The Butterfly Effect

by Blank Ji

Summary

She thought she was going to feel peace after finishing off her list, but she was far from it. Her family was still gone and she was alone. So, the Gods let Arya Stark travels back in time to save her family and give her a chance to rewrite the past. While doing so, she creates the Butterfly effect and she soon realizes that maybe things were written like it was for a reason.
Notes

Inspired by the movie The Butterfly Effect.

An AU story where there is no Night King/White Walkers/Wights trying to breach The Wall. Ned's execution and the Red Wedding happens. Jon got stabbed when he tried to save Arya from the Boltons (as per book). Theon (allegedly) burned Bran and Rickon. And Arya did everything the TV shows highlighted (up until Season 7 episode 1).

This is my first fic, so my apologies for any lacking in this work. As English is not my mother tongue, I am bound to make grammatical mistakes. I hope you can bear any mistakes on my part and enjoy the plot! It gets better as the chapter goes (as said by my lovely readers), so give it a shot.. You might be surprised...or not. Entirely up to you.

PS: Dany will start to appear in Chapter 8. New tags will be added as the story progress. Alright then, shall we start?
Prologue: Vengeance

Chapter Summary

In which it all began.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - Present*

What was vengeance supposed to feel like?