself in their chambers all day, needing time to think about all that had happened yesterday. He wasn’t ready to explain it all to Arya’s siblings, he trusted her and her father to handle all of that. He had contemplated sneaking out of the castle, Arya had showed him her secret passageway, and going to a forge. But, he didn’t have a forge to go to anymore. Once Mott had returned to King’s Landing two days after his marriage to Arya, he had quit and said his goodbyes. There wasn’t a place there for him anymore.

He carefully put on a black doublet Sansa had had made for him, one of many. She had felt it was important for him to look the role of a member of House Stark at the number of feasts that would happen in the weeks leading up to the wedding. He was thankful for the thoughtfulness now, he assumed the simple leather jerkin he’d taken to wearing would be unwelcome at a dinner with the Queen.

He looked over as the door opened and Arya walked in. Sansa had been letting out Arya’s dresses all day, to better hide the bump on her stomach caused by the babe. Gendry was glad that Arya had finally decided to share the secret with her sister, she needed someone other than himself and her parents to talk to about it.

The dress she was wearing today was the pale grey of House Stark, he smiled at her, “You look beautiful my love.”

She smiled as she took him in, “You look handsome. Where did you get that doublet?”

“Sansa had a few things made for me.” He explained, running his hands over the material, “You sure it looks alright?”

She smirked as she walked up to him, running her hands up his chest to rest on his shoulders, “You look good enough to eat, Ser.”
He groaned at the look on her face, “I wish I could just take you to bed instead of going to this dinner.”

She nodded, “We will have time for that, later. First, we must go have dinner with the Queen.”

Gendry held out his arm, “Shall we then m’lady.”

“We shall.” She said, giving him a smile as they began their walk to the Queen’s chambers.

Sansa had successfully been able to avoid Joffrey since she had seen him skinning the cat, but she had known that would only last for so long. When he arrived late that afternoon and requested the take a walk around the gardens, she knew she was in no position to say no. They had just entered the gardens when he spoke for the first time since their initial greetings, “I saw your sister and her knight leaving as I was arriving. Where might they have gone off to?”

Sansa wasn’t sure why’d he’d even care, “They were invited to dine with someone else tonight, Arya did not tell me who.”

“Why would anyone want to dine with them? Are they not heading back to Winterfell after the wedding?” He asked, his tone doing nothing to hide his disdain for the people in question.

Sansa had to resist the urge to roll her eyes, “As far as I know they are Your Grace.”

“I can’t believe your father allowed a bastard blacksmith to marry your sister. Does he have no respect for your house?”

“Gendry is a knight. Honorable, strong, brave, and kind. He is the perfect match for my sister, our father saw that and couldn’t deny my sister her happiness.” Sansa replied, wishing she could just end this conversation and return to her room.

Joffrey scoffed, “He is craven. Wouldn’t even agree to a duel.”

“My brothers told me the opposite.” She commented as she glanced around, noticing that only the Hound was within sight. The large imposing man was walking far behind them, not nearly close to overhear their words. She wasn’t sure why, but she was feeling brave in that moment, “Said you refused to take the challenge, claiming it was bad luck.”

“It would be bad luck to kill your good-brother before the wedding, even if he is just a lowborn bastard.” Joffrey snapped and then his face turned into a sneer, “Maybe afterwards though.”

Sansa looked at him in confusion, “What do you mean?”

“Maybe I’ll kill him after. Won’t be hard to trick the bastard into a duel, then I can deal with him disrespecting us all with his mere presence.” He said, his voice full of a confidence Sansa was sure he hadn’t earned, but Sansa had never seen what kind of ability Joffrey had with a sword to be able to fully judge.

Sansa shook her head, “He hasn’t disrespected anyone. He just wants to go to Winterfell and be a blacksmith.”

“You are so naive.” Joffrey replied, “At least you are beautiful, so you have that going for you.”

“Why do you hate him so?”

Joffrey stopped and gripped her wrist, “You think I don’t know who he is. He isn’t just a bastard,
he is my father’s bastard. I might not remember what my father looked like before he became fat, but I know what my uncle looks like. That bastard could practically be Renly’s fucking twin.” His grip tightened, “He is disrespecting my mother, my siblings, and myself with his godsdamn existence.”

“Joffrey, please, you’re hurting me.” She begs, trying to free her wrist.

“Once I’m King maybe I’ll purge the entire city of those bastards, I’m sure I could get the Spider to tell me where they are, or maybe Littlefinger if he ever returns from the Vale.”

Sansa stilled, eyes wide in shock, “Those are your siblings.”

“They are not! They are just my father’s bastards, they mean nothing.” Joffrey shouted, his hand so tight that she was sure there would be a bruise.

Sansa shook her head, while she had never been close to Jon, she could never imagine wishing him dead. She even worried about him up at the Wall, it was a dangerous place. The tears were rolling down her cheeks now, she wasn’t sure if they were from the physical pain or the emotional upheaval he was causing her.

Joffrey tugged her up against his body with her wrist, causing her to yell out, “You’ll start to see things my way, once we are married, and I can get you all to myself.”

The heavy footsteps broke the moment, “Everything alright Your Grace?”

Joffrey released her wrist and she stepped back, silencing a cry in her throat, “Of course it is dog. Why wouldn’t it be?”

The Hound kept his stance straight, “I heard a scream.”

“Lady Sansa saw a spider, nothing to be concerned about.”

“As you say Your Grace.” The Hound replied before walking back to his spot.

Sansa was grateful for the man’s interruption, Joffrey’s vile words still playing over in her mind, “It is getting late Your Grace.”

Joffrey turned back to her, “I shall you walk back to your room my lady.”

Sansa nodded and gingerly placed her hand on his arm, she hated even this little bit of contact, and dreaded the thought of her wedding night.

Arya had been expecting the Queen but she had not expected the King to be present as well, and if she was judging the look on the Queen’s face correct, she hadn’t been expecting it either.

Cersei greeting them with a smile, “Ser Gendry, Lady Arya, thank you so much for agreeing to dinner.”

“You are welcome Your Grace.” Gendry replied, Arya tucked into his side and she could feel the nerves in the tense stance of his body.

“Please, call me Cersei.” She said and gestured for them to head over to a small table set up near the open balcony doors.

The King was already seated, a goblet of wine in his hand. He smiled when they sat down, “You
two make a lovely couple.”

Arya blushed a bit, “Thank you Your Grace.”

She then turned to the spread of food before them, there was a selection of roast chickens and a large variety of sides. She was thankful for the lack of fish, the smell of the sea creatures had been making her nauseous for the last few weeks. She watched as the King loaded up his plate first, and then Cersei started picking a few items before she looked up at them, “Take whatever you like.”

Gendry slowly reached out and grabbed a chicken, bringing to his own plate. He quickly broke it apart, placing the legs on her plate, as he knew they were her favorite before placing the soon empty carcass back on the serving platter. Arya reached forward and spooned a few greens onto both their plates.

When she was finished she noticed that Cersei was looking at her with a small smile. Arya just gave her a smile in return and took a bite of the food. She didn’t know what to say to break the silence that had fallen between the four of them, the only noise the sounds of eating.

Cersei broke the silence once they were nearly finished with the first helpings, “What is your favorite dish Gendry? I just went with the chicken as it is usually a safe choice, not sure I’ve ever met someone who says no to chicken.”

Gendry looked surprised at the sudden question, quickly glancing at Arya before answering, “Hmmm, meat pies. There is this really talented baker down in Flea Bottom, he makes the best pies. I always saved some coin every month to get one.”

Arya could see how strained the smile on Cersei’s face was, like she was trying not to make a negative comment. So she decided she could break the moment, “I’ve always enjoyed venison myself, but I haven’t had a chance to share it with Gendry yet.”

“You’ve never had venison?” Robert asked, finally paying attention to the words they were saying.

Gendry shook his head, “Not a lot variety for meats in Flea Bottom. If you’re lucky you can get chicken or pork, but most of the time you just accept that it is meat and don’t ask what kind.”

Arya was surprised Gendry was being so direct with them, it took weeks before he was willing to behave this way with her father. She wondered if this was the consequence of leaving him alone all day, at his request, that he found some new resolve with how to deal with his potential parents.

“Got to change that then!” Robert said excitedly, “We shall go hunting, find a big fat stag to dine on. Ever been hunting before lad?”

“No, Your Grace.”

“Robert, the wedding is only a few weeks away. You don’t have time for a hunting trip.” Cersei replied before taking a long sip of her wine.

Robert scoffed, “We would be back before the bloody wedding. Not like I’m needed for any of it anyway.” He downed his goblet and poured another glass, “I’ll take all the boys this time, can be a bonding experience between the Baratheon men.”

“Tommen is too young for a hunting trip.” Cersei protested.

“Nonsense.” Robert shrugged a looked to Arya, “How old were your brothers when Ned first took them hunting?”
Arya really didn’t want to get into the middle of this but she was pretty sure there was no way to avoid answering, “Ten Your Grace. I was fourteen when I finally convinced him to let me come along as well.”

“You hunt?” Cersei asked, unable to keep the surprise and judgement from her voice.

Arya straightened her back as she shifted in her seat, “I do, Your Grace. I also like to ride and I do archery and I have been practicing some swordsmanship.”

Cersei did not seem thrilled at the idea, but Robert laughed and said, “Proper northern girl you are.” His face dropped for a moment as he narrowed his eyes at her, “You remind me of someone.”

Arya just smiled, she knew who it was that she reminded him of, but she assumed his drunk mind wasn’t able to connect the dots. She was not going to help him along, “My mother was never very happy with my choice in hobbies, but trust me when I say that you do not want me sewing anything if you want it to look pretty. Septa Mordane once said I had the hands of a blacksmith.”

Gendry laughed and picked up her hand, “These soft little things, I don’t think your septa knows what blacksmith hands look like.” He placed a sweet little kiss to her fingers before letting her hand go.

Arya noticed that Cersei had been watching the interaction closely but she wasn’t able to tell what the emotion playing on the Queen’s face was. She chose to let it go and think about it later. She looked over at the King, noticing that he had lost interest again, and decided she done being polite in all this. She took a deep breath and said, “Why did you want us here?”

Cersei looked surprised by her sudden question, “I want to get to know my son.”

“Why are you so convinced that he is your son?” Arya asked, “My father told us that Gendry resembles a younger King Robert, but that doesn’t mean he is your son.”

Cersei pursed her lips, “You aren’t a mother yet, Lady Arya, but there is a connection you make with your child. I knew, in my soul, that the baby I found in the crib that night was not my son. I made sure everyone knew that as well, but I had no way to prove it. I was declared mad with grief and told to accept that my son was dead.” Her green eyes flashed to Robert, who was staring very hard at the wall, “I led everyone to believe that I had moved past that belief but I had not.” She turned a smile to Gendry, “When I first saw you, I instantly knew that you had to be one of Robert’s. I am not naive, I am very well aware of how many bastards are probably spread throughout this city. I was ready to just move on after that but then you told me how old you were. In that moment, everything came rushing back to me. How that is how old my son would be, a black haired young man. I know that some people believe I am simply attaching myself to you because of my grief, but I truly believe you are my son. The evidence that Lord Varys found just proved it.”

Arya could see the truth in the words that Cersei said, her belief was absolute that Arya thought the Mother herself could stand before the Queen and tell her that Gendry wasn’t her child and Cersei wouldn’t believe it.

Robert placed his goblet down with a bang, “All that is in the past now.”

Arya glared at the King, his face was flushed red and she wondered if it was from embarrassment from Cersei’s words or if it was the wine he was always drinking.

He nodded to himself when no one spoke, “Yes, now is about the future.” He pushed himself to his
feet, “Be ready lad, I think we should leave in three days to be able to be back for the wedding.

Robert did not wait for a response and walked out of the room. Cersei shook her head before taking a drink. When she placed the glass back down she turned to them, “I would say you would not need to worry, but Robert takes hunting very seriously.”

Gendry nodded his understanding but Arya shook her head and turned glare onto Cersei, “I hope you understand how much trouble you’ve made for us.”

“Excuse me?”

“We had a plan, one that would have suited us perfectly.” Arya explained, the anger she’d felt since Gendry had told her the new yesterday breaking through, “We were going to live in Winterfell and be happy, you’ve ruined that.”

“I ruined it?” Cersei clarified, “I have given you a chance at a better life. One you were both born to have.”

“The one everyone wants us to have you mean.” Arya replied, “You have lived in this city for over twenty years, do you actually know anything about the people in it? The people like Gendry? Not everyone has dreams of living in a castle.” She got to her feet, “I saw that look you had when Gendry told you what his favorite meal was and how he wasn’t sure what kind of meat was in the pies.”

Gendry stood up and placed a hand on her shoulder, “Arya, we can’t change anything now love, getting upset isn’t going to help anything.”

“I just want her to know that her selfish actions hurt people.” Arya replied, keeping her eyes on Cersei.

Cersei gracefullly got to her feet, “I am sorry to hear that you feel that my actions have been selfish or hurtful, but I can promise you my intentions were only to have my son where he belonged.”

“Did you consider what Gendry would want? Or how your other children would feel it about?” Arya asked, Gendry keeping a firm grip on her hand.

Cersei shook her head and scoffed, “Why would anyone be less than happy about all of this?” Cersei let out a sigh before adding, “I know this has come as a shock to you both, mayhaps we should have waited a few days for this dinner, allow you time to come around to the new normal.”

“It is a lot to come to grips with, Your Grace.” Gendry replied.

Cersei smiled and nodded, “I do want a chance to get to know you Gendry, and you Arya. We will have time for that, I apologize for rushing you.”

“Thank you, Your Grace. Dinner was delicious but I think it best we retire for the evening.” Gendry said, gently pulling Arya towards the door.

“Of course, I will see you both soon.” Cersei replied.

Arya left the room without a word, she had not meant to say what was on her mind tonight, but the whole evening had just worn on her. She hated how fake accepting Cersei and Robert were being in attempts to make Gendry like them, when they had done nothing to help before. She heard Gendry wish Cersei a good night before his heavy footsteps rushed to catch up with her. He did not speak as they walked back to the Tower of the Hand and she was thankful for the silence, and that
he was so attuned to her needs. They would talk about this in the privacy of their own room, away from the many eyes and ears she was sure was paying attention to their every move.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed it!!!

My work schedule is a little different for this coming week, so I will try to get the next chapter up on Saturday, but it might not happen. It all depends on how much time I find to write and how easy things flow. If you follow my tumblr, I will make sure to make a post if things aren't looking good for an update.
Gendry looked around the small courtyard with apprehension, surrounding him were the members of the three most powerful families in the kingdoms. He didn’t feel that he belonged in their company, no matter what the Queen said to the contrary. It had been two days since the dinner he and Arya had with the King and Queen, and now here he was to be introduced properly to the rest of them. The Starks had been some of the first to arrive in the courtyard for the gathering, and Catelyn had said the names of those that arrived they had not already met. Stannis Baratheon, Lord of Dragonstone and the middle son of the Baratheon brothers, with his wife Lady Selese and daughter Shireen. Renly Baratheon, Lord of Storm’s End and the youngest brother, came alone. Tywin arrived with another man, Kevan Lannister, his brother. Tyrion Lannister, the Queen’s younger brother, had introduced himself to Gendry the day before. All seven members of the Kingsguard were present, as well as the small council members, including Lord Baelish who had returned from the Vale only that morning. With the addition of all the Baratheon and Stark children, the small courtyard seemed very crowded. The last people to enter the courtyard were the King and Queen themselves.

He felt Arya instantly tense in the chair in front of him, Catelyn having placed her there after she refused to stop pacing. All the chatter stopped between the groups as they all turned to look at the monarchs.

Robert smiled, “Glad you could all make it. We have a few announcements.” He did a quick sweep of the gathered company before continuing, “First, I have decided we will do a groom’s hunt, which will commence in two days, and we will be back in time for the wedding.” He glanced at his wife quickly with the last part of his sentence before looking back out, “Second, Cersei and I have unexpected news for you lot.”

“Pregnant again?” Renley joked, and Gendry could see why people kept comparing him to the lord in looks.

Cersei looked like she was suppressing the need to roll her eyes as Robert answered, “No, no. As you may remember, Cersei and I had a child before Joffrey who we believed had died in his crib. We now know that the wet nurse assigned that night replaced her child with Stefon and stole him,
disappearing into Flea Bottom. We discovered this on accident after Lady Arya brought her new husband to court.” Robert gestured and Gendry stepped forward until he was standing between Robert and Cersei, “Everyone, this is Ser Gendry, birthname of Stefon Baratheon, and he has now returned home to where he truly belongs.”

Gendry looked out over the crowd, the Starks were all giving him encouraging smiles, as was Tyrion. Tywin and his brother seemed rather disgruntled at the announcement. Renly looked around in shock.

It was Stannis that broke the silence, “You expect us to believe that after 20 years you found a son you believed was dead?”

“I never believed he was dead.” Cersei commented, placing a hand on Gendry’s arm, “I know that Gendry is my son, both Varys and my father have been looking for proof, there is evidence to support it.”

Stannis turned and looked at the elder lord, “Lord Tywin, what proof did you discover?”

Tywin looked about ready to refuse the other lord’s request before he spoke, “Lord Varys discovered the tavern at which the woman Gendry called his mother worked. The tavern keeper and his daughter both provided testimony that indicated that the woman was indeed the wet nurse that disappeared the night of Stefon’s death.”

“You trusted the Spider on this?” Stannis questioned.

“I did not.” Tywin replied, “I had my own men speak to them both and then had them taken to the sept and swear before the gods that their words were true. Neither changed their story from what was given before. It does lend more credibility to the words.”

“He cannot be who you say, he is just a bastard blacksmith!” Joffrey yelled, his face flushed red with anger, “I am the heir to the throne.”

“He is your elder brother, but we have all decided that you shall remain the heir Joffrey.” Robert said, and Gendry noticed that Sansa shook her head, as if upset at the idea.

Joffrey glared at Gendry, and he wondered if the Kingsguard would defend him if Joffrey attacked, though neither of them carried their sword.

“What is your plan for the boy then?” Renly asked, giving Gendry a much friendlier smile than his brother had.

“He will be the heir to Storm’s End as you have no children yourself.” Robert answered.

Renly nodded, “I have no objections to that.”

Stannis looked at his younger brother and shook his head, “You are just going to accept this without question?”

“Why should I question it? I am sure that Robert and Cersei would not have gone through all of this if they were not absolutely certain of their course.”

Stannis turned away and addressed the King, “Do you plan on announcing this to the realm then if he is to be Renly’s heir?”

“We shall wait a few moons after Joffrey and Sansa’s wedding before making the announcement.”
Cersei said, “But we felt it was important that the families be brought in on the news before the realm.”

“I for one welcome you back to the family nephew.” Tyrion said, holding up a goblet of wine.

Gendry nodded, not really sure what to say.

Cersei had no such trouble, “Thank you for so welcoming little brother, I hope the rest of you can follow Tyrion’s lead.”

Gendry looked to Arya, and she was just smiling at him, but he could tell she was still nervous about all this. He felt the same, this situation was only to get more confusing the more people were let in on the news. As he scanned the group, he noticed that despite the announcement that Gendry would not be in line for the throne, Joffrey was glaring at him.

Robert’s hand suddenly landed on his shoulder, “Let’s enjoy the good food and wine as we celebrate not only the joining on the three great houses of Westeros but Stefon’s return to the family.”

Gendry took that as his a sign that he could return to Arya’s side. He had never been a sociable person, he had few friends throughout his life. Living with the Starks had helped him open up a bit, but he was not sure how comfortable he felt with people like the Lannisters and Baratheons. All he could really do was hope that they weren’t all like Joffrey, but he had been preparing for that outcome for the last few days.

Arya looked up at him from her chair, and asked in a quiet voice, “Are you alright?”

He nodded, not sure if he trusted himself to speak.

Sansa spoke up from her seat next to Arya, “A few of them are coming.”

Gendry and Arya both looked up and noticed that Mrycella, Tommen, and Shireen were headed their way.

Mrycella spoke first, “We’ve never properly meet, I’m Mrycella. Your little sister it would seem.”

“Nice to meet you.” He replied gruffly.

She just smiled at him, “This is our little brother Tommen and our cousin Shireen.”

He nodded at both of them and noticed that Shireen had some sort of scarring on one side of her face.

“Don’t worry about my Father, he just has trouble with change but he’ll come around.” Shireen said.

“He had some very strong words.” Arya commented, looking over to where the lord is question was talking with Robert, Renly, Tywin and her own father.

“He usually does.”

Gendry looked over the three younger people standing before them, his siblings and cousin, his family. He had never had a family before Arya, and when he was sure they had no future together, he wasn’t sure he ever would. Then Arya told him that she was with child, and a different future seemed possible. One where the two of them were together with this child and maybe a few more,
but it never included other people, for he knew her family wouldn’t accept him. Only, they had. Lord Stark treated him like a son, and while Lady Stark wasn’t warm, she wasn’t cruel. The biggest surprise had been her siblings and the welcoming he received from all three of them. He wondered that if given some time, he could start to consider these people his family as well.

The clattering of a goblet being dropped on the stone ground drew all of their attention to the other side of the yard. They all watched as Joffrey stormed off, leaving behind a forlorn looking Cersei next to a pool of wine.

Mrycella gave him a strained smile, “Joffrey will just need some time to adjust, he is used to being the oldest.”

Tommen nodded, “It is a lot to process, we can all get to know each other better on the hunting trip Father mentioned. Mother has never let me go one before.”

“It shall be my first as well.” Gendry replied, trying to keep his face from falling into a grimace.

It seemed Bran caught onto his mood and quickly took over the conversation, drawing away Tommen’s attention. Arya reached up and gripped his hand, he gave it a squeeze and he knew he could handle this, as long as Arya was at his side.

Joffrey Baratheon was not a fool, he did not believe for one moment that this blacksmith was actually his older brother. This was all just a ploy by the Starks or maybe his uncles, they all knew that Joffrey would be an excellent King that would not allow them to keep their power. He was surprised they were able to trick his mother and grandfather though. His father was a fool, so them able to convince him on this folly was not at all surprising. Joffrey was not a fool, he would not allow some bastard to claim his throne, no, the blacksmith needed to go. He would just need to wait for the perfect opportunity to get rid of him, one that would not label him a kinslayer.

As they entered the Tower of the Hand, Arya was ready to just go straight up to their chambers and go to sleep. It seemed that Sansa had other ideas, “Can I….can I just talk to you both about something?”

Arya turned away from the steps, “Of course.”

Sansa nodded and looked around, “Let’s go to your chambers, just encase the boys or Mother and Father come back.”

They walked up the stairs in silence but Arya’s mind was racing. She felt that whatever her sister was going to tell her was not going to be good news.

Sansa didn’t even wait for Gendry to fully have the door closed before saying, “I am worried that Joffrey might try to kill you.”

Gendry turned to look at her, “Why do you think that?”

Sansa took a deep breath, “When you were having dinner with Cersei the other day, Joffrey came by to see me. He was angry that Gendry was around, said it was an insult that one of Robert’s bastards was in the castle. He told me he was planning to challenge you to a duel after the wedding.”

“That was before he knew that Gendry is actually his trueborn brother.”
Sansa looked at her, “I actually think that will make things worse.”

“Why?” Gendry asked, “I am no threat to him.”

“He won’t see it that way. You are the elder brother and you look more like a Baratheon, while he took after the Lannister side. He will not take this well.”

Arya looked over at her husband, “We should find a way to stop the hunt.”

“Robert seemed very adamant about it, I don’t see how we could.” Gendry replied, “He wouldn’t be fool enough to try something out there, would he?”

“He might, if he can find a way to get away with it. Accidents happen during hunts all the time.” Sansa replied, “You’ll need to be extra careful.”

“Bran and Rickon will be there, never leave their sight and Joffrey can’t do anything without witnesses.” Arya suggested, stepping up next to him and grabbing his arm, “Please, don’t be rash while out there.”

Gendry smiled down at her, “I would never do anything that might take me away from you or our child, but I am not defenseless, if Joffrey tries something, I will defend myself.”

“I would rather we avoid situations where a fight happens at all, but we have a few days before you go on the hunt. We will work on getting you ready, just to be safe.”

Sansa walked toward the door, “I don’t want to see you get hurt Gendry, please, be careful around Joffrey.”

Gendry nodded, “Thank you for the warning Sansa, I will keep it in mind.”

When the door shut behind her sister, Arya fully wrapped her arms around him, “I will not let him kill you. I will kill him first if I have to.”

Gendry kissed the top of her head, “It will not come to that. I will use the hunt to prove to him that I am not a threat to his throne.”

Arya nodded against his chest but she wasn’t sure there was anything that Gendry could do to convince Joffrey that he wasn’t a threat. She knew he could protect himself but they were partners, and therefore they protected each other. She would just need to trust that Joffrey was not as much a fool as he was arrogant. She would use they time they were away to come up with her own plan for Joffrey. Threatening her husband was the final straw for her, she would not be letting Joffrey marry her sister or hurt her husband, she just needed a plan.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!!! Hopefully it wasn't too much of a let down for those of you looking forward to the hunt, that will be coming up next I promise. I just wanted a little more set up.
Chapter Summary

The hunt begins

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for all your lovely comments, I didn't respond to them because a lot had opinions on the hunt and I didn't want to give anything away. But I did read them and appreciate every single one of them.

I'm posting a little earlier than usual because I got this done earlier and didn't feel like waiting. Hope you enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry was happy to finally get off the horse when they found a suitable place to set up camp, he’d never ridden a horse before the previous day when Jory and Arya had given him a quick lesson. He was not sure it was something he would ever really get used to, but Arya had mentioned riding was one of her favorite pastimes, so he would need to at least get more comfortable. He was also sure that he would be less stressed about it if Joffrey wasn’t glaring at him every few minutes. Bran and Rickon were doing their best to be silently encouraging, trying not to draw attention to his bad riding. He was grateful but he also wanted them to back off a little, he liked space. He wondered if Arya had told them to stick close to him or if they were just doing it because they wanted to.

He walked around the clearing, the squires having collected his horse and started setting up the tents. He needed to stretch the kinks out of his legs, they’d rode out of Red Keep at first light, and it was well past midday now, his legs had not appreciated the new treatment.

“Have you ever ridden a horse before today?” A voice asked, not unkindly.

Gendry turned and took in Lord Renly, he was wearing a long black leather doublet with a design up the middle and a stag broach over his sternum, “Not before yesterday m’lord.”

Renly waved his hand, “No need for formality, we are family. If you are to be my heir, then we shall be spending a lot of time together in the future. I would like for us to be comfortable with one another.”

Gendry nodded, unsure what to say to the man. He was sure that they would have nothing in common to discuss, but he assumed it would be nice to have at least one ally among the Baratheons.

Renly seemed to notice his unease, “You were a blacksmith correct?”

“Yes m….I was.” He replied, stopping himself from saying the man’s title.
“Did you make that sword?” He asked, gesturing to the one at Gendry’s hip.

Gendry nodded and removed the sword from the scabbard, “It was one of the last things I made before my knighthood.”

Renly took and examined the offered sword, “This is excellent work, you have a talent.”

“Thank you, m’l….uncle.” He forced out, putting the sword away once again.

Renly smiled at him, “I cannot even begin to understand what all has happened to you in your life, nephew, but I can assure you, you will get used to the new way of things.”

“I doubt it. I can’t even properly weld the sword or ride a horse.”

“You will learn. You learned how to smith and you shall learn these new things as well.”

“I had most of my life to learn how to smith.”

“I can promise you will not need 20 years to learn how to weld a sword or ride a horse or learn your numbers.”

“I’ll leave the numbers to Arya, she has a knack for that kind of thing I’ve noticed from her trying to teach me.” Gendry said, smiling softly at the thought of his wife.

Renly smiled at him, “You really did marry her for love, that is a rare thing.”

Gendry’s face fell, “I know what some people think. That I tricked Arya into marrying me so that I could improve my station. I am not that clever I’m afraid.”

“That is where you are wrong nephew. You did something even more clever, you actually fell in love with a woman and she fell in love with you in return. When Ned saw that, I am sure he was unable to deny his daughter what her heart truly desired.” Renly told him, “Getting her with child certainly didn’t hurt the issue I am sure.”

Gendry rolled his eyes, “Is it really that obvious?”

Renly laughed, “I had honestly not noticed but it is the current gossip among the ladies of the court, and what they say can reach my ears. You just confirmed it though. Congratulations nephew.”

He nodded, unsure what to actually say to that, he wasn’t sure that anyone had actually congratulated him on the babe before.

“I understand the reason for hiding it. I will not share your secret.”

“Thank you, uncle.” He said this time with more meaning.

Renly clapped a hand on his shoulder, “This is all even better news for me, with you as my heir and an heir of your own, they might all finally leave me alone about getting married.”

Gendry remembered what Arya had told him once, about how Renly enjoyed the company of men over women. He smiled at the man, “You shall never get any such pressure from me.”

Renly laughed, “I would hope not, then you could potentially lose your new castle.”

“I never even wanted a castle to begin with.” He admitted, “I was happy being a blacksmith.”
“The Gods have other plans for you it would seem.” A shout came from where the tents were set up and Robert was gesturing at them. Renly nodded and said, “Come on, we shouldn’t keep him waiting.”

Gendry followed behind his uncle and thought that maybe if the rest of them were like Renly, maybe things wouldn’t be so bad.

By the time the camp was set up, it was too dark to go into the trees for the hunt, but Robert assured them that they would be heading out as soon as the sun was in the sky. Gendry was used to waking with the sun, even in the castle he hadn’t been able to break the habit. As he looked around the gathered group, he could tell this was not the case for everyone. Especially for his newly found blood brothers, neither looking like they were ready to begin the day. His brothers by marriage on the other hand they had been grumpy at first but had quickly rallied with excitement. Bran was currently talking with Ser Barristan, while Rickon was trying to help get Tommen’s spirits up.

“Ready for your first hunt Ser?”

Gendry turned to look at Ser Jaime, his Kingsguard armor shining in the early light. He nodded, “Yes, Ser Jaime.”

The blonde haired man studied him, “It is okay to be nervous, means you will be more aware of your surroundings. That is good for a hunt, and for a battle. Just make sure that if we come across a boar not to hesitate, their tusks can gut a man with ease.”

Gendry took in the words, he had never killed anything bigger than a pigeon before, but he was sure he could manage it. He glanced over at his uncle, he was about to speak when Robert’s voice burst through the morning air.

“We are too large a group to find anything all together. We will split into two smaller groups, Renly, you and Ser Jaime can take the Stark boys. Ser Barristan and I will handle mine.” He said, and then turned to the other Kingsguard, “Ser Meryn, stay here and protect camp and the squires.”

Gendry did not like the idea of that group split, he’d much rather go with Renly, Bran, and Rickon. He also knew that this was most likely not for debate. He glanced over at where Joffrey was standing with the Hound, to find the prince sneering at him.

“Joffrey just needs some time to come around, maybe this will provide a good experience for the two of to bury the hostility.” Jaime said, his eyes following Gendry’s.

Gendry looked away from his brother, “I have no hostility. I do not want Joffrey’s crown or the throne. I am not a threat to him.”

“Then this can be your opportunity to tell him as much.” Jaime replied before he walked off to talk with Ser Barristan and Ser Meryn.

“Maybe we can convince the King to let you come with us.” Rickon’s voice suddenly said from his side, “Then you won’t have to be with Joffrey.”

Gendry smiled at the younger boy, “The King has already decided, I’ll be fine. I will stick with Tommen, he seems like a much better choice for company.”

His eyes darted around, most likely searching for Bran, and Gendry knew that Arya had told them to keep an eye on him, “Rickon, I will be fine. If I died you know your sister would just find a way to bring me back so she could kill me herself. None of us want that.”
Tommen popped up next to them, “Gendry, come on, Father said it is time to get going.”

Gendry gave Rickon a firm squeeze of the shoulder before following Tommen to where the others were waiting. Ser Barristan handed each of them a spear when they stopped before him.

“All here?” Robert said, looking around, “Good, let’s go. Remember, keep your eyes and ears open and try not to make too much noise.”

He didn’t wait for a reply before stomping off into the trees. Joffrey and the Hound fell into step behind him, Gendry and Tommen went next, with Ser Barristan bringing up the rear.

They’d walked for maybe an hour, only small whispers between them, before Robert suddenly spoke, “Gendry, came up here with me.”

Gendry shared a quick glance with Tommen before doing as requested, ignoring Joffrey completely as he walked past. He wasn’t sure if he trusted Joffrey at his back with a crossbow but he didn’t have much choice, he just needed to trust that Robert’s presence would keep him in line.

“What do you think of your first hunt so far son?” Robert asked quietly, his eyes still searching among the trees.

Gendry just shrugged, “Nothing but a lot of walking so far Your Grace.”

“None of that Your Grace shit unless we are at court. In private I am just Father.” He said, not waiting for Gendry to give a response, “There is something I want you to think about while we are out here. Your name.”

Gendry furrowed his brow in confusion, “My name?”

“Yes, you need to decide whether you are going to be Stefon or Gendry Baratheon. I would prefer if you went the name your mother and I picked for you, but we’d understand if you’d like to stick with Gendry.” Robert explained as they continued to walk.

Gendry had never even considered that all this would mean that his name might be in question. He could see why the King was concerned about it, his birthname had been Stefon, and by continuing with the name Gendry it could be considered an insult to him and Cersei to continue going by the name his kidnapper had given him. He thought of himself as Gendry though, Stefon seemed like a name that belonged to someone else.

“You have time to think about it before we make any formal announcements after the wedding.” Robert continued, “We should even consider doing a more proper wedding for you and your lady, make it official with you new status and name.”

“It was plenty proper.” Gendry rebutted on instinct, he didn’t like the insuatitation that his marriage to Arya was not real.

“Yes, yes, but it wasn’t public. The people like weddings, makes them feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves, keeps them happy.” Robert explained.

Gendry shrugged, he’d never given one shit about the highborn weddings, “Arya liked the wedding we had. The people are getting their wedding with Joffrey and Sansa.”

“A ridiculously expensive affair indeed, Cersei insisted it needed to be something grand.” Robert commented, “Are you planning on entering the tourney? I loved a good tourney when I was your age.”
“I don’t have the skill for it.” He replied, wishing they could go back to walking in silence. He did not see him ever having a close relationship with the man beside him, the smell of wine clung to him like a perfume.

“You’re built strong, with proper training I bet you’d be a fine warrior.” Robert said as his eyes continued to scan the trees, Gendry was surprised at his focus on both tasks, “As a blacksmith, a warhammer would be your best weapon.”

“Jory said I need to know how to use a sword, warhammers are difficult to carry around on a regular basis.”

“It was a warhammer I used to crush in Rhaegar Targaryen’s chest, they have a great many uses.”

Gendry nodded, unsure how to respond to his statement. He took the chance to glance behind him and noticed that Joffrey’s eyes were digging into him, not caring one bit for their purpose to being here. Gendry tightened his grip on the spear, he would be ready if his little brother tried anything.

“Do you know why I needed to kill Rhaegar?” Robert continued and Gendry shook his head, tales of the rebellion were many but he never cared to listen to them, “He stole the woman I was to marry, Lyanna Stark. She was your wife’s aunt, and she was promised to me. He took her and for the crime of wanting her back, the Mad King killed her father and brother, and would have killed me and Ned if not for Jon Arryn.”

Gendry nodded, he could understand the impulse, if someone actually managed to steal Arya, he would gladly start a war to get her back.

“Your Arya reminds me of my Lyanna.” Robert finally took his blue eyes off the trees to look at Gendry, “Don’t let her go lad, ever.”

Gendry was taken back the raw emotion in Robert’s voice, “I won’t.”

Robert nodded, and then looked around, “Let’s spread out a little bit, see if we can’t flush something out. Barristan, Clegane, take the edges.”

Joffrey and the Hound spread out to Gendry’s right, while Tommen and Ser Barristan took the King’s left. They moved until there was about 20 feet between them all, just enough to still see each other through the trees.

Gendry was grateful for the momentary solitude, the King had asked so much of him in that one conversation. Not only to accept him as his father but to also change his name. He’d need to discuss that with Arya, she always helped him sort out his thoughts. His eyes drifted upwards, the sun was high overhead, indicating it was midday. The morning had gone differently than he had expected and he wasn’t exactly sure how he felt about it. So much was changing in such a short amount of time.

A twig snapped nearby and he stopped to listen, his eyes scanning around him. He was just about to take a step forward when a crossbow bolt flew past his face and hit the tree beside him. He looked at in shock for a moment before he turned to his right and there was Joffrey, his face set in an evil sneer as he glared at Gendry, his hands already moving to reload the crossbow.

Chapter End Notes
Yes, I left that on a cliffhanger. The next chapter will be up on Saturday I think, but it will be about what Arya is doing while the boys are away. The second part of the hunt itself will be up next week. Would love to know your thoughts!!!
Arya was happy for the distraction of training with Syrio, it kept her worrying about Gendry out in the woods with Joffrey. The worrying had already prevented her from sleeping the night before, the first night she’d been alone since the night of their wedding. The sweat was pooling on her forehead but she refused to take her eyes of the Bravosi to wipe it away.

“Distraction leads to mistakes.” Syrio commented, sweeping the training sword in his hand at her left arm. She dodged out of the way, her own sword not coming close to landing a hit, and Syrio tutted, “Why is a girl so distracted today?”

“I am not distracted.” She insisted, but as her next steps took her into his swing instead of out of it, that was clearly a lie.

He rested the flat of the sword on her shoulder, “Do you worry about the babe?”

She sighed, lowering her sword as she did, “I should not be surprised you figured out about it already.”

Syrio smiled at her, “Your body has changed in all the telling signs. We shall continue training until you feel you can no longer continue.”

Arya smiled, “Thank you. That is not what was concerning me. I fear for my husband.”

“What fear to you have?”

Arya took a deep breath, she knew she could trust Syrio but telling her fear was still difficult, “There are those that want to hurt him, kill him.”

“Can you not protect him?”

She shook her head, “Not where he is right now.”

“Can he not protect himself? Did you pick a weak man for a husband?” He asked, his eyes staring
“He is strong but the one who wants to hurt him is powerful.” She replied, “That matters more sometimes.”

“Why did a girl wish to learn how to water dance if power is what matters? Daughters of a great house have power.”

She was silent for a moment, “When I was a young girl, my brothers were out training with swords and bows, while I was expected to sit in a room and sew. That was never right for me, that was not who I was. I wanted to do what my brother’s were allowed to do. Then, I started to hear and see things. Do you know what happened to Princess Elia and her children, in this very castle?” She paused and saw him shake his head, “She was raped and murdered by a man she had just witnessed violently kill her young children. I am not saying that things would have gone differently had she had a weapon and a knowledge to use it, but I never want to be helpless in that kind of situation. I will protect what is mine.”

“Strong words.” Syrio commented, “They show that power is not everything.”

Arya nodded, knowing that he got her talking to get her to change her own mind.

Syrio spun at her then, the sword tapping lightly at her left arm before doing the same to her right, “Speed, skill, strength, and cunning matter more in fight than power. Having faith in your mate, you chose him for a reason, trust in that.”

She knew that he was right, worrying about Gendry was not going to help her. She had no control over what happened out in the woods. She had to trust that Gendry could handle himself and she needed to remember he wasn’t alone. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, emptying her mind. When she opened them again, her mind was clear and she moved through the motions with Syrio with a renewed focus. She was one with the sword and she would find a way to rid the world of Joffrey Baratheon.

Arya wasn’t paying attention to the women around her gossiping about all the knights and lords who’d shown up for the tourney. She cared more about figuring out how to kill Joffrey without getting herself or Gendry executed for regicide. Though she planned to this completely alone, she knew that people would suspect Gendry long before they suspected her. It would do no good to protect him from Joffrey only to then get him beheaded.

“Do you hate these things?” Shireen asked as she took the empty seat next to her.

Arya smiled at the younger girl, “I would not be here if my mother had not forced me to be.”

“I actually had to beg mine to let me come. I’ve spent my life on Dragonstone and no one ever came to visit. My father brought me here a few times in the past but I was young and only saw my cousins.” She shrugged, “Don’t know I thought it would be different, no one wants to talk with me. I think I disgust them, just like my mother said I would.”

“She said that?” Arya asked, anger flooding her and her eyes searched the garden for Lady Baratheon.

Shireen nodded, “I embarrass her.”

“You survived a disease that kills almost all the people that get afflicted. She should be proud to have such a strong daughter.” Arya replied.
“You really think so? Mother says that between my scars and my books that she’ll never be able to find me a proper husband.”

Arya shook her head, “We will just have to find you an improper one.” She smirked at the younger girl, “I, personally, have a fondness for blacksmiths.”

Shireen laughed before shaking her head, “I’m sure that whoever I end up marrying will be doing it for Dragonstone and not for me. Unless they decide to give the castle to Tommen.”

“If they do that, you are always welcome at Storm’s End, no matter what.” Arya assured her.

“I may need to, especially if Joffrey become King before I’m married. He already told me that Dragonstone shouldn’t be left in the hands of a deformed freak.”

Arya sighed, just another reason to kill Joffrey quickly, “He is a menace.”

Shireen nodded and seemed to check that no one was nearby before saying, “May I ask you something?”

“Of course.” Arya said, her eyes snapping up to Shireen.

“Are you really okay with Joffrey being King?”

Arya shook her head, but was careful with her answer, “He could very well be Maegor the Cruel come again but we are not given a say in the matter. He is the Crown Prince.”

“Gendry could put forth his claim.” Shireen said sighly, looking away from Arya’s stare, “I know that is not what was decided and that you and Gendry don’t want to be on the throne, but I think you would do great.”

Arya had forgotten about that during her assaination planning, who would be next in line then? Tommen was a sweet, kind boy but Gendry was older and with the proper teachers, he would learn things quickly. Arya licked her lips, “Joffrey would never give up his claim without a fight. There would be blood if Gendry vied for the throne.”

Shireen nodded, “Can you just….talk about it with Gendry? I think we’d all be happier if Joffrey did not become king.”

She sighed and gave her a half-smile, “I will talk with him.” She looked up and noticed Sansa was looking distant in whatever conversation she’d been dragged into by Margery. She turned back to Shireen, “Why don’t you go try talking with Sansa? She would never turn you away and she can introduce you to some of the other ladies. Once they get to know you, there is no way they couldn’t like you.”

Shireen nodded and got to her feet, she took a few steps before turning back, “I really hope you think about it Arya, you’d be a wonderful Queen.”

Arya had nothing to say to Shireen’s retreating form. No one had ever thought Arya would be wonderful at anything, let alone being queen. Sansa was always the one that everyone knew would make the perfect lady or queen. Sansa was beautiful and proper. Arya was average and improper. The only thing that Arya had ever been complimented on growing up was her numbers, she understood how to run a household better than Sansa. It was the only thing she had ever been told she was better at than Sansa. Arya was too friendly with the common folk, always getting dirty, and too stubborn.
The only person in her family who had ever really understood her was Jon. Her father might have allowed some indulgences in her behavior, but Arya always knew it was because he was hoping she would grow it once it was no longer some unobtainable thing. Jon had not been that way, he had done it because he loved her and wanted her to be happy. She had sent Jon a raven at the Wall after her marriage to Gendry, telling him all she could in the small space available on the parchment. She had not gotten a reply from him yet and she hoped it was just because it took a long time for ravens to fly across Westeros and not that something had happened to him.

She looked over to the other side of the garden where her mother was sitting with a few of the older ladies. Arya blamed her mother completely for Jon’s current status as a member of the Night’s Watch. Robb and Arya had spent so much time trying to convince Jon that he belonged at Winterfell and not the Wall. Nothing they said ever seemed to get through to him and Arya knew it was her mother that caused Jon to run away. Arya loved her mother but they’d never really understood each other. Arya also noticed that Catelyn was much friendlier to Gendry once it was revealed he was really a prince, Arya had just decided not to push it and cause a problem. Especially not when there were so many other problems to be dealt with first. She couldn’t help but wish Jon was here with her now, he would know the right thing to say to her, he always did. Her life was headed in a direction she never could have never imagined. Just like Winterfell, she was thinking that Storm’s End was soon going to be out of reach. Her eyes flicked over to where Shireen was talking with Sansa, Margery, and few other ladies around the same age. Her sister didn’t want to marry Joffrey, she no longer cared about being the queen. Margery would probably happily take Sansa’s place if they could convince Robert to break the engagement. He already had his Stark/Baratheon marriage after all.

That solution might free Sansa from Joffrey but it certainly wasn’t going to free Gendry from Joffrey’s wrath. Arya wasn’t sure of her assassination anymore, Shireen had reminded her that the action would have a consequence she had forgotten about. There had to be someone as next in line for the throne.

She shook her head, there was just too much going on now. Winterfell was nothing but a dream now, she knew her chances of ever seeing the castle again got smaller with each new revelation. She got to her feet and walked out of the garden, she needed a place without any eyes to watch her to think.

Cersei knew it was important that she was seen at little events such as these, but it didn’t mean she liked them. Nothing but gossiping fools. She mostly remained alone, watching the groups form and making a mental note of them for later. Few were brave enough to talk to her for more than a few moments, usually just a greeting and some sort of flattering comment.

The largest group consisted of Sansa, Myrcella, Margery Tyrell, and other girls of the same age. Cersei noticed that Sansa’s smile did spread beyond her lips and sighed. Cersei would have to teach the younger girl some techniques to hide her feelings from showing on her face, it was a talent every queen needed. Her eyes drifted to one of the tables, where Catelyn Stark sat with Olenna Tyrell and a few other ladies from the North, the Riverlands and the Reach. She moved on to see Arya sitting at a table with only Shireen Baratheon for company.

Cersei was surprised that Shireen was even present, Slyse had always been hesitant to allow Shireen to be seen in public. She watched as the two young women talked before Arya’s face dropped and Shireen got to her feet, saying one last thing to Arya before walking over to Sansa. Cersei looked back at Arya, her stare was vacant and Cersei knew she was lost in thought. Cersei watched as Arya suddenly looked around before getting to her feet and walking away from the
garden. She got to her feet as well and followed the girl, she wanted them to have an opportunity to talk after everything that happened.

When Cersei found her, Arya was leaning against the outer walls, seemingly watching the ships as they moved in and out of the bay. One hand was gently rubbing her stomach, which Cersei noted was becoming more noticeable with the bump of pregnancy. She walked slowly up to her, “Lady Arya, I was hoping we could talk.”

The brunette turned around, “I suppose we should, Your Grace.”

“I was hoping that now that you have had time to…..”

“I will not apologize for what I said at the dinner.” Arya interrupted, “Your selfishness has put my husband and my child in danger.”

Cersei was shocked at the accusation, “I would never hurt Gendry or your child.”

Arya huffed, “For being the most powerful woman in the kingdom, you are horribly naive about what is going on inside your own household.” She shook her head, “You would never hurt them directly, but you are placing them in danger all the same.”

“I do not…”

“Joffrey wants to kill Gendry, he sees him as a threat to his crown.”

Cersei shook her head, “I know he is having trouble accepting that Gendry is his trueborn brother, but I have assured him that he will remain the Crown Prince. He just needs some time to come to terms with it.”

“Joffrey is not reasonable. He is arrogant and cruel.”

Cersei was silent, unsure what to say, because despite Arya’s opinions, she did know what kind of person Joffrey was.

Arya’s expression softened, “Only you can stop this from ending in bloodshed. It is only a matter of time before Joffrey makes a move against Gendry and someone will end up dead.”

“What is it you expect me to do? Joffrey is a grown man, I cannot control him.”

Arya shrugged, “I don’t know, I just know you need to do something.”

There was a threat hanging on the end of that sentence and Cersei saw a determined look in the grey eyes looking at her. Cersei knew about the girl’s sword master, her spies had found out about that easily, but none could say what her skill was. The implication was clear, if Cersei didn’t do something, Arya would, and the end results would be very different.

Arya plastered on a false smile, “If you’ll excuse me Your Grace, I really should return to the garden before my absence is missed.”

Cersei nodded as the girl walked past her and back towards the tea garden. Cersei did not turn to follow, instead her green eyes focused on the ships, wishing they could give her an answer to a question she thought she’d never have to ask. How do you stop one son from killing the other?

Chapter End Notes
Just wanted to get in a little bit of Arya before we get to the drama that Joffrey's actions will cause.

Don't be afraid to share your thoughts.
Gendry was sure he was imagining things, there was no way that Joffrey had just fired at him. Yet the arrow lodged in the tree near his head and the motions as Joffrey attempted to reload his crossbow surely supported that it had actually happened. Gendry turned and stalked toward Joffrey, his spear at the ready. Joffrey dropped the crossbow and reached for his sword, but Gendry was faster. He swiped out with the spear, cutting Joffrey on his forearm before moving to rest the blade against his throat.

Gendry’s voice was deep and full of anger, “What the fuck are you doing?”

Joffrey held his bleeding arm against his chest, “Getting rid of the filth. I don’t know how you convinced all of them that you aren’t just some bastard, but you don’t fool me. I will not be letting you steal my crown.”

“I never asked for any of this. You have issues with it, take it up with the King and the Queen. I do not give one shit about you or your stupid fucking crown.” Gendry replied, pressing the blade a bit into his skin, a slice of blood forming beneath it, “When you try to kill someone you should make sure you don’t miss.”

Joffrey’s eyes widened in fear, “You cannot kill me.”

“I think I could, very easily.” Gendry countered, pressing the blade a little harder against the skin beneath it.

“I am the Crown Prince!!”

“You just tried to kill me, your title does not matter.”

Joffrey sneered at him, “Who is going to believe you? They might just kill you right on the spot when they find you standing over my murdered body with a bloody spear.”

Gendry stilled, the only proof he had that Joffrey tried to kill him was a bolt stuck in a tree, and there was no scratch on him. If he killed Joffrey now, he could easily be accused of killing him just to gain access to the throne. Even if Joffrey was wrong and they didn’t kill him on sight, he’d go
through a trial, and how many people would be on his side? The Starks certainly, but had he made enough of an impression with anyone else to support him?

His distraction allowed Joffrey the chance to reach up and grab the spear, pushing it away from his neck as he walked backwards.

Gendry recovered quickly, Joffrey not having enough strength to push him off balance. The spear pointing now at his chest, but not close enough to touch. Gendry stared at the blonde, blood smeared on his neck and his arm, “Where do we go from here?”

Before Joffrey could answer a high pitched squealing dragged their attentions to their left, just in time to see a group of piglets run past them. One of the piglets was closer to them than the others and ran between Joffrey’s leg, causing the prince to lose his balance and fall to the forest floor. Gendry did not have much time to think about that because running after the piglets was a huge boar. It caught sight of them and with an angry noise rushed toward them. Gendry stepped back and braced himself, the spear at the ready.

What he had not expected was for Joffrey to use the opportunity to stab in the leg with his dagger. Gendry screamed in pain but could do nothing but thrust his spear forward, piercing the charging creature above its shoulder, plunging the full length of steal into the flesh. The animal trashed in pain and Gendry jump out the way as best he could with dagger sticking out of his calf. When he looked back, the boar was limp on the ground at Joffrey’s feet.

Joffrey was staring at the animal with wide eyes before he looked up to see Gendry watching him, his left hand pressing around the knife still in his leg. Joffrey rose to his feet and drew his sword, Gendry had no such option at this moment, so he pulled his own dagger from his belt.

Before Joffrey could make his move, the Hound appeared from the trees to their right. He immediately rushed to Joffrey’s side, taking in the scene before him, Gendry wondered what he would do. Joffrey opened his mouth and Gendry was sure he was about to order his sworn sword to finish him off, only he didn’t get a chance.

“Did someone manage to get the foal creature?” Robert’s booming voice said as he emerged from the trees in the direction from which the boar had come.

No one answered as three sets of eyes landed on the King as he came towards them. His own eyes were happily taking in the dead boar, “Good work lads, which one of you landed the fatal blow?”

It was then he seemed to actually look at the rest of them, his blue eyes taking in Joffrey with his unsheathed sword and bloody wounds before looking down at Gendry and the dagger still sticking out of his leg. His face lost all of its previous elation, “What is going on here?”

Joffrey spoke first, “He tried to kill me Father, he might have even succeeded if that boar hadn’t interrupted him.”

“That is a lie.” Gendry grunted out, his jaw tight at the pain that was shooting through his body, “He tried to kill me first, I was simply defending myself.” He pushed himself up a bit and turned to point at the tree, “The bolt he fired at me is still in that tree.”

The red polish of the bolt meant they could easily see it from where they stood. Robert looked at Joffrey and raised his eyebrow in question.

“I fired it when he snuck up on me.” He replied quickly.

Gendry groaned as he moved, “If I wanted you dead, you’d be dead you lying sack of shit.” He
pointed to the boar, “Maybe I should have let that thing kill us both and saved everyone else this trouble.”

“How’d you get a knife in the leg?” Robert asked.

“The boars startled us, Joffrey was knocked down by one of the piglets, when I turned to deal with the adult, he stabbed me from behind.”

Footsteps were heard and they looked up to see Ser Barristan and Tommen come into view.

Robert sighed, “We will figure out the truth of this back at camp. Ser Barristan, assist Gendry. Hound, bring the boar.”

Ser Barristan nodded and ripped off a piece of cloth, tying it off above the wound as tight as he could. He ripped a second piece as well and grabbed a piece of wood from the ground, “Bite down on this Ser, this is going to hurt.”

Gendry did as he was told and the pain as Barristan removed the knife was almost worse than when it had been put in. Barristan wrapped the second piece of cloth around the now open wound, attempting to stop the bleeding. Gendry spit out the piece of wood, he was surprised to see Tommen standing next to him glaring at Joffrey with a hatred he hadn’t been aware the sweet boy possessed.

Joffrey had sheathed his sword and was having his arm wrapped by the Hound, but his eyes were focused on Robert. Gendry turned to see that Robert was attempting to remove the spear from the boar but it was buried too deep. Robert instead gripped the wooden shaft and snapped it, leaving the steal still inside, “We will have to cut the blade out.” He turned then and looked at Gendry who had gotten to his feet with the help of Ser Barristan and Tommen. He nodded, “Let us try and get back to camp before nightfall.”

Gendry quickly found he couldn’t move without support, any pressure on his wounded leg and he’d fall over in pain. Tommen took over as his personal walking helper, Ser Barristan nearby incase the younger boy needed a break. Joffrey was walking at the head of the column with Robert, he had attempted to speak with him but Robert had quickly silenced him. The Hound was between the two groups, the boar slung across his shoulders.

Tommens spoke first, “Joffrey tried to kill you didn’t he?”

Gendry was surprised at the question but nodded.

Tommens shook his head, “I was afraid he would try something but I didn’t think he would be fool enough to do it now.”

Gendry glanced over the Lord Commander but he did not seem to be listening to them, “Why did you think Joffrey would try something?”

“I’ve known him my entire life.”

Gendry had been expecting a more complicated answer but that was all the boy seemed he was going to say on the subject. Gendry sighed, “Unfortunately, this is just going to be my word against his. He is the crown prince and I am just a blacksmith.”

“You aren’t just a blacksmith, not anymore. You are a prince too.” Tommen reminded him, “He hates you so much because you are older.”
“I don’t want to sit the bloody throne.” He replied, he was growing tired of having to tell people that, “I enjoy being a blacksmith, I don’t need a castle or a lordship or any of it. All I need is my wife and a forge to be happy.”

“The gods led us all to our proper calling Ser. I did not start out planning to be the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard or even to be in the Kingsguard, but we are all put on our paths for a reason.” Ser Barristan said suddenly, causing both of the younger men to look at him.

Gendry shook his head, “If the gods had wanted me to be King, I would have never been stolen in the first place.”

“I do not believe the gods control our actions, we are placed on our rightful paths and the gods hope we make the right ones. The woman who lost her child and stole you in her grief chose the wrong path but the gods made sure you were returned to yours by leading you to Lady Arya.” Barristan said, his eyes ever roaming around them for threats.

Gendry had never put much faith in the Seven Gods, the Faith had never done anything to help him. Septons and septas never gave him any time or attention, he wasn’t even allowed in the Sept of Balor. Those who had it worse than himself would gather around the steps praying to the gods for everything and only ever getting an answer whenever the High Septon felt like giving back to the smallfolk. He had even resented it as a young boy when people would tell him the Smith had blessed with a talent. If the gods had given one shit about him they wouldn’t have taken his mother away.

“I am glad the gods led you back to us Gendry.” Tommen commented.

He nodded, not trusting his voice to not say something that would hurt the young man’s feelings. He would happily thank the gods for Arya and their child, but he wasn’t sure he was thankful for the rest of it. Especially as each step he took was extremely painful and he knew things were not going to get any better. Joffrey was not going to change his story and this walk back to camp in relative silence was sure to give him time to come up with a better one. Gendry would not lie, he would tell the complete truth and hope it would save him. Maybe it was time to start praying to the gods after all.

Bran was disappointed as they sat around the camp fire, they hadn’t managed to catch anything. They had seen a few deer but they had not been skilled enough hunters to snag one. Even with the failure of their hunt, Rickon was in a good mood, and smiled as he sat down next to him.

“Why are you sad? This is much better than King’s Landing.” Rickon looked around at the trees, “It isn’t as great as the Wolfswood but I think I could get used to it.”

Bran rolled his eyes, “Enjoy it while you can, we will be going back to Winterfell soon enough.”

“You really think so? There is so much going on right now. I feel like Mother will want to stay with the babe is born and by then Sansa might get with child. We could be here a long time.” Rickon explained, picking up a stick to start drawing in the dirt.

“When did you even start thinking about these things?” Bran asked, Arya had told them the day before they left for the hunt, when she asked them to keep an eye on Gendry and Joffrey.

Rickon shrugged, “Just seems like how it might go.”

Bran shook his head, sometimes his little brother was a mystery, “I think Father and Mother have plans for you in the North. Robb needs an heir until they find someone for him to marry.”
“That would be you, you’re older.”

Bran smiled. “Father told me that after the tourney he was going to either find a fostership or squireship. I won’t be going home anytime soon.”

A commotion behind them caused both boys to turn around. Joffrey stormed into camp, disappearing into this tent before a word could be spoken to him. Bran watched as King Robert followed, his face set in determination before he shouted at Lancel for wine. The Hound came in carrying a boar over his shoulder, blood staining his tunic and chainmail. It wasn’t until Ser Barristan came into a view assisting a limping Gendry next to a concerned looking Tommen that Bran got to his feet. He and Rickon instantly ran to Gendry’s side.

“What happened?” Rickon asked once they were close enough to not be shouting.

“Joffrey tried to kill him.” Tommen answered.

Ser Jaime stopped in his steps as he heard Tommen’s words and turned to Gendry, “Is that true?”

Gendry nodded and Bran was concerned at how pale he seemed, “I think he needs to lay down.”

“He has lost a lot of blood, we will need to redo the dressings on his wound.” Ser Barristan replied before Ser Jaime lifted up Gendry’s other arm and together the two men took him into the tent he was sharing with Bran and Rickon.

Bran went to follow when a hand on his shoulder stopped him, he turned to see Lord Renly standing behind him, “Give them some time to see to his wounds. You three give Gendry some room, he will need time to rest.”

He waited until they had all agreed before walking off. Bran looked around, noticing the Hound had walked into Joffrey’s tent after leaving the boar with the squires. He turned back to Tommen, “Tell me what happened?”

Tommen’s eyes briefly flicked over to King Robert but had taken up a seat in a chair he had brought with them and was downing glasses of wine. He shook his head before answering, “When Ser Barristan and I showed up. Gendry was on the ground with a dagger in his leg while Joffrey and the Hound stood over him. Gendry’s spear was in the boar but he had his own dagger in hand. Father was holding back his anger but I could see it all the same.”

“You didn’t actually witness anything then?” Renly asked, his voice calm and comforting.

Tommen shook his head, “Gendry said that Joffrey tried to kill him and I believe him. You know what Joffrey is like Uncle.”

Renly nodded and sighed, “I will go talk with your father. You three give Gendry some room, he will need time to rest.”

He waited until they had all agreed before walking off. Bran looked around, noticing the Hound had walked into Joffrey’s tent after leaving the boar with the squires. He turned back to Tommen, “What did Joffrey say had happened?”

“He claims that Gendry tried to kill him first and he was just defending himself.”

“Horseshit.” Rickon said immediately.

Bran sighed, “It doesn’t matter what we think, it matters what the King thinks is the truth.”

All three of them looked over to see that Robert was still in his chair as Renly stood next to him. Robert’s eyes were focused on the boar and Bran wondered how much he was actually listening to his younger brother.
Tommen spoke up first, “What will happen now?”

Bran shook his head, he wished he had an answer.

“We protect Gendry.” Rickon said, causing the other two to turn and look at him, “We can’t trust that Joffrey won’t try again, one of us needs to be with Gendry at all times.”

Tommen nodded and said, “You two…”

Renly walked up them then, “I don’t know what you are three are conspiring about but I do hope it isn’t planning revenge against Joffrey. That is the last thing we need right now.”

“We aren’t my lord.” Bran assured him.

Rickon nodded, “It is really Arya you’ll need to be concerned about.”

Renly gave them a small smile, “Try to get some sleep. We will be heading back to the city at first light.”

“Is Gendry going to be alright?” Tommen asked.

“He should be but we do need to get him to a maester.” Renly assured them before walking back toward his own tent.

Bran noticed how Tommen’s eyes drifted to the tent he’d been sharing with Joffrey and said, “You should stay with us tonight. Three sets of eyes are better than two.”

Tommen smiled and nodded, “Thank you.”

The Stark brother waited until they were alone again before Rickon asked, “What are we going to do about Joffrey?”

Bran shook his head, “Nothing right now.” He turned away from looking at Joffrey’s tent, “We will talk with Arya and figure something out. No one hurts the pack.”

Rickon nodded, “The pack survives.”

“The pack survives.”

Chapter End Notes

The ending of this chapter just sort of happened while I was writing it, hope you liked the spontaneous Stark brother solidarity. Don’t see anything from stopping me from updating on time next week, so until then amazing readers.
Cersei enjoyed the peace that came with her chambers, no gossiping ladies or every watchful spies. She could just sit in her chair without having to worry about keeping up appearances or faking small talk she didn’t care about. The light breeze kept the heat away and the wine was smooth as it went down her throat. She had been expecting to have a quiet evening by herself, until she was startled from her thoughts when her twin burst into her chambers looking extremely unsettled.

She looked him over, “Robert has never taken such a short hunt before. Did something happen?”

Jaime nodded, “What exactly happened is still under debate.”

She narrowed her eyes, “Tell me now.”

“Joffrey stabbed Gendry in the leg while we were out hunting.”

She was glad she had remained sitting down, “Is he alright? Why would Joffrey do that?”

Jaime poured himself a glass of wine before saying, “Gendry should be fine. Joffrey claims he did it in self defense, that Gendry tried to kill him. While Gendry claims that Joffrey made the first move and he was defending himself.”

She thought for a moment before getting to her feet and began pacing, “Who do you believe? You were there, you must have seen something.”

He shook his head, “I only saw the aftermath when they got back to camp. There were no actual witnesses to the fight itself.”

“You still have an opinion, who do you believe?” She asked again, her tone leaving no way to avoid the question.

He sighed, “I may not know Gendry very well, but I do know he is not stupid. Attempting to kill Joffrey this way is stupid. It would look like the newly acknowledged prince killed his brother for the throne, which is exactly what Joffrey is claiming he was trying to do.” Jaime shook his head, “Gendry doesn’t seem the type with that sort of ambition.”
“Would Joffrey really try to kill his brother?” Cersei asked, though she was really just saying a thought aloud and not expecting Jaime to answered.
“Joffrey doesn’t see Gendry has his brother, he is only a bastard who wants his throne.”

She turned her eyes to her brother, “He said that?”

Jaime nodded, “I questioned him about what happened in the woods and that was he told me.”

“Did you speak to Gendry about what happened?”

Jaime nodded, “Gendry’s story is that Joffrey fired his crossbow at him but missed. Gendry then threatened with his spear but he swears he was just trying to scare Joffrey, that he wasn’t planning to kill him. A group of piglet ran past and one of them tripped Joffrey. While Gendry was focused on the large boar then charging them, Joffrey used the opportunity to stab Gendry in the leg.”

Cersei sat back down and drank the rest of the wine in her glass, “Was I selfish during this whole thing with Gendry?”

Jaime shook his head, “what do you mean?”

“Arya told me I was selfish and that my actions placed Gendry in danger. Was she right?”

Jaime took the other available seat, “When did she say this?”

“Yesterday, we had a talk in the gardens.”

“You allowed her to talk to like that?” Jaime asked, the surprise clear in his tone.

Cersei sighed, “Usually I would not but I need that little wolf to like me so I can spend time with my grandchild when it is born. Yelling at her would not endure her to me.” She looked over at her brother, “Is Gendry with the maester now?”

“Yes, I left him there with Robert and Lord Stark.”

She got to her feet, “I am going to go see him and then I want to talk to Joffrey.”

Jaime stood as well, “What are you going to say?”

Cersei shook her head, “I just want to hear what happened, directly from them both.”

Arya was talking with Sansa and her mother in the common room of the Tower of the Hand when her youngest brother rushed through the door.

“Back alrea…” Catelyn started to say before Rickon interrupted, “Joffrey stabbed Gendry in the leg, he is with the Maester now.”

Arya was instantly on her feet, “You can tell us what happened as we walk.”

The four of them walked as quickly as possible to the healing rooms near the Maester’s chambers. Bran and Tommen were leaning against the wall outside one of the rooms, Ser Barristan and Lord Renly were whispering further down the hall. They looked up as the Starks came into view and walked to join the boys.

Arya reached for the door but Renly placed a hand on her arm, “Your father and my brother wanted to talk to Gendry alone.”
She shook of his arm, “I will be seeing my husband right now my lord. If you really want to try me, be my guest.”

She wasn’t sure if it was her stare or her tone, but something swayed him and he opened the door for her. First thing she saw was the backs of the King and her father standing at the foot of a bed. Her eyes then noticed Grand Maester Pycelle sitting on a stool with a sewing kit next to him. She moved to the vacant side of the bed, ignoring the words throw at her from the three older men. Her focus was purely on her husband who gave her a small smile as she sat on the bed.

She placed a hand on his cheek, “Are you going to be alright?”

“Blonde sucker stabbed me in the leg but I will be fine.”

She nodded before turning to the two most powerful men in Westeros, “What do you plan to do about this?”

“Arya, we are still trying to piece togeth…” Ned started to say.

“What is there to put together? Gendry told you what happened!”

“Joffrey tells a different story.” Ned replied.

She narrowed her eyes at them and got to her feet, Gendry grabbing one of her hands to stop her from advancing on them, “Joffrey is a liar and a monster. I never thought him a fool but this incident clearly shows otherwise. He only cares about one thing, himself. You do the entire realm a favor and execute him!”

“Arya!” Ned admonished.

She looked away for a moment, but it wasn’t out of shame or fear, no, it was to take a moment to get her anger under control. She took a deep breath and in a calm voice said, “I only speak the truth and shall not apologize for it, Your Grace.” She shared a quick look at her father before going back to the King, “If you would like insight into the true character of the Crown Prince I would suggest you speak to my sister. She witnessed him doing some truly horrifying behavior. Something that disturbed her so much that no longer wishes to marry Joffrey and is dreading the idea with her whole heart.”

Robert’s face was beat red with anger and he had to unclench his teeth to turn to her father, “What is she talking about Ned? Is this because of that business with the cat?”

Arya was shocked, “You knew about the cat?”, Gendry squeezed her hand, trying to stop her but it was too late, “And you are still okay with letting a person like that be king? What kind of father are you?”

“I am the King! You should remember that girl.”

Arya was not afraid of him and his Baratheon fury, she was a Stark of Winterfell and she had her own fury growing in her womb, “I am not a girl. I am a woman grown with your grandchild inside me. You cannot frighten me. That sorry excuse of a man that you all want to let be king does not frighten me.”

Robert’s eyes flickered briefly from her face to her womb before he looked over at Gendry, who had pushed himself into a sitting position. He took a breath before saying, “You swear, on all the gods, that what you told us is the truth?”
“Yes, Father.” He replied, his eyes focused on the King.

Arya was surprised at the familiar title he used but knew better than to question it now. It was clear Gendry was using it for a purpose.

He nodded and looked at Ned, “I want to speak with Joffrey again before making my decision.”

“I would like a chance to speak to him as well.” Ned agreed, his eyes looking back to Arya, “You are not to do anything in retaliation. Is that understood?”

Arya nodded.

“I want to hear the words.”

She huffed, “I promise I will not retaliate.” For now, she added in her head.

Both men turned to leave but the door opened before they could reach it and Cersei strode in. Arya rolled her eyes and sat back down on the bed, her back to the Queen as she took in her husband. She could hear the three of them whispered behind her but she instead looked at the Maester, who had remained silent so far, “Will his leg be alright?”

The old man nodded, “Nothing important was hit by the blade. There will be a scar but as long as we keep it clean of infection, there should be no complications.”

“Thank the gods.” Cersei commented.

Arya looked over her shoulder and noticed the Queen was the only other person still in the room with them.

Cersei looked back at the Grand Maester, “Are you finished for now?”

“I am Your Grace. You can return your rooms Ser, came back tomorrow and I will change the dressing.” He replied before he bowed and left the room as well.

Cersei moved to the now vacant side of the bed, and moved the Maester’s empty stool to be near the head of the bed. She smiled at Gendry, “How are you feeling?”

“Like I was stabbed in the leg.” Was his gruff reply and Arya had to stifle the giggle.

Cersei just nodded, “Jaime told me what happened, but I would like to hear it from you, if you don’t mind.”

Arya narrowed her eyes, Cersei was acting strange. This was not the suppressing rage that the Queen had shown the last time they spoke or the fake sweetness she had at the dinner, this was a tone she had not heard before.

Gendry was quiet a moment before speaking, “I was walking and a crossbow bolt flew in front of my face. When looked in the direction from which it came, Joffrey was standing there with his crossbow pointed right at me. If he was a better shot, I would be dead.”

Arya squeezed his hand tighter, she could be a widow right now. Her child might never have had a chance to meet its father. All because of that stupid little shit.

Gendry brought her hand to his lips, causing her to look at him, “I will be fine love, he didn’t succeed in killing me.”
“What happened next?” Cersei asked, breaking the moment between them.

Gendry looked back to the Queen, “I attacked him with my spear, I used to knock his crossbow away and then held it against his throat. The piglets startled us and one ran between Joffrey’s legs, tripping him. I turned to face the threat of their much larger mother and while I was distracted, Joffrey stabbed me in the leg. I still managed to kill the boar. Joffrey then got to his feet and drew his sword. The Hound and the King showed up before he could do anything.”

The three of them fell into silence after he finished speaking and Arya could see that Cersei was thinking hard. She assumed it wasn’t easy to accept that one of your children attempted to kill another, all because of greed. Arya couldn’t help it, she let out a laugh.

Cersei glared at her, “Is something funny about this to you my lady?”

Arya shook her head, “I told you this would happen, I just hadn’t expected it to happen so soon.” She then looked away from her husband and looked to his mother instead, “Is this all that you were hoping for when you destroyed our lives?”

“I am not to blame for this.” Cersei spat back.

“You are the one that raised a selfish prick for a son. I think some of it is your fault.” Arya countered.

“I allowed your insolence once without comment, do not expect the same treatment again.” Cersei threatened, her anger was less explosive than the King’s.

Arya rolled her eyes, “That didn’t work from the King and it certainly won’t work from you either.”

Cersei opened her mouth to speak again but Gendry interrupted, “Mother, could we speak more later? I am very tired and want to get back to our own chambers before I allow sleep to take me.”

She was quiet for a moment before nodding and giving him a soft smile, “Of course, we shall talk more tomorrow.”

“Thank you.” He replied and Cersei left without another word.

Those out in the hall filtered into the room immediately after her departure and Arya sighed, she wanted time to speak to him alone. That would have to wait until they were back in their own rooms it would seem.

Gendry was tired of all the attention he was receiving, he understood that everyone was just worried about him, but he wanted some space. At least space from everyone not Arya. So when Bran was finished helping him get up the stairs to his chambers, he was done with social interactions and announced he needed rest. The rest of the Starks filtered to their own chambers and he relaxed on the bed. He heard Arya harshly whispering with someone on the other side of the door before she firmly shut it and turned back to him.

She immediately climbed up onto the other side of the bed and sat next to him, “Are you really alright?”

He nodded, “The injury isn’t that bad.”

She let out a sigh of relief, “How are doing up here?” She asked and tapped his head.
He shook his head, “I’ve never had someone try to kill me before. I’ve been in fights before but I always knew it was nothing more than a tavern brawl. This was something different.”

She allowed him silence after he finished speaking and he was so grateful for her understanding. He knew that if this had all somehow happened without her, that he would not be handling this as well as he was.

“I was finally getting used to the idea of having a family of people who shared my blood. Lord Renly, Tommen, Ser Jaime, even the King talked to me. It felt nice to be accepted by them. That feeling abandoned me the second Joffrey threatened me. He is my brother but he tried to kill me.”

He had been staring at some point on the wall while he spoke but now he turned to her, “What caused him to hate me so much to attempt to murder me?”

She grabbed the hand closest to her and squeezed it, “You did nothing to bring this on. Joffrey was ruled by his own insecurities and stupidity. Do not blame yourself for any of this.”

“What happens next? What happens if they believe Joffrey over me?” He asked, feeling the panic starting to fill him.

She silent a moment and he could see the steel in her grey eyes when they met his, “Joffrey will not get away with this. He will be punished. Whether by the crown or the gods, he shall not be given a pass.”

“You cannot kill him Arya.” He said, he had no doubt in his mind that his beautiful wife was fully capable of killing a person she deemed deserved it, especially when they had hurt some she loved. He lifted her hand to his lips, placing gentle kisses along the knuckles, “I do not want anything to happen to you on my account.”

“He tried to kill you. I cannot let that go. I will not let him or Cersei or Robert think that what happened is okay.” She looked away a moment before coming back to him, “I will not do anything to happen to you on my account.”

He reached down and tilted her head up, “I will not let them take me away from either of you. If I actually have to kill Joffrey to ensure it, then I will.”

She shifted her body up and kissed him before whispering, “If it comes to that, we shall kill him together.

As she settled her body back down so they were laying on top of the blanket together, with her once again curled against him, he knew he would survive this. With Arya on his side, he felt invincible, and with that thought, he fell into a deep sleep.

The King summoned all of them to the Throne Room the next morning. Starks, Lannisters, Baratheons, and all the members of the small council. Arya stuck firmly to Gendry's side, she would not be separated from him again anytime soon. Joffrey was standing next to his grandfather and she noticed every time he looked over at them, his face turned up in disdain. She hoped her own murderous glare would keep in line.

All eyes turned to Robert when he began speaking from his place on the Iron Throne, "This is a difficult situation and not one I was ever thinking I would have to contend with. I have two sons and each claims that the other tried to kill him and he defended himself." He paused a took a
breath, "The answer to this is beyond me. I have decided there will be trial to determine the truth of the matter. The wedding and the tournament shall be postponed until such time as the trial has come to an end."

Arya wasn't sure what all a trial would entail but she would make sure Gendry was the victor, she swore it to the old gods and the new.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone!!!! I didn't proofread this too hard because I wanted to get it out, so hopefully nothing was too messed up there. Don't be afraid to let me know what you are thinking about how the story is progressing! I always love hearing your thoughts.
The Trial Begins

Chapter Summary

As the trial begins, so does the plotting

Chapter Notes

Hello wonderful readers. I apologize for their being no update last week. I was dealing with some personal things and was not in any frame of mind to write. To make up for it, this one is almost twice as long as the usual updates. Hope you don't mind the extra long read but I couldn't find a spot I liked to split it up. I also apologize for any grammar mistakes. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry was nervous as he sat in one of the chairs in Lord Stark’s, no Ned’s, solar. His wife’s father had asked him to stop using the title, they were family, and family did not need titles. The trial would start in the morning, after nearly a fortnight of preparations, and he did not like the odds, even with the truth on his side.

Ned handed him a goblet of wine before he sat down in his own chair, “Do you know what a trial is?”

Gendry nodded, “Arya explained it to me, at least the basics.”

“Good. This one will be a little unusual. I am not sure there has ever been a trial between two princes to figure out which one is telling the truth about trying to kill the other before.” Ned said, “Robert, Lord Tywin, and I have devised the system for how this trial will play out. There will be seven judges, one from each kingdom represented. Except for the Iron Islands, they declined a summons and no one came for the wedding. Their spot will be filled by an Archmaester, selected from the Citadel, and will be the head judge. There will be 8 judges total.”

“Who selected the other judges?”

“The Lord Paramounts. No one with the name Lannister, Baratheon, or Stark is allowed to sit on the panel of judges, to avoid any favoritism.” He sighed, “I know he is your grandfather, but I fear he might try to side with Joffrey in this matter.”

Gendry nodded, “It would make sense, Joffrey is the one he knows.”

“I wish I could promise you that this will all turn out the way we want but I fear that Tywin and Joffrey will attempt to bribe the other judges in their favor.”

“How many do you think will side with Joffrey?” Gendry asked, spinning the goblet in his hand.
Ned shook his head, “I do not know. I selected Lady Maege Mormont to represent the North, she is a strong and fair woman. Renly selected Lord Davos Seaworth for the Stormlands, he is loyal to Stannis as far as I know. Catelyn’s brother will represent the Riverlands.”

“So, three should be on our side.” Gendry stated, thinking about it.

Ned nodded, “Lord Royce of the Vale and Lord Tyrell of the Reach could go either way. Prince Oberyn Martell of Dorne will do the opposite of whatever Tywin wishes I believe.”

“Why?”

“When the Lannister sacked King’s Landing at the end of the Rebellion. One of Tywin’s men murdered Princess Elia and her children. Princess Elia was Oberyn’s sister. He blames Tywin for their deaths.” Ned explained and then took a drink of his wine, a faraway look in his eyes.

Gendry didn’t want to break the silence, he could tell that Ned needed a moment to come back from whatever memory he was in.

Ned shook his head and looked back at Gendry, “We will need to do everything we can to sway everyone to our side.”

“How do we do that? These people don’t know me. I am just a blacksmith who got knighted and married a lord’s daughter. I am not anyone to them. Joffrey is the Crown Prince, their future King.”

He said and downed his wine, “These things never work out for people like me.”

Ned leaned forward and placed his hands on his desk, “I know it is hard to come to grips with but you are a prince now too Gendry.”

“They don’t know that.”

“They will, we are going to tell them.”

Gendry looked at him in shock, “We are?”

He nodded, “Yes, we need to be able to tell the full story and for that, the court will need to be aware of who you really are. When you are introduced, it shall be as Gendry Baratheon.”

He shook his head, “It should be Stefon.”

Ned looked at him confused, “Why do you say that?”

“I’ve been discussing it with Arya. We think it will look better if I am officially Stefon Baratheon, but I will remain Gendry to those that matter.” He replied, “Robert asked me to think about it, before my brother tried to kill me, and I have.”

“Stefon it will be then.” Ned agreed, “Before either you or Joffrey testify, each side is going to call character witnesses.”

“Can assume that Joffrey’s will all be paid off?” Gendry asked, already knowing the answer.

“Yes, Lannister gold no doubt.” Ned replied, “We just need to trust that those we have on our side can convince the judges of the truth.”

“Who will be my witnesses?” He was nervous, his future was in the hands of eight judges, none of which had any reason to believe him.
“Myself, Sansa, and Tommen, should he be allowed.”

Gendry looked up surprised, “Tommen wants to be a witness for me? He barely knows me.”

“He came to me a few days ago, told me he wants everyone to know what kind of person Joffrey is. He is a good boy.”

Gendry agreed, “Too bad he can’t become the King, maybe then we would all be better off.”

Ned didn’t answer and Gendry felt there was something heavy in his lack of response, like Gendry was missing something important.

“What is it?” He eventually asked.

Ned shook his head, “You need to be focused on this. Should the outcome require it, then we shall talk about it.”

Gendry frowned, he didn’t like the sound of that, but he could understand the reasoning, “After the character witnesses, then Joffrey and I testify?”

“Yes. Joffrey first, than you. After that there will be testimony from Ser Barristan, Sandor Clegane, and the Grand Maester, should there be questions about your wounds.” Ned answered, “After that, the judges can request to speak to whoever else they wish before making their decision.”

“Can Joffrey do anything to force the outcome in his favor?”

“Besides attempting to bribe the judges, his only other option if he feels things aren’t going his way is to demand a trial by combat instead. In which case, both of you would pick a champion to fight to the death, and the loser shares the fate of their champion, or the Wall.” Ned informed him.

“Why would we use a champion and let someone else die in our place?” Gendry asked, “That seems like the cowards way out.”

Ned smiled, “I suppose it is.”

“Do you think Joffrey will go that way?”

“I honestly could not tell you. I do know, that if they did, he would chose one of the Clegenes has his champion. The Hound and the Mountain would not easily be defeated in single hand combat by anyone that I know.” Ned told him.

“Then I am fucked.” Gendry replied, looking at the empty goblet in his hand, “If the trial starts to go my way then he will do this trial by combat and I lose. If the trial goes his way, I lose.”

Ned rested a hand on his shoulder, Gendry hadn’t even noticed that he had risen from his chair, “I will do everything in my power to make sure that you do not lose. You are a member of this family Gendry and family protects one another, no matter what.”

Gendry got to his feet and on an impulse he had never felt before with anyone but Arya, he threw his arms around his good-father and whispered, “Thank you.”

The sun was starting to filter through the curtains but Arya was already wide awake, she wasn’t even sure she had fallen asleep at all. Gendry was curled around her back, his steady breaths usually had a calming effect, they hadn’t last night. Her brain wasn’t able to shut off her fears. Gendry had returned from the meeting with her father looking like a lost child. He told her what
they had discussed about the trial and the possibility of a trial by combat. She had seen the Mountain walking around the castle a few times in the last week, he was huge and she had no doubt believing the rumor he cut a horse in half with a single swing of his sword.

She had spent all night trying to think of a way to convince Joffrey that only cowards have champions fight for them. Even if it never actually got to that point, she wanted the thought in his head. She knew that she couldn’t say anything to him directly, he would never listen to any of the words she said. She knew what she needed to do.

Carefully she extracted herself from the bed, knowing Gendry would need his sleep, and dressed in a simple blue gown. Her bump had become much more noticeable in the last week, she wasn’t going to hide it any longer, hoping it would bring some sympathy.

She knocked twice on the door to her brothers’ chambers before pushing open the door. Both of them were looking at her from their beds with sleepy faces.

“Something wrong?” Bran asked, stretching as he sat up.

“Only everything.” She replied on sat on the foot of Rickon’s bed, “I need you both to do something for me and for Gendry.”

“Can I hit Joffrey now?” Rickon questioned.

She let out a small laugh, “No, but you could help trick Joffrey into his death.”

“I will do it. What is it?” Rickon agreed easily.

“I want to know what it is first.” Bran said from his own bed.

“Father told Gendry that there is always a chance that the trial could always be changed to a trial by combat. I want you two to plant the idea that the use of champion in the combat was the craven way out.”

“How would we do that?” Rickon asked, sharing a look with his brother before looking back at Arya.

“Just, talk about it somewhere that we will overhear you. Maybe get someone else to agree with you, Ser Loras or some other knight. Joffrey is vain, I am hoping that if he thinks people would call him a coward for using a champion, that he would fight himself or maybe not call for trial by combat in the first place.”

“Can Gendry beat him in single combat? He is still shit with a sword.” Bran replied.

Arya smiled, “He wouldn’t be using a sword.”

Arya was nervous as she awaited the start of the trial, Robert was sitting on the throne, the crown reflecting the light from the windows. She thought he looked drunk, while there was no wine to be seen, his eyes were unfocused and his face was flushed. Cersei was sitting in elaborate chair the left of the throne, her dress was black instead of the usual red and gold, as if she was already in mourning. Her father was to the King’s right, his grey eyes carefully watching the crowded throne room. The eight judges were split in half, four to the right of the throne and four to the left. At the base of the steps three platforms had been constructed, one for Joffrey, one for Gendry, and one from which the witnesses would testify.
Arya was sitting on a bench that had been provided behind the platform that Gendry would be sitting in. Her mother was on one side, while Sansa was on the other, with their brothers beside her. Joffrey’s bench held Lord Tywin and some of his lackeys. The small council had their own area and then the rest of the lords and ladies filled the remaining space in the great hall. The whispers were almost deafening.

A banging drew everyone’s attention to the throne, the silence shocking before the King stood up and spoke, “Citizens of the realm, you are all here today to witness the trial which will reveal the truth behind two serious accusations. Before I reveal the charges, there is something else that must be shared. Some of you might remember that the Queen and I had a child born before Prince Joffrey, but he died. Or that was what we were lead to believe but the gods have recently revealed the truth and he has been returned to us. Ser Gendry, a former blacksmith and the husband of Lady Arya Stark, will from this day forth be known as Ser Stefon Baratheon, a prince of the Seven Kingdoms, and the heir to Storm’s End.” Robert paused as the whispers began again before the herald once again banged for attention. Once it was again silent, he started speaking, “Now onto the matter at hand. We are here today because Prince Joffrey has accused Prince Stefon of attempting to murder him. Prince Stefon denies these allegations and claims that Prince Joffrey attempted to murder him instead. As this an issue involving two of my sons, I recuse myself from sitting judgement on this trial. My Hand, Lord Eddard Stark, will also be recusing as Prince Stefon is his good-son. A jury has been selected representing the seven Kingdoms, with Archmaester Martyn being the head judge.”

Robert turned and nodded at the herald before sitting down, the red-haired young man had a surprisingly booming voice as he yelled, “Prince Joffrey Baratheon, heir to the Iron Throne.”

All eyes turned to the main entrance, Joffrey walked down the aisle, his outfit made of the finest materials in the red and gold of House Lannister. Arya thought that was an interesting choice, when she knew most of his argument would be that Gendry wasn’t a true Baratheon. He was being escorted by a member of the Kingsguard and kept his eyes straight ahead until he got to his platform, then his eyes scanned the room, when he got to her he smirked. She hoped the look on her face was as murderous as she was intending.

“Prince Stefon Baratheon, heir to Storm’s End.” The herald said.

The eyes that had followed Joffrey immediately went back to the door, for those of them that had never seen the husband of Arya Stark, this was their first glimpse of the returned prince. Sansa had been working on the tunic ever since the trial had been announced, knowing that Gendry would need something royal. It was gold tunic with large black stags embroidered on the chest. On his shoulders were patches of red with small lion heads sewn in for detail. Down the center of his back was black stripe and between the shoulder blades was the direwolf of House Stark. His black hair was a drastic contrast to the gold and his blue eyes shown. He looked every bit the son of Robert Baratheon as he walked with confidence toward his platform, his own Kingsguard following behind.

Once everyone had once again settled down the Archmaester got to his feet and walked to the center of the dias, standing before the King, “Your Grace, with your permission, we shall begin?”

Robert nodded, “You have the floor Archmaester.”

The man turned around, his grey robes swinging as he did. Arya would have expected him to be older, like Maester Luwin and Pycelle, she was surprised to see he was closer to her father’s age, they grey only started to show in his brown hair. He cleared his throat before speaking, “Lords and Ladies, we are here for a most delicate matter. The attempted murder of anyone is a terrible
offense but when it is between two brothers, things become more complex. We are here to determine what is the truth.” He clasped his hands together, “First, we shall begin with Prince Joffrey’s account of events, then we shall hear Prince Stefon’s. Then we will hear from a few others that witnesses the event, before moving on to character witnesses. Once the prepared testimonies have been shared. The judges are free to call anyone they wish to the stand for more evidence.” He turned to Joffrey, “Your Grace, if you would please move to the center platform and share what happened.”

Arya frowned, her father had said they would start with the character witnesses. She glanced up and him, the furrow in his brow showing his confusion as well. The Archmaester returned to his seat and then Joffrey began to speak, “About a moon ago, my Father called the family all together for an announcement. I, wrongly, assumed it regards to be upcoming wedding. Instead, he told us that the brother I had grown up thinking was dead was in fact alive and that he had been living in the Red Keep with us for a long time.” Joffrey stopped at turned to Gendry, he pointed, “They said that man is my elder brother.” Joffrey paused and looked back to the judges, “I believe that they have all been fooled. That man is not Stefon, he is nothing more that a bastard from Flea Bottom. My concerns were set aside and I was told to accept it. I was informed that my new brother have no place in the succession for the throne and that he would become my uncle’s heir to Storm’s End. I accepted this, as is expected of him, and went back to preparing for my wedding. Father then said he wanted to do a hunt, allowing for some family bonding. While we were out on the hunt, we split up to better find our prey. That was when he came at me with the spear he had been given for the boar. I fired my crossbow at him in defense but the shot missed and I ended up with a spear to my throat. If we had been interrupted by the boar my father was chasing, he would have sure killed me. He knocked me to the ground before turning his attention to the boar. Once the creature was taken care of, I stabbed him in the leg with my knife and then got to my feet and drew my sword to defend myself. The Hound, Sandor Clegane, my personal sworn shield arrived a moment later and my Father arrived next. That was the end of the attack on my life.”

Arya had part of her dresses clenched in her fists, Joffrey was pretending to be an innocent victim, when he was anything but that. Even the look on his face was as fake as his words, she wanted to punch him. Her mother reached over and smoothed out her hand. Arya looked up into the blue eyes of her mother, they couldn’t speak with words, but the statement as clear, don’t them see your emotions. She took a deep breath as the Archmaester again walked to the center.

“Thank you Your Grace, if you would please return to your platform.”

Joffrey nodded and did so without complaint, but the smirk he shared with Tywin did not escape her attention.

“Prince Stefon, if you would please move to the center and give your version of events.”

Her eyes remained focused on Gendry the whole time, she could see the tension in his shoulders even if it didn’t show in his face.

“I was walking in the woods, attempting to not make noise as I was told, when I heard a noise. I stopped to listen but I didn’t hear anything, as I was about to take a step to start moving again a crossbow bolt flew by my face and hit the tree beside me. I turned to look for the source and there was Joffrey, a look of pure hatred on his face as he moved to reload. I was faster and knocked the crossbow from his hands and placed the edge of my spear blade against his neck. We talked for a few moments before we were interrupted by some piglets, one of them tripped Joffrey. I was distracted by their mother when she rushed at us. Joffrey stabbed me in the leg right as I went to spear the boar. I managed to kill the boar but the wound caused me to fall. Joffrey stood and drew his sword, I was sure he was about to kill me when the Hound arrived. King Robert arrived before
Joffrey could kill me or order the Hound to do it.”

The Archmeaster nodded, and Arya could not get a good read on his opinions from his expression, “Thank you, Your Grace, please return to your platform.”

Gendry did as requested and made sure to catch her eyes as he walked back, she hoped the smile she sent him was reassuring.

“We summon Sandor Clegane to the stand.”

Arya looked off to Joffrey’s side and watched as the man in question did as he was bid. He looked just as gruff as he usually did.

Once Clegane was in his spot, the Archmaester began, “All we need to know is what you witnessed the day.”

Clegane was silent for awhile and Arya thought maybe he wouldn’t answer, but then he began speaking, “I heard the boar screaming, I figured someone had felled one of the creatures and went to join them. Prince Joffrey was standing over the black….Prince Stefon who had a knife in the leg and was laying next to a boar with a spear sticking out of its chest.”

“Did you witness anything that looked like an attack from either Prince?”

“I didn’t see either one take a swing at the other if that is what you are asking. Whatever happened was over when I got there.”

“And Prince Joffrey didn’t ask you to kill Prince Steffon?”

“No. The King showed up not long after I did, there was no time for speaking.” The Hound answered, the annoyance clear in his tone.

“Thank you Clegane. You may return to your seat.”

The Hound did not return to his seat, instead he stomped out of the hall through one of the side entrances. Arya wondered why he was in such a hurry but she had no time to ponder these things at the moment.

“Ser Barristan Selmy.” The Archmaester called and the Kingsguard walked over from his place against the wall. Once he was settled the Archmaester asked, “Ser Barristan, you were out with the King’s hunting party on this correct?”

“Yes Archmaester. The King split our group into two, I was in a group with the King, all three princes, and Clegane.”

“Whose idea was it to separate?”

“The King.”

“Did you witness the attack?”

“I did not. I arrived much later with Prince Tommen, by that time the other members of our party were already there. I went to tend to Prince Stefon while the King began questioning what happened. That was when Prince Joffrey accused his brother of attempting to murder him and Prince Stefon claimed the opposite was true.”

“Was anything else said?”
Ser Barristan shook his head, “Not on that matter. I assisted Prince Stefon to his feet and we all began the walk back to camp.”

“Thank you Ser Barristan, that is all.”

“Archmaester, I would like a word if you please?” Prince Oberyn said from the sidelines, and the Archmaester walked over to the Dornish man.

They were too far away for Arya to hear but she could see that the Prince had an opinion and from the frown he carried as the Archmaester walked away, he did not get his wish.

“Before we move on to the next part of the trial, we will take a small break, and in one hour.”

Arya was surprised they were taking a break already and as she watched the judges all walk out of the room, she was worried about the reasons.

Gendry was nervous as he remained on his platform, Arya had come to join him, giving him comfort while everyone else talked around them. He noticed that Bran and Rickon were talking in a group near Joffrey, but he couldn't even begin to guess what the two were up to.

She leaned against him and whispered, “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

He nodded, he knew she meant it but that if he was found guilty, what could she actually do?

The judges choose that moment to return, she squeezed his hand before going back to her seat. The herald called for everyone to return to their places. Gendry took a deep breath as the Archmaester returned to his spot standing before the throne.

“We have discussed it and before we call any character witnesses. The judges would like to ask Prince Stefon a few questions. Your Grace, if you would please return to the witness stand.”

Gendry did as he requested and his eyes landed on the Queen, she did not seem confident about this change of events.

The Archmaester turned, “Prince Oberyn, you may proceed.”

The Prince did not stand, he simply leaned forward, “The King has told us all that you are his son. What were you doing before you returned to royalty?”

“I was a blacksmith. I worked for Tobo Mott on the street of steel.”

“How did you come to marry Lady Stark?”

Gendry was not sure how to respond, did he tell the lie or the truth, he decided for an inbetween, “She came into my shop and bought a dagger. Then I saw her again a few moons later and saved her from some thugs that wished to rob her. She brought me before her father and asked to allow us to marry, he knighted me for protecting her and we were married that same night.”

Prince Oberyn eyes moved to Arya, taking in the swell to her belly, he smiled, “Yes, I am sure that was the reason Lord Stark allowed the marriage. You did not know you were the King’s son at this time?”

“No my lord. I was not told of that until I was summoned to a meeting with the King, Queen, and a few others.” Gendry replied, keeping eye contact with the Dornish man.
“You are a lucky man. A beautiful woman marries you and then you find out you are a prince.” He comments, and when Gendry does not reply he asks, “Had you had an encounters with Prince Joffrey before your true identity came out?”

“Only once my lord. He threatened me while I was touring the tournament grounds with Lord Stark and his sons.”

“What did he say?”

“He asked the Hound if it would be bad luck to kill his betrothed good-brother before the wedding. When the Hound responded it would be, the Prince said that we would just kill me afterwards then.”

“Had you done something to offend him?”

“Not that I know of my lord. He just kept referring to me as bastard.” Gendry replied, he wished he could turn to see how Joffrey was taking this news, “He still believes me to be nothing more than one of the King’s bastards, not the trueborn son they claim me to be.”

“He told you?” Prince Oberyn asked, and Gendry could see a few of the other judges were paying more attention.

“He did, while I held the spear to his throat. My wife’s sister, Sansa, also told me that Joffrey told her something similar.”

Oberyn shifted his focus to the redhead sitting behind him, before going back to Gendry, “Do you have problems with Prince Joffrey?”

Gendry wondered again for a moment on his truthfulness, “He is not a good man, he tried to kill me, and I have heard other disturbing things from others.”

“From Lady Sansa?”

Gendry nodded, “Yes, and my other brother, Prince Tommen.”

Prince Oberyn leaned back into his chair, “I have no further questions for the Prince.”

The Archmaester got to his feet, but Lord Westerling got to his feet, “If I may. Your Grace, how can you expect us to believe all of this? If we side with you and remove Prince Joffrey from the line of succession, you would be next in line. How can we be sure you are not just spreading lies so you can become King?”

Gendry turned to look at the lord, “I have no desire to be King, my lord. I am blacksmith. I would not know the first thing about being a King. Prince Tommen would be the best choice for everyone.”

Gendry could see that the lord was not expecting such an answer and he sat back down without saying anything else.

“Does anyone else have any questions for Prince Stefon?” He paused and when no one answered he dismissed Gendry back to his platform.

Gendry spared a glance at Joffrey, and noticed the other man was not even attempting to disguise the hate on his face.
“Lady Sansa of House Stark.” The Archmaester said and Gendry turned to watch her walk to the witness stand, she kept her eyes down, not risking a glance at Joffrey. Once she seated, he spoke again, “Lady Sansa, you are betrothed to Prince Joffrey correct?”

“Yes Archmaester.” She replied and Gendry noticed she kept her gaze forward.

“Prince Stefon said you told him Prince Joffrey threatened his life, is that the truth?”

She was silent for a moment before replying, “Yes, it is true.”

“Did he tell you this before or after he learned that Prince Stefon was his brother?”

“Before, but he did think that Gendry,” she paused, “Apologies, Prince Stefon was one of his father’s bastards.”

The Archmaester was quiet a moment, “Did you believe he meant to follow through with this threat to kill him?”

“I did.”

“Why? Had you witnessed the Prince threatened others and follow through?”

She shook her head, “No but I did witness him skin a cat alive, and he was laughing as he did it.”

A loud gasp came from the crowd and the whispers once again started. Gendry could not make out the words but when he took a glance back, he noticed most of them were looking at Joffrey with a look of surprise or disgust.

“Lying whore!” Joffrey yelled, his face was beat red with his anger.

Lord Tywin immediately rushed to his feet and was at Joffrey’s side. Gendry looked at Sansa, she was purposely looking in the opposite direction of Joffrey.

The Archmaester shared a look with the King, who Gendry had avoided looking at before now. His face was set in a neutral expression, but Gendry could recognize the anger sitting below the surface. The King turned and gestured to the herald, the man quickly ran up and then returned to his spot. He banged his cane against the floor, the sound echoing in the large room, and then he yelled, “Everyone will be silent, on orders of the King.”

Gendry was amazed that the sound all instantly faded away and he noticed that Lord Tywin returned to his seat.

The Archmaester waited another moment before saying, “Lady Sansa, you swear before all the gods that what you say is truthful?”

“I do swear Archmaester. The Crown Prince is a cruel man, Prince Stefon is a kind one. I know which version of events I believe.” Sansa said as she straightened her back.

“You would be Queen, you are willing to give that all up?” Prince Oberyn asked.

Sansa turned her eyes to him, “There are more important things.”

The room fell into an eerie silence, and the Archmaester broke it, “Thank you Lady Sansa, you may step down.”

Gendry looked over the faces of the judges, trying to decide if Sansa’s words had swayed any more
He could see they were all deep in thought. Prince Oberyn and Lord Tully, who was sitting next to him, were talking in whispers. Lord Tully then turned and spoke to the two lords on his other side, Lord Royce and Lord Tyrell. The Archmaester seemed to notice the movement and walked over to the four lords. He spoke to them for a few moments before he walked over to the other three judges, Lady Mormont, Lord Seaworth, and Lord Westerling.

The Archmaester then returned to speak to the room, “Prince Joffrey. Please return to the stand, the judges have some more questions.”

Gendry turned to his brother and could see that he was unhappy with the turn of events.

“I do not think I will.” Joffrey said, and then he looked out over them all, “I can see you have already believed the lies you’ve heard here today. I will not trust you vultures with my future. I will put it in the hands of the gods. I demand that this matter be decided by trial by combat. No champions either, bastard.”

Gendry knew what to do, he and Arya had talked about this possibility, “I accept.”

The noise that filled the room after that was much louder than whispers.

Chapter End Notes

Many of you correctly guessed where this was going to go, good job!

I cannot promise the next update will be on time either, because of the holidays, but I will do best.

Thank you for all the patience everyone, I really appreciate it.
Cersei did not know what to do. How had things gotten to this point, tomorrow one of her sons could potentially die. The wine had long stopped being a comfort but she continue to drink her sorrows anyway. Arya’s words kept ringing her head, she had warned her something like this would happen. Only, the warning had come too late for Cersei to be able to act, not that there was anything she could have done to prevent it anyway. She stood on unsteady feet and moved to the balcony, hoping maybe the fresh air would help clear her mind. She was not sure how long she stood there before she heard a voice, “Sister, are you alright?”

She turned and looked down at her little brother, the one that left her motherless far too young, “What do you want Tyrion?”

“I wanted to check on you. This cannot be an easy time.”

She laughed, a hollow bitter sound, “Tomorrow one of my son’s will die, of course it is not an easy time.” She pushed past him and back into the room, “Why do you even care?”

“Despite what you might think,” He said as he poured himself some wine, “I do not want you to suffer the loss of a child, especially when you just got him returned to you.”

She studied him a moment, “Do you think Gendry will lose?”

Tyrion shrugged, “That is a question for Jaime. I have not seen him practice, he is doing it somewhere in private. Joffrey is not hiding away with his, but I have seen enough tourney’s to know he is not as good as he believes he is.”

“Who do you believe?”

Tyrion took a long drink before responding, “I have known Joffrey his entire life and only know Gendry through a few conversations.” He looked at her, “Joffrey tried to kill Gendry.”

She sat down in one of the chairs, “How did it come to this?”

He sat in the other chair, “I do not have an answer for you. All you can do is prepare yourself for
what is to come tomorrow. Gendry has more to fight for, a wife and child on the way, no matter his skill, he will not go down easy. I am also sure a life of swinging a blacksmith hammer has built his stamina more than a life of privilege has Joffrey.”

“I should have allowed Gendry to live his life as a blacksmith and go to Winterfell.” She admitted, drinking more of her wine.

“You did not and now he is Stefon Baratheon, and tomorrow he fights for his life against his brother for a throne he doesn’t even want.”

“How did I miss seeing the kind of man Joffrey had become? He was such a good baby and child.”

Tyrion gave her a small smile, “No one wants to see their child as a sadistic monster, you just focused on the good things and ignored the bad.”

“Do you think Joffrey would take the black?”

“No, I don’t think he would. This can only end one way I’m afraid.”

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Arya curled into his chest, her breathing coming back to down to normal, and she looked over to the corner, “Did you get everything to be the way you want?”

He nodded, “Mott does excellent work, no one I trust more, and he put everything else aside so we could get it done in time.”

“You will win. Bran and Rickon have been watching his training sessions, even with the Hound as a teacher, he would be able to beat you. Especially since I am sure he isn’t planning on you using a hammer.” She smirked, her fingers making patterns on his chest.

His arm tightened around her, “We can’t underestimate Joffrey. He will do everything he can to ensure I fail, I assume he will have some trick up his sleeve.”

“He is snake. I was half expecting him to try to poison you by now.”

“With all the guards surrounding us both at all time, I don’t think he has had the chance.”

Arya shook her head, “He must have something planned. I don’t trust him to depend only on his skill, which according to Bran and Rickon is average at best.”

“All I need is one good hit and he will crumble. I am stronger than he is, he won’t be able to withstand a solid hit.” He assured her, “I will not fall tomorrow my love.”

She pushed herself up and looked down at him, “I know I don’t need to tell you this but I need to say it.” She paused a moment, “I love you. Even if this babe in my belly hadn’t taken root, I would have found a way to be with you. I have only ever wanted you Gendry, no other man, and there shall never be another man for me. Only you.”

He reached his hand up and brought her face down for a solid kiss on her lips, she rested her forehead against his when they parted, “I love you with my entire being Arya, and I will be victorious tomorrow because I have something to live for that my foolhardy brother does not. The love of a beautiful woman.”

“I will be standing right there on the sidelines, cheering you on.” She laid her head on his chest once again, “We should have fled to Winterfell when we had the chance. Before the Queen ever
laid her eyes on you.”

He kissed the top of her head, “We cannot foresee the future, we just have to deal with these problems as they come along. Together.”

“Together.” She agreed, and couldn’t stop her thoughts from spilling from mouth, “If you kill Joffrey tomorrow, you become the heir to the Iron Throne.”

His entire body tensed and his breathing became shallow for a long moment before he said, “Tommen will the heir, not me.”

“You are the elder brother, by rights it will fall to you.” She whispered, her voice holding no joy at the thought. It was never her dream to be a queen, that was always Sansa, and while she had accepted long ago she one day be lady of a castle, ruling an entire kingdom was beyond her.

“I’ll…..tell them I don’t want, whatever the official way to do that is.”

“Abdicate.” She supplied for him.

“Right, I’ll abdicate the throne and Storm’s End too while I’m at it. We can do our original plan and go to Winterfell. I’ll be the blacksmith and you’ll be my lovely wife, teaching all the children of Winterfell how to weld the small swords I’ll make them.”

She smile, “It is a lovely dream, but it is just a dream. It could have worked when you were just Ser Gendry, but now you are Stefon Baratheon, a prince of the Seven Kingdoms. We cannot simply hide away in the North.”

“I am sorry.”

She shook her head, “None of this is your fault. The Gods have different plans for us.”

“Thought you didn’t believe in the Gods?”

She snorted, “I don’t know how else to explain all the things that have befallen us.”

He sighed, “Suppose you are right, are you okay with being the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms? You’ll be doing most of the ruling I’m afraid, I’d have no idea what to even do.”

“Your father isn’t dead yet stupid. You’ll have time to learn all that stuff. All I am expected to do is look pretty at your side and provide you with many children.” She replied, knowing she probably couldn’t have sounded less thrilled with the idea if she tried.

“No.” Gendry said without pause, “If I am forced into the role of King, you shall be equal Arya. We will rule together, all decisions will be made together. And if you don’t want to give me more children than the one you are already carrying, I am okay with that.”

She smiled into his chest, “We will discuss future children once I am done with this one.” She shook her head, “I’m not even sure I’ll be a good mother to this babe, how can I be the mother of the kingdoms?”

“You will be an amazing mother, I don’t know where you got the notion that you wouldn’t be. You’d also be a wonderful Queen because you have compassion for those less fortunate than yourself.”

“How would you know that?”
“You have never once made me feel like I am lesser than you, even when I was nothing more than a lowly blacksmith selling you a dagger. Everytime we went out into Flea Bottom, I could see you calculating all the ways things could be better. I also overheard you talking to Sansa about all the good you thought she could do as Queen.”

“Yes, what Sansa could do as Queen, not me.” She pushed up and turned back on him, “That isn’t me.”

Gendry sat up and rested his chin on her shoulder, “This isn’t me either but maybe it can be us.”

She shook her head, “Let’s not talk about this now.” She turned and smile at him, “I just want us to pretend this is any other night.”

“Aye m’lady, so then I will do this.” He leaned forward and kissed her soundly before laying her down on her back. There was no need for any further talking as they lost themselves in their love.

“Is this all my fault Ned?”

Ned looked up from his work and over at the King, he was well into his cups and Ned was expecting the guards would have to carry him to his bed tonight. When he didn’t respond Robert continued, “I should have done more to find Stefon, should have listened to Cersei when she insisted that the dead babe wasn’t our son. I was just so angry, I couldn’t see past my own grief to see what she was saying. If we had found him then, everything would be different. Joffrey would have grown up with an elder brother, none of this would have happened.”

Ned set down his quill, “We cannot change the past Robert, whatever has happened already has, all we can do now is focus on the future.”

“A future that will involve me watching one of my sons kill the other tomorrow.”

“There is still time to convince Joffrey to forfeit and take the black.”

Robert shook his head, “He still denies that he attempted to murder his brother and that everyone is just spreading lies about him. He told me the gods are on his side and he will prevail tomorrow.”

“Gendry has more to live for.” Ned commented, knowing sometimes the will to live was stronger than one’s abilities.

“Aye, a beautiful wife and a babe on the way.” Robert drank more of his wine, “If Joffrey wins, you need to get those daughters of yours out of this castle. I do not think they would be safe.”

Ned was shocked at Robert’s admission, “What of the betrothal?”

“It is clear Sansa fears Joffrey, and I will not trap her in a marriage with a man who killed her sister’s husband out of spite. Our houses are already joined anyway, the babe in Arya’s belly is proof of that.” Robert stared at the cup in his hand, twirled the liquid inside, “I fear I missed the kind of man my son became. I did not spend enough time with him as I should have, I didn’t teach him how to be a good man and lord.” His blue eyes raised to his friend, “I fear his paranoia will cause him to want to harm the babe. Winterfell will be the only place it will be safe, Cesei will understand.”

“Gendry has a good chance of winning Robert.” Ned assured his friend, or maybe he was assuring himself.
“Aye, and then who is my heir? The boy of 14 or the man that only recently was declared alive and had to just kill his brother in a trial by combat.” He downed the rest of his cup, “Things have become so complicated.”

Ned nodded, “They have but things are now out of our hands. The Gods will decide their fates tomorrow and the matter will be at an end.”

“But what end shall we pray for?” Robert asked and the two men fell into silence, they both knew the answer but neither wanted to say it out loud.

“You are a fool.” Tywin said as he stepped into his grandson’s chambers, finally able to find a time to get the boy alone.

Joffrey looked up from his bench as he polished his sword, “Thank you for the confidence in my skills Grandfather.”

“You have never fought outside of the training yard. What made you think you could defeat him in single combat?” Tywin asked, walking further into the large room, “There is a reason we keep seasoned knights around.”

Joffrey set down his sword before getting to his feet, “I will not be declared a coward for having some other man fight my battle for me when I am perfectly able to do so myself.”

“Who placed that idiotic notion in your head?” Tywin asked, his eyes focused on the young man before him, “That blacksmith is going to kill you.”

“Have you seen him training with a sword? A squire could defeat him.” Joffrey said with a chuckle and turned away from his grandfather, picking up his sword.

Tywin shook his head, “Do you really think he will be using a sword? The man was raised with a hammer in his hand, he is not a fool, he will be using a warhammer.”

Joffrey slowly turned around, the sword still in hand, “Why do think that?”

“My spies have seen him practicing with one when he has not been working on his armor.” Tywin explained, and walked over to the dummy wearing Joffrey’s own armor, “You have a shield, correct?”

“Aye.” Joffrey responded, his eyes tracking his grandfather’s movements.

“Good, make sure that you use that to take his blows. He is a strong young man from all that labor, one well placed hit will be all he needs.” Tywin replied, his fingers tracing the design on the armor in front of him, “He builds armor for a living, he will know the weak spots.”

“That is the best armor money can buy.” Joffrey protested.

“He will be wearing armor too.” Tywin turned, “Have you seen a full fledged warhammer?”

Joffrey nodded, “Father has shown me the one he used to kill Rhaegar Targaryen before.”

“Good, then you know what damage a warhammer can do. If you don’t think that Rhaegar Targaryen also did not have the best armor money could buy, you’d be an idiot.”

“You shouldn’t insult me. I am the future king!”
Tywin did not react to the outburst, “I am trying to ensure you survive tomorrow, you would do well to listen to my advice. Come over here.”

Joffrey reluctantly walked over and Tywin gestured for the sword.

Tywin pointed the sword at the shoulder, “The armor separates here, this is where you need to aim. He will his bigger than you and that should make him slower, that is your advantage. If you cannot land a hit here, go for the back of his legs or his neck.”

Joffrey nodded before asking, “You believe me that I didn’t attempt to kill the bastard?”

“On the contrary, I know he is telling the truth. You acted rashly but you were simply trying to protect our family and our legacy.”

“You agree then that he is just a bastard? Despite what mother says?”

“Your mother is usually a smart woman but this subject has always blinded her. That the boy is of Robert’s seed is clear enough, but I believe your brother died in his crib. The Starks are behind all of this somehow.”

Joffrey smirked, “First I will deal with the bastard and then we can deal with House Stark.”

“Good.” Tywin said with approval and removed a vial from his pocket, “First, we need to swing things a little more in your favor.”

Chapter End Notes

I just really wanted a Cersei & Tyrion scene okay, they were always some of my favorite interactions in the show. Next up will be the trial by combat, I promise.

Also, if anyone has ideas for the following, please let me know. Who should Sansa end up with? Should the babe be a boy or a girl? Name ideas would be helpful too. If anyone has ideas for a bride for Robb, I could use that too.
Trial By Combat

Chapter Summary

The day has come for the fight between two Baratheon brothers

Chapter Notes

First, I want to say thank you to everyone who gave answers to my questions in the last chapter's end notes. I still haven't completely decided on everything, but I think I have a better idea now. I appreciate the assistance.

Second, I am not a great 'action' writer. So I hope you aren't too disappointed in how I decided to go with describing the actual fight. Joffrey's armor is just his Battle of the Blackwater armor, and Gendry's is kind of a play on Renly's from the show mixed with the description of Robert's rebellion armor, for some visual aids.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry was nervous as Bran helped him put on his new armor. He had never actually worn a full suit of armor before this, he never had a need despite making them all his life. It had only been finished the day before and the final fitting had been the first time he'd worn all the pieces together. He was thankful that Bran had offered to be his squire today, it was good having someone he could trust next to him at a time like this. Bran was securing the breastplate when the door to the room opened and in walked his mother.

Bran instantly stopped what was doing to bow, Gendry could do no such thing with half secured armor and instead choose to greet her, “Hello Your Grace.”

She turned to Bran, “Could you give us a moment?”

Bran looked at Gendry quickly and waited for the nod of approval before heading out of the room.

Once the door was shut she walked over to him, “I wanted to apologize to you. This is my fault.”

Gendry shook his head, “No, this is Joffrey’s fault. He was the one who choose to try to kill me. You had nothing to do with it.”

“I wish I could believe that.” She replied and picked up his helmet, “Your Father used to have a helmet similar to this one.”

“I know.” Gendry replied, “Lord Stark told me about the Battle of the Trident and it gave me the idea.”

She turned to him, surprise in her eyes, “Did you make this?”

“I did. I made all this armor, with the help of my former master.” He finished tightening the breastplate as best he could before he walked over to her, “This is what I know how to do, it was
the best training I could do to prepare myself for this fight.”

She looked over the golden stag emboldened onto the center of his black armor, “You are embracing the Baratheon I see.”

“If I must take the name of Stefon Baratheon, I should embrace all the aspects of it.” He replied before he showed her the right pauldron, “Even the house of my mother.”

She traced the lion head with her finger before looking at the left one, “And that of your wife.”

“House Stark accepted me when I was just a lowly blacksmith, I shall never forget that.” He said, “I really need to continue getting ready.”

She nodded, “I cannot pick a side in this but know that even if we have only known each other a short time. I love you, son.”

“Thank you, mother.” He replied and returned the hug she gave him before leaving the room.

He had only a moment to consider her words when Bran rushed back in and once again began attaching his armor.

Arya was carefully watching the crowd as they took their seats, she wanted to get a good idea of who was talking with who. The seats for Robert and Cersei were empty, while her Father was talking to Renly and Stannis in hushed tones. Sansa was sitting with Rickon and Margery Tyrell, the younger boy seemed to be telling the lady an animated tale she assumed from his hand movements. What caught her eye though was that Tywin and Littlefinger were talking quietly to themselves on the edge of the crowd, away from prying ears.

“I knew you were a smart one.” A voice said suddenly, pulling Arya’s attention away from the two men.

“Lady Olenna.” Arya greeted.

The older woman smiled, “Never trust a man who rose so high, so quickly.”

“My mother does not see it.” Arya replied, “Littlefinger is up to something.”

“Yes, and he seems to be throwing his luck into Lord Tywin’s basket.” Oleena commented, “A foolish move for such a clever man. I for one am sure that the gods will be just and allow your husband to be the victor today.”

Arya rolled her eyes, “I doubt a woman such as yourself as any use for the gods, old or new.”

She smiled again, “You will make a wonderful Queen, you have the right instincts for it.”

“I am not going to be Queen. Tommen is next in line.”

Olenna shook her head, “Believe that if you want, but I think deep down you know that it isn’t true.”

Arya narrowed her eyes, “Why wouldn’t you want Tommen to be King? Give him a few more years and you could marry him to Margery.”

“I have a new idea to join the houses of Baratheon and Tyrell, and Stark.” She replied quickly before walking away.
Arya wasn’t sure exactly what the Tyrell matriarch had planned, but she was sure it involved either Robb or Sansa. That was a problem for a different day however, today she needed to worry about the fight. She could not fight Joffrey for Gendry, though she surely would have offered. She was sure even with her rapidly growing belly that she could easily defeat the arrogant prince.

Joffrey walked over to his station, the Hound close behind, and a boy Arya hadn’t seen before. She assumed it was Joffrey’s squire, though he seemed a little old to simply be a squire. Arya was surprised at Joffrey’s armor, it was all Lanister red with golden lions embossed on the chest and lion heads on the shoulders. Arya could see nothing relating to his Baratheon side at all. She shook her head and wondered what Joffrey’s thoughts would be when he saw Gendry’s armor.

“Arya, we should go take our seats.” Her mother said, appearing at her side.

She shook her head, “I’m going to watch from right here.” Her eyes moved around, noticing that everyone else was now sitting, though the King and Queen were still absent, “I need to be here.”

Catelyn grabbed her hand, “Than I shall be here with you.”

“Mother, that is…”

She raised a hand to her cheek, “I believe Gendry will win this, but if he doesn’t, I need to be here, for you.”

Arya nodded, giving her mother a grateful smile.

“I am just going to go speak to your father, I will be back before it begins.” Catelyn informed her before walking off.

The sound of the armor gave him away and Arya turned to glare at Joffrey as he walked toward her, she knew he wouldn’t do anything to her, far too many witnesses, but she also did not want to hear what he had to say.

“Shame that I will have to make you a widow today.” He said instead of a greeting.

“I already have the dress picked out to wear to your funeral.” She snipped back, “You really brought this upon yourself. You couldn’t just let well enough alone.”

“I know you were scheming to get my crown. Now you won’t get a chance.” He replied haughty, “I’ll make sure to send someone to get that babe in your belly too. I don’t need to worry about revenge.”

“The fact that you think you’ll live past today is laughable. If my husband doesn’t kill you, I will.” Arya replied, her eyes throwing all her hate at him while she instinctively placed a hand on her stomach.

“Joffrey!” A voice yelled and both turned to see Lord Tywin glaring in their direction.

“Stark bitch.” He muttered before moving to go.

“Lannister coward.” She replied back.

The look she got in return caused her to grin, when someone let their anger control them, they made mistakes, Syrio said. She wanted Joffrey to make as many mistakes as possible and die in humiliation.
She turned her eyes back to the crowd, noticing that Sansa was now talking to young man dressed in Dornish robes. Arya sighed, things were going to become complicated for her sister after all this was over and her betrothal was officially called off. As she moved on from her sister and her new possible suitor, she noticed the chatter had died down and many people were looking behind her.

She turned had smiled at the sight that was walking toward her, he looked like a true prince walking toward her in his Baratheon armor. Like the Robert Baratheon from the stories of the rebellion, and she was sure that the court was thinking the same. His golden antlers adding another four inches to his height, he looked like a dangerous warrior. Especially with the large warhammer he carried in his hands, not many men would be able to lift, let alone wield such a weapon. She smiled at him before turning to look at Joffrey, and the look of terror on his face made her so proud of her husband. He hadn't even begun to show Joffrey what kind of skills he did have and the man was practically pissing himself.

She walked over to her husband, “You look like a true knight in this very fine armor Ser.”

“Thank you m'lady.” He replied before removing the helmet, he handed it off to Bran who took it and walked away to join their mother under the tent, “Did he say anything?”

She shook her head, “Nothing unexpected. He will be dead soon, so it doesn’t matter.” She placed her hand on his chest, getting him to look at her, “Focus on him, don’t think about anything else.”

He nodded, his blue eyes staring into her grey ones, “I love you.”

“I love you.” She leaned up and kissed him, for the whole court to see, and slipped a dagger into his belt, “My favor for my husband.” She whispered as they parted.

The herald broke the moment, “All rise for His Grace, King Robert Baratheon, First of his name…”

“They know who I bloody am.” Robert shouted as he walked to his chair, the redness of his face made it clear how much he’d been drinking. Cersei walked in behind him, her black dress already displaying her mourning. Robert took his seat and turned to the row where the judges sat, “Maester, let’s get this started.”

Arch Maester Martyn stepped forward, “This will be a one on one trial by combat, both parties have declined the use of champion. Prince Stefon Baratheon.” Gendry stepped forward after taking his helmet from Bran, and Arya went back to the covered stations, Catelyn immediately grabbed one of her hands in comfort. “Prince Joffrey Baratheon.” Arya watched as the two came to the middle and stared at each other. The Maester took a deep breath, “You can yield, but you forfeit the match, and your sentence will be to join the Night’s Watch. If no one yields, this will be decided by who is the first to strike a fatal blow. Do you both understand the rules?” They both agreed in the affirmative. The Maester nodded, “Then, may the gods guide the hand of which of you is right of heart. Begin.”

The first sound Sansa heard was the force of Gendry’s hammer hitting Joffrey’s shield, the force hard enough that Joffrey stumbled back. Joffrey attempted to swipe out at Gendry but Gendry simply sidestepped and swung his hammer again. It caught the edge of the shield as Joffrey barely managed to block, and the dent in the curve of the shield was clear as Joffrey scrambled away. The helmets blocked their faces but Sansa could tell from his posture that Joffrey was afraid, he had not expecting Gendry to be as strong or quick as he was.

“He reminds me of Robert at that age.” A lord whispered in front of her, she wasn’t sure exactly
which one he was.

“Joffrey is no match for him. We shall have a new crown prince soon.” His neighbor responded before all their attention was drawn back to the fight as another loud bang sounded from hammer hitting shield.

Joffrey stabbed at Gendry but he knocked it away, and Joffrey nearly dropped the sword. Gendry swung again, the time the spike first and it embedded in the shield, causing Joffrey to scream. From the pool of blood that formed at Joffrey’s feet, she assumed the spike must have hit his arm. Gendry ripped the hammer free, causing another scream from Joffrey who fell to his knees from the pain.

Sansa watched as Gendry lifted his hammer up to swing it again and Joffrey struck out, the sword slid off the leg guards of both of his legs before Gendry was able to knock it out of Joffrey’s hand with the hammer. A crack sounded and Joffrey let out a scream as the hammer smashed his hand, the crack of his arm breaking could be heard by all in the crowd. A few of the ladies let out gasps or screams, but his arm guards prevented anyone from seeing the break. Gendry used his foot to kick Joffrey off his feet, the armor sounding harsh against the stone floor. Gendry moved and placed his foot in position to hold the shield down, bending Joffrey’s body in a way that he was now laying on his back with his broken arm held against his chest. Gendry pointed the hammer at him with one hand while using the other to remove his helmet, tossing it to the ground.

“Do you yield?” He yelled, his voice loud and booming, much like Robert’s had been when he’d arrived.

The whispers started up in earnest as Joffrey did not answer and Gendry made no move to finish him off. The whispers began voices as the staredown stretched between the two combatants, but Sansa held her breath. She looked over to Arya, who was glaring at Joffrey while their mother held onto on her hands with both of her own.

Joffrey shrugged his arm free of the shield and Gendry kicked it away. He then lifted up his helmet and threw it aside, it landing next to the one Gendry had already discarded. The silence resumed as everyone was captivated by the scene before them.

“Go ahead, kill me bastard, all it will do is prove me right.” Joffrey spat.

Gendry raised his hammer up, “Are those your final words?”

“Fuck you.” Joffrey yelled.

Gendry lowered the hammer, spike first, and everyone gathered held their breath as they waited for the blow.

“Yield! I yield!” Joffrey screamed.

Sansa gasped when the hammer stopped before hitting its target, the spike resting against Joffrey skull.

“You yield?” Gendry repeated, his voice loud and clear.

“Yes, yes, I yield.” Joffrey cried, his unbroken but still bleeding arm held up in submission.

Gendry looked up to the Archmaester. He stood up, “Prince Joffrey has yielded, this is an admission of his guilt before the gods. His sentence is to be stripped of land and titles and to be sent to join the Night’s Watch as punishment for his crimes. Guards, please take the guilty party
Sansa watched as two of the guards and Ser Jaime walked off with a bleeding Joffrey back toward the castle. When she turned her eyes back, she saw that Arya had run forward and was cupping Gendry’s face. Sansa could not hear the words but she could see Arya’s mouth moving, and Gendry’s nod. She assumed Arya had been asking if he was alright.

The crowd soon started talking again, and the question she heard most as she and Rickon moved to join Gendry and Arya was, “Who is the heir now?”

Sansa couldn’t help but think as she looked upon her sister and her husband, that she knew what the answer would be to that question.

The milk of the poppy that he’d been given had helped him sleep through the pain of a shattered wrist and broken arm, not to mention the gash he had on the other arm from where the hammer had bent in his arm guards. It was not enough though to keep him asleep when he heard what sounded like stone scraping against stone. He wanted to sit up, but his head was still fuzzy from the poppy, so he just listened as he heard footsteps get closer. Then, his breathing increased as the steps stopped and silence filled the cell.

“Who is there?” He whispered into the darkness.

A hand suddenly grabbed his face and he felt a liquid being poured down his throat, drowning out his attempt at a scream. Before he could understand what was happening, the hand disappeared and hit him in the chest, the rush of air forcing him to swallow. As he recovered, coughing and trying to move his drugged body, a flash of light come as his assailant lit a candle.

“Did you really think you were going to be able to just go hide at the Wall like the coward you are?” Her voice said, as her grey eyes reflected the light.

“I am leaving, I am not a threat to you.” Joffrey pleaded, but even as he spoke, he felt his body beginning to slow again.

“As long as you are alive, you are a threat.” She replied, her voice calm, “You can learn so much about poisons from books. Grand Maester Pycelle never even realized it or the vial of poison I just poured down your throat was missing. He won’t either, I’ll put back the empty vial after this, filled with something else and broken of course.”

Joffrey felt a fire burning in his veins, he wanted to scream but all he managed was, “Why?”

She leaned down to him, “You tried to kill my husband, you threatened my sister and my unborn child. Did you really think you could escape justice? I was not going to let you live at the Wall, my brother is there, I could not trust you would not to try to kill him too.” She stood back up and rested a hand on her swollen stomach, “I protect my pack. Now you are no longer a threat. Enjoy the seven hells Joffrey Baratheon, I am sure they are eagerly awaiting your arrival.”

His vision blurred as he felt the fire reach his heart and opened his mouth in a silent scream before his entire body slumped in defeat and the darkness took him.

Chapter End Notes
And he is dead! I always planned for Arya to be the one to kill Joffrey, just took me a little awhile to decide on how exactly it would happen. Also, this way Gendry doesn't have to live with the kinslayer stain, even if he didn't have a choice. Don't be afraid to let me know what you think!!

Edit: I left it in as Archmaester whatever, oops
News spread quickly of Joffrey’s death, officially it was declared he died from his wounds, but the royal family had been told it was because Joffrey had taken too much of the milk of the poppy Grand Maester Pycelle had left with him for the pain. It showed the incompetence of the the aging Maester and it had been decided it was best to keep the truth a family secret. Arya had been secretly beaming during the meeting, she knew what had really befallen the stupid prince, and she would happily take the truth to her grave. Joffrey’s funeral would be held the following day at the Sept of Baelor and they were all required to attend.

Arya noticed that the Queen had not attended the meeting, and though she was still angry at Cersei for bringing all this upon them. She could feel pity for the woman, she assumed that burying a child had to be one of the hardest things a mother could ever do. She would do everything she could to make sure she never had to suffer the same way.

Gendry had been called away by King Robert, she had just been about to go see how Mrycella was handling things when Lord Tywin stopped her.

“I was thinking it was time for you and I to officially talk.” He said, stepping into her path.

“What would you like to talk about my lord?” She asked, keeping her face in the neutral face she had been trying to develop the longer she spent at court.

He eyed her carefully, “I saw you speaking with Lady Olenna at the fight yesterday. What did you discuss?”

“She is considering marrying Margery to my older brother Robb, she had some questions about his character.” She replied without missing a beat, “She wants to avoid Margery ending up with someone unsavory.”

His eyes narrowed, “Your husband was about to fight for his life and she wanted to discuss marriage possibilities?”
“She also told me that she was sure Gendry would prevail, it was comforting.” She told him, “I’d say I’m sorry for your loss my lord but that would be a lie.”

“I saw Joffrey after the fight, his wounds were not life threatening and I watched Pycelle give him the poppy, it should have not been enough to kill him.” Tywin informed her.

“You heard His Grace as well as I, Joffrey must have woken and taken more because of the pain. An unfortunate end to his unfortunate life.”

“You are walking a thin line girl.” Tywin threatened, his voice low, “I will not have my grandson disrespected even in his death.”

“Am I not also married to your grandson?” Arya asked, dropping her mask of indifference, “I know you were supporting Joffrey to win. I have not figured out what you and Lord Baelish were planning, but I will be smiling tomorrow because the threat to my family is gone.”

“I will make sure you and your blacksmith have no opportunity to be crowned.” He assured her, his smile that of one of victory.

“Joffrey never understood this either. We have no desire to rule, we don’t want the Iron Throne or Storm’s End. We just wanted to go to Winterfell and live our lives in peace. Your daughter saw to the end of that dream when she declared Gendry was her son to the world. If you have an issue, take it up with her.” She replied, not afraid to look him in the eye as she spoke. She knew his reputation and the Rains of Castamere was a common song among Lannister soldiers, but she would not allow him to intimidate her.

He studied her for a moment, “I underestimated you. I figured you were a vapid social climber like your sister or Margery Tyrell but no, you are made of different stuff, much like my daughter.”

“I would rather you didn’t insult my sister.”

He let out a low chuckle, “You’ve got a fire. I wonder how much you would actually do to protect your family?”

“I am simply a woman Lord Tywin, there isn’t really much I could do.” She said with a sweet smile.

“I know about your ‘dancing lessons’.” He responded, “You aren’t an ordinary woman.”

She smirked at him, “Then you should know I am not helpless. Keep that in mind Lord Tywin, we wouldn’t want anymore unfortunate deaths in the family.”

She then turned and walked around him, not waiting to hear his response. She would need to keep an eye on her new grandfather, she could not trust him. She was beginning to wonder if she could trust anyone outside of her family.

Tywin Lannister was not a man that easily allowed himself to show his emotions, he valued himself on his ability to remain calm even in uneasily situations, but the current state of affairs were trying his resolve. After Robert had summoned them all for that stupid ‘family meeting’, he had finally spoken with the Stark girl. He sat down in his chair, she was more than he had anticipated. She was clever and confident, a dangerous combination, especially in a girl of her heritage. When he had first come to the capital and heard the younger Stark girl had married a blacksmith, he had been surprised at the failings of Lord Stark to keep the girl in line. The rumors about the girl were plentiful, she would often be seen in men’s clothing. She also possessed a
sword and had apparently been taught how to use it. She was headstrong and stubborn. There were none among the highborn ladies that would be considered friends, the opposite of her sister, who had them fawning over her.

He could see now why that was. Arya Stark was not a mindless woman, interested only in her sewing and gossips. She saw the truth of what was going on around her, not falling for the false flattery of those that would use her position for their own gain. She could be a problem for all his future endeavors if he did not act carefully.

A knock on the door pulled him from his thoughts and he bid the guest enter.

“My Lord Tywin.” Littlefinger greeted as he came in before closing the door behind him, “I offer my condolences on the death of your grandson.”

“Thank you Lord Baelish, have a seat.”

Tywin waited until the lord has made himself comfortable, “What are the lords saying?”

“Prince Stefon’s strength and mercy have gotten him a new following. Many of the younger lords see him as the clear choice, for he reminds them of Robert. The ladies have also started to whisper about how wonderful a Queen the Lady Arya would be, after her clear display of affection after the fight.” He explained, “The older lords however, they have an issue with the idea of a boy raised as a blacksmith in Flea Bottom becoming their King. They will be on our side.”

Tywin thought for a moment, “The older lords don’t have the numbers.”

“We could always follow through where Joffrey failed my lord.”

“Poison is a coward’s work.” Tywin said with disgust.

“Have we another option?” Littlefinger asked, “He is clearly well suited for battle and an assassin would raise suspicion.”

“Poison will as well. He is a young, strong young man. A sudden death with instantly raise the issue of poison.” Tywin replied, but the idea did hold some merit, “Perhaps a slow acting poison, one that could appear as though a sickness has gotten hold of him.”

Littlefinger nodded, “Such poisons could be found my lord. The problem will be finding a way to get them to him without poisoning the Lady Arya as well.”

“You are clever man Lord Baelish, I am sure you can find away.” Tywin answered, wondering for a moment if perhaps he should also get rid of the Stark girl. He shook that thought away, the girl and her babe would be of no consequence once they were back in Winterfell, no matter how clever she was.

Gendry sighed as he fell backwards onto the bed, quickly kicking his boots off before getting more comfortable. He had never been to a funeral like that before, the ones held in Flea Bottom were far and inbetween, mostly were lucky if they could even convince a Septon to come. This one was a half day of speeches and general chatter, he hated it all. Lords kept coming up to him and talking to him, asking his opinions on this matter or another. He didn’t understand why they cared what he would think. Renly made a show of introducing him to the Stormlords in particular, as he was still Renly’s heir, even if not officially official as of yet.

He smiled as he thought of how Arya had brightened up when they met Lord Selwyn Tarth and his
daughter Brienne, his heir. The woman had been taller than Gendry by an inch and had the build of a warrior instead of what he’d come to expect from a highborn lady. Lady Brienne and Arya shared a love of the sword, and Gendry had left Arya with the warrior lady as Renly had kept dragging him around for more introductions. One of them should have a decent time at least.

When they’d returned to the Tower of the Hand, Sansa had dragged Arya away, wanting to discuss something alone. He didn’t mind, he might have indulged in a bit too much wine as a way to help make the boring conversations more bearable. Laying down and curling up next to Arya was all he wanted to do with the rest of his day, but since he was alone for now, he’d have to settle for just the first part.

He must have fallen asleep because the next thing he knew there a warm body leaning against him. He opened his eyes to see his wife’s beautiful face, but he frowned, “What’s wrong? Something with Sansa?”

She shook her head, “Not with Sansa directly just what she told me.”

He sat and leaned against the pillows, “What did she say?”

“Everyone is talking about the succession.” She replied, moving so she was sitting beside him, “It seems as though our assumption that it would go Tommen was wrong.”

“How so?”

She turned her grey eyes on him, “The rumors are that Robert is going to call together a Great Council, and debate whether you or Tommen should be his heir.”

Gendry sighed and closed his eyes, “How did everything get so complicated?”

He felt her lay her head on his shoulder, “I have a feeling things are only going to get worse.” She sighed, “We better start preparing for the outcome. You could be the next King.”

He shook his head, “I am…”

She lightly slapped his chest, “You are not to apologize again. None of this is in any way your fault.”

“You fell in love with a blacksmith, not a prince.”

She lifted up her hand and turned his head to face her, “I fell in love with you. I don’t care whether you are a blacksmith or a knight or a king. As long as you remain you.”

“I can’t be the king. What does the king even do? All Robert seems to do is drink and whore and hunt. I am sure there is more to it than yet.”

“Robert is not a good man, he leaves all his duties to others, like my father and the small council. He cheats on his wife at every opportunity and does not even have the decency to attempt to me discreet about it.” She shook her head, “I am sure he will be remembered as a good king, because Jon Arryn and my father kept the kingdoms from falling to pieces. Just as Tywin Lannister could have done for Aerys had he not succumb to his madness, from the things I have heard.” She smiled at him, “You are a good man. You would be a good king.”

“Only because you would be by my side.” He promised her and wrapped his arm around, pulling her to his chest, “What would be your first suggestion?”
“We would need a new small council. I don’t trust Littlefinger or Varys.” She replied, “Grand Maester too if you can even remove such a position, I’m sure we could at least petition the Citadel about it.”

He chuckled, “I hadn’t realized you had already put so much thought into it.”

She smiled, “I was thinking of going to my father and telling him to get rid of them.”

“You should be the one sitting on the throne and I can be the one that stands there looking pretty.”

She pulled back and looked at him, a small glare in her eyes, “Is that all I will be during your reign the Queen to stand beside you look pretty?”

He laughed, “You are always pretty, but you shall be ruling right beside me. You’ll attend every small council meeting with me, if you want to. All decisions will be made together. Whether it is the name of our children or who to name as Hand or if we need to go to war with Dorne or something.” He shrugged, “Maybe I could make you our own throne. I can find a few hundred swords and fire out a way to melt them together.”

“We can cause a scandal and I’ll just sit in your lap.” She replied, giving him a kiss before laying her head down on his chest, “I know what the first law I’d want to change is.”

“Which one?”

“Inheritance. I think all the kingdoms should follow Dorne’s example, the eldest child should inherit, regardless of whether they are a boy or girl.”

He nodded, “I agree.”

She smiled, “I was hoping you would.”

He placed a hand over her stomach, “This child could be a future ruler of Westeros.” He looked over to her face, not removing his hand, “I can always step aside. Tell them all I don’t want Storm’s End or the Iron Throne. We could go to Winterfell like we had planned.”

She shook her head, “We have gotten pulled into the game my love. Winterfell is no longer for us, we would never have peace. All we can do now is hope they pick Tommen.” She placed her hand over his on her stomach, “We need to be careful, I don’t trust them not to try something.”

“Who is them?”

“The people who will want Tommen instead. Easiest way to ensure that is to get rid of you.”

He frowned, “Would they really try that so soon after Joffrey?”

She wrapped her arms around his waist, her head against his chest, “I would hope not but we don’t know who we can trust. We need to be careful.”

He sighed, “I don’t even remember half the names of the people that Renly introduced me to today. How do we find people we can trust?”

“We will figure it out.” She promised him before letting out a yawn.

He kissed the top of her head, “We will, but not today.”

He lowered their bodies so they were laying down on the bed, her even breathing letting him know
she had already fallen asleep. Her words kept him awake though, could his life still be in danger even with Joffrey gone? He looked down at the woman using him as a pillow, her swelling belly pressed against him, and he smiled. He would do anything he could to protect her and their babe, and to do that he also had to protect himself.

Chapter End Notes

Little uncertain about the Arya and Tywin conversation but I decided to go with it how it is, overcorrecting usually makes it worse. I'm sure you guys can get a sense about where this is going. Hopefully you like the direction this heading, a little more political intrigue. Don't be afraid to comment!
Arya wakes the morning after Joffrey’s funeral and turns over, her hand coming up to lay it on Gendry’s chest, but sat up quickly at the feeling of his skin. Her eyes took him in, his entire body was coated in sweat. He’d kicked away the covers, his naked body on full display for her. She reached up and cupped his cheek, “Gendry, love, wake up.”

He groaned but otherwise didn’t react, his eyes remained closed and she noticed he was breathing heavier than normal. She shook him a few times, trying to wake him, but he would not rouse. She wondered what had happened, he’d been more tired than usual the night before but she had assumed it had been a combination of the wine and the long day. She quickly started checking over his body for other signs of distress. It wasn’t until she reached his left leg that she noticed dark line spreading from the back. She lifted his heavy leg and turned it as much as she could and let out a gasp. There was a thin cut across the back of his calf and spreading from the wound was purple veining.

She ran to the door and pulled it open, glad she had chosen to sleep in a light dressing gown last night. The guard stationed outside startled at the sudden noise and reached for his sword, only to drop his hand at the sight of her. She cared little for that, “Go fetch the maester, now!”

“What is wrong my lady?” The guard asked instead of moving.

“The Prince is ill and needs a maester, go get him!” She exclaimed and slammed the door once he started a hasty walk down the hall.

She rushed to the table that held the wash basin and quickly soaked a piece of cloth before returned to Gendry’s side. She ran the cloth over his face, trying to sooth his heated skin from the fever that taken over him. Tears pricked at her eyes to see him in such a state, her strong husband reduced to such a state by a tiny cut. He hadn’t even bothered by it enough to tell her about it and now an infection had grown.

A knock on the door before it opened was the only warning she had before both Grand Maester Pycelle and ArchMaester Martyn entered, a servant following them.
Martyn immediately rushed to Gendry’s side, his eyes taking in the sweat and feverish skin. He looked up at her, “How long as he been like this my lady?”

“He was fine last night, just tired. When I awoke I found him like this. There is cut on his leg, I think that might be the cause.” She replied, pointing to the area in question.

Martyn reached forward and turned to examine the cut, his fingers gentle as he prodded the area. Gendry let out another moan at the treatment but his eyes still did not open. The Maester looked up at her when Pycelle got close enough to see for himself, “When did he get this wound?”

She shook her head, “I don’t know, he did not tell me about it.”

They looked up as her father entered the room, a frown on his face, “The guard fetched me, what is wrong?”

Arya got up from the bed as the maesters did their work, “When I woke I found Gendry like this. His skin is hot and sweaty, I could not wake him.”

Ned nodded and grabbed her robe from the foot of the bed, wrapping it around her shoulders before pulling her into a hug, “Gendry is strong my dear, he will pull through a fever.”

“I am not sure it is a fever my lord.” Martyn spoke, “Poison is my guess.”

“Nonsense, it is a fever caused by infection.” Pycelle replied, “He should have come to have this treated.”

“The cut is shallow, it should have healed just fine without infection.” Martyn argued, “I would wager that the knife or sword that cut him had been coated in poison.”

Arya was silent as the two maesters continued to disagree, her brain trying to process all the information. Her eyes flashed up, “It was Joffrey.”

“Joffrey has been dead for days.” Pycelle replied, “He could have not poisoned the prince from beyond the grave.”

She shook her head, “He didn’t. He poisoned him during the fight. His sword slid off of Gendry’s leg guards, he could have cut him then, but it wasn’t deep enough to cause Gendry to notice with all his focus elsewhere. Joffrey could have coated his sword with a poison.” Her anger was pushing through, “Like the fucking coward he was.”

“My lady, it is not…”

“Shut up old man!” She yelled and turned to the other maester, “What poison do you think it could be?”

“I am not sure at this time my lady. I will fetch a few tools and books at get to work at finding the solution at once.” He said with a quick bow before he rushed from the room.

“My lord.” Pycelle said, speaking to her father now, “It is most certainly an infection, allow me to treat it as such. I am the Grand Maester after all.”

“I have seen infection from a wound before Grand Maester and it has never looked like that.” Ned said, pointed to Gendry’s leg, “Arch Maester Martyn is going to be care of Prince Stefon’s care.” He then turned to the servant boy, “Go fetch the King and Queen, let them know that Prince Stefon has been poisoned and they need to come right away.”
“Yes m’lord.” The boy said before running off.

Pycelle opened his mouth to speak, but Arya cut him off, “Leave Grand Maester, your services are not needed.”

Once he had left, with a great amount of glaring from both, Ned turned to his daughter, “You should dress before the others arrive.”

She nodded and quickly moved behind the dress screen, pulling on a simple blue dress that tied in the front, meaning she wouldn’t need assistance with it. She came back out to see her father sitting in a chair he had moved to the side of the bed, running the cloth Arya had earlier over Gendry’s skin. She sat on her side of the bed and then moved into a kneeling position, “Thank you Father.”

His grey eyes came up to her matching ones, “For what?”

“Standing behind me when I accused Joffrey. Grand Maester…”

“Yes. I agree with Arch Maester Martyn, this is not an infection. Your reasoning is sound, I do not doubt you are right.” Ned replied, dipping the cloth back into the water, “I meant what I said, Gendry is strong, he will get through this. We just need to figure out the poison.”

She could still feel the tears stinging her eyes, but refused to let them fall, she needed to be strong for Gendry. She needed to help figure out what was wrong with him and how to fix it.

Maester Martyn returned then, a servant boy behind him carrying a large book, and he himself had a large case in his hand. He looked around and pointed to the table, “Clear that off for me lad and drag it closer to the bed.”

The servant placed the books down on a chair and started doing as he was instructed. Martyn turned to her father, “If you wouldn’t mind my lord, I need room to work.”

Her father nodded and quickly got to his feet. Martyn placed his case on the chair and opened, revealing empty and full vials, along with a bunch of tools she didn’t know.

Ned moved to stand behind her from where she still sat at on the bed, both watching the maester work in silence. He took a long, thin device and pushed it into the wound, removing it and a piece of the infected tissue with it. She watched as he took it and dipped into a clear solution, swirling it a moment before waiting. Nothing happened. He wiped the tool clean and repeated the process over and over again, each time the solution remained clear. On the tenth try, the solution turned a deep purple color and the maester sighed. Before he could speak the door opened again, King Robert, Queen Cersei, Ser Jaime and Lord Renly entered the room.

“What happened to him?” Cersei asked, immediately rushing to his side, leaning over the bed next to Arya.

“Poisoned Your Grace. He seems to have been cut by a blade that was coated in some sort of animal venom.” Maester Martyn replied, keeping his eyes on the wound, “This poison is not one I am familiar with.”

“Could it be manticore venom?” Ser Jaime asked, bringing all eyes too him.

“No. Manticore venom is quick acting and causes the wounds more decay.”

“Why would you ask that?” Arya questioned.
“Prince Oberyn is known to use it. There is bad blood between our houses, I wouldn’t put it past the man to seek revenge in this matter.” He replied, his green eyes showing no lie she could tell.

“What happens now maester?” Renly asked, breaking the silence that had fallen after Jaime’s declaration.

“I must consult my books, hopefully I can find a cure for the venom. In the meantime, we will need to our best to keep the prince hydrated. Watered honey at this time. I don’t want to give him anything that might further aggravate the poison.” He replied, places his tool back into the case. He looked to Arya, “I suggest you break your fast my lady. You cannot forget to look after yourself at this time.”

She shook her head, “I can’t leave him.”

“Arya, you need to think of the babe. I shall stay with him.” Cersei told her, moving so she was sitting on the bed for comfortably, “I will not leave his side until you return.”

Arya wanted to protest but looking around the room, she knew she would be out numbered on this issue. She nodded and allowed her father to lead her from the room, but not before she prayed to all the gods she could think of that Gendry would survive.

Grand Maester Pycelle had served at the Red Keep during the reign of four kings, through madness, war, and peace, yet nothing had been as troubling as the Starks. Choosing the ginger upstart over himself, he had decades of experience and they’d chosen to ignore it. The wound could have been poison, but the more likely option was infection. The hallways were still relatively empty this early in the morning and he made it to his destination quickly. He knocked on the large door before him.

A young man answered the door, “Yes Maester?”

“I am here to see Lord Tywin.”

The boy nodded and took a few step back and looked to his left, “The Grand Maester is here my lord.”

“Send him in.” Pycelle heard the reply and stepped in.

He saw Lord Tywin had a small round table, breaking his fast while reading a scroll. He placed the scroll down, “Grand Maester, I was not expecting you.”

“I have news for you my lord.” He replied.

Tywin gestured to the seat in front of him, “Get the Grand Maester a glass Podrick.”

“Yes my lord.” The boy quickly got to work doing as he was told.

“My new squire, Podrick Payne. I had gotten him set up with Joffrey but that did not work out.” Tywin replied as Podrick poured the glass before stepping back, “What news do you bring?”

“Prince Stefon is a bed with a fever. He did not wake when we attempted to rouse him.”

Lord Tywin frowned, “He seemed perfectly well when I saw him yesterday.”

“There was a cut on his leg, it seems to have gotten infected and brought on a fever overnight.” He explained, and then added, “ArchMaester Martyn in under the impression it is poison however and
Lord Stark informed me that my services would not be required.”

Lord Tywin was silent for awhile, deep in thought before he asked, “Could it be poison?”

Pycelle shrugged, “That is always a possibility, but I find it unlikely. Lady Arya said Joffrey must have poisoned his sword and gotten a cut on Stefon during the fight.”

Tywin got to his feet, “Thank you for informing me about this Grand Maester. I should go check on my grandson.”

“Of course my lord.” Pycelle replied before leaving, “Thank you for your time.”

Pycelle smiled as he walked back to his rooms, he’d been in the game long enough, he knew when to support the winning side.

Podrick was not really sure what was going on anymore. He’d barely been in the capital for a fortnight and he’d already witnessed the death of one prince, and now another was struggling for his life. Lord Tywin had sent him to fetch Lord Baelish after the Grand Maester had left. Once he had returned with the Master of Coin, Lord Tywin had dismissed him for the next hour. It was none of Podrick business of course, what the lords discussed, but he had a feeling it was not anything good. He was glad to not be apart of it.

He was not usually granted free time while in Lord Tywin’s service and decided he would use this time to walk the gardens, he had heard they were beautiful, but had not gotten a chance to see them yet. It was still early in the morning, many of the castle residences would still be breaking their fasts. So when he saw a young woman crying on one of the benches he was surprised to see her there.

He thought about turning around and leaving her to her privacy, but something about her screamed at him to talk to her. He made sure his steps were loud, as to not startle her, and said, “Pardon my intrusion my lady, are you alright?”

She looked up at him quickly, a strand of her red hair coming out from her hairstyle, it stood out brightly against her black dress, “I am fine.”

He could tell from her tone that she was not in the mood for company, “Yes my lady.”

He started to continue his walk when he heard her voice, “Wait!”

She was standing when he turned around, “That was rude of me. Thank you for your concern…”

“Podrick Payne my lady. I am in the service of Lord Tywin Lannister.” He introduced, and was not surprised as her face faltered a moment at the name of his master.

“I am Sansa Stark, daughter of Eddard Stark.” She answered.

His own eyes widened a bit, the Hand’s daughter was speaking to him. He really should have known too, the Hand’s daughters were the center of the majority of the gossip he overheard. Sansa had been betrothed to marry Joffrey. It would explain the black, she was in mourning. He gave her what he hoped was a comforting smile, “I am sorry for the death of your betrothed my lady. Hopefully the grief will not pain you too extremely.”

“That is not why I was crying.” She said, her voice barely above a whisper. Then she shook her head and put on a smile, “Thank you for your words Ser.”
“I am not a knight.” He answered quickly, almost fumbling the words.

That got him a more genuine smile, “I know.”

He blushed, he should not be talking to her. He was nothing more than a member of a minor house, not worthy company for a lady of a great house. He was about to bow and take his leave when he remembered what he had overheard earlier, “I will also pray the gods will bring your good-brother a speedy recovery.”

The smile fell from her face, “How did you hear about that?”

“Grand Pycelle informed Lord Tywin while he was breaking his fast, I may have overheard while in performance of my duties.” He replied, looking away from her steely blue gaze.

“Gend...Prince Stefon might be my sister’s husband, but he is a good friend to me as well. I worry about my sister’s health should something happen to him, especially as she is with child.” Lady Sansa replied, sitting back down on the bench, “They love each other so much, I am not sure my sister could survive without him.”

“I do not know your sister,” He said, and sat down as well, “But I saw her during the trial by combat. She did not seem like a wilting flower to me, she looked ready to fight Prince Joffrey herself. You should hold on to hope my lady. Prince Stefon is young and strong, he will fight whatever fever felt the need to take hold of him.”

“Thank you Podrick.” She got to her feet again, “I would appreciate it if you kept this to yourself.”

“Of course my lady.” He replied, also getting to his feet.

She smiled and nodded, “Have a good day.”

“You as well my lady.” He replied as she walked away.

He turned and walked in the opposite direction. His thoughts swirling around inside his head. She was truly the beauty he had heard tell of, he cannot believe he had missed noticing her during the combat. He assumed she had been up in the stands. It must have been hard for her, do you pray for the victory of your betrothed or your good-brother? From the short conversation they had shared, he had a good guess on what the answer to the question would be.

“Podrick.” A voice called and he turned to the right to see who had called him, “I was just on my way to visit my father. Has he been made aware of Prince Stefon’s condition?”

“Grand Maester Pycelle informed him earlier my lord.” Podrick replied, falling into step with the man beside him.

“Has he already headed over to the Tower of the Hand?” Tyrion asked.

“No my lord, he is in a meeting with Lord Baelish, he did not require my services.”

Tyrion stopped walking, “Podrick. I know you serve my father but I would like an honest answer. Do you know of a plot my father might have against Stefon?”

Pod shook his head, “I have seen or heard nothing that would suggest that my lord.”

“You are a good man Podrick, that might get you in trouble if this shit starts getting any worse.” Tyrion said as he began to walk again.
“I do not understand my lord.”

“You will.” He answered, “I have changed my mind. I shall go directly to the tower and check on my nephew myself. Have a good day Podrick.”

“You as well my lord.” He replied and stopped on his path as Lord Tyrion walked toward the tower in the distance. He glanced up at the sky, his hour was nearly up. He shook his head and began his walk back to his lord’s chambers. Things in the capital were much more complicated than it had appeared on the outside, maybe he could get Lord Tywin to agree to get trained in proper arms. He might be needing to be able to defend himself if things kept along their current path.

Chapter End Notes

Please don't hate me!!!

Update schedule: There will most likely not be an update next weekend as that Saturday (25th) is my birthday and I have IRL plans. If I have the time, I will of course update, but if I don’t, that is why.
Chapter Summary

Tensions are high as they raise to find a way to save Gendry's life

Chapter Notes

As usual, thank you for all the wonderful comments!!! And to those that wished me an early birthday (which is tomorrow, the big 30), thank you!! I don't know why I assumed I wouldn't get this done, I don't really do anything but go to work and stay home.

Hope you enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A full day passes and Gendry’s condition does not get better. Sansa forced her to come share her bed that night, knowing that otherwise Arya would just continue to stare at her husband and worry. As soon as the sun had risen Arya had gone back to her husband. Arch Maester Martyn was already there, from his appearance she assumed he had gotten about as much sleep as herself.

He looked up when she entered, “There has been no change my lady. The tonic I gave him seems to have prevented any worsening, but there is no improvement.”

She walked closer and ran a hand through Gendry’s hair, her heart clenched at his labored breathing, “You still do not know what poison it could be?”

He shook his head, “I sent a raven last night to the Citadel describing his symptoms, they will find the answer.”

“It might be too late by then. A day for the raven to get to Oldtown and then who knows how long it will take for them to find an answer.”

“I have exhausted my knowledge in this area my lady. Grand Maester Pycelle also does not recognize the poison. We just have to keep him comfortable until the Citadel can respond.” He said and crossed his hands, “I have given him a dose of the tonic. I am going to see if I can find any other sources of poison in the Grand Maester’s library. Summon me if anything changes, otherwise I will be back this afternoon for his next dose.”

She nodded and he left with a bow. She sat in the vacant chair and fought back the tears, they had come unbidden the night before, and Sansa had rocked her until they ceased.

A gentle knock signaled a visitor before Bran came in, “How is he doing?”

Arya shook her head, “The same.”

He came up and stood next to her, “How are you doing?”
“I do not have an answer that would make sense.” She replied reached out and gripping Gendry’s unresponsive hand, “How could this have happened?”

“Joffrey was a coward. He must have decided that if he died, Gendry was going to die along with him.”

“Where did he even get a poison like this? He couldn’t have stolen from Pycelle or he would have recognized it.” She knew Bran didn’t have an answer, but she needed to think aloud, “Someone must have gotten it for him.”

“There is no way to know who Arya.”

“If we could figure it out, then they’d know what it is and maybe know the antidote.” She looked up to her brother, who even at 15 had grown well past her own height, “We need to find out how he got that poison.”

“Even if we did find out who, why would they confess?” Bran asked, his arms crossed over his chest.

“I will kill them, that is why.” She hissed and got to her feet, “I cannot just sit here and watch my husband slowly die. I have to do something. Someone in this godsdamn castle knows what this poison is and is going to tell me.”

Bran sighed, “Where do we start?”

“The squire, the one that helped Joffrey during the fight. We start there.”

“How am I supposed to find him?”

“His name is Podrick Payne, he is working for Lord Tywin.” Sansa answered, coming into the room with a small tray of food, “I spoke to him yesterday.”

“Good.” Arya replied, “Do you think he would talk to you again?”

Sansa nodded, “He seemed sweet, if I could find him away from Lord Tywin, I think so.”

Arya was quiet for a moment, there was one other person she wanted to speak too as well, “The two of you see what you can do. I want to talk with Prince Oberyn.”

“Why?” Sansa asked, handing Arya a slice of apple.

“Ser Jaime said that Prince Oberyn was known for using poisons, maybe he could recognize this one.” She replied, forcing herself to eat the small bit of fruit.

“You should talk to Father first. Relationships with Dorne are delicate and we don’t want to make matters worse.” Sansa said, “Eat some more too. Come on Bran, let’s see if we can find Podrick.

Arya did as she was told, even if she didn’t want to waste valuable time eating, she needed to keep herself healthy for the babe. She refused to allow her mind to wander to how the babe in her belly might be the only piece she would have of her husband soon. She refused to let that come to pass.

“Arya, has there been any change?”

She looked up at the voice and shook her head, “No Your Grace.”

“Please call me Cersei.” She said and took a seat in one of the chairs that had been placed around
the bed. She looked over to Arya, “Does Archmaester Marytn have a plan?”

“He sent a raven to the Citadel, he has reached the end of his knowledge.” She explained and wondered how much to share with Cersei about her plan.

Cersei shook her head, “Who knows how long that could take. I don’t want to lose another son.”

“Gendry isn’t going to die. If the maester can’t figure out what it is, then I will.” She replied and got to her feet, “Maesters aren’t the only ones with knowledge on poisons.”

Cersei smiled at her, “You love so strongly.”

“I believe Joffrey did this. That he coated his blade with something. Someone had to give him the poison. Who would Joffrey have trusted with something like that?” She asked, looking over the Queen as she did. Her blonde hair was still masterly styled as always and her black gown was elegant even in her grief, but her skin was pale and there were dark circles under her eyes.

Cersei took her time to answer, “I have come to realize that I never really knew my son. He was capable of so many horrible things and I was blind to it. I know he no longer trusted me or his father. My father perhaps?” She shook her head, “There was so much I did not see.”

“He made sure you did not.” Arya replied, “I need to go speak to my father about something. Can you stay with him?”

“Of course.” Cersei replied and turned her eyes to look at Gendry’s sleeping form.

Arya placed a quick kiss to Gendry’s forehead before leaving, she was not going to let him die. Even if she had start interrogating everyone in the Red Keep.

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 Arya made her way to her father’s solar, only when she arrived, he was not alone. She put on a fake smile, “Lord Tyrion, you are meeting with my Father early.”

“I walked over with my sister. I wanted to check on Gendry but thought I’d have a talk with your father first.” He replied from his seat, “How are you doing my dear?”

She took the other empty seat, “Physically, I am fine. Emotionally, I am not. Watching a fever try to take my husband from me is an unpleasant experience.”

“I would not doubt it.”

“The Archmaester told me he has written to the Citadel, hopefully they can provide us with an answer.” Ned said.

“That is what I have come to talk to you about Father. We have no idea how long it will take for the Citadel to come back with that answer.” She paused and took deep breath, “I think we should ask Prince Oberyn to look in on Gendry.”

“Prince Oberyn?” Her father asked.

She nodded, “Ser Jaime mentioned he was well known for his use of poison, maybe he has seen this one before. It could not hurt to ask him.”

Ned turned to Tyrion, “Do you know Prince Oberyn?”

Tyrion shook his head, “Only by reputation, he does not like King’s Landing or Lannisters.”
“Then why did he come now?” Arya asked.

“He is escorting his niece, Arienne, future Princess of Dorne, and his nephews Quentin and Tystaime. Prince Doran is of ill health and unable to come himself, but it seems as though it was finally time to introduce his children to court.” Ned explained, and sighed, “Quentin has put a request forth to court your sister.”

She raised her eyebrows, “Joffrey has not even been dead a week.”

“The Dornish see an opportunity, they want to make sure they are not overlooked.” Tyrion supplied, and then nodded, “I think we should ask for Oberyn’s help, he might just know what is ailing Gendry, and it we use it to restore relations between our houses.”

“House Lannister and Martell anyway. I agree with Prince Oberyn that he should have been given the Mountain’s head, along with Elia’s body and those of her children.” Ned replied, glaring at Tyrion.

“I was but a child during the rebellion, I was sitting reading in Casterly Rock when all of that happened.” Tyrion defended, “I am sure Oberyn has not forgotten though.”

“You will give him whatever retribution he wants for the death of his sister. I will not risk Gendry’s life for a slight from over 20 years ago.” Arya commented and looked at her Father, “Will you ask him to come Father, please?”

Ned nodded, “I will send someone to find him.”

Arya got to her feet and smiled, “Thank you Father. I will be with Gendry, please summon me when he gets here? I would like to talk to him myself.”

“I will.” He said and turned to Tyrion, “I would like you to attend as well my lord.”

Tyrion nodded, “I can stay.”

Arya nodded her goodbyes and returned to Gendry, she kissed his forehead again and whispered, “We will save you my love.”

Cersei gave her a sad smile and got to her feet, “I have something I have to attend to, I will be back later in the day.”

Arya did not look at the Queen as she nodded, her eyes fully focused on Gendry, saving him was all that mattered.

Sansa sighed as she sat on the bench near the entrance to part of the castle that housed Lord Tywin’s chamber. She and Bran had been there for most of the morning, waiting for Podrick to come out on some errand for Lord Tywin, but they had had no luck so far.

“What if I went over and requested to speak to him?” Bran suggested, he had started pacing after awhile, unable to stay still.

“Why would you need to speak to Lord Tywin’s squire?” Sansa asked, letting out a huff, “Maybe we should just go back to the tower, try to think of some way to get to him to come to us.”

Bran nodded, “Maybe….shit, the Queen is coming.”

Sansa turned and noticed Cersei walked toward them, she was looking down at her feet, not at
them. She jumped to her feet and pulled him inside the walls and down the hallway opposite of Lord Tywin’s room, where she assumed the Queen was headed.

Bran didn’t ask any questions and remained quiet as they listened to the Queen walk down the hall. Sansa peeked out and watched the Queen knock of her father’s door. Cersei walked in when the door opened and Podrick came out of it a moment later. Sansa smiled this was their chance, she tugged of Bran’s sleeve, “Come on.”

They both stepped onto the hall just as Podrick reached the opening to the courtyard, she smiled and said, “Hello Podrick.”

He jumped slightly and turned to look at them, “Lady Sansa.” He gave a small bow.

“It is good to see you again, this is my younger brother Bran.” She introduced.

“My lord.” Podrick replied, “Is there something I could help you with?”

“That remains to be seen.” Bran answered, “Take a walk with us.”

His eyes furrowed in confusion but he consented all the same.

Sansa waited until they were well into the gardens and away from the listening walls of the castle before she stopped them near the bay wall. She smiled at him, “Podrick, we know you had nothing to do with it, but we were hoping you could tell us about what Joffrey was up to before the fight.”

He frowned, “I don’t know what you mean my lady.”

She looked to Bran, and he explained, “When you were assisting Joffrey before the fight, did he behave any weird way with his sword? Rub anything on it? Something that might have seemed odd to you.”

Podrick shook his head, “I asked if he needed it polished but he said he’d already done it. I never even really saw the sword, it was in the scabbard the whole time I was helping with his armor.”

Sansa let out a small sigh before looking at Bran, “I really wish it would have been that simple.” “What is it you were hoping for my lady?” He asked, looking at her before glancing at Bran.

“The answer to who gave Joffrey the poison he had on his sword.” “So we can save Gendry. The archmaester doesn’t know what the poison is.” Bran added.

Podrick nodded, “I wish I could give you the answer you seek my lady. I never saw any poison. I only witnessed Prince Joffrey speak with Lord Tywin and Lord Baelish that morning.”

“Did you hear what they talked about?” Bran asked.

“Lord Tywin just gave him combat advice. I did not hear what Lord Baelish had to say.” Sansa looked at Bran and nodded, “Thank you Podrick, if you…”

“Keep this just between us. I remember my lady.” He said, giving her a small smile.

Podrick bowed and walked away.

Bran turned to Sansa and mockingly said, “Thank you Podrick.”

“Brandon!” Sansa scolded and stalked off toward the tower.
Bran laughed as he jogged to catch up, “I think he likes you. Joffrey is gone, you’ll need a new husband.”

She shook her head, “Joffrey has only been dead a few days Bran. I cannot express any interest in a new betrothal until the appropriate amount of time has passed. Besides, Podrick is kind, but nothing can happen between us.”

“Why not?”

“He is from a small house in the Westerlands, that would not be a good match.” She answered him, “Just like you’ll need to marry someone more of station as well.”

“Father said I would get a squireship first and then he’d worry about a betrothal, one step at a time.”

“We should about worry Gendry now. We can figure out my next betrothal after he is awake and well. That is what is important right now.” Sansa said, glancing at her younger brother.

“You are right.” He replied, and they walked the rest of the way in silence, as they worried for their good-brother.

Cersei did not want to believe it, but the thought had not left her since Arya had brought it up. There was only one person Joffrey would have trusted enough, her father. She wasted no time walking over to his chambers once Arya had returned, she needed to know the truth. She hoped he had nothing to do with it, but at the same time, if he had, he could save Stefon’s life. All it took to get rid of the squire was a simple request.

Tywin watched her take a seat before he asked, “How is the boy?”

“He has a name.” Cersei replied.

“Yes. Which one should I be using, he has so many?” Tywin questioned, “If you had not brought this upon us, Joffrey would still be alive.”

“Are you blaming me for my own son’s death?” She seethed.

“You should have given him more discipline. Robert was never the right sort to raise a future King, he and Jon Arryn should have allowed Joffrey to foster at Casterly Rock. I could have given him the hard lessons he needed.” Tywin replied, his stare moving from her briefly, “They should have listened to me. I ruled this continent for 20 years.”

Cersei faced turned into silent understanding, “You wanted to rule again. Joffrey would have been the puppet King while you were the true ruler, just like it was before Aerys got rid of you.”

“Legacy is what people remember about you.”

“What they will remember about is that you helped one grandson kill another because you coveted power.” She said and got to her feet.

“I have no idea what you are talking about.” He replied, his tone indicating exacerbation with her turn of the conversation.

“The measters have no idea what the poison ailing Stefon could possibly be. If Joffrey had stolen the poison from Grand Maester Pycelle, he would be able to recongize the poison. That means he
had to get it from somewhere. He would only have trusted you.” Cersei accused, her hand gripping the back of the chair she had been sitting in.

“Grand Maester Pycelle informed me it was nearly a mistreated infection.”

Cersei glared at her father, “That old man would know a boil if it sprouted on his nose. I trust Archmaester Martyn in this regard. He was poisoned. You either gave him the poison or you know who did. I will not bury another son.”

Tywin got to his feet his hands slamming down on his desk, “That blacksmith bastard is not your son. I do not care about what your instincts tell you or what Varys’ claims to have found at a tavern. That boy is nothing more than a wayward fuck of Robert’s that somehow seduced the Stark girl and managed to get a taste of power and then wanted more.”

Cersei shook her head, “Have you ever even spoke to him or Arya? They don’t want power.”

Tywin scoffed, “Everyone wants power.”

“You told Joffrey to use poison on his sword, so even if Joffrey lost, Stefon would out of the way too. Giving Tommen a clear path to the throne and he’d be more likely to set aside Lord Stark and give you the position of Hand.” Cersei shook her head, “What is the poison?”

Tywin sat back down, “If Joffrey used poison during the fight, I had nothing to do with it.”

The two stared at each other, the silence stretching before Cersei shook her head, “We will save his life and you shall be returning to Casterly Rock, I no longer want you in the Red Keep.”

His face grew angry, “I am your father, you will…”

She steeled her expression and her stance, “I am the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms, and father or not, I will not have those that wish harm upon my son in the castle.”

She turned on her heels and headed toward the door, she turned before she opened it, “You have a day to change your mind, otherwise, if Stefon dies before we can save him, you will be escorted from the city. Decide wisely father.”

She did not turn to see him or wait for his response, instead she walked away and headed back to the Tower of the Hand. She wanted to spend as much time with her son as possible. She didn’t know what the outcome of this situation would be.

Chapter End Notes

I know this was just a lot of talking but I felt we needed a bit of conversations between the characters. The Cersei and Tywin was the hardest to figure out, hope you liked it. Don’t be afraid to let me know what you think!!
Arya was strangely nervous as she walked to join her father, Lord Tyrion, and Prince Oberyn in her father’s solar. She knew it was a long shot that the Dornish Prince would know how to save Gendry, but she was willing to try any option she had available to them. She did want to raise her child alone. She knew all their other plans had not worked out, but she would make sure this one would work out. She wanted to see Gendry’s face when he saw their child for the first time. The tears came back to her eyes but she pushed them away, she needed to be strong now.

She walked through the open door to see her father behind his desk, Lord Tyrion and Prince Oberyn seating in the chairs in front. She moved to stand beside her father after closing the door.

Prince Oberyn glanced at her, “Lady Arya, I heard about the Prince’s condition. I do hope he was a speedy recovery.”

“Thank you. That is actually why we asked you here today.” She replied.

“I promise that I did not poison the new Prince. I do not believe in punishing children for the acts of their fathers, or grandfathers.” He answered, and she was surprised at how relaxed he remained.

“We do not believe you are responsible for poisoning Prince Stefon. We are however hoping you might know the poison affecting him. The maesters are at a loss.” Ned said.

Prince Oberyn nodded, “I will not know until I take a look at him myself, but I would be willing to see if I could be of assistance.”

“What would you want in return?” Lord Tyrion asked.

“How nice of you to ask Lannister.” He replied, sparing a glance to Tyrion before looking back at her Father, “I want three things for saving the life of our future King.”

“Let us hear them.” Her father said, and she was curious to see what the asked for, surely knowing they would give anything he wished.

“A marriage between our great houses. One marriage with House Stark and one marriage with House Baratheon.” He answered, “My youngest nephew Trystane would be a good match for Princess Mrycella. Your daughter Sansa could marry Quentyn, now that she is available, or your
son Robb could marry Arianne. The details can be discussed later.”

“Two marriages can be arranged.” Her father agreed.

“What was the third thing you wanted?” Arya asked, all she cared about was getting this over with, and getting Oberyn to Gendry.

He smiled at her and said, “The Mountain. Ser Gregor Clegane.”

“I can arrange that.” Lord Tyrion replied without pause, “He is here in the city to compete in the tourney.”

“You do not care why?” Oberyn asked.

“You want to kill him for what he did to your sister and her children during the sack.” Arya replied, “If we have an agreement, shall we go see my husband now?”

“Lead the way your future grace.” Oberyn said as he got to his feet.

“Tommen is the next King.” She said as she walked past him.

“Once the prince has recovered, there is a council to decide which brother will King.” He commented as they walked, “After seeing him in action, I know where I will be placing my vote.”

She didn’t respond as they entered her chambers, where Sansa was sitting by Gendry’s bedside. She looked up from her needlework and got to her feet, “Prince Oberyn.”

“Lady Sansa.” He replied with a nod of his head and then he approached the bed.

“How was he poisoned?”

Arya came up and stood near the head of the bed, “We believe Joffrey poisoned his sword. There is a cut on his leg that he did not have before and they skin around the area is discolored. He has a fever and has been unconscious since yesterday. The Archmaester believes it is some kind of animal venom, but not one he was encountered.”

Oberyn nodded and tilted Gendry’s injured leg to see the wound, he then moved up and opened one of Gendry’s eyes. He stepped back, “I have never seen this poison in Westeros.”

Sansa’s hand gripped Arya’s, but Arya kept her eyes on the Dorinshman.

“I did witness it once while traveling in Ashai.” He looked over to her, “It is from a strange reptile that was similar to a dragon but without wings, they use venom instead of fire to catch their prey. I will see if I can find a dealer somewhere in the city that might have a solution to the poison.”

“Do you honestly think you can save him? I do not want you giving my daughter false hope.” Ned replied from where he and Tyrion were standing just a few feet into the room.

“If I can find the correct antidote before the morning, I can save him.” Oberyn replied and started walking from the room, he paused at looked back at her, “I will return as soon as I can, Your Grace.”

Arya nodded, before she sat down on the bed, and ran a hand threw Gendry’s hair.

“Your Grace?” She heard Sansa say.
“Prince Oberyn has decided that should he live, that Gendry shall be the next king. Making your sister the future queen.” Tyrion said before letting out a sigh, “I need to go talk to my brother, capturing the Mountain is not going to be an easy task.”

“I should discuss this with the King.” Her father said, “Prince Oberyn had a lot of demands.”

Arya turned her head to look at the two men, “If it saves Gendry’s life, then won’t it be worth it?”

“Of course my sweet.” Ned replied, he walked up to her and placed a kiss to her head, “I will check on you later.”

Lord Tyrion gave each her and Sansa a nod, “Have faith my ladies.”

The door shut behind them and Sansa looked over to her, “What all did Prince Oberyn demand?”

She frowned, “He wanted two marriages and the Mountain.”

“Arya turned her body to be fully facing her sister, “One with House Baratheon and one with House Stark.”

“Me?”

“Or Robb. The two eldest Martell children are the options. It was practically decided that Mrycella will marry the youngest Martell son, pending royal approval.”

Sansa frowned, “Isn’t Arianne Martell the heir to Sunspear and Dorne? Why would she want to give that up to be the Lady of Winterfell?” Sansa shook her head, “I spoke with Quentyn Martell briefly at the combat trial. He seemed nice, a better option than Joffrey at any rate.”

“They made no decisions yet Sansa.” Arya said, trying to comfort her sister.

“I’ve always known what my purpose is Arya. I will marry a lord that will benefit the standing of House Stark. Whether that is Quentyn Martell or Willas Tyrell or maybe someone I do not know yet, that is my fate. I am good with that.” She then smiled, “Not all of us can run away and marry a blacksmith.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes before she asked, “Would you want to if you could?”

Sansa was quiet for a moment before she answered, “No, that isn’t me.”

Arya gave her sister a small smile when the door opened, “Mother.”

“I brought something for Gendry.” Catelyn replied and then walked over to the bed. She reached up and hung a wheel of some kind on the bedpost, “We can only pray the gods will answer our prayers.”

Arya nodded, “Thank you.”

Catelyn looked her over, “Have you eaten anything today?”

“Not since this morning and it was only a little bit.” Sansa answered, probably expecting her to lie.

“I am going to get you something. We need to make sure you stay healthy.” Catelyn said before walking out of the room.
Arya turned to her sister, ready to say something when Bran rushed in, “You got a letter from Jon.”

Ned was not sure to think about Robert’s reaction to Prince Oberyn’s demands, mainly because he had no reaction, he simply drank more wine. He let him process his thoughts for awhile before breaking the silence, “If Oberyn can find the solution, do you agree to his terms? I need your approval for a betrothal between Myrcella and Trystane.”

Robert let out a laugh, “That Dornish snake is finally getting his revenge after all this time. He demanded Tywin’s head after the sack and tried to raise Dorne for the Targaryens.”

Ned nodded, “I remember. Jon was able to keep them in the fold and prevent a war.”

“All this time later and he is finally getting his head.” Robert commented, “I will sign the order, Ser Gregor Clegane will face Dornish justice for his actions during the sack of King’s Landing.”

“And the marriage?” Ned questioned.

Robert sighed, “I see little option. I do not want my new son to die if I could save him.”

“I will let Prince Oberyn know we agree to his terms.” Ned said and got to his feet.

“Which of your children are you sacrificing for the Dornish ambitions?” Robert asked, his gaze looking at the wine in his glass instead of Ned.

He shook his head, “I will need to think on it. The decision I make could cause a lot of waves, I’ve received other offers for both Robb and Sansa.”

“Vultures. Joffrey hasn’t even been dead a week.”

“They see an opportunity for advancement, especially with the possibility of my daughter being the future Queen.” Ned explained, not that he liked it any better than Robert.

She was reading the letter from Jon for a third time when a knock on the door startled her. She yelled for the person to enter and Prince Oberyn walked in.

He bowed, “Your Grace.”

“I am not the Queen or a Princess.” She replied as she got to her feet, “Did you find the antidote?”

He smiled at her and produced a vial from his robes, “I did. It was not easy but luckily the scum of the world have a home here in King’s Landing.”

Arya sighed in relief, “Thank the gods. Does he just need to drink it?”

Oberyn nodded, “Open his mouth.”

Arya did as she bid, and she watched as Oberyn poured the liquid down Gendry’s throat.

“He should hopefully wake in the morning, but he will be weak for a few more days.” Oberyn explained.

She smiled and then looked at the Dornishman, “Why were you so willing to assist us?”

“Having the future monarchs as your friend is better than having them as your enemy.” He replied,
and he took a few small turns around one of the chairs, “Do you know who your enemies are little wolf?”

“I have an idea.” She replied, straightening her back. She knew Oberyn had no reason to harm her but she felt the need to seem strong all the same.

“The man with whom I received the antidote from, always told me for whom he provided the poison, and it was not Prince Joffrey.”

She took a deep breath, “Joffrey wasn’t completely stupid, he would have had someone get the poison for him.”

“Do you know who that man was?”

“Enlighten me.” She replied.

“Lord Baelish.”

She frowned, “I would think Littlefinger would have used a middle man as well.”

Oberyn smiled, “He did, but the man who bought the poison works in one of Littlefinger’s brothels.”

“You should tell my father.” She answered, her eyes watching him closely, “A man like Lord Baelish can clearly not be trusted.”

“You already knew that about him though. I can see it on your face, you are not surprised by Littlefinger’s scheming.” Oberyn said and gave her another bow, “I shall leave you to your evening, Your Grace.”

“Until we meet again Prince Oberyn.” She replied as the man left, not bothering to correct him on her title once again.

She watched Gendry for awhile, looking for any change, knowing that it wasn’t magic and therefore wouldn’t be instant, but she hoped. She eventually got up and summoned a servant to tell Archmaester Martyn that Prince Oberyn had given the Prince antidote.

She then settled herself on her side of the bed again and picked up Jon’s letter, wanting to read it one more time.

_Little sister, I apologize for not responding to your letters sooner but the Lord Commander had me accompany Uncle Benjen on a ranging beyond the Wall. The Lord Commander wants me to understand all the workings of the Night’s Watch, my friend Sam believes that he is grooming me for command one day._

_I cannot believe that in the year since I have seen you that you have gotten married and are with child! Two things I never would have expected to hear from you so soon. From what you have said I am glad you have found a man that compliments you so well. I do hope that one day I can meet him and your child. The most recent letter said that you will most likely be heading to Storm’s End after Sansa’s wedding, maybe in a few years I can get leave to see you. Or perhaps you will come to see the Wall._

_I know that life in King’s Landing has not been the easier for you, little sister, but you are a strong and confident young woman. Even as a small child you always knew what you wanted and were not afraid to get it. Those aspects will serve you well as a mother and the Lady of Storm’s._
End. I am full faith that this will not break you. I am always here should you need me, even when we are an opposite ends of the continent.

Love, Jon

The tears had once again come to her eyes and she wished she could hear these words coming from his lips.

She jumped when a hand landed on her leg and when she turned to the man laying besides her, she smiled as she looked into bright blue eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I know that I set up a few things in the chapter, I promise to follow through on it. Don't be afraid to let me know what you think. Who should the Martell/Stark alliance be between, if it were to happen? We are getting closer to the end, only a few more chapters to go.
The week following Gendry’s illness did not see things return to a sense of normalcy. Though he had only been abed for two days, he needed double that for recovery. His leg had been extremely weakened by the poison and it was unable to bear his weight right away. On the fifth day he was able to get up from the bed and walk to the balcony with only a small limp, where they had an intimate dinner to celebrate her eighteenth nameday. On the sixth day they ventured into the garden, accompanied by the Queen and Bran, who was there encase Gendry fell over.

The morning of the seventh day her father informed them that Robert had called for the great council meeting to start that day. The only space large enough for so many lords and ladies was the Dragon Pit. He would be out of the castle until sundown he assumed. He assured them that their presence was not yet required, but it may be in the following days, depending on how the debates went.

The castle was then left with only the younger members of the houses inside the walls. Gendry decided he was well enough to spar and went with Bran and Rickon to the training yards. Arya wished to attend with him but Sansa asked her to come with her on a walk with Myrcella and Margery.

They walked toward the garden to meet up with the others when Arya said, “Is there a reason I need to come along? I am still worried Gendry isn’t at his best.”

“Bran and Rickon will make sure he is alright for a few hours.” Sansa replied, “You are the future Queen, you need to get to know some of the other ladies.”

“I already know Myrcella and Margery.”

“Not well enough.” Sansa commented, “Besides, I think a few other ladies might be present as well.”

Arya stopped in her tracks, “This isn’t a walk at all is it, are you taking me to a tea gathering?”
Sansa shrugged, “You might officially be the next Queen by the end of the day. You need to know these women.” She placed a hand on Arya’s shoulder, “I might be leaving for Sunspear, or Highgarden, any moon now. I want you to find someone you can trust when I am gone.”

Arya nodded, she had remembered wishing the same thing for Sansa when she thought she’d be heading back to Winterfell or Storm’s End. She silently followed Sansa the rest of the way.

The garden seating was half full when they arrived, little groups of ladies talking in whispers as they sipped at tea and ate little snacks. She noticed that Shireen and Myrcella were sitting at a table all their own and walked over to join them.

Shireen noticed her first and got to her feet, pulling her into a hug, “I wasn’t sure you’d be joining us.”

“Gendry wanted to do some sparring and Sansa convinced me to come.” She replied and sat down, “He greatly appreciated the book by the way, he is suddenly fascinated by learning his Baratheon history.”

Shireen sent her a beaming smile, “I am so glad. I would have came and delivered it personally but Mother thought I would just be bothering you.”

“You wouldn’t have been a bother at all.” Arya assured her, reaching over and giving the other girl’s hand a squeeze.

“Did you hear Arya? I will be marrying Trystane Martell.” Myrcella said, her smile bright.

“I did. Are you happy with the match?” Arya asked, even though she thought she knew the answer from the princess’s demeanor.

She nodded, “I was just telling Shireen that this was the best betrothal I could have asked for. Trystane has actually been courting me almost since they arrived, he is sweet and handsome. I think we could be very happy together.”

Arya let out a little laugh that was also a sigh of relief, she was glad that her desperation to save Gendry hadn’t caused Myrcella any grief. She smiled at the slightly younger girl, “I am very happy for you.”

Myrcella nodded, “Now we just need to find a good match for Shireen.”

Shireen shook her head, “I am not sure Mother would allow a betrothal right now. Just getting her to agree to let me come to court was difficult.” She then frowned, “Besides, who would want to marry me when I look like this?”

Arya opened her mouth to protest Shireen’s insecurities when a shadow fell across the table, causing all three women to look up. Lady Brienne gave a bow, “I apologize for interrupting your graces, but may I offer some advice. Do not let the opinions of others decide your life for you. I have been called ugly my entire life. I will never be a great beauty and have suffered at the words of many a man when I was your age. Trust me when I say that focusing on their words will get you nowhere.”

Arya smiled at her, “Thank you Lady Brienne, please, join us.”

“Oh no, I shouldn’t.”

“Yes, please do.” Myrcella insisted and pointed to the empty chair, “You are the heir to Evenstar
“Yes Your Grace.” Brienne replied and looked uncomfortable as she took her seat. She then turned to Arya, “I was very happy to hear about Prince Stefon’s recovery.”

Arya smiled, “We all are. That might have been the worst few days of my life.” She unconsciously ran a hand over her ever growing stomach.

“Now you might be Queen.” Shireen commented with a smile, “I think you and Gendry would be great rulers.”

Arya sighed, “People keep telling me that and I do not know why.”

“It is because you care about people.” Brienne responded, and continued after Arya gave her a confused look, “Lady Shireen and I are the least respected people here. Due to our less than desirable appearances. You do not care about that and insist on including us all the same.”

Myrcella nodded, “I think you would be a gracious Queen, just the kind the people of the Seven Kingdoms need. Not to say my mother has been a bad Queen, but I know she doesn’t really care about the small folk. You and Gendry would.”

“Arya!” Sansa called and gestured for her to join her.

Arya got to her feet with a sigh, “I am being summoned, please excuse me.”

Sansa smiled at her as she walked closer, “Arya, this is Princess Arianne of House Martell.”

Arya looked over the Dornish Princess, she was short, but undeniably beautiful. Arya smiled at her, “It is a pleasure to meet you.”

“You as well my lady.” Arianne replied, “Our families will be joined soon, I thought it would be good for us all to meet.”

Arya nodded, “Your uncle told you of his proposal then?”

Arianne smiled and nodded, “He did. I hope you do not find this rude, but I am hoping the match is between Sansa and my brother. I have no desire to leave Dorne and travel to the North.” She then turned to look at the redhead in question, “I have been trying to talk up my brother to your sister. As, out of respect to the recent loss of Prince Joffrey, it would be improper if he were attempt to court her at this time.”

Arya smirked, “But it isn’t improper for your uncle to propose a marriage alliance?”

“That is a private matter.” Arianne replied, a smirk of her own on her face, “If they were seen out in public together, it might send the wrong idea about Dorne’s grief over the late Prince.”

“Yes, we are all still deep in grief.” Arya commented, and decided she liked Arianne Martell. She looked around, maybe there was something gained from befriending the highborn ladies.

Gendry was catching his breath at the edge of the training yard, watching as Rickon and Tommen spared under the watchful eye of the Red Keep’s master-at-arms, and the Hound. He was transferred to Tommen’s service after Joffrey’s death on the orders of Lord Tywin, or so Tommen had told him. He glanced to right to see that Bran was talking with Ser Loras and a few other knights that he did not know the names of. He gave a small smile, Bran would be some knight’s
squire soon, maybe Gendry would make him a proper sword for the position.

“Your Grace.” A voice said to his left and he turned his head, still not used to the title. The man was shorter than Gendry, with plain brown hair and matching eyes. He bowed and introduced himself, “I am Prince Quentyn of House Martell.”

Gendry nodded, this was Sansa’s new potential husband, “Pleasure to meet you Ser.”

“I am glad to see you have recovered.” The man responded shyly.

Gendry was surprised at the man’s timidness, most of the other highborns he had met were the opposite, and his uncle was quite the presence. Oberyn had come to see Gendry during his recovery, checking that the antidote he provided had the desired result. He nodded again, “As am I. I was not ready to meet the gods.”

They fell into silence, the only sounds that of the hits of the practice swords as Tommen and Rickon continued their sparring session. Gendry took a deep breath, he hated trying to start conversations, but he also had enough of the awkward silence, “Do you fight Prince Quentyn?”

The man nodded, “I have trained since I was old enough to be able to hold a weapon.”

“Something we do not have in common.”

“I saw your fight with Prince Joffrey, you are not a man I would want to meet in battle Your Grace. I would not despair at your lack of proper combat training,” Quentyn assured him, “Do you ride?”

Gendry shook his head, “I am trying to learn but circumstances have pushed that back recently.”

“That is understandable.” He replied.

Gendry could see the man nervously trying to think of something else to say, he turned to look at the man straight on, “Can we put aside the pleasantries? What is it you really want to know?”

The man’s cheeks blushed but he said, “I was hoping you could tell me what to say to Lady Sansa to get her to accept my offer of marriage.”

His eyes widened, that was not what he expected, “You want me to tell you the proper way to court my good-sister?”

Quentyn seemed to scan the area around them, making sure they were not being overheard, “I am not good with women. When I am around them, I get…..flustered. If I know something about Lady Sansa, besides that she seems kind and beautiful, I could possibly give a better impression.”

Gendry frowned a moment, this conversation was moving outside of his normal comfortable levels, “Sansa would respect you just being honest and yourself.”

Quentyn seemed to be about to say more when a group of young men walked up to them, the Dornish prince sighed, “Prince Stefon, may I introduce you to a few of my fellow Dornishmen?”

Gendry nodded, knowing he really didn’t have much choice.

“This is Ser Cletus Yronwood, Ser Edric Dayne, Ser Geris Drinkwater, and Ser William Wells.”

He said, gesturing to each man in turn.

“Sers.” He replied, nodding his head at each one of them, and already knowing he would soon forget their names. He should have had Bran here to remember them for him.
Luckily he was saved from further conversation with the Dornish knights when Tommen called for
him. He excused himself and walked quickly to his brother.

“Do you think you could teach me to use a warhammer like you and Father?” Tommen asked when
Gendry reached him, spinning the practice sword in his hand.

“You’d need to work up your arm muscles first, I am not sure you could properly lift the weight of
a hammer.” He replied, smiling as his little brother frowned. He let out a little chuckle, “That
doesn’t mean you’ll never be able to use one, but I’d stick with the sword for now.”

Tommen smiled at him, “I am really happy you’re feeling better.”

“Me too.” Gendry replied and hoped that whatever decision the council came up with didn’t
change his relationship with Tommen, not when he actually had a chance to have a relationship
with his brother.

Ned wasn’t able to return to the Tower of the Hand until well after sundown, the council having
lasted well past the time they should have disbanded for dinner. He sighed as he climbed the stairs,
Lord Tywin had managed to swing a lot of the Westerland lords to his side supporting Tommen, as
well as a few Reach, Riverland, and Vale lords. While Lord Renly had gathered a lot of lords to his
side supporting Stefon, mostly consisting of lords from the Stormlands, Dorne, and the North. It
was all the undecided lords and ladies that the sides were trying to persuade to their side.

He was ready to collapse into his bed, the day had been long and stressful, but there was something
he needed to do first. He stepped off one of the landings and approached the door, knocking on it
loudly. He was glad the door opened quickly and that Arya was still in her dress from the day, it
meant he hadn’t interrupted anything. He had done that before and while he knew his daughter was
sure to engage with relations with her husband, her current condition proof of that, he didn’t need
visuals.

Arya smiled at him, “Are you just getting back?”

Ned nodded and Arya stepped aside to let him into the room. He saw that Gendry was sitting at the
table, a large book open in front of him. He turned and looked at Arya, “You both are going to
have to attend the council tomorrow. As well as Tommen.”

Gendry got to his feet and nodded, “We were assuming it would happen eventually.”

“What does it seem evenly split?” Arya asked, stepping into Gendry’s space and his arm wrapped
around her.

Ned smiled at the simple gesture, it was automatic, “There are three camps. One for Tommen, one
for Gendry, and the other is undecided.”

“What are the odds?” Gendry asked.

“That will depend on you. You can abdicate any right you have to the throne if you are absolutely
sure you do not want to King. You can always fight to convince them that you are the right choice
as well.” He answered, looking between the two of them, his briefly looking at his daughter’s
stomach.

“We will discuss it Father, thank you.” Arya said, sending him a small smile.

Ned nodded, “Try to get some rest tonight, tomorrow could be a very long day.”
“You too.” Arya replied as she walked him to the door, “We shall see you in the morning. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Deep below the main areas of the castle, a lone figure wandered the halls with nothing but a torch to see his path. Not that he even really needed the light, he had made the same journey every day for a week. The heavy door creaked open as he undid the latch and swung it open, he moved around the room lighting a few more torches before he approached the figure chained to a table in the center of the room.

The table was actually too large for the monster of a man and his legs hanged off the table from the knees down. Those had been chained as well, nothing had been left to chance.

“Ser Gregor, are you ready for our time together to end?” Prince Oberyn said as he approached the man, who was naked in except for his chains.

The Mountain grunted, “Growing bored already Dornish whore?”

“I take that as a no,” Oberyn replied, seeing the infected cuts that littered his victims body. He could not take anything away that the Mountain loved, so he had resorted to a different kind of pain for his revenge. He held the torch over his face, “I spoke with your brother the other day. He did not at all seem concerned with your disappearance.”

“Like I care what that little cunt thinks.”

“He actually requested I give you a gift from him, as if he knew what I was doing with you.” Oberyn replied and moved his body back while lowering the torch to the Mountain’s face, the man seemed about ready to fight through the pain before the anguished screams began to start.

Oberyn smiled, and said over the screams and smell of burning flesh, “You know what you have to say to make it stop. Who gave you the order?”

He removed the torch from the man’s face, the skin was red and burned, as their eyes met, “Fuck off Dornishman.”

Oberyn sighed, “Wrong answer.” He placed the torch on the other side of his face and then the pain became too much, even for a man like the Mountain.

“Tywin Lannister!”

Obery smiled, that was just the answer he wanted to hear. He removed the dagger from his belt and stabbed the Mountain in the gut, a blow that would cause a slow death, “Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!! Don’t be afraid to let me know what you thought!!!
The Morning Of

Chapter Summary

The morning of the Great Council has arrived

Chapter Notes

So, this is a little short, and all set up, but I really wanted to get into their heads a bit more before we get into the hardcore politics. I also upped the chapter count....

I finished this off at work, and wanted to get posted right away, so I apologize for any grammar stuff, i'll edit it later.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry stared up at the canopy of their bed, his mind unable to silence from what was going to come with the sun. He and Arya had spent most of the night before discussing what they want from the future. When he had first met Arya six moons ago, he had never thought his life would end up here. He turned his head to look at his sleeping wife, her belly getting ever bigger as their child grew within. She had told him that he had probably gotten her with child that first time, if she went off her missed moon bloods. No matter how many things kept changing, he knew he could never regret it, not as long as it led him to Arya. He could handle anything the gods threw at him, as long as Arya was standing right beside him.

As if feeling his stare, her eyes slowly flicked open, and she gave him a smile, “Trouble sleeping husband?”

He nodded, “In a few hours dozens of people I have never met are going to decide my fate. My brain will not rest.”

She moved until her head was resting on his chest, her hand coming up to draw lazy patterns on the bare skin, “Have you changed your mind about the throne?”

He shook his head, “We agreed together. We shall make the Seven Kingdoms a better place, or at least try our best. I shall be Stefon Baratheon, First of His Name.”

“I will be standing right beside every step of the way.” She assured him and then let out a small laugh, “I remember a time when I told my father I would never marry a lord and just be used for having children. Now I’m going to be Queen.”

He grabbed her moving hand, and she looked up at his face, “You know I’m not just using you for children, right?”

She quickly sat up, “I never meant to imply that. I know what kind of man you are.”

He nodded, “I worry I’ve ruined you.”
"My love, we both know I ruined you." She teased, "You would have never touched me if I had just remained a simple patron of your shop."

"I was very tempted." He admitted, his eyes falling to her bare chest that was now on display. She’d started sleeping naked a few weeks earlier, saying the combination of the King’s Landing summer and the warmth of the babe, made clothes uncomfortable at night. He stole a glance at all the skin that was available to him before coming back up to her eyes, "I took myself in hand thinking about you more than once."

She smirked at him, "Is that so Your Grace?"

"It is. I imagined your lithe form moaning in pleasure for me or of your small hands being there instead of my large ones." He raised the hand he still held to his lips, "You haunted my dreams m’lady, and once I had you completely, I dreaded the day I would have to let you go."

"You never have to worry about that now. You are stuck with me forever."

He leaned over and captured her lips in a kiss, "There is nowhere else I would rather be." She moaned into him as he kissed her once again, only this time moving from her lips to her neck, and that sweet spot only he knew existed.

"We have places to be soon." She whispered, her fingers threading into his hair.

"I am the prince, they can wait." He responded as he moved them so she was straddling his lap, "This morning I want to spend time pleasuring my wife."

Breakfast had been a quiet affair, today was going to be a long day for all of them. Arya had not shared the decision that she and Gendry had come to. They would find out with the rest of court later today.

The journey to the Dragon Pit was equally as quiet, just her, Gendry, and her parents. Her siblings were once again not included in the proceedings and would be left to their own devices. She envied them and rested a hand on her stomach, life was changing so fast. As the ruins came into view, it amazed Arya that the building at once been the home of dragons. She had come across the skulls of the giant beasts during her exploration of the castle, a part of her had wondered why King Robert had not destroyed them, but she was thankful he had not. There had been no dragons for a hundred years, the skulls were the closest she would ever get to seeing one.

As the entered the cleared space as the center of the pit, she noticed that the pavilions had been set up in a circle around a small central table. Each pavilion had one chair that was at the center that was larger than the others. Small banners were hanging from the overhead, indicating the houses that were represented by each pavilion. She noticed there was a slightly smaller one than the others that only held the Baratheon stag, she assumed it was the royal section, under which there were five chairs set up.

Renly walked up to them as soon as they entered, "I am so glad you have all arrived. I was hoping for a word before we began?"

"Have there been any new developments?" Ned asked the younger lord.

Renly smiled, "I have managed to gain a few more supporters to our side from the undecided. The real test will be during the questions." He turned to look at Gendry, "I need to know what you are going to say."
Gendry took a deep breath, his hand squeezing hers, “I will not deny my claim. If the lords and ladies of Westeros decide I am the one they want, then I will accept.”

Renly’s smile grew, “I was hoping that is what you would say. I truly believe you would be an excellent King, and Arya would be a wonderful Queen.”

“We are thankful for your confidence my lord.” Arya replied, giving the man a polite smile.

He turned to her, “I am your uncle by law now Arya, no need for such formalities.”

“Renly.” Ned said, before gesturing to where the other lords had began to fill their seats, “We should take our positions.”

“Yes. I suppose we should.” He gave Gendry’s shoulder a gentle squeeze, “This will be a memorable day.”

Arya tugged on Gendry’s hand to get him to follow behind her Father. He led them up to the Baratheon pavilion, while Renly went and took the large chair under what she assumed was the Stormlands area. Ned gestured to two chairs on the right of the largest chair, “These are for you. Robert, Cersei, and Tommen will take the other chairs.”

She nodded, “Where is your seat?”

He pointed to the pavilion decorated with the Northern banners, and she noticed her mother had moved over there. She was talking with Lady Mormont and Lord Karstark.

“Arya.” Ned replied to once again get her attention, “Are you sure this is the course of action you wish to take?”

She nodded, “We have discussed it and this is what we have decided.”

He gave her a small smile, “I just wanted to make sure.”

A flash of red caught her attention from the corner of her eye and she turned to see Lord Tywin under the area for the Westerland lords. He was talking with a few of them before he turned to look at her. He glared at her for a moment before his eyes drifted down to her stomach and she instinctively placed a protective hand over it. He smirked before he turned back to the lord he had been talking with.

“I will take my seat. Remember, you have a lot of supporters.” Ned said before walking the short distance to his seat.

Gendry sat down in the one next to the large one for Robert, “I have a bad feeling about this.”

Arya moved to stand directly in front of him, “You are a prince. Robert and Cersei have both publicly acknowledged you. You have every right to the throne.”

His eyes moved across the assembled lords and ladies and shook his head, “That isn’t what I worry about.”

She frowned, “What worries you?”

His blue eyes moved to her grey ones, “What they will say about you.”

She shook her head, “I will handle whatever they throw my way. There is nothing they can say that will hurt more than some of the things I heard as a girl.”
“I hope that is true.” He replied, his eyes once again beginning to roam around the faces that surrounded them.

She smiled at him one last time before taking her seat. Sansa and her mother had helped her pick out a golden dress with black vines encircling it, Baratheon colors. She raised her back as straight as she could manage and placed what she hoped was a polite smile on her face. She needed to look as regal and presentable as possible, that is what her mother had said. Usually, Arya would fight back about being either of those things, but she knew how important this was. Not just to her, or Gendry, or even their families, but to the realm.

She smiled as Tommen walked in with Cersei, the boy was only a few years younger than herself, he would be turning 15 soon. That was not an unreasonable age for an heir, after all, her cousin Robert Arryn was the Lord of the Eyrie while also only being 15. She unconsciously ran a hand over her stomach, this decision would decide whether her son would be the future King of the Seven Kingdoms, or the Lord of Storm’s End. She had decided it was a boy the night before Gendry had fought Joffrey, after a dream had come to her. Of a small boy with dark hair and blue eyes looking up at her with a goofy grin while she sat in the Winterfell godswood. She knew the chances of her seeing Winterfell again were slim, but the image had stuck with her ever since, and she wanted to see it come to pass.

Cersei walked over to them and smiled, “I want you to know that I support you, if that is your wish.”

“Thank you, Mother.” Gendry replied, a slight pause before the name left his lips.

Arya watched as Cersei’s smile grew and diverted her eyes to her own mother. She wasn’t sure that Catelyn had ever smiled at Arya with such open affection, at least not in her older years. Would Catelyn be proud of her if she became Queen? That the least ladylike of her daughters would be the future Queen of the Seven Kingdoms. The child who would sneak out to play with the smallfolk and practiced her archery in secret, the child who could not sew a straight stitch in her embroidery.

“You look beautiful, like a true Baratheon princess.” Cersei said to her, drawing her back into the moment.

“Thank you, my mother and Sansa picked it out.” Arya replied, playing with the skirt.

“Your mother has good taste.” Cersei replied before nodding her head and walking the short distance to her own seat.

Gendry smiled at her, “You do you look very beautiful. I can’t remember if I already told you that today.”

She shook her head, “You had not, but thank you.”

He grabbed her hand and kissed her knuckles, “I will do better to remember to tell you every day in the future.”

She wanted to tell him that there was no guarantee that he’d feel that way in the future, but something on his face stopped her. She had a feeling, that even if she gained enough weight to rival King Robert, that Gendry would still find her beautiful, love had blinded him. It was the same for her, no matter what the future held, she would always love him and want him. She nodded and smiled at him, content that their love would get them through this. No matter what happened next.
Hopefully you all liked. I hope to have the next chapter up on the normal schedule of Saturday.
The Great Council of House Baratheon

Chapter Summary

title pretty says it all

Chapter Notes

A lot of you were wondering what Tywin was up, well, now you get to know. There are a lot of people talking in this, I tried to make it as easy to understand who was speaking as possible, hopefully it isn't too confusing.

Thank you so much to everyone who has stuck with the story up to this point, you are all wonderful!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gendry remained silent as the lords and ladies took up their positions. He noticed a number of them wore red ribbons on their wrists, while others were wearing black. He wondered what they could mean.

As everyone had found their seats, Arch Maester Martyn approached the table at the center and opened a book before he looked up at the gathered nobility. He took a deep breath, “My lords and ladies, Your Graces. We are all gathered here today for a historical manner, to determine who shall be the Crown Prince. Usually when it comes to matters such as these, the eldest male heir gets precedence, as determined by the Targaryen succession councils of the past. We have found ourselves in an unusual situation. Prince Stefon is the elder but as he was not acknowledged as a royal prince until recently, there those that raised concerned at not only his legitimitizing, but his character. Prince Tommen has always been a member of the family, and is of known character to the court, however, he is young.” He paused for a moment, “Today, we shall question both Prince Stefon and Prince Tommen. We will then vote and the prince with the greatest number of supporters shall be the next King.” He then turned and faced the royal pavilion firmly, “Prince Tommen, we shall start with you. If you would please take a seat.”

A servant brought out a single chair and placed it before the table, before he disappeared behind the pavilions.

Gendry shook his head, would have simpler to have put the chair there before they had all gathered. He supposed it was for a moment of pageantry and he did not understand the need for it. Was not this whole council enough pageantry as it was?

He watched as Tommen walked to the chair and sat down, he felt bad for his little brother, he didn’t want any of this any more than he did himself. He also hadn’t felt though it was his place to try to persuade him one way or the other. This was something he needed to decide for himself but as Gendry caught sight of the smile Tywin sent Tommen’s way, he couldn’t help but think that his grandfather had not felt the same way.
The archmaester then turned to the gathered nobles, “Does anyone have questions for Prince Tommen?”

A man stood from the Stormlands section, there was a lightning bolt sewn into his tunic.

“Yes, Lord Dondarrion.” Archmaester Martyn announced.

“Prince Tommen. You have grown up a prince. Do you feel that the gods have set you on this path to the next King?”

Gendry was surprised at the direct question, he found most highborns liked to flowerly with their words and dance around before asking what they wanted.

Tommen remained straight back in the chair, “I received all the proper education as befitting a prince. If the gods have seen it that I should be the next King, then I will accept without question, but it was never anything I set out to have for myself.”

Gendry watched as the lord resumed his seat. The archmaester looked around, but no one else stood to be called upon. Gendry did not know much about these sort of things, but he assumed that Tommen only being asked one question was not good for him.

“If there are no other questions,” Martyn paused, and nodded, “Then you may return to your seat, Your Grace.”

Tommen gracefully got to his feet and returned to his chair next to Cersei. Gendry took a deep breath and looked at Arya, she gave him a small smile and a nod.

“Prince Stefon, if you would please come to the center.”

He nodded and got to his feet, he hoped his walk looked as graceful as Tommen’s, but he doubted it from some of the sneers he could see being sent his way. All from those wearing the red ribbons he had noticed before. He wished he could ask Renly about them, surely he would know. He slowly sat in the seat.

“Does anyone have questions for Prince Stefon?”

An older man under the Reach banners stood up, an archer broach on clear display on his tunic.

“Lord Tarly.” Martyn announced.

“Until recently you were only a blacksmith. What makes you think that qualifies you to be the King of the Seven Kingdoms?” Lord Tarly asked, and Gendry knew this man was not on his side.

“I do not think that my abilities of a blacksmith qualifies me in any way for being King. I do believe that my upbringing, as a member of the smallfolk, does however. I know what the people need better than anyone and I can relate to them in a way no other King before me could.” Gendry replied, he and Arya had spent hours the night before discussing what to say to the predictable questions.

A different lord stood up, this one had no sigil notation he could see.

“Lord Hawthrone.”

“Knowing the smallfolk does not qualify you as King, if anything it proves that you shall place their wellbeing above those of your sworn bannermen.”
Gendry frowned at the man, “If one does not have the support of the smallfolk, I could have the support of every noble house in Westeros and still be a failure as King. The smallfolk outnumber the nobility at least 10 to 1, if they wanted to rebel against us, there was very little we could do to stop them. The Targaryens learned that lesson in this very place.”

Lord Hawthrone took his seat without further comment and Gendry scanned the crowd, noticing that many had broken out in whispered decisions between themselves. He eventually found Renly, who was smiling broadly at him.

A man with silver hair stood up from the Crownland section.

“Lord Velaryon.” The archmaester said.

“You mention the Targaryens’ loss of their dragons in this ruin. Did you learn this tale while smithing weapons?”

“I did not, my wife and my cousin, Lady Shireen, have been teaching me the histories of Westeros, my lord.” He replied, wishing he could turn around to look at Arya, find some comfort in her appearance.

“Can you not read to learn these things yourself?” The lord asked, and Gendry thought a man with a seahorse pin should not be so bold.

“I can read some and I am getting better at it all the time. When I was finally reunited with my family, we all agreed that it would be a good idea to improve my education. Though, at that time it was in the belief that I would be the Lord of Storm’s End, not King.” He replied, his eyes flashing to Renly again who was nodding.

Lord Velaryon took his seat and Gendry let out a small sigh of relief.

An average looking, mid-aged man dressed in black stood up from the Iron Islands pavilion, which had only had a handful of the chairs full.

“Lord Harlaw.”

“There is really only one question that matters here. Do you want to be King?”

He sat back down before Gendry even opened his mouth. Gendry took a deep breath, “I have never wanted to be anything other than a blacksmith, that is what I have always known. I am, however, ready to accept the role of Crown Prince, if you all here believe that I will be the best choice. If not, my uncle has informed me that I shall be his heir to Storm’s End. No matter the outcome here, I shall no longer be a blacksmith. I will fill whatever role you want from me.”

A silence overtook them all as he finished speaking. The archmaester looked around and asked, “Does anyone else have questions for Prince Stefon?” No one stood up or called out, “Prince Stefon, you man return to your chair.”

“Thank you Archmaester.” He replied and walked back to his seat beside Arya, and she gave him a warm smile. He hoped that meant he had done enough.

Tywin had remained silent during the questioning for one reason only, he wanted to see what the other lords were thinking. He had of course talked to a few of them and gotten them thinking about certain topics, but he was happy to see that many had issues with a blacksmith as king.
Archmaester Martyn had opened up the floor for discussion, it had quickly dissolved from civilized conversation into bouts of screaming. He glanced up to see that Tommen looked unnerved with the situation before him, while Gendry/Stefon reminded him of Stannis, silently glaring. He chanced a glance at the Lord of Dragonstone, and sure enough, the expressions were nearly identical.

The lords were yelling at each other from their pavilions, all declaring why their candidate was the best choice, a few had even moved to the center between the pavilions. This was exactly what Tywin had been hoping for, the chaos would only be heightened when he made his announcement. He had just been waiting for the right moment. He looked up at the royal pavilion and smirked, the bastard and his she-wolf would regret the moment they went up against the lion.

“My lords! My lords!” He called loudly until he had their attention, “I think we are forgetting that we want a King of good moral character and Prince Stefon is anything but that.”

“That is slander Lord Tywin!” Renly shouted, getting to his feet in anger.

“You might not be aware of this Lord Renly, as you have no children of your own, but as I man who witnessed his wife’s belly growing with child, I can look at Lady Arya and know that the timeframe she became with child is moons before their marriage.” Tywin replied and gestured to Arya, “They were abed together long before the marriage bed.”

Arya felt her heart stop for a moment as Tywin’s words reduced everyone to silence. She took a deep breath and steeled her face into what she hoped was a mask of indifference, but she knew it was probably more like simmering anger. Her eyes flashed to her father. This whole mess had been why they had planned to send her back to Winterfell in the first place. They had forgotten to discuss what would happen if she stayed in King’s Landing.

Lord Crakehall got to his feet, “I wish to know the truth of the matter. Let a maester examine the Lady, they can confirm how long she has been with child.”

“My daughter’s honor should not be questioned in such a manner.” Her mother said, getting to her feet.

“It is not Lady Arya’s honor we doubt, but rather that of her husband.” Lord Turnberry replied.

“If you doubt one, you doubt the other. Unless babes are made differently in the Westerlands than they are in the North.” Lady Mormont said in return, causing a few snickers from the other Northerners.

Arya took a moment to glance at Gendry as the two sides once again fell into disagreement, his hands were clenching the arms of his chair. If it had been of a lesser craftsmanship it surely would have broken by now. She looked back to the debating lords and ladies, and noticed that Lord Tywin had returned to his seat, smirking at the chaos he had wrought. The sight of his smirking face infuriated her. He did all this so he could manipulate the lords and ladies of Westeros into picking Tommen as King, all so he could once again have a chance at being Hand. Or at least, she assumed those were his ambitions, for what other reason could he have?

She wished she could ask her father, or mother, or even Cersei, what her next move here should be. Would her coming clean with truth hurt or damage their chances? She knew her honor would be in question either way, but could she help restore Gendry’s? He had agreed to marry her as soon as he learned of the babe, she knew not all men were so honorable.

She looked once again at Gendry, but he was focused on the crowd, as were Robert and Cersei,
while Tommen looked extremely uncomfortable. She looked around the seated crowd, those not actively engaged in the screaming match. Lady Olenna was watching her, the old woman was smirking as well. When their eyes met, she inclined her head to the side, gesturing subtly to the group. The Tyrell matrarch was trying to tell her something and as she took a deep breath and got to her feet, she hoped she had read the woman’s intentions correctly.

“I wish to speak, my lords and ladies.” Her voice was loud and it cut through all of them. Silence fell as dozens of sets of eyes turned to look at her. She took a deep and stepped forward, “I can settle this debate right now. What Lord Tywin says is true, Prince Stefon and I were intimate with each other before our marriage.”

Whispers started up immediately and she let out a whistle that she had only ever used before with hunting dogs. Silence once again fell in the Dragon Pit.

“Before anyone jumps to any conclusions, allow me to explain. As those here from the North are sure to know, I have always been a willful child, and womanhood has not changed that. I ran into Prince Stefon quite on accident and commissioned the creation of a sword, without my father’s knowledge. I snuck out often to visit with Prince Stefon at his smithy and one night I took it upon myself to seduce him. This went on for many moons until I discovered I was with child. Prince Stefon, who still thought he was nothing more than a bastard blacksmith, agreed to meet with my father and offer to marry me, to save my honor and that of House Stark.” She told them, amazed that she was able to keep their attention so easily, “It was my idea to have him knighted but the story that you heard for which he was knighted was no lie. He had saved my life one night while I was not in the Red Keep.” She paused and took a deep breath, “Prince Stefon is one of the most honorable men I have ever known in my life. Westeros could do much worse than him as its King.”

She finished her truth and stood waiting for the insults or jabs, but instead they all continued to stare at her in silence.

“That right there is a woman we want to be Queen.” A voice said from the crowd, one Arya recognized and looked to Lady Olenna. The older woman used her son’s arm and pulled herself ot her feet, “Anyone willing to admit their actions, and do so with such eloquence, is somehow we want dealing with our affairs.”

“We aren’t here to pick a Queen, but a King.” Someone yelled from the crowd, Arya could not tell who spoke.

Lady Olenna scoffed, “We are picking both. Prince Stefon, whether you want to believe he is of the nobility such as we are, has married a woman born of the marriage of two of the most powerful houses in Westeros. The child growing in her belly has blood from Houses Baratheon, Stark, Tully, and Lannister. A child meant for greatness.”

“Prince Tommen is unmarried. Prince Stefon already has an heir.” Another disembodied voice yelled out.

“Prince Tommen is also young, he has years to make an heir, with a proper lady, one who does not go out to have affairs with blacksmiths.” Lord Crakehall said.

“Did Lord Tywin promise to consider your daughter for the role should you support him?” Renly asked, glaring at the lord, “I am sure many other lords here were told the same.”

Arya sighed as things once again fell into chaos, she turned and returned to her seat. Avoiding the eyes of Robert and Cersei as she did.
Gendry leaned over his chair and whispered to her once she was seat, “Are you alright?”

She nodded and gave him a small smile, “We should have known better than to think it wouldn’t come out.”

He sighed and looked to Tywin, “Just a shame that my grandfather felt the need to attack your character in such a way.”

She reached out and grabbed his hand, “My actions might have helped us. All we can do now is wait for the vote.”

He leaned back into his chair, “Who knows when that we will be.”

She watched as Robert’s frown deepened, and she wondered how much of their conversation he had heard. Suddenly, the large man got to his feet and shouted, “Enough!”

The silence was instant as everyone looked up at their king.

“All of you, return to your seats.” He said, the rage clear in his tone. Once everyone had seated he said, “I think we have all heard enough. Archmaester, begin the vote.”

Robert returned to his seat and the Archmaester stepped forward. He gestured behind him and two servants came forward, between them was a large clay pot. They placed it one end of the table and the Archmaester reached inside, pulling out a large stack of parchment, a quill pen, and an inkwell.

He then turned once more to address them, “Each House gets one vote. The representative of the house shall come up, write down either the name of Prince Tommen or Prince Stefon, fold it in half, and place it inside the pot. Once every house present as voted. Myself and two other maesters shall count the votes to determine the winner.” He took a breath, “Please take a few moments to discuss. I shall call up House from the list I have made of those present.”

Arya took a deep breath as the whispers started up again. She knew it would only be a short while before the archmaester called the first name, before the sunset today, they would have a new Crown Prince. She wasn’t sure she had ever been so nervous in her life.

“Lord Ashwood.” Archmaester Martyn announced, and so the voting began.

Chapter End Notes

I know, a little bit of a cliffhanger, but it was the perfect place to stop. Hope you can forgive me!
The Crown Prince

Chapter Summary

The decision is revealed, a feast is had, and things are happening in the shadows

Chapter Notes

Hello wonderful readers!! As usual, thank you for all the amazing comments on the last chapter.

In this chapter, I have a little ceremony that I don't think they actually do in canon, but I felt like it was needed. Hope you don't mind!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ned was nervous as he watched the maesters count the votes at a special table that had set up at the edge of the pit, away from prying eyes but still public enough that no could accuse them of cheating. The others had begun to mingle around a bit, speaking quietly in small groups. He noticed that Cat had approached her sister and Ned frowned. Lysa Tully-Arryn was not the woman he remembered her to be on the day of their joint wedding. The years had not been kind to her mind it seemed. He also wasn’t sure what to think of Robert Arryn, he was officially the Lord of the Eyrie, but Lysa seemed to be the one in charge. That was what Lord Yohn Royce had told him at least, along with a few disturbing things about Lord Baelish and the strong influence he had over both Lysa and Robert. As Hand, Ned knew that Lord Baelish had requested permission to marry Lysa Arryn, but with everything that had happened with Joffrey and now the council, no decision had been made. The news that Prince Oberyn had provided him was also disconcerting and would need to be dealt with sooner rather than later.

“Ned, could we have a quick word?” Renly said, coming up to his side.

Ned nodded and the younger lord led him away from the others.

“I have been talking with a few of the others, I am not confident this will go the way we want.” Renly confessed, “We should make a plan encase it doesn’t.”

Ned frowned, “What is it you worry will happen?”

“Robert is doing his best to kill himself early. I worry what will happen if that were to happen before Tommen is older. Right now the boy is young and impressionable, and he loves his grandfather. If Tywin could convince Tommen to make the right changes, that would be the end of your tenure as Hand and I would be sent back to Storm’s End.” Renly explained.

“Tommen is smarter than you give him credit for Renly. While I do agree that I think Gendry and Arya are the better choice, I do not think the realms would suffer under Tommen.”

“It isn’t Tommen I am worried about.” Renly replied but shook his head, “What of Littlefinger?”
“We will deal with him shortly.” Ned narrowed his eyes at the man in question, who was now speaking with both the Tully sisters, “I have a suspicion I want to explore.”

“Wish to share?”

Ned shook his head, “Not here.”

Renly nodded, “I understand.”

They noticed a slight commotion at the edge of the dragon pit, the maesters were all walking toward the stage. A servant ran up to the center of the stage, “Please, my lord and ladies, retake your seats.”

Everyone was quick to do so, the anticipation of the next moment was thick in the air. Ned looked over at Cat beside him and she gave him a small smile before her blue eyes floated up to the front pavillion. He followed her example, Gendry had reached over and was gripping Arya’s hand in his own. He smiled at the sight, still amazed that his wild, wilful daughter had been the first of his children to be married, and to be married to man that suited her so well. He wished he could spare them both what he was sure to come. Ruling one kingdom was hard enough, as he knew from experience, but ruling seven was proving to be an even harder task.

Archmaester Martyn walked to the center of the stage, “The votes have been counted, and while the vote was not unanimous for one candidate, the victor was clear. The future King of the Seven Kingdoms is Prince Stefon.”

The gathered lords and ladies stood, cheering and clapping for the new Prince. Ned stood as well, his hands moving in congratulations but his eyes were focused on his daughter and her husband. Both of them had plastered on smiles as they stood and accepted the decision of the council, but Ned could see the slight disappointment in their behaviors. He spared a glance to Tommen and the young boy looked nothing but relieved at this turn of events.

This was going to be a hard life for them, the future King and Queen of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. He was going to everything he could help them, that was his duty, not only as the future Queen’s father, but as the Hand to the current King. His eyes drifted to Lord Baelish, he was clapping as well, but his were less than enthusiastic. Yes, Ned knew what he needed to first, and he turned back to the royal family. Robert had now stood and was cheering as well. There needed to be changes made to the Small Council, and Ned knew exactly where he was going to start.

She was nervous as they waited to be announced. This was going to be a very different experience than anything else that had happened before in the throne room. She was wearing the fanciest dress she had ever seen, something fit for a princess, because that was what she would be in just a few short minutes. A princess. The lords and ladies of Westeros had voted, and they had picked Gendry to be the next King. She would one day be Queen and her son would be King. She had hoped that once they had dealt with Joffrey that all their problems would be over. That they could just go to Storm’s End and practically disappear, maybe showing up at weddings and tourneys and other special occasions. That could not happen now. The Red Keep was going to be her home now, a castle she had hated upon first sight.

She hoped that Robert would keep his health for a few more years yet. She glanced over at her husband, dressed in full Baratheon colors, and smiled. He certainly looked the part of a King, young, strong, and handsome. But he had never left the walls of Kings Landing. How was he to rule the seven kingdoms, when he had only seen one city? She had talked about it with Shireen, and while Robert had never done one, the Targaryens had often done royal progress. She would
bring it up to her father and Gendry, after the babe was born and grown enough to travel with them. She could not bear leaving it behind. They could travel all of Westeros, the three of them, a happy family little family. The could go with Sansa and Mycella to Dorne, and then travel up to Highgarden, Casterly Rock, and then go to Winterfell. Maybe even visit Jon and Uncle Benjen up at the Wall.

The doors opened and their names were called, “Prince Stefon of House Baratheon and Princess Arya of Houses Stark and Baratheon.”

She had requested keeping the Stark name in her official titles, it was who she really was at heart and she didn’t want to lose that. Most people still called Cersei a Lannister, so she could remain a Stark.

She looped her hand into Gendry’s elbow and together they walked down the hall toward for the Iron Throne, where Robert sat, smiling at them. There were three occupied chairs to the left, for Cersei, Tommen, and Mycella, and two empty to his right. One chair was larger than the others, and this was meant for the Crown Prince.

Her father was waiting for them at the base of the stairs, a smile on his face as they approached. Sansa and Bran were standing beside them, each of them holding a pillow that held a circlet crown. Ned smiled at them when they stopped before him, “Prince Stefon of the House Baratheon, do you accept the burden of taking on the mantle as heir to the Iron Throne of Westeros and all that it entails?”

“I do.” Gendry replied and bowed his head as Ned took the circlet from Bran and placed it upon her husband’s head.

Ned then turned to her, “Do you, Arya of Houses Stark and Baratheon agree to support your husband as his Queen?”

“I do.” He took the circlet from Sansa and put her on the head.

She and Gendry turned toward the waiting crowd. Ned raised his voice, “The Crown Prince Stefon and the Princess Arya!”

The hall erupted into cheers, they turned and walked up the stairs, bowing to Robert before taking their seats. She looked out over the still cheering crowd, picking out the familiar and happy faces upon them. The Martells were near the front, clapping for them with smiles on their faces. Lady Brienne’s height made her easy to locate as well, she was wearing a large smile, as she stood next to her father. Her eyes found mostly smiling faces, those that weren’t the largest of the opposition for them, chief among them was Tywin Lannister. He looked like he was smelling something foul as he stood still among the crowd.

She held her head up higher and smiled, she would prove to all those that believed in Gendry, and her, that they had made the right choice. She would make sure of it.

Robert stood then, holding up his hands so the crowd would know to silence, once he had he spoke, “I know that the past few moons have been confusing and troublesome. You all traveled here for a wedding and tourney. The wedding will not be happening but we shall still hold the tourney.” There was a cheer again before he continued speaking, “There shall be a feast tonight, to celebrate my son, and then in two days we shall start the tourney. Which will now be held in the honor of Prince Stefon and Princess Arya.”

Arya smiled as they once again cheered for her and Gendry, she couldn’t wait for this all to be over
and for things to return to normal. At least, a normal she hoped they would find.

Arya smiled as the people danced, the feast had ended and everyone was just now celebrating. Whether that celebration was for them or it was for a tourney, she wasn’t sure, but she was happy to see that people were happy all the same.

Gendry leaned over to whisper to her, “Should I request a dance from my wife?”

She smiled over at him, “Are you ready for such a big step in our marriage?”

That made him crack the smile she loved and he stood up, holding out his hand to her, and together they joined the others on the dance floor.

She noticed that Sansa was dancing with her potential Dornish suitor, Quinton Martell. Shireen was dancing with Rickon, the young boy trying hard not to step on her feet. Mrycella was dancing with her betrothed. Margery was dancing with Robert Arryn and her usually perfectly crafted smile had fallen, it was clear whatever her cousin was saying did not impress the rose. She looked for Bran and noticed he was on the sidelines talking with Ser Barristan, she smiled her little brother had always dreamed of joining the Kingsguard. She smiled to see that even Brienne had found a dancing partner, she couldn’t remember his first name but she knew it was one of Lord Umber’s sons. He was taller than Brienne, which was a feat indeed, and the smile on the lady’s face was not one of disgust. As she continued to spin with her husband, she noticed that her mother was talking with her siblings, and from Lysa expression she assumed it was not an enjoyable one. Her father was nearby, talking with a few of the Vale lords, she recognized Lord Royce but could not name the others. She wondered what that could be about.

The song came to an end but before she could leave the dancefloor, Prince Oberyn approached, “I hope you won’t mind if I steal your wife away for a dance Your Grace.”

Gendry looked at her and she nodded her head, “She is all yours Prince Oberyn, but only for the one song.”

Prince Oberyn laughed, “I would never try to break up such a lovely couple.”

Gendry nodded and walked off, joining his uncles by a table and accepting a glass of wine from Tyrion.

“I will be leaving shortly. I just wanted to make sure we had a proper chance to talk before I do.” Prince Oberyn said.

“Missing Dorne?” She questioned.

“My daughters mostly, they are a wild bunch and shouldn’t be left unsupervised for too long. Besides, I have come to the capitol to do what I needed, no reason for me to stay. I have no use for tourneys anymore.”

She nodded, “I assume our deal was beneficial for you.”

“Very, I got all the answers I needed.” He looked over the crowd, “It seems the deal worked out well for everyone. I have nothing against Tommen but he would have just been Tywin’s puppet. Your husband will make a much better King, or at least I hope, otherwise swaying all the Dornish lords to his side was a mistake.”

“I wish you safe travels back to Dorne my prince. Hopefully we shall see each other again in the
future.” She said with a smile, knowing this was not really the proper place for such discussions.

“That I know we will, afterall, we shall be joined by two marriages soon.” He replied, nodding his head toward Myrcella and Trystane.

She let out a small laugh, “Yes, I suppose we will.”

The song ended and they bowed to each other, “Until then Prince Oberyn.”

“Until then Your Grace.” He replied, placing a kiss on the back of her hand before he disappeared into the crowd.

She turned to look for Gendry but noticed Sansa’s dance was over as well and decided to see how her sister was faring.

Gendry was quickly learning he was not really a feast person. He did not like being around so many people, he was sure eventually he would run out of new people to be introduced to, but that did not seem to be happening. After Oberyn had requested Arya for the dance, his Uncle Tyrion had given him a glass of wine, introduced him to a few people, and now he just seemed to keep being passed around from noble to noble. It was starting to get exhausting.

“Cousin!” Shireen said as she came up to him, “Will you join me please?”

He grabbed her hand and let himself be led onto the dance floor, he sighed, “Thank you.”

“I could see you needed an escape.” She replied as the moved to the music, “Are you excited for the tourney?”

He shrugged, “I have never been to one before.”

“Neither have I. I am very excited to see it.” She replied, “I am sure Mother will want to send me back to Dragonstone right away. She is already upset we have been here this long.”

He didn’t like that idea at all, he had only known her a short time, but he had grown fond of his little cousin in that time, “You should stay here, if that is what you want.”

“Mother wouldn’t let me.”

“Arya needs ladies-in-waiting right? You can be one of those.”

Shireen smiled, “And how did you learn about ladies-in-waiting?”

“From those Targaryen books. They mentioned all the ladies that attended the Queens and Princesses.” He replied, “You can be one of those.”

“That is up to Arya.” She pointed out.

“She will like the idea, I am sure of it.” He assured her, “I would like it if you stayed.”

Shireen smiled, “I will talk to Arya about it and if she agrees, I will bring it up to Father.”

He nodded, “I just don’t want you stuck on that stupid island for your whole life.”

“Thank you.” She said before she pulled back and gave him a curtsy.
He bowed and she walked off. He made his over to the edge of the dancefloor, deciding it was time to find his wife. He didn’t get far before Cersei came up to him.

She smiled at him, “Are you happy with this outcome?”

“I do not know if happy is the word, but I am content with it. My choices were limited.” He replied.

She then reached up and linked her arm in his and led him over to a balcony, further away from prying ears, “I hope that one day, you can forgive me.”

He furrowed his brows, “What do I need to forgive you for?”

“I brought you into this mess.” She said, “If I had….”

“You already apologized for that before the fight. I do not blame you for anything.” Gendry replied honestly. Did he wish things were different? He did but he had learned long ago that there was no changing the past.

She nodded, “I will do my best to protect you better in the future. That I do promise you.”

He gave her a small smile, “Hopefully there will be nothing that you need to protect me from.”

“I do too.” She replied but Gendry could tell that she did not believe it, “Let us talk of happier thoughts. Have you and Arya come up with a name for the babe hit?”

He shook his head, “There has been so much happening, that hasn’t been a priority.”

“You still have some time.” She assured him, “I had to come with the names for all you myself, Robert was not an active participant in the process.”

Gendry frowned, “Am I not named after his father?”

She nodded, “You are, it was an attempt to please him.” She then looked down for a moment before looking back at him, “I know Gendry is the name you have really known your whole life, I do appreciate you taking on Stefon for the future.”

“That is my true name, but honestly, I will also feel like Gendry. Arya said she is still going to call me that because that was my name when we fell in love. I am okay with that.” He told her with a smile.

“I am very happy that you’ve found one to truly love, it is a rare thing for people in our positions.”

“I am lucky indeed.” He replied and smiled as he watched his wife appear and walk towards them.

She smiled as she leaned up against him, “I never realised feasts could be so exhausting. What were you two talking about?”

“I was asking about the babe.” Cersei replied, smiling at them both, “I was curious if you had chosen a name yet.”

Arya frowned, “We should probably get to work on that. He will be here sooner than we are probably ready for.”

“He?” Cersei asked.
Arya nodded, “I am convinced it is a boy, but Gendry thinks it will be a girl.”

“I just want two beautiful ladies in my life.” He teased and kissed the top of her head, “But we shall pick out a name for either possibility.”

“Never know, could be one of each. Twins do run in the family.” Cersei teased, and let out a laugh when their faces fell, “I am sure it is just the one, not to worry.”

Gendry frowned, “Maybe we should pick four names anyway, two boys and two girls.”

Arya leaned up and kissed his cheek, “She was teasing my love.”

He nodded, “Yes, yes I know.”

Cersei smiled at them, “Come, let’s rejoin the others. You two are the guests of honor, you can’t leave your guest waiting.”

Gendry and Arya turned to follow Cersei back into the main room, and he gripped her hand in his. He hoped that all this pageantry and death threats would be over soon, he just wanted to spend time with Arya preparing for their child. What concerned him though, was a clustered group off to the edge of the feast. The Hand talking with the Small Council, minus Lords Baelish and Varys, and other high ranking lords with frowns on their faces at a celebratory feast could only mean more trouble was coming. He sighed and took another glass of wine from a table, he hoped whatever it was, he could stay out of this time.

Chapter End Notes

What is Ned up to, hmm?

Don’t be afraid to let me know your thoughts on this. I would love to know all your thoughts!!
The Deceptions of Lord Petyr Baelish

Chapter Summary

Some changes are made to the Small Council

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone!! Thanks again for all the lovely words on the last chapter. I think the title kind of explains what is going to happen here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ned had planned this perfectly. There should be no chance that Littlefinger knew what was about to happen, they had agreed that they would never talk about it again after their first discussion on the subject. It had been a week since the end of the tourney, many of the lords had returned to their own castles, with only a few still lingering about the city. Today was the first small council meeting since all the events had piled one on top of another for what seemed like moons.

Renley came in first and took his seat, next came Stannis and Varys, before finally the Grand Maester and Littlefinger walked in. Lord Baelish took his seat and opened up the book he had brought with him.

Ned waited for them all to be seated before he began, “First order of business. The King and I have decided to make a few changes to the small council.”

“Adding seats?” The Grand Maester asked, “There have in previous times been more than just 5 filled positions.”

Ned shook his head, “No, we have decided that a few of you are no longer suited to our positions.” He nodded to Renly who snapped his fingers and Ser Barristan, Ser Jaime, and Ser Mandon walked in.

Lord Baelish looked around, “That requires members of the Kingsguard?”

“It does when we are also arresting someone for the murder of the Hand of the King.” Stannis replied and looked at Lord Baelish, “We have learned some disturbing things of late.”

Baelish’s eyes filtered about the room before landing on Varys, “I do not know what the Master of Whispers might….”

“He actually told us nothing.” Renly interrupted, “Which is why he will also be leaving this council, but as we cannot find him punishable by any crime, he will be doing it of his own free will.”

Ned looked over at the Master of Coin, “When you had Lysa Arryn poison her husband, what was your final goal? Lord Protector of the Vale?”
“A large station indeed for a man who came from a house so small that most people would have never even known it existed.” Stannis supplied, “Lord Tully took you in, gave you a proper lord’s education, and this is how you repay him? You conspired to murder his friend and goodson by seducing his daughter.”

“I deny this all. Lord Arryn was the one to give me my position, why would I repay that kindness with murder?” Littlefinger replied and got to his feet.

Renly shrugged, “That is a question we can attempt to answer at your trial. Ser Barristan, if you would be so kind as to escort Lord Baelish to the dungeons.”

“My pleasure my lord.” Ser Barristan replied and dragged a still protesting Littlefinger from the room, with Ser Mandon, on his heel.

Ned then turned to Lord Varys, “Your services are no longer required Lord Varys. For your long and dedicated service you will be gifted a house and servants here in King’s Landing, if you so desire it.”

Varys got to his feet, “I thank you for the kindness Lord Stark, but if my services are no longer required here. I think it is time I return to Essos.”

“If that is your desire. We will of course give you some money to help fund your journey.” Ned replied, “Come see me before your departure and I will have something set up for you.”

“My lords.” He said and gave them all a bow before walking off.

“Do you want me to follow him?” Ser Jamie asked, looking after the former Master of Whispers.

Ned nodded and the last Kingsguard member retreated from the small council chambers.

“That was certainly unexpected. I never trusted either of them I will....”

“Grand Maester.” Ned said, interrupted what was sure to be a tedious speech, “I have also spoken with the Citadel, and they have agreed that it is time to have a fresh mind on the small council. They have requested you return to the Citadel, to sit on the council there, and the title of Grand Maester is being temporarily given to ArchMaester Martyn until a vote can be held for your replacement.”

“This is an outrageous act. Surely the King....”

“My brother agrees with the action wholeheartedly, especially seeing as it was your actions that aided in the death of his son.” Renly replied, “While the crown appreciates your long years of service Grand Maester, we feel it is time for someone else to take the reins.”

Ned pulled a parchment from his stack of papers, “Here is the official summons from the Citadel. A ship has chartered to take you back to Old Town, it leaves at first light.”

The Grand Maester slowly read over the documents, taking in each and every word at it at the same reading level as a snail. He eventually creaked his way into a standing position, “While I do not agree with the decision of this council or the Citadel, it is my duty to serve. It has been a pleasure to serve the crown.”

Ned watched as the old man slowly took his time walking from the chambers, his steps slow and deliberate. When the guard finally shut the door behind his old form, all three remaining men let out a sigh of relief.
“We need to fill the vacant seats.” Stannis said, wasting no time in getting down to business.

Ned nodded, “We need a Master of Coin, Whispers, and War.”

Renly frowned, “War?”

“We have had a long stretch of peace, even if you consider the Greyjoy rebellion, I think it is only a matter of time before we have another fight on our hands.” He said, and Robert’s words from the Kingsroad came to mind ‘I don’t know who’ll be fighting, but war is coming’.

“I was thinking, I would do better as Master of Coin, than laws.” Renly supplied, causing both men to look at him, “Storm’s End has done very well under my management, I would like to attempt to do the same for the crown.”

“Who would be master of laws then?” Stannis asked.

“I was thinking you could be brother. You’ve always preferred justice to ships.” Renly replied.

Ned nodded, “I agree. Then instead we need a new master of ships.”

Stannis let released a rare half smile, “I have an idea, might upset a few lords though.”

“Who do you suggest?”

Arya was certain something was going on that she was not included in. Her father had left for the small council meeting hours ago, and they were not usually that long. She was sitting in the garden sipping on some tea, Sansa was sewing something, and Shireen was showing Gendry something in one the girl’s many books. It was peaceful and relaxing, and everything the last few moons had not been. She shouldn’t be concerning herself with whatever matters the small council was discussing, that was none of her business, at least not yet.

No, she had more pressing matters, like picking out a name for the child in her womb, which had recently taken up kicking her while she was trying to sleep. She ran her hand over her stomach and used the other to turn the page of the book lying on the table. It was a large thing, with the names off all members of every house since Aegon’s conquest. She was currently looking through the Baratheon names, and descriptions, if anything, all she had decided so far was that her child was going to be black on hair. Joffrey and Tommen were the only non-black haired children of House Baratheon. The Lannister blonde won out there. She had already decided on a name for a girl, but it was the boy she was worried about. There were so many options and they had agreed that the babe would not be named after a currently living relative. The issue with that came with, there were so many other traditional Baratheon names to pick from. She could start at the beginning with Orys, or even farther back with Durran, or go more recently and go Ormund. She sighed, she never realized picking something as simple as name could be so hard.

Her mother walked into their little gathering then and sat down at the table with her. She poured herself a cup of tea and said, “What is troubling you?”

“How did you come up with five names? I cannot even think of one.”

Catelyn laughed, “Well, Robb was named for King Robert, your father’s best friend. You and Sansa are named after women of house Stark, Bran is named for your father’s brother, and Rickon is named for his father.”

Arya frowned, “You didn’t want to name a daughter after your mother?”
Catelyn shook her head with a small smile, “I loved my mother very much and when I lost her, my whole life changed. As the eldest, it was my duty to look after Lysa and Edmure. And while I loved her, I didn’t want her reminder. Does that make sense?”

Arya nodded, she did understand what her mother was trying to say. There could be a legacy to names, even if it was only for those people close to that person. She ran her hand over her belly once more, “This babe will be the future King of the Seven Kingdoms. I don’t want to pick a name and have it be the wrong name.”

Catelyn smiled, “Nothing is a wrong name Arya. Whatever name you and Gendry choose it will be the right one because it was the one you chose.”

“Thank you Mother.” Arya replied and let out a deep breath. She knew that the strain from her relationship with her mother caused by their disagreements when she was younger might always sit with her, but she was glad her mother was here now.

“Did you have a nice talk with your mother?” Gendry asked once they’d retired to their room so Arya could take a nap before dinner.

Arya turned to him and smiled, “I asked for advice on naming the babe. It was comforting.”

Gendry walked up and placed both hands on her stomach, “I already told you that I will help you come up with a name. Shireen has been telling me all about House Baratheon, or we could give it a Stark name.”

Arya shook her head, “No, the first one should have a Baratheon name. We will give the others some namesakes from the other houses whose blood flows in their veins.”

He smiled, “The others? Planning on me getting another babe in you already?”

“We are young and in love. While I would like to keep a few years between them, I do plan to give you a large family.” She told him and cupped his face, “The Seven Kingdoms will tire of birth announcements from the royal family.”

“I have no arguments about this plan whatsoever.” He replied and leaned down to kiss her, slowly, and as if they had all the time in the world. That was what he planned now. He might not be able to control much, but he was going his best to control this. He would die an old man, after having a long and happy life with Arya, with children and grandchildren to miss him when he was gone.

Dinner was tense for a reason that Arya couldn’t understand. The threats had been dealt with, as far she knew, but yet her father looked like he was about to tell them terrible news.

He stood up once the meal was finished, “The news will soon spread but I wanted you to hear it from me. Lord Petry Baelsih was arrested this afternoon for treason.”

“What did he do?” Sansa asked.

“He is the one reasonable for Lord Arryn’s death. Prince Oberyn also brought me evidence that it was Baelish that gave Joffrey the poison that nearly killed Gendry.” Ned explained, “He is currently only being tried for the charges concerning Lord Arryn. He can also just say that Joffrey ordered him to find a poison, and he couldn’t deny the wishes of a Prince, and that he had no idea what it would be used for.”
Arya crossed her arms across her chest, “He should be punished for nearly killing Gendry as well. He could have come forward and told us what poison he had given Joffrey, instead he was happy with letting Gendry die.”

“Lord Arryn’s murder takes presendece right now Arya.” He said, and looked to Gendry, “I hope you understand. I want justice for you as well but…”

Gendry held up his hand, “Joffrey tried to kill me. I don’t care if Littlefinger gave him the poison or not. Joffrey was the one that decided to use it.”

Arya looked at him in shock, but it was his life that had been danger, not her own, so if he decided he was just blaming Joffrey, she would need to accept that. She nodded, “Are you going to do a trial?”

“Yes, it will be less extravagant than the one that was done for Joffrey and Gendry. Just a few lords that are still here.” He explained, “We have already set it up to start in two days, we want to get this over with as soon as possible.”

“Do we need to do anything?” Gendry asked.

“No. There is no need for either of you to be involved, unless you wish to watch. Neither of you would be turned away.” Ned explained.

“I have no desire to watch that.” Gendry replied.

Arya kind of did, but she had other things to worry about as well. She had faith that her father would give Littlefinger the justice he deserved.

Three days later, the entire city had gathered before the steps of Baelor. The trial of Petyr Baelish had been quick and clear, he was guilty of conspiring in the murder of Lord Jon Arryn, the Hand of the King, and he was sentenced to death. Her father had told him that he had been given the option of the Night’s Watch, some crimes were not going to be forgiven by service. Arya stood with the rest of the royal family as the guards led Lord Baelish to the executioner's block. He looked pale and ragged. She smiled to herself, he might not be being directly punished for his part in Gendry’s poisoning, but he was being punished all the same.

Her father walked forward, “Lord Petry Baelish has been tried and found guilty of conspiring to kill Lord Jon Arryn, the Hand of the King, so he could attempt to become the new Lord of the Eerie. His sentence is death.” He turned from the crowd and looked at the kneeling lord, “Do you have any last words?”

“You are making a mistake.”

Her father nodded to his squire, and pulled Ice from the sheath, “I, Eddard of House Stark, Hand of the King, do sentence you to death. May the gods have mercy on you.”

He lifted the sword and swung down, therefore ending the life of Lord Petyr Baelish. Arya ignored the cheers of the smallfolk, instead she watched the faces of the gathered nobles. She noticed that Lord Tywin looked rather pleased with the events that had just took place, and that did not sit well with her.

Cersei pushed the door open without bothering to knock, she was done being polite to a man that had never done her any kindness. Her father was sitting at his desk, a parchment in his hands, and
he looked up at her at the sound of the door.

“Just because you are the Queen does not mean you get to enter my chambers without permission.” He said, putting the parchment down on the desk.

She walked over and placed her hands on the back of one of the chairs, “The mockingbird betrayed you Father, you should be more weary of those you conspire murder with.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.”

“You do. I spoke with Littlefinger this morning, alone, and before his execution. He had so much to say in an attempt to save his life. Would you like to know what he had to say?” She asked, running a finger over the back of the chair, her rings catching the light.

“The man was a traitor, I have no use for the words of such men.” Tywin replied, staring at her hard, “Say what you came to say.”

“Littlefinger sang a wonderful little tune. All about how you wanted to place Tommen on the throne, so you could once again be Hand of the King, the true ruler of Westeros. He said that while he did procure the poison that almost killed Stefon, it was you that he gave it to, not Joffrey. He then told me that you had plans to try again, once it was clear that he would survive.” She said, her hands now gripping the back of the chair, “How could you? He is your grandson!”

Tywin got to his feet, “That bastard is no blood of mine. You’ve allowed your grief and paranoia to convince you of something that is a lie.”

Cersei felt her shoulders fall as she realized a breath, “It really is true than isn’t it, you did conspire to kill him.”

“I admit to nothing. Leave.” He replied, his green eyes narrowed in anger, “We can speak again when you have regained your sense.”

She shook her head, “You have three days.”

Tywin frowned at her, “Excuse me?”

“If you are not on the road to Casterly Rock in three days I will bring this information to Robert and Lord Stark. I do not think that either of them will take it well.” She told him, and straightened to her full height, “You are my father and I do not wish to see you executed for treason but I will do what is necessary to protect my son. You are no longer a welcome guest in King’s Landing.”

“Have you forgotten your place?” He yelled at her.

She didn’t even flinch, “I am the fucking Queen of the Seven Kingdoms, have you forgotten yours my lord?” She watched as his eyes twitched at the address, “You have three days and if Stefon even so much as sneezes in that amount of time, I will hesitate to have you arrested. I think Tyrion is more than ready to be the Lord of Casterly Rock.”

She smiled as he had nothing to say in return, she may take issue with her little brother, but nothing nearly as strong as the hatred Tywin carried for his youngest son. They just stared at each other for awhile before she asked, “Is that clear Lord Tywin?”

He clenched his jaw, “Yes, Your Grace.”

“Good.” She turned and walked toward the door, but she turned, “Goodbye Father, I doubt we shall
be seeing each other again.”

The sound of the door slamming shut behind her echoed through the hall as she walked, she felt a sense of finality settle in her chest. The deed was done, there was no turning back, and she felt free.

Chapter End Notes

I know I rushed through this a bit but I really didn't want to write a second trial but we needed to get rid of Littlefinger someway. If you have ideas for the people I should put on the council and their positions, I'd appreciate it. And don't worry, Tywin will still get what is coming to him, just not in a way I'm sure you'll expect.
A Royal Birth

Chapter Summary

A few moons have passed since the council decision that made Gendry the Crown Prince and now it is time to welcome a new member to the royal family.

Chapter Notes

Hello wonderful readers. I decided to post a few days early, hope you enjoy!

I have never been pregnant or given birth, I am sorry if any of the descriptions in this are not accurate. I googled some stuff and then went off the television/movie tropes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Arya looked at the crib as Gendry moved it around the room, trying to find a place that Arya liked it. It was brand new, made of strong wood and decorated with little iron sigils from their houses. They were moving it out of the adjoining nursery room and into their own chambers, she wanted the baby closer, at least for the first few moons. Arya hoped it wouldn’t be too much longer now, she couldn’t even see her feet anymore from how large her stomach had grown, and she had a near constant need to pee. She shuffled over to the seat at the end of the bed and lowered herself down onto the cushions. They had moved from the Tower of the Hand into the permanent rooms in the Red Keep for the Crown Prince, once they’d had it scrubbed of everything that had belonged to Joffrey.

“How about here?” Gendry asked and backed away from the crib.

She nodded, “There should be good.” She groaned and laid on her stomach, “Your son is overly excited today for some reason.”

Gendry smiled and kneeled in front of her, he placed a hand on either side of her large bump and said, “You should be nicer to your mama.” That earned him a kick to his hand and he laughed.

Arya smiled at the exchange, things were changing, yet again, but she was ready for it this time. Soon, they would be able to hold their darling babe and she couldn’t wait.

There was a knock on the door that caused Gendry to get to his feet, opening the door to reveal Tommen and Shirreen.

Tommen spoke first, “Grandfather is dead.”

Arya let out a gasp of shock, “What happened?”

“Burst belly.” Shireen said, “That is what I overheard Father and Uncle Renly saying.”

Gendry sighed, “Will you be okay for a while love? Tommen and I should go check on Mother.”
She nodded and Shireen said, “I’ll stay with her.”

Arya let her mind run wild for a moment, a man like Tywin Lannister, brought down by a burst belly? That seemed like an act of the gods. He had left King’s Landing only a few days after Littlefinger’s execution, claiming he had been gone from Casterly Rock for too long. Arya thought the abruptness of his departure strange, but had not been able to get any answers from anyone in that regard.

Shireen smiled at her, “Can I get you anything?”

Arya shook her head, “No. I thought you were going sailing with Sansa and Mrycella?”

“I didn’t want to be a bother, I think they wanted to be alone with their betrotheds.” She replied, and grabbed the bench from the vanity, bringing it closer, “Can I ask you something?”

“You know you can talk to me about anything.” Arya told her, slowly moving herself into a more comfortable position.

“Do you think you could talk to your father about betrothing me to Rickon?”

Arya’s eyes widened in shock, “You want to marry Rickon?”

Shireen nodded, “He, and Bran, are the only boys who have never seemed absolutely disgusted at my face. He even yelled at some stormlander boy for calling me ugly.”

“He is much younger than you.” Arya commented, her little brother was only twelve, while she and Shireen were only a year apart.

“Bran wants to be a member of the Kingsguard one day. They can’t marry.” Shireen replied, “No one else will be nice to me Arya, I’ll just be alone forever without this.”

Arya reached over and grabbed Shireen’s hand, “How about this. Gendry and I are planning to make a royal progress once the babe is old enough. We will be going all over Westeros. As my lady maid, you will be coming with us. You will meet all sorts of people. If, at the end of the progress, you still feel Rickon is your only option. I will bring it up to my father.”

“Everyone is getting married it seems but me.” Shireen said with a sigh, “I don’t even have the prospect of a betrothal.”

“Shireen. You are the heir to Dragonstone, that is going to count for something.”

She scoffed, “Whoever marries me is only going to do it for the castle.”

“I will make sure your Father picks someone who isn’t completely worthless.” Arya said with a smile, “What brought this on all of a sudden?”

Shireen looked away before saying, “I overheard my mother saying that I should marry Robert Arryn, go to the Eerie.”

Arya frowned, she had known they were worried about keeping the Vale in the fold after everything that went down with Littlefinger and her aunt Lysa. She still shook her head at the thought of her aunt. Manipulated by a man who claimed to love her into killing her husband. She had been stripped of her titles and sent to the Silent Sisters. Robert Arryn was placed as a ward under Lord Royce, along with Bran. Her father hoped the situations could breed a friendship, like it did between him and Robert Baratheon.
“He said some very unkind words to me before he left for the Vale.” Shireen admitted, “I would be so alone in the Vale. At least Dragonstone or Storm’s End is closer.”

Arya was about to speak when she felt a sharp pain and let out a gasp, clenching her hand to her side.

Shireen was on her feet, “What is wrong? Should I get the Maester?”

“No. They have been happening lately, just means it is getting closer. I was told not to worry unless they start coming within a few minutes of each other.” She replied, and took a deep breath, “My Mother said the babe is lower now, means it will be any day.”

Shireen smiled, “It is exciting to think that soon there will be a tiny baby around.”

Arya rubbed a hand over her belly, “I cannot wait to be able to hold him.”

“Did you finally decide on a name?” She asked, returning to her seat.

Arya nodded and with a smile said, “I think so. Now we just need him to get here.”

“Still convinced it is a boy I see.”

“I am completely positive but we picked out a name for a girl all the same.” She said before letting out a yawn, “I’ve been jumping between wanting to sleep all day and making sure everything is ready for the baby.”

Shireen stood up with a laugh and helped get Arya to her feet, “Take a nap. I’ll go find some way to entertain myself.”

“Can always go to the training yards and see if Brienne has managed to embarrass anymore of the knights.” She said as she crawled into her bed, her eyes already down when she heard the door close behind Shireen.

Gendry wasn’t sure what he was supposed to say as he sat at the table with his mother, uncles and brother. Mrycella was out doing a day sail with Sansa, Trystane, Quentyn, and a few of the other Dorinishmen. He could not really tell if any of them were upset at the death of their Father, they had accepted his and Tommen’s condolences readily enough, and told them to stay and have a drink with them. Cersei even allowed Tommen a glass of wine. It had been strangely silent ever since.

Gendry glanced over where Podrick was standing in the corner, the squire looked like he wasn’t sure what to make of the event either. He and Podrick had formed a sort of friendship in the training yard, both were attempting to improve their sword skills.

“How is Arya faring Gendry? She should be close now.” Tyrion asked suddenly, breaking the silence.

“Doing well. Her back hurts more lately but the Maester says that is to be expected. He is thinking that the babe should be here in a few days.” He replied, not able to stop the smile that always came to his face at the thought of his wife and child.

Cersei laughed, “I remember that feeling well enough. I barely left the bed the fortnight before having Tommen.”
Tommen flushed, “Apologies Mother.”

“Nonsense. You were worth it my darling.” She assured him.

“Will you be the new Lord of Casterly Rock then Uncle Tyrion?” Gendry asked before taking a sip of his wine.

Tyrion frowned, “By rights I should be but dear Uncle Kevan sent along a will with the news of Father’s death. Seems once he returned to Casterly Rock, Father saw fit to disinherit me. He still named Jaime his heir and in the event that he was unable, he gave the castle to Kevan.”

“That doesn’t seem right.” Tommen said, “Uncle Jaime cannot hold land as a member of the Kingsguard, as the second son the castle is yours.”

“Not to speak ill of the dead, but your Grandfather was not a fair man Tommen.” Jaime replied before he let out a long sigh, “Even from beyond the grave he manages to stick one more knife in.”

“Can you….fight the will?” Gendry asked, his lessons had only briefly touched on laws of succession.

Tyrion shared a look with his siblings, “Let the old man have this win. I will just live out the rest of my days here. I have a new business to run.”

Cersei rolled her eyes, “Just like you to buy a brothel.”

“Littlefinger no longer had any use for it.” He replied with a shrug and a wink.

“Are you really going to be the new Lord of Whispers uncle?” Tommen asked, causing everyone to look at him, he shrunk back a bit, “I hear things.”

“It is being discussed, the position was offered to Oberyn Martell first, he has not yet responded.” Tyrion explained, “His brother said he had taken his daughters on a retreat.”

“8 daughters, that just sounds like a handful.” Jaime commented.

Gendry took a sip of wine, he didn’t think it sounded so bad. Though, he would admit he would like some daughters and sons. He needed to focus on it one at a time, maybe Arya would go through the labor and decide she only wanted the one. He would not fault her, he never paid much attention to just how much a woman went through when having a babe. But she seemed to take it all in stride, all the physical strain it seemed to put on her small body meant nothing to her. Not as long as at the end of it just got to hold her child, and it somehow made him love her all the more. He glanced at his uncles, they didn’t have any children of their own, they would never understand.

A thought came to him, “Uncle Jaime, do you regret being a Kingsguard?”

The blonde man turned and looked at him with wide eyes, as all the other eyes in the room turned to him. He took a deep breath, “When I was seventeen, it felt like the greatest honor one could have. 25 years later, I wish I could have chosen differently.”

Gendry frowned, he wished there was something he could do to help his uncle, but, as far as he knew, once you were in the Kingsguard, you were in it for life.

The door burst open and Jaime was instantly on his feet, his hand on his sword, but it was just one of the guards, Ser Meryn besides him. The guard was breathing heavily, “Apologies but Your Grace, Princess Arya is in labor.”
Gendry didn’t even remember getting to his feet because the next thing he knew he was racing down the halls. He was happy they’d moved from the tower to the castle proper, he didn’t need to go nearly as far from his mother’s chambers to his own. He pushed open the door, revealing his wife on her birthing bed, Catelyn sitting on a stool holding her hand while the Maester was examining between her legs.

“Gendry!” she shouted when she saw him and he rushed to her other side, laying a kiss on her head.

Grand Maester Martyn looked up, “It is not quite time yet, I am afraid we still have awhile to go. I doubt the babe shall be born before nightfall.”

Gendry frowned, it was just barely past midday, “That long?”

The maester nodded, “I have assisted in many births. There is still a lot of time left before this one is with us. I am going to go to my chambers and get some things put together. I will check back shortly.” He bowed and left.

“Robb took his time coming too, the first one always seems the hardest.” Catelyn said, brushing some of Arya’s hair back from her face.

Gendry lifted her hand up and kissed the back of it, “We will have our child soon.”

Arya smiled at him and nodded, “I woke up from my nap because of these sharp pains, it felt different than the times before. I got up to fetch a servant to call the maester and suddenly my legs were soaked.”

“It is good, means he is ready to join us.” Catelyn said, and they all looked up as the door opened once again, this time Ned came in.

He looked them over with a smile, “I ran into the Grand Maester in the hall. Today will be the day.”

“More likely tonight.” Catelyn answered, with a smile and squeezed Arya’s hand, “You can do this my dear.”

“I know Mother.” Arya said, her voice slightly strained.

She smiled, “Your sister will be in for a surprise when she gets back from her sailing.”

Arya let out a chuckle, “She even told me not to have the baby while she was gone.”

Gendry looked over at Ned, there seemed to be tears forming in the stoic man’s eyes, and Gendry wondered if he would feel that same when he was getting ready to meet his first grandchild.

It was the hour of the wolf and Arya was sure she had never felt such pain in her life. Once, as a child, she had broken her arm, and she had cried every time she moved it for days. This was a very different pain and it was somehow worse. She was gripping Gendry’s hand in one of her’s, many people had tried to get him to leave the room, but they had both refused them all. Gendry wanted to be there for every moment and she wanted him there for it too, he comforted her in a way that no one else ever had. She was also glad her mother was with her as well, she had experienced this five times herself, she would know if something was wrong.

Sansa had been with her until the maester said it was time. Sansa had made it two minutes before
she excused herself to wait in the adjoining room with everyone else. Every once and awhile she could hear the booming laugh of Robert Baratheon through the heavy door. She was sure the men, along with a few women, were having the time of their life in there. She wasn’t even completely sure who all was in there, waiting to hear the news of her child.

She screamed again as she fought another pain, squeezing Gendry’s hand so hard she was hoping she didn’t break anything in it. She looked up at him, “I don’t know if I can do this.”

He leaned down and kissed her forehead, “This is just another challenge for you my love. I have never met someone as strong as you.” He then chuckled, “You also don’t have a choice. Your son is eager to meet you.”

Her breathing was hard, “Finally believe it is a boy?”

“A few more pushes and we can find out.”

“Princess,” The maester said, causing them both to turn to him, “I can see the head, when the next contraction comes, you need to push as hard as you can and don’t stop.”

She nodded and continued to breathe, this was it, just a few more minutes and she would be able to hold her child in her arms. She felt the pain starting and screamed as she pushed, the pain intensified and then it was gone. She sagged back against the pillows, to the sound of crying filling the air.

She felt Gendry let go of her hand and get to his feet, his footsteps headed toward the end of the bed.

“Maester?” Gendry asked and Arya opened her eyes.

Grand Maester Martyn smiled at them, “You have a beautiful, healthy, son.”

The servant girl who had taken the baby to clean up handed him to Gendry. Arya watched as her husband stared at the bundle in his arms, the smile on his face something she had never seen on his feature before. Her heart filled with joy as Gendry turned to look at her and walked over to her.

He knelt down and said, “Arya, say hello to our son.”

Arya took the bundle and stared down at the baby wrapped up in it. Seeing bright blue staring back at her with little black tufts of hair on his head. She smiled, and felt some tears starting to prick at the edge of her eyes, “Welcome to the world, Durran Baratheon.”

Chapter End Notes

I promised Tywin would get what was coming to him ;)

We are going to be doing a little time jumping for the last few chapters, and go on a little adventure around Westeros (which I am planning out and the continent it ridiculous), meet up with a few fan favorite characters, and introduce some new ones. The end is approaching!!

Please let me know your thoughts!!
Sunspear

Chapter Summary

A trip to Dorne

Chapter Notes

I finished this and I just wanted to get it up right away. As I mentioned, we are doing some time jumping. Enjoy!!

The trip from King’s Landing to Sunspear had been taken by boat, her first ever journey by such a vessel. When they passed by Tarth, Brienne had been excited to share with them all the history of the Sapphire Isle. Arya was glad that she had decided to offer Brienne a place in their routine for the progress. Arya had grown fond of the woman’s company and enjoyed the looks they gathered when they would spar. Also with them was Shireen, Ser Jaime, Ser Mandon, and Podrick, who had been transferred from Tyrion’s service into Gendry’s. The progress would start in Dorne, as that was where they were headed for two very important weddings. Sunspear was unlike anything she had ever seen before, the large tower did seem like a spear piercing the sky and the shadow city that hugged up against the curved curtain walls intrigued her.

Arya balanced a seventh month old Durran on her hip as she watched their mother do Sansa’s hair. It was a combination look of braids and carefully crafted curls that drifted down. They dress was of a Northern style but made using Dornish fabrics so Sansa would not overheat. The grey cloak Arya had worn at her own wedding was draped elegantly over a chair, waiting for the moment to be placed on it’s true owner. An actual maiden for the maiden cloak.

Catelyn stepped back and smiled, “I think that is it. Let me go check in with the others.”

Once the door was shut Sansa turned around, “I am not sure of this Arya.”

Arya blinked rapidly in surprise, “What does that mean? I thought you liked Quentyn.”

“I do, I do, but I’m nervous.” She replied, “I like him, I really think we are good friends, but I see the way he looks at me. He loves me, I think, and I don’t feel the same way.”

“Do you think you could love him, eventually?” Arya asked, “Mother and Father did not fall in love right away either.”

“You and Gendry did.” She said.

Arya smiled down at her son, who was struggling to be let down, but she kept her grip, “Gendry and I are probably the most unique case in all the Seven Kingdoms.” She tickled Durran in the stomach causing him to giggle in her arms, “If I had not gotten with child…” She shook her head, “The Gods saw fit to bless us all.”
Sansa nodded, “I never would have been happy with Joffrey, we weren’t even married yet and he was already a nightmare. Quentyn is sweet and gentle.” She stood up and walked over, smiling at her nephew, “Maybe one day, we can be where you are.”

Arya reached out with her free hand and placed it on Sansa’s shoulder, “I want that for you too. Just give it some time, the feelings will grow, I am sure of it.”

“Thank you. I am glad we are here.” She laughed, “When we were children, if someone said that one day we would be friends, I wouldn’t have believed it.”

“I am glad we are too.” Arya said, returning the smile.

The door opened and Catelyn walked back in, “Everyone is ready.”

Sansa nodded and took a deep breath, “Let us go and get me married then.”

The feast was in full swing and was unlike any other feast Arya had ever attended before. The Dornish wine was flowing strong and there were dancers everyone she looked, both the paid entertainment and the guests. She noticed that one of Oberyn’s daughters had enticed Podrick into a dance, and the young man looked as red as the Dornish sunset.

She turned to her husband, “I wonder if our dear Podrick will lose his virginity tonight.”

Gendry sharply turned his head to her, “How do you know that about him?”

She smirked, “I have my ways.” She turned back to watching the crowd, they were at a special table set up for the rest of the royal family. The High Table having been reserved for King Robert, Cersei, Prince Doran, and the two happy couples. At least, she thought her sister looked happy, and she hoped she truly was.

Gendry leaned over, “I hope you aren’t expecting a dance this time wife, because I think I would make a right fool of myself.”

She laughed, “We cannot have the Crown Prince looking a fool, so I shall allow a respite from the dancing tonight.”

He gave her a quick peck to the lips, “Thank the gods.”

“Now now you two. Save that for the newlyweds.” Arianne replied as she walked up in front of them with a smile, “We are officially family now, twice over.”

Arya smiled at the older girl, “I suppose that is so. I hope you have been well, sister.”

“I have. I think I might have even found a husband, now I just need to convince Father that it is a good idea.” She said with a smile.

“Anyone we know?” Arya asked, before taking another sip of her wine. She was usually not a big fan of the drink but whatever this kind was, the sweetness suited her just fine.

“Possibly.” The Dornish princess answered vaguely.

Gendry shook his head, “I miss the days when people were straight forward.”

Arianne laughed, “My apologies Your Grace, I was just teasing.”
“Don’t mind him.” Arya replied, “You going to keep it a secret?”

Arianne looked around, “Not here, how about we have tea tomorrow?”

Arya nodded, “I will look forward to it.”

Arianne smiled, “You look beautiful in Dornish silks by the way. We will have to send some back with you.”

Gendry waited until the other woman turned and walked away, before he turned to his wife, “I agree with her, you look beautiful.”

Arya ran a hand over the yellow silk and smiled at her husband, she ran a hand over his own silk tunic, “You look rather good yourself.”

A throat cleared and they both looked over, “I apologize for the interruption, but I was hoping to steal you for a dance Your Grace.”

Arya smiled, “Of course Prince Oberyn.” She gave her husband a quick kiss to the cheek before she accepted the Dornishman’s hand.

He led her over a dance, “I told you we would see each other again.”

She smiled, “That you did. When did you return? We have been here for a fortnight.”

“I arrived in time for the ceremony.” He answered, “I had some business in Essos.”

“Have you considered my Father’s offer to be the master of whispers?” She asked as they moved around the space, smiling at those they passed.

“I have considered it.” He answered.

“I certainly hope you take it.” She answered, and glanced around, “I am sure you heard about Lord Tywin.”

The Prince smirked at her, “Such an undignified way for such a powerful man to die.”

“Indeed it is. Almost makes one wonder just how natural it was.” She replied, staring him in the eye.

“Are you accusing me of something Your Grace?”

“I would never Prince Oberyn.” She replied giving him a smile of her own, “The gods must have just decided it was his time.”

A woman came up and placed a hand on Oberyn’s shoulder, “Care to introduce me lover.”

He took the woman’s hand and kissed her knuckles, “Princess Arya allow me to introduce Ellaria Sand, my paramor, and mother to my four youngest daughters.”

“Pleasure to meet you. I met a few of your daughters over my stay, they are all very lovely young women.” Arya replied, looking at the beautiful woman before her, “I hope that if Prince Oberyn takes up the offer to be on the Small Council, that you will all be joining him in King’s Landing.”

“Oberyn was not lying when you spoke of you I see Your Grace.” Elaira said with a smile and looked at something over Arya’s head, “You might want to return to your husband and save him.”
She looked over and saw Ser Oylvar of, she couldn’t remember which house, once again speaking to her husband. Over the last few days she had noticed the young knight hanging around and his presence seemed to annoy her husband.

Oberyn laughed, “The boy means well but he is probably being over eager.”

Arya nodded, “It was a pleasure you again seeing you Prince and meeting you my lady. Hopefully we shall be able to see each other again soon.”

“Your Grace.” They both replied as she walked off.

She smiled as she looked over at the knight, “Ser Oylvar.”

He stuttered, like he usually did in her presence before giving a bow, “Your Grace.”

“I have need of my husband, if you will excuse us.” She didn’t wait for an answer from the Dornish knight and took her husband by the hand and led him off.

“Thank you.” He replied as he closed the distance to hold her close, “But I am still not doing any dancing.”

She smiled up at him, “I was hoping maybe it was time to retire for the night.”

He seemed confused for a moment before smirking at her, “Tired already m’lady?”

She shook her head, “Not even a little bit.” She said and spotted a servant, she walked over to the girl, “You could have some of the delicious wine sent up to your chambers please?”

The girl nodded, “Right away Your Grace.”

“Let us just say goodnight to the brides and grooms, and then have our own party.” She whispered into his ear as they headed up to the head table.

“Should we not at least stay for the bedding ceremony?” Gendry asked, his hand periodically squeezing her waist.

She shook her head, “I want to do our own bedding.”

He groaned, “I really love you.”

“I know.” She replied before they came up the table, she smiled at her sister, “I think we are going to head to our chambers, it has been a long night.”

Sansa nodded and gave her a smile, “I understand. I will see you tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow.” Arya agreed before grabbing Gendry’s hand and they walked off to their own chambers. Arya was happy to see that her husband seemed just as eager to have some time alone in their bed.

Durran was in the safe hands of his watcher, an older maid that had raised three children of her own, and helped Arya immensely in those early moons, especially after Catelyn had left for Winterfell and Robb’s wedding. She had asked the woman to accompany them on the progress, she was to be Durran’s personal servant. As there would be times that he would need to be looked after while they were busy meeting with the lords and ladies. Mary had agreed right away, she missed taking care of children, and she had grown fond of the little prince.
They entered their chambers to see that the wine she had asked for was sitting in front of the lit fireplace. It was small, for those few cold nights, but it was mostly used for light. She walked over and poured them each a glass.

Gendry took his when she handed it to him, the look in his eyes making her unbelievably attracted to him.

She restrained herself from attacking him and raised her glass, “To a quiet night, just the two of us.”

He knocked his glass to hers and took a drink, but when he looked back at her he said, “I hope it won’t be too quiet.”

She blushed and felt that tightening in her core, his eyes held such promise. She finished off the glass of wine, her head feeling fuzzy and free. She placed the glass down on the table, “Is that a threat my prince?”

He down his own wine, the glass making a heavy thump on the table, and he advanced until he could circle one hand around her waist and the other went to cup her cheek. He leaned in and whispered into her ear, “It is a promise, my princess.”

A shiver went down her spine and then his lips were on hers. It was more desperate and passionate than they had been in a long time. The had been intimate in the moons since Durran had been born, but Arya could tell, this time was going to be fast and rough. As she pulled the ties for his tunic and he loosened the ones on her dress, she couldn’t help but look forward to how the rest of tonight was going to go.

Arya knew she’d drunk way too much last night, her head was pounding as she managed to drag herself from her bed, and naked husband, that morning. She somehow managed to not fall back asleep at the table when she broke her fast, and was happy to see that her husband did not seem to be faring much better. Shireen kept giving them knowing looks but took over the task of making Durran eat his breakfast without comment. She took a nap with Durran in her arms a few hours later, asking Shireen to wake her up when it was time for her to meet with Arianne.

The extra few hours of sleep were worth it, for she was able to walk without trouble as she went to join the Dornish Princess on a terrace overlooking the sea.

Arianne greeted her with a smile and a kiss to the cheek, “Enjoy the rest of the feast after we spoke?”

Arya groaned as she took her seat, “That wine went straight to my head, much too dangerous.”

Arianne laughed, “The sweet stuff has that deceptive quality.’

Arya nodded, “Enough about that. Tell me about this future husband of yours.”

“He name is Ser Daemon Sand.”

“Sand?” Arya asked, surprised that she would risk being with a bastard, even though she knew the Mart ell’s loved Oberyn’s bastard daughters. She was sure Prince Doran would not approve of such a match for his only daughter and heir.

Arianne nodded, “He is the son of Ser Ryon Al lyrion of Godsgrace. We have known each other since we were children, and I have loved him a long time. I actually gave him my maidenhead.”
Arya could understand wanting to marry your first love, and even giving him her maidenhead, that was what she had done after all. Arya took a sip of her tea before saying, “Would your Father agree to such a match?”

“He already does not.” Arianne said, “I have spoken to him about it but that was before.”

“Before what?”

“You and Prince Stefon.”

Arya frowned, “I don’t understand.”

“The truth is out now, thanks to your speech at the council. It has inspired me to fight for what I want, and what I want is Daemon.” Arianne replied, “I was hoping that you could convince either your Father or Stefon to talk to King Robert, and have Daemon legitimized. Then I could marry him.”

“I don’t know if I could even ask that. My father would not want to offend Lord Allyrion, is he not willing to ask for a legitimation?”

“We have tried that before, he will not go against my father. Who wants me to marry someone of a higher station. Though I do not know who, as he refused both the offers of Houses Tully and Tyrell.” She replied, and shook her head, “I fear royal assistance is the only way this will come to pass.”

Arya was silent as she contemplated the words that Arianne was saying, it would be hypocritical of her to tell Arianne that she couldn’t love a bastard. Arya loved Gendry when she thought he was one and had let the love grow even when she couldn’t have imagined a future.

Arya nodded, “I will bring it up to my Father. We are family now, we should be able to help each other out wherever we can.”

Arianne smiled, “I do very much appreciate it Arya.”

“I couldn’t very well try and convince you to put aside the man you love for an arranged marriage. I wasn’t very good at doing it myself.” She replied with a smile before taking a sip of her tea, “Have you seen either of the newlyweds this today?”

“I saw Sansa and Quentyn walking in the gardens, but no sign of Trystane or Mrycella.” Arianne said with a smirk.

Arya smiled, “I do hope they will both be happy, not that I’m trying to say anything against your brothers.”

Arianne shook her head, “Mrycella is already in love with Trystane, you can see it in her eyes when she looks at him. Sansa, not so much.” She paused for her own drink, “I have never been close to my brothers. Quentyn was sent away when he was young and Trystane is so much younger than I. I do want them to be happy however. I hope that Sansa can find some affection for Quentyn eventually.”

“She is fond of him but as a friend.” Arya replied, “I told her that not all love is quick, some takes time to grow. I hope that is what happens for her.”

“I hope so as well.” Arianne said in return, “Have you planned out your journey already?”
Arya nodded, “Yes, from here we will head toward the Reach, stopping at a few of the other castles and holdfasts along the way. We are going to stay in Highgarden for at least a fortnight, as they are family now as well.”

“I wonder how Margery is faring in the North.” Arianne commented.

“From what Mother told, she is taking some time to adjust.” She said with a smile before continuing with their travel plans, “From Highgarden we will then continue on to Casterly Rock. Then we will take the road to Riverrun before crossing over the Trident to travel the Riverlands before going to the Vale, after some time in the Eyrie, we will then travel to Winterfell. Storm’s End will be a trip later on, separate from the progress.”

Arianne nodded, “What of the Iron Islands?”

Arya shrugged, “Father is not comfortable with us traveling to the Iron Islands with Durran, given the animosity still on the islands toward the crown.”

“Did you not grow up with the heir to the Iron Islands? Do you have cause to believe he would wish to do you harm?”

“Theon is someone I consider family, I cannot remember a time when he was not a part of my life before I went to King’s Landing. He has only recently returned to the Iron Islands, Father is worried that if we visit too soon that it could be seen as the Stark’s checking up on their captive.” She replied with a sigh, “Pyke will also have to wait.”

“I can understand the concern, you can never be too careful with the heir to throne.”

Arya nodded, “I also plan to go to the Wall. No ruler has visited it since Queen Alysane.”

“Your half brother is a member of the Night’s Watch correct?”

“Aye, as is my uncle Benjen. Stark’s have manned the Wall for as long as there has been a Wall.” She replied, “I miss Jon. Growing up, he was always the one I was closest to.”

“I can understand that Tyene might only be my cousin, but she has always felt more like a sister.” Arianne agreed and raised her cup, “To a successful royal progress.”

Arya smiled and raised her cup as well, she truly hoped that everything would go as planned with this trip.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully that cleared some stuff up, Oberyn killed Tywin, I hinted at it a bit in the previous chapter. Next up will be some Westeros traveling, only going to focus on a few of the stops, until we get to Winterfell.

Thoughts?
The journey through Dorne had been different than she had expected, they stopped at the Water Gardens, were they said goodbye to Arianne, Mrycella, and Sansa, before they continued on. Stopping by Planky Town, the site of Princess Nymeria’s landing. The onward to Godsgrace and Yronwood. Ned Dayne accompanied them all the way to his home of Starfall and showed them the famed sword of House Dayne, Dawn, that had last been welded by Ser Arthur Dayne. She almost expected there to be bad blood between House Stark and House Dayne for Ser Arthur’s death, but Ned assured her there was none. Ser Arthur died in a war and that was not the cause to hold a grudge.

From Starfall they got on a boat and sailed the short journey to Oldtown, where they were hosted by House Hightower. From Oldtown they went up to Horn Hill, visiting the home of the Master of War, Randall Tarly. The road through the Reach toward Highgarden was beautiful, Arya had never seen so many farms, just long stretched out areas of fields. They passed a few wineries as well, and Gendry joked about how that was truly where his Uncle Tyrion should be. Durran spent most of his time inside the wheelhouse with Shireen and Mary, but she would allow him to ride in the saddle with her for a few hours each day. He seemed to love the movement of the horse and she looked forward to teaching him to ride when he was older, maybe they would get a pony for him to practice on when they returned to King’s Landing.

Lady Olenna was the first to greet them, along with her son and grandson. She immediately took care of Durran, placing him on her lap at the feast. The woman was a mother and grandmother many times over, but she seemed to enjoy the idea of having the future King of Westeros rest on her lap after a meal. Arya would of course not deny the woman this, for Arya knew that she had been the one to help Renly the most in putting forth Gendry’s claim over Tommen’s. While at
Highgarden they also learned that Margery had given birth to a baby boy, which they had named Eddard. Arya was pleased for her brother and could not wait to get to Winterfell to meet her new nephew, even if they would not be able to get there for six moons at least.

Arya smiled as Durran ran around with one of Olenna’s great granddaughters. They were close to the same age and they seemed to be content to just chase each other from one side of the small sitting garden to the other, laughing as they did.

“He is going to be a handsome one.” Olenna commented.

Arya nodded, “The Baratheon look came out strong.”

“How have you been enjoying your travels so far my dear?”

It did escape Arya’s notice how the elder woman did refer to her title, “Dorne was beautiful, despite being mostly sand. The Reach is a different kind of beauty, rolling hills and green for as far as you can see.”

She gave her saccharine smile, “You know what I was really asking.”

Arya bit her lip before saying, “I believe that friendships with the crown are being strengthened by this progress.” She looked away for a moment before saying, “Have you found a match for Willas yet?”

“The Viper stole the best match from me.” She replied, “I have been looking though. Riverland or Vale girl would probably be best, maybe a Westerlander. The options are not limited.”

“Maybe I can find a match for him on my travels.” Arya answered, taking a sip of her tea.

Olenna smiled, “I knew I was making the right choice with you, already learning how to play the game.”

“Alliances are important, no one can survive alone.”

“A very good lesson to learn, do your best to pass it on.” She said, their eyes moving to linger on the children still going about their play.

The road to Casterly Rock took a slightly different air than the previous journey’s. Ser Jaime assured them that Kevan would not be any threat to them, as he was more willing to accept defeat than Tywin, but the resentment that the older man had stolen the castle from Tyrion was still there. Brienne had attempted to ease his worry by distracting with a spar every night, sometimes Gendry, Podrick or herself would take a turn as well. Arya was happy to see that the collection of knights, lords and ladies she had put together were getting along so well. Casterly Rock was unlike most castles she had seen, the high walls were nothing new, but its location on cliff edge was unusual. She remembered Tyrion had told her that the Casterly’s had built the castle during the Age of Heroes, but they had lost it to Lann the Clever, who tricked them out of the castle and started House Lannister. Lady Lannister was a very kind host, while her husband was more sullen, especially after a private conversation he had with Ser Jaime. Ser Martyn, one of Lord Kevan’s twin sons, seemed to take a special interest in Shireen during their stay. She also noticed that Podrick did not like the attention the lady was receiving, and Arya couldn’t help but wonder if perhaps the squire held affection for her.

From Casterly Rock they headed out toward Riverrun, on the journey from the Lannister stronghold, Arya started to get more and more nauseous. They stopped for a visit at Golden Tooth,
home of House Lefford, and she consulted with the maester to get confirmation on what she already suspected.

She waited until they were laying in bed, ready for sleep after the long day to break the news, “I have something to tell you.”

His hand tightened on her waist as laid on his chest, “A good or a bad something?”

“It’s good.” She assured him, and ran a finger over his chest, “I am with child again.”

His hand came up and stilled her roaming finger, causing her grey eyes meeting his blue ones, “You are sure?”

She nodded, “I’ve suspected it since Casterly Rock and the maester here confirmed it.”

He smiled, “Another babe. I wasn’t expecting it so soon.”

“I think it happened that night in Sunspear, we both had so much wine, and I think you forgot to spill outside.” She replied, “And I know I was a little lax on the moon tea while we were there.”

“Are you upset?” He asked, running a hand over her back.

She shook her head, “I would have preferred it wait until after we had gotten back from the progress, but I can never be upset with having more children with you.”

He leaned down and kissed her, smiling as he pulled away, “It will be a girl this time.”

She laughed, “Why do you want a girl so badly?”

He shrugged, “I know so many amazing women. Is it wrong that I want a chance to have a little girl and watch her grow up to be just like her mother.”

Arya felt her heart flooding with affection, “You are already such a great father with Durran, this one, boy or girl, will be so lucky to have you.”

He suddenly started laughing.

“What is it?”

“We haven’t heard from your sisters, but isn’t it funny to think that you are the one you got with child on their wedding night.”

She thought it over and joined in his laughter, “I was already with child on our own wedding night, so I guess this was the gods’ way of correctly it.”

He pulled her in for another kiss, “You, Arya Stark-Baratheon, make me the luckiest man in the world.”

“I feel the same way.” She replied and ran a hand over his cheek, “I want to have this baby in Winterfell. Are you okay with that?”

He raised her hand up to his lips, “We can return to King’s Landing this moment or we can continue as planned or head straight to Winterfell. Whatever you want to do, my love, that is what we will do.”

She leaned forward and gave him a gentle kiss to the lips, “I love you.”
“And I love you.”

Arya had never been to Riverrun but she felt like she knew it from the stories from her mother’s stories. The castle sat at the meeting of the Red Fork and the Tumblestone river, a large moat protected the third side that could be filled in times of war to turn Riverrun into an island. She smiled down at Durran in the saddle with her, “That is where Grandma Cat grew up.”

He titled his head and she knew that he didn’t really understand what she was saying and he probably wouldn’t even remember anything that happened on the progress, but she would always remember it. She settled into a gentle trot as they rode toward the entrance to the castle as they crossed the drawbridge, she could see a collection of people waiting for them. She recognized her Uncle and she assumed the older man standing next to him in black armor was her great uncle Brynden, the Blackfish.

The introductions were done and then they were led to their chambers to clean up before they had a private dinner. The larger feast would be in two days, as a few of the Riverland lords who were not along their route wanted to come to pay their respects.

Arya was seated next to her great uncle at the dinner, which was a nice treat for her as she wished to get to know the man her mother talked about in such strange terms. She had said that her uncle had left the Riverlands when she was a girl after he and her father had gotten into an argument.

Gendry was across from her and seated next to Edmure. Brienne was Edmure’s other side while Shireen was on her own. Ser Jaime was seated beside Gendry, while Podrick was on Brynden’s other side. Mary was keeping an eye on Durran, who they had given an early meal and had gone straight to bed.

“I think you need to find the man a wife, he doesn’t seem willing to did himself.” Brynden said, breaking the silence of the meal.

Edmure looked up from across the table, “Uncle, that is really…."

“What kind of woman are you looking for uncle? We have meet many ladies on our travels, perhaps we know of one that will be a proper match.” Arya asked, interrupting the man’s protest. She noticed that Jaime took a quick sip of his wine to hide his laugh while Brienne had simply turned away and was suddenly very focused on the fish in front of her.

Edmure frowned and did not seem ready to answer the question.

“Your Princess asked you a question nephew, better answer her.” The Blackfish commented.

Edmure glared at the man before looking to Arya, “I am sure you have much better things to concern yourself with than my lack of a marriage, Your Grace.”

Arya waved her hand, “Nonsense Uncle. I am very good at multitasking. Have you had many offers?”

“Only every Riverlord with a daughter or granddaughter. Even a few from the other kingdoms as well. Lord Walder is the most persistent though.” Brynden replied, “I read many ravens with offers while he was away in King’s Landing.”

“What is the matter my lord, not interested in the ladies of the Riverlands?” Ser Jaime said, his tone teasing for a man he had only met in passing during the great council as far as Arya knew.
“The politics of the Riverlands can be complicated and has many petty feuds. I am trying to keep the peace.” Edmure replied, sparring a quick glare to the knight before looking back at Arya.

She was silent for a moment, “There are many houses in other kingdoms to look to. House Hightower or Tarly of the Reach for example.” She paused, “Lady Brienne could suggest a few Stormland houses I am sure.”

Edmure was silent for a few moments and everyone took the opportunity to continue eating. He sighed, “Ser Baelor Hightower had approached him with an offer for his eldest daughter, I do not remember the name.”

“Bethany.” Shirren supplied, giving Edmure a small smile before returning to her food.

“Thank you my lady.” Edmure replied, and turned to Gendry, “Your thoughts Your Grace?”

Gendry looked around the table quickly before he turned back to his food, “I leave the matchmaking up to my wife, I suggest you go with her advice.”

Bryden laughed, “You caught on to the trick of keeping your woman happy quickly it would seem Your Grace.” He then turned to his nephew, “I’ve met with Ser Baelor, fought beside him. A marriage joining our two great houses would be beneficial.”

“I will think about the idea.” Edmure replied and Arya shared a knowing smirk with the Blackfish, they had just brokered a match.

Chapter End Notes

Don't forget to let me know what you think!! Part 2 is written and just needs some edits, so that will probably be up tomorrow.
A Royal Progress - part 2

Chapter Summary

the Vale -- the Neck -- the North

Chapter Notes

I promised the second part today and here it is!!

Hope you enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It amazed her just how different each castle was, and the home of House Arryn was something entirely new. When they reach the Gates of the Moon they meet a guide, a young woman named Mya Stone. Arya had watched the woman carefully as she explained the ascent to them, she had such familiar blue eyes and dark hair. Her age would suggest that she was probably born a few years before the Rebellion. Arya looked at her husband, wondering he had caught on to the strong resemblance that he shared with the woman. He had taken Durran into his arms though, insisting that he would be carrying his son on the journey to the castle. Arya loved how much he cared for their son, and as her stomach started to grow with the new life inside her, she knew his protective instincts would only start to increase.

The journey to the tower took a long time, with the air getting colder as they continued to climb. The last steps were the worst, the steps more like a stone ladder. Mya had suggested that if she felt that she could not handle the ascent in her condition, she could be hauled up in the basket they used for supplies. She chose to do the steps. Gendry remained by her side the whole time, with Durran firmly in his arms.

She had been able to see the castle for a long time during their ascent but seeing the large white towers looming. The Crescent Chamber was a welcome sight after the long climb up the Giant’s Lance, the large mountain on which the Eyrie sat. A table had been set up with food and teas, as well as a large hearth to help warm them, and a few servants were waiting to take their cloaks.

Arya used the opportunity to speak to Mya, who was warming up before she began her decent back down the mountain. She smiled at the woman, “Thank you for your assistance.”

The woman nodded, “Of course Your Grace.”

Arya glanced around, noticing they were as private as they could get, “May I ask you question Mya? I am afraid it will be very personal.”

“I already know the question. I am King Robert’s bastard, he even acknowledged me for a short while, but King’s have no use for their bastards.” She replied, “Lord Arryn made sure I was looked after however.”
“Do you like your duty here?”

“I am at home here, I doubt I would be happy much place else.” She answered and her eyes glanced behind Arya before coming back to her, “It was a pleasure to meet you Your Grace. I shall see you in fortnight to help you back down the mountain.”

Arya nodded, “Thank you again Mya.”

She watched the young girl leave through the doors that had entered in and shook her head, just how many bastards did Robert have spread around Westeros? She went and poured herself another cup of tea, that was something to think about a different day. After they were settled for a few moments the door that she assumed led into the main castle opened and in came her little brother. It had been over a year since she had last seen him and he had managed to get even taller. He rushed over and embraced her, his auburn hair had been cut shorter than it had been the last she saw him.

He rested a hand on her stomach, “Another one on the way already.”

She nodded, “You will get to meet the first one in a moment.”

“I wish I could have stayed and been there for the birth.” He replied, looking away from her for a moment.

She shook her head, “You had no control over it, I don’t blame you for anything. Just like Sansa and Robb understand why you couldn’t be at the weddings. How have things been going with cousin Robert?”

Bran rolled his eyes, “He insists on being called Robin for one, it was what Aunt Lysa called him. He is also convinced that Aunt Lysa and Littlefinger were framed for his father’s death. Lord Royce is very impressed with my skills though, says it shouldn’t be long before I should be knighted.”

“Barely a year as a proper squire and already almost a knight?” She said with a laugh.

“He says between my training with Ser Rodrik and his own, he doubts it will long.” He replied, “Robin, on the other hand.” He shook his head, “Let’s just say it is a good thing he has the Knights of the Vale to defend him.”

Gendry appeared before them, an upset Durran tucked into his chest, “I think he needs his mother.”

Arya quickly took the toddler from her husband's arms, “It is alright my sweet, everything is fine.”

She noticed that Gendry and Bran had started talking while she calmed her son’s tears and assured him they were safe, just very high. When he was done with the tears she smiled at him, “Would you like to meet your Uncle Bran?”

Bran bent down and gave him a smile, “Hello Durran, I have been wanting to meet you for a long time.”

Durran just continued to stare at Bran with large blue eyes. Gendry clapped him on the shoulder, “Don’t get upset, he can only say ‘mama’, ‘papa’, and ‘horsey’.”

“You mean what we think is horsey.” Shireen came up and smiled at them, “Good to see you again Bran.”

Bran smiled at her, “You too Shireen.”
Ser Jaime walked up to them then, “Young Stark, where might our gracious host be?”

Arya noticed that Bran was refraining from rolling his eyes. “He is waiting for you in the High Hall, the only proper place for the Lord of the Eyrie to welcome guests.”

Gendry shook his head and took Durran from her, “I suppose we should not keep him waiting.”

Arya nodded and they all walked through the halls to the High Hall, passing the tapestries of the great deeds of the Kings of Mountains and Vale and the Lords of the Vale after the conquest. She paused at one that showed a young boy in the arms of a beautiful woman on a dragon, the boy who had flown off a King and landed a Lord.

Brienne stopped beside her, “It is amazing to think that dragons once flew the skies.”

Arya nodded, “I have seen the skulls of the Targaryen dragons, they are in a room under the great hall in the Red Keep. To see them in the flesh would have been something else.”

“Certainly enough to surrender a crown I am sure.” Brienne commented with a smile.

She ran a hand over her stomach, “I have my own little dragon right here.”

Brienne cocked an eyebrow and they continued walking before she continued, “Gendry’s great grandmother was a Targaryen princess.”

“How many great houses do your children have a connection to?”

“Bloodwise, Stark, Baratheon, Tully, Lannister, and Targaryen, and then marriage gives us Arryn and Martell.” She replied, realising suddenly that was all of them.

Brienne didn’t get a chance to respond as they entered the High Hall. She took a deep breath and readied herself for a meeting with her cousin. She hoped the gods gave her strength to not yell at the entitled lord.

The road through the Neck was narrow but it was still large enough for them to comfortably ride. One of the guards learned the hard way that stepping off the road too far was not a pleasant experience, as he sunk half way up to his knees in the swampy substrate and almost had a run in with a lizard-lion. He chose to remain close to the wheelhouse after that. On their second day traveling through the Neck, they were greeted by a small group of people. At the head was a young woman with curly hair and a strong presence, a man behind her was holding the banner of House Reed.

Arya had been mostly confined to the wheelhouse, only able to be in the saddle for short periods of time due to her ever growing belly. This happened to occur on one of the times she was in the saddle. Gendry dismounted first before he and Brienne assisted her in her own dismount.

The young woman waited until they were both on their feet before she bowed, not curtsied, and introduced herself, “Your Graces, welcome to the Neck, I am Lady Meera of House Reed. On behalf of the crannogmen, we would like to invite you to come visit with us at Greywater Watch for a few days.”
Arya nodded her head and replied, “It is pleasure to meet you Lady Meera, I am Princess Arya and this is my husband, Prince Stefon. We would be delighted to visit with House Reed and the other crannogmen.”

The woman smiled, “Excellent. If each of you would please make sure to follow my men exactly. The journey to Greywater Watch is not easy as simply following a road but I assure you, no harm will come to you.”

Arya nodded and their group began the slow task of traveling through the swamps and bogs that was the Neck. It gave Arya time to study the crannogmen. She had always heard such strange stories told about the people that populated the Neck, and while they did seem a bit small, they were still just as normal as she. They wore odd clothes, but she was sure they were better suited for the conditions of the Neck than their own. They always carried odd looking spears and when she turned to look at Gendry, she noticed he was talking with Lady Meera, inquiring about the weapon.

She shook her head and moved closer, wanting to listen in on the conversation, “...are slippery little demons, the triple points makes it harder for them to get away.”

“Can you spear fish with them as well?” Gendry asked her, his eyes studying the spikes of the spear as they walked.

“Only the best fisherman can do that, mostly we use nets for fish.” Meera explains, “The spears are mostly for frogs but can also be used for protection against the lizard-lion. Might not always work, but sometimes it can at least buy you enough time to get away before they grab you.”

“Will we see one of the lizard-lions?” Shireen asked suddenly, and they all turned, surprised to see her out of the wheelhouse.

“Perhaps.” Meera answered, her eyes focused on Shireen’s scars for a moment before they moved on, “With a group this large they will most likely stay hidden.”

They came across a large space where the ground seemed more solid than most of the places they’d seen in the swamp. Merra stopped them, “The wheelhouse will have to stay here, it will get stuck in the mud otherwise.”

Gendry nodded and started ordering the guards to start unloading it, while Arya went and got Durran from Mary. She kept a firm grip on her son, as she had quickly realized that even with short little legs, the boy was quick.

“Lady Meera, this is our son Prince Durran.” Arya introduced, while Durran looked at the woman curiously.

“Hello little prince.” Meera said sweetly, which caused Durran to smile and turn his head away before looking back at her.

Arya laughed, “You’d think after all the new people we’d met recently he would stop being so shy.”

Meera shook her head, “He is adorable.”

“Do you have any children Lady Meera?” Arya asked, the woman seemed more on age with Robb than herself if she had to guess.

She shook her head, “Not yet, Father is still debating on whether he wants me to marry a
Northman, a Riverman, or a fellow crannogman."

“Have you an opinion on the matter?” Arya questioned, she wanted to try and make sure all the ladies she met were being treated fairly.

Meera nodded, “My father is well aware of my opinion on certain individuals, but overall, as long as it is someone near to my age and not a pompous ass. I am not too picky.”

Arya laughed, “I am sure your Father will help find you someone agreeable.”

Shireen came up to them, “Lady Meera, is it true that Greywater Watch moves around and that is why it is not accessible by raven?”

“It is. The castle was built on a piece of land that free floats in the swamp, so it moves with the tides of the water.” Meera answered, not seemingly put out by the other woman’s questions.

“That is so interesting.” Shireen responded and Arya could see her friends were making mental notes to add to her journal later.

“Lady Shireen is chronically our journey for us, as we need to see the need to bring along a maester.” Arya explained, “She took the task upon herself.”

“This is the first royal progress in the Baratheon dynasty, it is important to document everything.” Shireen replied, “I am the only one interested in that though it would seem.”

Gendry came up and placed a hand on his cousin’s shoulder, “The Citadel will appreciate all your effort I am sure.”

Durran reached for his father, his little hands opening and closing as he did. Gendry laughed and plucked the little boy from her arms, “Are you ready for another adventure my little prince?”

Durran nodded along with Gendry and they all giggled at the sight.

One of the crannogmen came up to Meera and she nodded, “We are ready to set out.”

The way to Greywater Watch had no trail or path that Arya could see and she was grateful for the leadership of Lady Meera. She knew of House Reed, Meera’s father Howland had fought alongside her own father in the Rebellion, he had traveled all the way to Dorne and back. She wondered what stories Howland would be willing to share of the time.

Greywater Watch was something she had never expected to see. It was a modest castle, built on what seemed to be a moving island. Meera explained they’d have to take canoes to get to the building itself, which with the rolling fog seemed to be ever moving away from them. The castle was made of stone, but the moss had grown upon them and it almost made the castle seem like a living creature.

A small collection of people were waiting to greet them when they disembarked from the boats. Meera introduced them, “Prince Stefon, Princess Arya, allow me to introduce you to my Father, Lord Howland Reed, my mother Jyana, and my brother Jojen.”

Lord Reed bowed and smiled at them, “I am so blessed to be able to welcome you to Greywater Watch Your Graces. Your Father is dear friend and I am happy to share what is ours with you.”

Arya smiled at him, her ability to curtsey not what it used to be with her seven moon baby belly, “I have heard so much about you my lord, I am glad we finally have a chance to meet.”
Lady Jyana gestured for them all to follow her, “Come, let’s get everyone settled. We have a special feast planned to celebrate your arrival.”

She heard Podrick sigh behind her and whisper to Shireen, “I really hope it isn’t frogs.”

“I hope it is! I am so curious to see what they taste like.” She heard Shireen say in response, and it never ceased to amaze Arya how the young woman could find interest in so many different things.

The feast did have a selection of frogs to eat but the main course was a variety of fish that thrived in the rich waters of the Neck. There were also a selection of greens that Arya had never eaten before and found very delicious.

She turned to Meera, who was her dining partner for the night as Gendry was seated with Lord Howland and Jojen, “Have you ever been to Winterfell?”

She shook her head, “I have not seen much outside the Neck.”

Arya smiled, she had developed a fondness for the older girl over the course of the day, “Would you like to?”

Meera looked at her with a confused brow, “I don’t understand.”

“I am asking if you would like to join our routine. Come to Winterfell, see some of the North, and when we return to King’s Landing, you can come with us or you may return here.” Arya said before reaching forward and grabbing a few of the crispy frog legs.

Meera was silent for some time before saying, “Why?”

“I have enjoyed your company and I think you would enjoy a little adventure.” She answered, “We are planning to head up to the Wall once the new baby is old enough to be left alone for awhile. You are welcome to join us for that as well.”

“I have always imagined what it would be like to stand at the top of the Wall and see what lies beyond.” She replied and bit her lip, “I will think on it, Your Grace, it is a big decision, and I should talk about it with my father.”

Arya nodded, “Of course, we shall stay here for a few days, no need to rush.” She ran a hand over her stomach, “We shall be at Winterfell for quite some time.”

Meera smiled and returned to her fish and Arya could see that she was deep in thought, and she hoped the young woman took her up on the offer.

The journey from Greywater Watch to Winterfell was not difficult once they were on the Kingsroad once again. The air began to cool and the land became more familiar, the rolling hills and pine forests made her smile. They had passed the ruins of Moat Cailin before heading onward to Castle Cerwyn, where they stayed for two nights before continuing on to Winterfell. Her heart beat faster as they got closer, they would reach the ancient castle of House Stark before midday. She was finally going to be able to show Winterfell to her husband and child, just like she had always wanted. The towers came into a view and she could not stop the smile that quickly spread across her face, this is where she wanted to be. Soon, she could show her husband and her son all the secrets of the castle. She could stand before the heart tree with Gendry, expressing their love to each other in front of a true weirwood. They could spend time soaking in the hot springs below the keep. She could show him the statues of her ancestors. She ran a hand through Durran black hair and smiled, she was finally home.
Thank you everyone for the comments on part 1!! I love hearing all your thoughts!!
Arya stood on the ramparts and looked out over the moors, a light summer snow had fallen overnight, and she had woken up giddy with excitement. A burst of laughter caught her attention and she turned to look into the courtyard. Gendry, Durran, and a few of the smallfolk’s children were playing in the snow before the sun could melt it. Her little boy was walking completely on his own now, running and laughing, a truly happy toddler. She ran a hand over her growing belly, it would be soon, she could tell.

“Ready for a second one?” Margaery said, walking up to stand beside her, little Ned propped up on her hip. The baby was 4 moons old now and his blue eyes were curiously taking in the sights around him.

She nodded, “I am.” She cupped her stomach, “I wasn’t planning on doing it again so soon, but we got carried away.”

Margery laughed, “I know the feeling. Robb was so surprised when I finally told him it was good to lay together again.”

“If he’s anything like my husband, I am sure he was thrilled.” She held up her hand when her good-sister opened her mouth, “I do not need the details however.”

Margaery shook her head and giggled, “I can understand that. If Willas ever finds a bride, I doubt I would want to know what happened in the bedchamber.”

“Do you miss Highgarden?” Arya asked, “I miss Winterfell so much.”

“I do and yet, I don’t.” Margaery replied, “I might have only been here a little over a year, but it feels like home now. Especially with this little one.” She dropped a kiss on her son’s auburn haired head, “I miss my family but I am making a new family here. I am even getting used to the cold.”

Arya laughed at that, “Yes, Highgarden is a very different climate.”

“Is that why you came here instead of going to King’s Landing, did you want the babe born here?”
Margaery asked her, switching Ned to the other hip.

She nodded, “In Riverrun, my mother’s home, it just became clear to me that I wanted at least one of my children born in the North. This one will most likely be my only opportunity.”

“I will show my children Highgarden one day. Just like I suspect that this will not be the last time that we host you in Winterfell.” Margaery said, “There is nothing wrong with missing home.”

Arya looked at her son as he giggled from his spot on Gendry’s shoulders, “As long as I have them, I am home anywhere.”

Margaery didn’t reply to that, just gave her a sweet smile before her eyes flitted to the edge of the courtyard, “Is her father going to be alright with that?”

Arya followed her eyeline and smiled as she noticed Shireen and Pod talking, the squire leaning what most would consider at an inappropriate distance to the young woman. Arya shrugged, “I started noticing it in Casterly Rock. I think we can convince Stannis, it is Selyse that will be the problem. He is a good match though, he is from a minor noble house, and he is sweet. That is what she needs more than anything.”

“I am happy for her.” Margaery replied and then her eyes moved to the archery practice, where Rickon and Meera were having a contest, before turning back to Arya, “Want to go in for tea? There is something I want to discuss with you.”

Arya smiled at her good-sister, “Tea would be lovely.”

Arya was beginning to think that maybe she would not see Jon while she was at Winterfell, the second moon in the castle of her birth was starting to grow to a close and the birth of her second child was going to be any day now. She had plans to go see him at the Wall once the babe was old enough for her to be gone from it for a moon, though that thought pained her. She was not sure that the Wall would be a safe place for it or for Durran. She also trusted her brother and Margaery to keep them both safe for her or she would throw that plan completely out the window and take them with.

She broke her fast in the Great Hall with Robb sitting at the head of the table, Margaery to the right and her mother on the left. She and Gendry were sitting across from them, Rickon on Gendry’s other side and Durran beside her with Shireen on his other side.

The door opened behind them, the large doors making it impossible to miss. They all turned but it was Rickon who responded first, “Jon! You’re here!!”

Arya watched as her little brother ran up to the older one, giving him a hug. Robb also rushed forward, embracing him. Gendry helped Arya to her feet, a task that was not as easy as it used to. Durran looked around confused at the commotion, looking back between her and Shireen. Jon smiled as he walked toward her, his eyes looking down at her stomach for a moment before returning to her face.

She went down the few steps and hugged her favorite brother, she did it as tightly as she could with her large stomach. He pulled back and shook his head, “You are with child.”

She nodded and rubbed her hand over her stomach, “Babe number two, I wanted him born here, at Winterfell.” She reached out with her other and grabbed Durran, she smiled down at the little boy, “Durran, this is your Uncle Jon, you remember mommy telling you about him?”
The boy shook his head but gave Jon a hesitant little wave anyway.

“This is my husband and the father of my children. Gendry, even if officially he is named Prince Stefon. To family, it is Gendry.”

Jon shook Gendry’s hand, “Your Grace.”

“None of that, we are family, and family has no need of titles.” Gendry answered, and Arya was so pleased at the sight.

Robb came up to them, Margaery’s hand on his elbow and little Ned in his arms, “Jon, this is my wife Margaery, and our son Eddard.”

Jon gave Margaery a slight bow and smiled at the babe in Robb’s arm, “Does Sansa have a child too, and no one felt the need to tell me?”

Arya laughed, “Not yet.”

Robb scoffed, “Don’t start, I sent you raven with the announcement, not my fault if you didn’t read it.”

“You have to tell me all about how you, my little sister who I once remember swearing to all the gods that she would never marry, ended up with the Crown Prince.” Jon said as they walked through the Godswood.

“I told you that in my letter.” She replied shyly, looking at the bleeding face of the weirwood tree.

“That letter was short and lacked any detail.” Jon said, giving her a look.

She sighed and sat down on one of the exposed roots, Jon helped lowering her before he took a spot beside her, “I don’t really know how to describe it. I had never felt...drawn to a person the way I did to him. Our first conversation was not something anyone would call special but it stayed with me, for days afterwards. I just couldn’t stop thinking about him, so I went back to him. I needed a new sword, for as much as I love Needle, I needed something more suited to my grown size.” She shook her head with a smile, “It was all just an excuse really. I wanted to see him again. I went back many times while he was working on it and...one night I went there, with the full intention of getting him to lay with me. It was.....”

“Magical.” Jon replied when she paused.

Arya looked at him and nodded, wondering how he could know exactly how she felt, “It was even harder to stop thinking about him after that. I was trying to be careful, I stole some moon tea, but I must not have used it correctly because it wasn’t long before I realized I was with child. I went to Gendry as soon as I found out. Instead of throwing me away or taking me up on my offer to run away with him, he agreed to face Father and the consequences.”

Jon shook his head, “And neither of you had any idea he was a prince?”

“No one did.” She said, “Father assumed Gendry was just one of Robert’s bastards, he has many. It was Cersei that insisted Gendry was really Stefon, she fought until everyone else believed it too.”

“Are you happy?” He asked her as the silence stretched.

She nodded, “I never thought that being a lady, let alone a princess, was what I would ever be good
at, but I am. Gendry never forced me into any of this. He has always made sure that all the
decisions we made were made together. If I had told him too, he would have renounced his crown
and title to Tommen. If I had told him that Durran would be our only child, he would have accepted
that. I am happy with my lot in life Jon.” She paused for a moment and asked, “Are you?”

“I think the Wall is where I am needed.” He answered, “Robb doesn’t need me, you don’t need me,
but I do think they need me there. I have friends, a brotherhood, and Commander Mormont is
grooming me for command.” He stood and looked over at the towers, barely visible through the
thick leaves of the godswood, “I could never be anyone here, I would always just be the Bastard of
Winterfell. I have a chance there.”

“That doesn’t mean you are happy.” She replied, slowly pushing herself up to her feet.

He shook his head, “I said the words, this is what I have chosen.”

She gave him a small smile and reached to give him a hug, to which he gladly accepted. They
stood there in front of the weirwood for a few moments simply enjoying being in each other’s
company. That was when the small pains she had been feeling all morning suddenly attacked her in
force. If it was not for Jon’s arms around her, she would have fallen to the ground. She felt the
liquid spreading down her legs and she looked up at Jon, “The baby is coming.”

She watched Jon’s grey eyes, so similar to her own, widen in fear for a moment before his face fell
into a determined mask. He wrapped one arm under her arm and started half carrying and half
helping her walk quickly toward the entrance to the godswood. As soon as they were into the
courtyard Jon immediately called for a guard to fetch Maester Luwin and met them in Arya’s
room.

Gendry and Podrick intercepted them when they were halfway to the room, Gendry taking over
Jon’s place at her side. She smiled at her husband, “Today is the day.”

Gendry kissed her forward, “Just hold off until we get to the room.”

She let out a breathy laugh, “I will do my best.” Then she frowned, “Where is Durran?”

“Taking a nap In the nursery with little Ned.” He answered without missing a beat.

When they arrived in the room that had been set aside for the birth, Shireen, Margarey and her
mother were already present, as well as Maester Luwin. Gendry removed her cloak and the others
helped her over to the bed. Shireen quickly undid the boots while Catelyn worked on the ties for
the dress.

She noticed that Gendry was still at the door, she assumed speaking with her brothers, but she lost
all care for that when another pain hit her and she cried out. Gendry was instantly at her side again
and she couldn’t believe how lucky she had been with him as a husband. Once her dress was
removed, she laid back on the bed in only her shift. Shireen and Margarey had moved to the edge
of the room, staying out of the way but still close. Catelyn was once again on her one side and
Gendry was on the other.

Maester Luwin lifted her skirts and examined her for a few moments, he frowned when he looked
up, “How long have you been having the pains?”

“Since this morning.” She admitted.

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Gendry admonished.
“I was just so excited to see Jon, I just wanted a few hours with him. Durran’s birth took over half a day, I assumed there would be time.” She said between breaths, it was getting closer, she could tell.

Luwin shook his head, “You should have said something sooner. The babe will be here within the hour, probably less.” He stood and washed his hands in a basin of water.

Arya looked over at Gendry, “Ready for a second child?”

He smiled sweetly at her and kissed her forward, “As ready as I ever am.”

She laughed for a moment before it turned into a hiss. This was it, soon she would have her new babe in her arms, all she had to was get through this.

Arya smiled down at the sleeping babe against her chest, the little tufts of black hair reminded her of how Durran had looked when he had done this same thing. Only, she knew that this boy had her grey eyes instead of the blue. The wolf had compromised with the stag when it came to her second child.

There was a gentle knock on the door before it opened, revealing Gendry leading Durran by the hand. Durran let go of Gendry’s hand and rushed up to the edge of the bed, peering at the bundle in her arms. Her little boy pointed and said, “Baby?”

She nodded at the word he learned because of little Ned, “Yes, this is your baby brother.”

Gendry lifted Durran up and placed him on the bed with her, “You need to be gentle with him.”

Durran reached out a hand and poked the babe with a finger, nothing hard as Gendry was keeping a watchful eye. Durran looked up and Gendry, “Baby!”

Gendry laughed and kissed the toddler on the head, “Yes, baby.”

Arya smiled, “Do you want to know the baby’s name?”

Durran furrowed his brows, “Baby.”

“Baby is not his name. His name is Edrick.”

Durran frowned, “Ed-ick.”

Causing both his parents to fall into a bit of laughter.

“You’ll get it eventually.” Arya said before letting out a yawn.

Gendry smiled at her, “I think you have earned a rest my love.” He reached out and gently took the baby from her, cuddling it against his chest, “I will keep an eye on our boys, you sleep. I’ll bring him back to you when he gets hungry.”

Arya leaned forward and kissed Durran on the cheek before smiling at him, “I love our little family.”

“I do too.” He said, flashing her a smile before leading Durran from the room. The door was barely shut before she allowed the exhaustion to take hold of her.

Gendry took Durran back to the nursery, unsurprised to see Margaery already in there playing with
little Ned. She immediately reached her arms out, and demanded, “Give me my nephew.”

He laughed but handed her the sleeping baby, “I am a prince you know.”

“You are my good-brother, I can speak to you how I wish.” She replied, not taking her eyes on the boy in her arms.

Durran walked up to her, “Baby.”

Margaery smiled and looked down at her own baby, he was much to young understand anything that was going on, his blue eyes just jumped from person to person.

The door opened again, this time it was Catelyn, “I went to check on Arya to find her sound asleep.”

Gendry nodded, “I told her to rest.”

Catelyn walked over and took the baby from Margaery without a word, the young woman just shook her head and went back to playing with her own. Who Durran had decided he needed to sit next to and play with some wooden blocks that had once been used by the Stark children.

Catelyn smiled down at the two boys before looking back at the one in her arms, “I have three beautiful grandsons.”

Gendry smiled as his good-mother held his son, just like she had when Durran was born, and he was sure she had when little Ned had been born as well. It was comforting to know that his son was loved, even within only hours of his birth. He had a thought then, “Catelyn, would you be able to watch the children for a moment? There is something I want to do before Arya wakes.”

Catelyn nodded, “I can watch them.”

“Thank you.” He replied and left the nursery. He walked the halls of Winterfell, a place he had learned while in the few moons they had resided in the castle. He was not exactly sure where he would find his quarry but he was willing to take his bet on starting with the training yard.

He turned the corner and headed to the yard, seeing that Rickon and Podrick were doing a sparring session, Ser Rodrick overseeing their movements. He scanned the edges and nodded when he found Jon talking with Lady Brienne on the sidelines.

“Your Grace.” Brienne greeted with a nod of her head.

He sighed, “Brienne, we have discussed the use of the title during informal times.”

“We have, Your Grace.” She replied and Gendry was thinking that perhaps she was spending too much time around his Uncle, his sass seemed to have infected her as well.

He shook his head and turned to his good-brother, “Jon, I was hoping we could have a word.”

“I shall leave you to it. I think Ser Rodrick needs some assistance with those two.” She said and walked off with a nod of leave to them both.

“Is Arya and the babe alright?” Jon asked.

Gendry nodded, “Both are sleeping. I was hoping we could have a chance to speak, you are the only one of Arya’s siblings I do not know. The one I should know best.”
Jon looked at him as if he had grown a boil on the tip of his nose, “I am just the Bastard of Winterfell, a brother of the Night’s Watch. No one of consequence.”

“That is where you are wrong.” Gendry replied, “From what I’ve heard. You are my wife’s best friend, her only confidant as a child. The person who gave her her first sword and who never treated her differently for not wanting to be a traditional lady. Her favorite brother.”

“She told you all of that?” Jon asked, his voice full of disbelief.

“She has told me everything.” Gendry said, and he looked around at the stone walls that surrounded them, the sky starting to darken with the coming night, “We talked of coming to Winterfell many times before the news of my true birth came out. I looked forward to living here, with my wife and children at my side. This does not seem a horrible place to grow up, even if it is so cold.”

“Arya wrote to me, telling me bits of how she married a blacksmith knight. I did not believe it when later she said she would instead be the queen and was with child.” Jon turned and looked at Gendry head on, “Arya said she loved you, when I talked to her before the babe came.”

“I love her with my whole being.” Gendry had no problem admitting to it, “Without Arya, none of the rest of it would matter, the crown or the title. I only accepted it for her, so we could live a happy life without fear of judgement. I would have been happy to remain a blacksmith the rest of my life.” He let out a sigh, “The gods had other plans for me.”

“The gods have plans for us all.” Jon said in response under his breath.

Gendry wished he had words of comfort for his good-brother, but he could find none that would fit the situation, “Would you like to come meet your nephew?”

“I doubt Lady Catelyn would approve.” Jon replied.

“I am the Crown Prince, I get to decide who is worthy of holding my son.” Gendry said and clapped a hand onto Jon’s shoulder, “We do not know each other, chances are we might not get a chance beyond the next few moons, but I want you to know that I do not consider you any lesser my good-brother than I do the others. He is your nephew as well and you have every right to see him. I am sure Arya would agree.”

Rickon ran up to them then, “Can I see the baby now? Mother said I had to wait earlier.”

Gendry laughed, “Perfect timing, we were just going to see him.”

“Jon, did you hear about how Joffrey tried to kill Gendry? It was crazy!” Rickon said and then proceeded to tell the story as they walked up to the nursery.

Gendry poked his head inside, seeing that it was just Mary watching a sleeping Ned and a focused Durran, “Where is the baby?”

“Lady Catelyn took him to Princess Arya, he was getting hungry, Your Grace.” Gendry nodded and walked across the hall, giving a quick knock before coming in.

Arya smiled up at him, the newborn suckling at her breast, as she talked with her own mother, “You returned, Mother said you had something you needed to do.”

“I did. Your brothers are out here, they want to officially meet their nephew.” He explained and her smile lit up even more.
She looked down, “I doubt they want to see me like this. He should be done in a few moments.”

He nodded and closed the door again, turning to the two men in the hall, “She is feeding him right now but said to wait, it shouldn’t be long.”

“Papa?” A little voice said from behind them.

Gendry walked over and picked up his son, “Hello little prince.”

“Hungry.” He replied.

He nodded, and poked his head into the nursery, “Mary, could you get some food for Durran?”

She turned and picked up a plate, “I have some right here Your Grace but he did not want it.”

He shook his head and tickled his son, “You are being stubborn I see.” He walked over and picked up some of the fruit and handed it to his son, who took it into his little hands. He walked back out into the hall, his son munching on the piece while he did so.

Rickon grabbed onto one of Durran’s foot and started tickling it, causing the toddler to laugh.

Gendry looked and noticed that Jon had an odd look on his face, while smiling, Gendry couldn’t help but notice the sadness there, almost longing.

The door opened to reveal Catelyn, “She is done.”

Gendry smiled and walked in, taking in his now completely covered wife as she sat propped up in the bed, their son in her arms.

Rickon and Jon slowly walked over and he turned to see that Lady Catelyn was still standing by the door, the look on her face unreadable.

“Jon, Rickon, I am happy to introduce you to your nephew, Edrick.” She replied, both of them smiling down at her.

Rickon reached out first, “Can I hold him?” At Arya’s sceptical look, he said, “I held baby Ned, I know what I am doing.”

Arya laughed, “I was teasing little brother.” She replied and gently placed the baby in his hands.

Rickon’s blue eyes immediately focused on the baby, ignoring everything else in the room.

Gendry had let Durran down, placing him on the bed by her feet and while he ate his fruit. He gently placed a hand on Rickon’s shoulder, “Let Uncle Jon have a go too.”

Rickon nodded and looked at Jon, who looked a little afraid.

“Don’t worry Jon, he won’t hurt you.” Rickon teased.

Jon carefully took the baby from his little brother and Gendry saw the first true smile he had seen grace his good-brother’s face. He smiled at his wife, but she was frowning in the direction of the door. He turned to look but all he saw was a glimpse of Catelyn’s dress as she left the room. He looked back up Arya was now smiling at her brothers as they gushed over her son. He sat down beside her and whispered, “Are you happy?”

She leaned up and gave him a soft kiss, “Everything is perfect.”
He nodded and looked around, he had more family now than he ever could have imagined previously. He let the smile settle on his face, today was a good day, and he knew they’d have many more to come that were both good and bad, but for now, he wanted to enjoy this moment, with his family.

Chapter End Notes

Edrick was picked from a list of traditional Stark names, and it seemed the best fit, as it is close to Eddard but we couldn't use that, Robb beat them to it.

Don't forget to comment!! Next up will be the Wall and a return to King's Landing, then only the epilogue. Both of which I am thinking I will post next weekend. The end is almost upon us :'(
The Wall was bigger than anything she could have ever imagined. She strained her neck to try and see the top but it was obscured by clouds. She turned to her husband beside her and she could see from his face that he was just as in awe of everything as she was. Jon had promised her that he would show them top before he had left Winterfell, and she could not wait to experience such a thing with two of her favorite people. She looked behind her as they approached the gates to Castle Black, Shireen, Rickon, and Meera were talking excitedly with each other, while Podrick’s eyes were scanning the Wall from one end to the other. Ser Jaime and Brienne were talking quietly behind them, and she assumed from Jaime’s face that he was still not thrilled about this journey. Ser Manon had remained behind in Winterfell to protect the two little princes, though Arya had no doubt that her Mother had them well looked after. Knowing that her mother, Robb, and Margaery were there to watch over them was one of the only things that had allowed her to be able to leave for the moon she would be gone.

The gates opened upon their approach, their guards entering first before she and Gendry went through. Castle Black was not what she had expected, it was not much like a castle at all. It was simply a wooden structure built up against the Wall, but it was large, as it had once held hundreds of men back in the old days of the Watch. Now, there were less than a thousand men spread across three castles. She hoped that this visit would help show the Watch that the crown had not forgotten about them.

She nimby dismounted her horse and had to reset the urge to run to her brother, she had to uphold her sense of decorum here, at least for first impressions. Once Gendry was beside her, she placed her hand on his arm and walked toward the waiting men.

An older man, with white hair and a white beard stepped forward, “Your Graces, I am Lord Commander Jeor Mormont, welcome to Castle Black.”

Gendry nodded to the man, “Thank you for your hospitality Lord Commander. We do not want to interfere in your normal operations in any way, we just felt it was long past time for the crown to visit the Night’s Watch once again.”

The Lord Commander then pointed to the men on his right, “Allow you to introduce our command, Benjen Stark is First Ranger, Ser Alistair trains the men, and Bowen is our lord steward.”
“Pleasure to meet you all.” Gendry replied and Arya smiled at her uncle, who noticed her look and gave her a wink.

“There is a storm coming in. This is Satin, one of the stewards, he will escort you to your rooms.” The Lord Commander said, waiting for the nod of dismissal from Gendry before turning to look at the gathered men, “Get back to work!”

Arya had to stifle a laugh as she watched grown men jump and hurry back to their duties.

She had never seen anything so beautiful, Jon had insisted they go up to see the sun rise, and he was right. First the sun had lit the North, giving them time to turn and watch as it started to illuminate the world beyond the Wall. It was nothing but forest for as far as the eye could see, everything covered in the white of snow. She turned to Jon and smiled, “This such a beautiful way to see the world.”

“There is no other view like it in the world, of that I am sure.” He said and looked over to her husband, “What do you think Gendry?”

“It is far too cold up here.” He muttered, and despite the leathers and furs he was covered in, she could tell he was still shivering.

She smiled and pressed her back to his chest and he wrapped his arms around her, “I will keep you warm Southern boy.”

Jon chuckled and looked back over the grand forest. She noticed he seemed deep in thought, “What is like out there?”

Jon turned to look at her, “Wild. There is really no other way to describe it. The people, the animals, the land.” He shook his head, “All of it, is wild.”

“Have you encountered some of the Wildings?” Gendry asked.

Jon nodded, “I have met some. I wanted to try a different tactic with them, try to speak to them and agree to a peace.” He sighed, “It didn’t go as well as I planned.”

Arya frowned, there was so much about her brother’s life she didn’t know, and would probably never know.

“Maybe that will change.” Gendry replied, surprising them both, “One day, you might be remembered as the Lord Commander that made peace with the Wildlings.”

“I am not the Lord Commander.” Jon muttered.

“Not yet, but it is clear that you will be, one day.” Gendry said.

Arya smiled, her husband was quiet. Some had even started to call him ‘the silent stag’ because he said so little and left much of the talking to Arya. What people did not understand was that while he was silent, he listened, and he learned. She had found her husband was a great judge of character, noticing things others might miss because he had grown up being in the shadows, watching to avoid trouble.

They heard talking behind them and turned to see Grenn coming over with Rickon, Shireen, Meera, and Podrick.
Shireen hurried over to them, “Isn’t this all amazing? Grenn let us go into the lookout station, you can look down the side of the Wall.” She looked over her shoulder, and whispered, “Pod did not like it.”

Gendry laughed and looked over at his friend, “Not enjoying the heights?”

Arya turned to look as well, she noticed he looked pale and was keeping his eyes focused on the ice around them, he eventually said, “I am perfectly fine, Your Grace.”

Arya giggled, “Pod, you don’t have to stay up here.”

He puffed up his chest, “Yes, I do.”

Meera patted him on the shoulder before moving to look over the edge and what laid beyond the Seven Kingdoms. She turned to Jon, “Have you done any rangings? What is it like out there?”

He looked down at her, “It is hard to explain. The ice just seems to go on forever but it has a strange beauty to it as well.”

“Have you met any Wildlings?” Shirren asked him.

He nodded, “They aren’t that different than us, they just have different beliefs.”

Arya smiled and thought back to Gendry’s words from earlier. He was right, Jon could do great things here at the Wall, if he allowed himself to believe it. She heard a wolf howl in the distance, soon joined by a chorus, and somehow, she knew everything was happening for a reason.

Arya watched as they packed their few belongings onto the horses before turning to look back up at the Wall. They had spent a fortnight at Castle Black, getting to know the members of the Night’s Watch. Uncle Benjen and Jon had even taken them out into the Forbidden Forest beyond, only a few miles, but it was strange to think that she had actually set foot outside of the Seven Kingdoms. Gendry, Pod, and Jaime seemed to enjoy the journey the least, all three of them constantly on edge. While she, Meera, Shireen and Brienne were much more relaxed. Trusting that everything would be alright and not nearly as bothered with the cold.

“I will miss you little sister.” Jon said suddenly from her right.

She smiled up at him, “And I will miss you but we shall see each other again.”

He laughed, “I know you will make sure of it.”

She looked back at the Wall, “When we left Winterfell, did you ever imagine this was where everyone would turn out to be?”

“I always knew I would be here and that Robb would be in Winterfell with a pretty highborn bride. I will admit, it was Sansa I was expecting to be the future Queen of the Seven Kingdoms, not you.” He said with a smile, “I am sure Dorne suits Sansa just fine though.”

Arya nodded, “I received a letter from her. Things with her and Quentyn are going well, she says they have become very good friends.”

“I am happy for her.” Jon said, and Arya knew he meant it.

“I spoke to Mother before we left about how she treats you.” Jon’s head turned to her in surprise, “She has no right to treat you like a lesser person. It is not your fault that Father strayed and it isn’t
right of her to take out her anger at him on you. I made it clear to her that you are my brother and she should treat you better.” Arya looked around her, “I know it is mostly her fault you are here. She made you feel unwanted and this was your escape.”

Jon sighed, “I appreciate it little sister but this has been the way things have been my entire life, Lady Catelyn isn’t going to change her mind about me now.”

Arya shrugged, “Maybe not, but I wanted you to know that you never need to worry about my children treating you like that.”

He smiled, “I never thought they would. I hope I get to see them all grown up one day.”

“You will.” Gendry said, coming up and wrapping a hand around Arya’s shoulders, “If you cannot come down to King’s Landing, then we will make sure to come back up here to you.”

“I am not really allowed to leave the Wall unless on official Night’s Watch business.”

Arya smirked, “Dear brother, you forget who you are talking to you. We are the future King and Queen.”

“The Night’s Watch takes no…”

Arya waved her hand and shushed him, “We will figure it out.” She reached forward and wrapped her brother in a hug, “I love you Jon.”

“I love you too little sister.” He whispered into her hair.

She knew it would most likely be years before she saw him again and she closed her eyes to enjoy this moment just for a while longer.

They spent another moon in Winterfell before deciding it was finally time to return to King’s Landing. She remembered how hard it had been to leave Winterfell the first time, nearly three years earlier, but this time was easier. She knew now what awaited her down in King’s Landing and that made the whole journey less intimidating. She was simply returning to what was her new home. Winterfell would always be the home of her soul, but the Red Keep was her home now. That was where she was going to raise her family and help rule the Seven Kingdoms. She also knew that this was not really a goodbye. She would see the castle of her birth again. Her brothers would not fade from her memory. Her mother would be following them to King’s Landing soon, having decided that Robb was more than capable of being the Lord of Winterfell without her guidance. She just needed to come up with a plan for Rickon first, perhaps a fostership with a Northern lord.

Robb came over to her, “Next I see you might be your coronation.”

“Who knows how long that could be.” She replied and smiled up at him, “Will you have a problem swearing fealty to your little sister?”

He grinned at her, “Not when that sister is you.”

She laughed, “I will make sure not to tell Sansa that.”

He leaned down and placed a kiss to her forward, “I’ve loved having you around again. I shall miss you.”
“I will miss you too.” She said, giving her a big brother a hug before he went off to say his goodbyes to her husband.

Margaery wrapped her arms around her without saying a word, catching Arya a bit off guard, “Take care sister.”

Arya returned the hug, “We shall see each other again.”

Margaery pulled away with a smaller, “Maybe sooner than my husband believes, if our plan comes to pass.”

“That is beyond our control but I think it could work out.” Arya said, “I have enjoyed our time together, I shall miss you.”

“As have I, but not to worry, we will stay in touch.” Margaery promised, giving her one more quick hug before she went over to join Robb.

She turned and took one last look around the courtyard, everyone was ready to go. She and Gendry were the only ones not yet mounted. She nodded at nothing in particular and walked over to the horse, throwing herself up into the saddle. She smiled as her family waved at her and she waved back, knowing it wasn’t a goodbye forever, just for now.

Gendry rode up beside her, “Whenever you are ready my love.”

She smiled at him, “Time to go home.”

He nodded and together they rode through the southern gate of Winterfell and headed toward the Kingsroad.

Arya smiled as she watched Cersei hold her second grandson, the Queen was as smitten with him as she had been with his brother, who was curled up asleep with his head in his grandmother’s lap.

Cersei smiled up at her, “Mrycella sent me a raven, she is with child.”

Arya smiled and settled herself on the floor beside them, “That is wonderful.” She ran a hand through the raven hair of her sleeping son, “Even more grandchildren for you to dote on.”

“Maybe this one will be a girl.” Cersei said, a teasing smirk on her face.

Arya groaned, “Usually all anyone wants is a boy, I produce two and everyone complains they don’t have a girl.”

Cersei laughed, “I am happy with as many grandsons as you wish to give me.” Her face fell as she said, “I wish I could be there for her.”

Arya frowned, “Why could you not be?”

“I am Queen, my place is here.” Cersei replied.

Arya shook her head, “Your place is wherever you want it to be. I can take over any duties you have while you are gone. It would be good practice.” She smiled at her, “I promise to not have any more babies while you are gone.”

Cersei nodded, “You are right. I do not need to leave for a few more moons, the journey to Sunspear is not horribly long. We can get to work on your training until I need to leave. I doubt
Robert would even notice I am gone.”

Arya reached out and touched Cersei’s hand, “I will.”

Gendry was not sure what to think of Small Council meetings but he wasn’t exactly sure he enjoyed them. It had been decided that it would be a good idea for him to start learning the process of ruling now, instead of just being thrown in without warning. He had agreed but he wasn’t exactly sure he understood most of what they were talking about. The numbers were such large sums that he could not even properly comprehend them. Lord Tarly seemed to take issue with some marriage in Essos between the last Targaryen princess and a Dotharki warlord, but he agreed with Ned that as long as they were over there, they weren’t a problem. Lord Davos was working with the Valeryons, Hightowers, and Manderly’s to build a royal fleet. The pirates were once again getting bold and the Iron Islands were less than inclined to help the throne and more likely to help the pirates, though they had yet to do so.

Then they were the subject of marriage, which he did not see relevant to his duties, but they were discussed all the same. One of Lord Tarly’s daughters were going to marry Robert Arryn, a decision made by the council, and approved by Lord Royce.

He had to do his best to avoid sighing in boredom. Was this all that ruling was? Sitting in a room and talking about the issues. He noticed that his Father had not even bothered to come to the meeting, instead choosing to continue with whatever activities he found more exciting. Gendry sat up straighter and tried to focus on the words that Renly was saying about trying to find ways to start paying off the debt to the Iron Bank. He would be a more attentive King than his father, he would make sure of it.

Gendry ran his fingers up and down her spine lazily as they laid naked in their bed. They’d been back in King’s Landing a full moon now and things were finally starting to fall into a normal rhythm.

She smiled and turned her head to look at him, “When we first met, could you have ever imagined that three years later, this is where we would be?”

He chuckled, “Has it really been only three years?” He shook his head, “I wouldn’t say that there is nothing I would change about the last three years. I could have done without fighting for my life.”

“As could I.” She replied, her thoughts drifting to all she knew about how far she was willing to go to protect her family. Things her husband had no idea about and she wondered if he would look at her differently if he did, but she didn’t think it would matter to him. He would understand her reasons and she nestled up against his chest again, “I love you and our family.”

“As do I.” He said and then let out a breath, “Speaking of family. Podrick asked me today if I would help him ask Stannis for Shireen’s hand.”

Arya smiled, “Certainly took him long enough, he has been pining for her for so long.”

Gendry nodded, “I think it would be a good match, he even said that he would take the Baratheon name, as it was more important than Payne.”

“That will make Stannis happier with the arrangement.” She replied, playing over the lines on his chest. He had built a small, single person forge in the keep before they left on the progress, saying he needed to be able to keep something to let his mind wonder. It was also helping him keep active,
which she appreciated.

He squeezed her, “I would have to talk to Renly and Stannis about it, but I was thinking that Shireen should get Storm’s End.”

She looked up at him in surprise.

“Stannis should have gotten Storm’s End as the eldest brother. It should go to Shireen.” Gendry continued, “Dragonstone could go to Tommen or Myrcella or we could do like the Targaryen’s and keep it as a secondary castle of the crown.”

She hummed in contentment, “I see you are starting to think like a hightborn now my prince.”

“It was bound to happen eventually, my princess.” He teased in return, “We have time to figure all that out of course.”

She smiled up at him, “We have nothing but time.”

Chapter End Notes

There will be a short epilogue posted in the next few days that will have a bit of time jump, so stay tuned for that!

Don’t forget to comment, especially if you still have any questions that might need answering!
Epilogue: Long May They Reign

Chapter Summary

It is time to crown the next ruler of the Westeros

Chapter Notes

Here we are, at the end. When I first started this story, I never expected it to turn out like it has. The support from everyone has just been amazing and I am truly grateful.

Many of you correctly guessed what this epilogue was going to be and I would have hated to subvert expectations. Things to expect: many children and unusual pairings. :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arya took a deep breath as they waited for the doors to the sept to be open. A crowd was waiting for them out there, for their new King and Queen. She had known that this moment was coming, Robert’s health had gotten worse in the past few years, his drinking increasing while his whoring slowed. He had tried, for a short time, to stop because of his grandchildren but the call of wine and women had been too much for him to resist.

Gendry reached over and grabbed her hand, raising it up and placing a kiss to the back of her knuckles, “This is it my love.”

She nodded, smiling up at him, “Ready to meet your subjects, my king?”

“That still sounds so strange.” He said with a shake of his head.

“Is it time now papa?” Joanna asked, her green eyes shining in the light streaming through the windows.

“Almost my sweet, we just have to wait for everyone to get ready.” She nodded and turned back to her siblings.

Durran and Edrick were dressed in black tunics, embossed with golden stags. Joanna wore a crimson dress with golden trimmings, Lyara wore a grey dress with white trimming, while Cassranda wore one of blue with red trim. Arya smiled at her children, representing their family houses as best she could. She ran a hand over her stomach, though still flat, she knew that life had taken hold within her once again, nearly ten years from the first time.

Her sons were the copies of their father, with the exception of Edrick’s eyes, which had stayed the Stark grey. Joanna and Lyara were born three years after Edrick and were the most unusual looking of the bunch. Joanna taking after the Lannister, her hair as golden as Cersei’s and her eyes the green of Lannister, where Lyara was Arya in minitutre, with brown hair and grey eyes. Cassandra had returned them to the Baratheon way not even a full year after the twins, with her black hair and...
blue eyes. She wondered what the next will look like, or if it shall be twins again. It had been four years, and she was sure that people assumed that they were done with children. Five was a respectable number after all, but she had decided to have one more, or two.

“You are lost in thought, my love.” Gendry whispered in her ear, causing a pleasurable tremor down her spine.

It amazed her sometimes that even after so long, she still found him as desirable as when they first met, if not even more. She looked to make sure the children were not listening, “I was just wondering if it will be one or two this time.”

“I will be happy either way.” He assured her, resting a hand over her stomach, “But I wouldn’t mind twin boys.”

She shook her head and laughed, “I thought you always wanted it to be a girl.”

“Three is more than enough.” He said wide eye, as if the idea of more daughters was frightening.

She gave a small laugh and smiled at him, “I think you’d be happy either way.”

“I am always happy with you and our children. There is nothing I would want to change.” He assured her, leaning down to lay a quick kiss to her lips, “But another boy would be good.”

“Must you do that where I can see?” Durran said, his face scrunched up in disgust.

Gendry shook his head, “Won’t be long now before you will want to be kissing girls, might as well get used to the idea now.”

The girls giggled while both Durran and Edrick looked a little put off by the subject.

Arya walked over and ruffled both their heads, something she was sure she wasn’t going to be able much longer. Durran was already up to her shoulders and Edrick was not far behind. She smiled at them, “No need to grow up too fast, just enjoy being children a little while longer.”

“I am the crown prince now Mama, doesn’t that mean I will have more responsibilities?” Durran asked.

She shook her head, “Not until you are older. For now, things will remain the same. You will have lessons and your training.”

“When will we get married Mama?” Lyara asked, her grey eyes looking up into Arya’s own.

“When you are ready.” Arya assured her and leaned down to plant a kiss on her cheek, “Which will not be for many years because you are only five.”

Lyara giggled and stepped away, rejoining her sisters, the trio never really apart.

Bran came over to them, his armor white and shining, “They are ready for you, Your Grace.”

Arya smiled at her younger brother, proud that he had been able to achieve his goal, a member of the Kingsguard only the previous year when Ser Barristan unfortunately passed away.

Gendry turned to their children, “Remember what I said, smile and wave but do not wander off. Understood?”

“Yes Father.” They all chorused at once and Arya smiled at the sight.
Gendry came up to her and she placed her hand on the loop of his arm. The girls lined up to her left and the boys do to the same on Gendry’s right.

Gendry gave her a smile and at her nod he turned to the guards at the doors, “Open them up.”

The doors opened as they stepped out to bright afternoon sunlight. The High Septon was waiting for them at the top of the steps. They went up to the High Septon and the gathered crowd cheered when they came into view.

The High Septon smiled at them before he turned to the crowd, “Lords, Ladies, and citizens of the realm, we are today for a very important reason, to anoint Stefon of House Baratheon in the blessing of the gods as the new King of Westeros.”

Arya looked around, noticing that her family was smiling from the front row. Cersei was first among them, the dowager Queen still looked regal in the black dress of her mourning. Her Father and Mother, with Robb and Margery next to them, the two oldest children smiling at them, while their youngest was being secured in her mother’s arms, at 14 moons he wanted to run. Next to her was Shireen, her stomach wide with her second child, while Podrick kept their son in front of them.

Her eyes continued to scan the crowd as the High Septon said his speech. She found Arianne Martell, her three daughters smiling beside her and her husband. Besides them was Quentyn and Sansa, her own red headed daughter of 3 years besides her. Mrycella and Trystane each had a babe in their arms, the twins, one boy and one girl, having been born 4 moons earlier, their older two daughters stood in front of them. Her eyes swept over and found the Tyrells, Lady Olenna was still charging through life, her son stood on one side, while her grandson stood on the other. Next to Willias was his wife and Arya smiled at Meera, her two young sons clenching her skirts. Further along the line was Robert Arryn, looking this than pleased to be in attendance. Her eyes finally stopped to rest on Jon, he had come down a few moons earlier to help plan a new recruitment plan for the Watch with the crown. It made her happy to know that almost her entire family was here to see this moment, besides Rickon who had remained as the Stark in Winterfell, alongside his wife Lyanna Mormont and their newborn daughter. Next came Lady Brienne, now the Lady of Tarth, with twins of her own. The father of the twins was a secret, as the Lady was unmarried, but Arya had an idea, even though she would never say it aloud. She already had the legitimization papers drawn up, just waiting for the signature that would make the 7 years old boy and girl Tarths instead of Storms. Finally her eyes settled on the small council, Renly, Davos, Tyrion, Lord Tarly, Grand Maester Martyn, and Oberyn Martell.

Gendry kneeled and her eyes went to him as the High Septon placed the golden antler crown upon his head, and then saying, “Rise, King Stefon of House Baratheon, First of His Name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm.” He then turned to her and she kneeled before him as he placed her silver crown of a wolf and stag meeting was placed, and he said, “Rise Queen Arya of Houses Stark and Baratheon, First of Her Name, Queen of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lady of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm.”

They stood together and raised their joined hands high. Many had fought against their plan to both be styled as equals but they had planned their arguments for years and none could find fault in their logic. Everyone cheered as they stood before them, the highborn and lowborn alike. Her eyes drifted over them all before being pulled upward, the red comet had appeared in the sky the previous morning. The meaning for it could mean many things but she chooses to believe it is a sign from the gods, both old and new, that this was the path she meant to be on. It heralded a bright future for her and her family.
That is it! We have come to end. If you still have any questions don't be afraid to share. Also, it was suggested that I do little one-shots from the time I've jumped over and I liked that idea. So there might still be more from this universe in the future, just not anytime soon because I have a few other projects I am working on first. (feel free to leave suggestions for stuff you want to see in the comments).

Again, I just wanted to thank everyone for their support and love and comments. I do truly appreciate every single one. <3

Thanks for reading!! Please, please, let me know what you think. You can also follow me on tumblr under the same username.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!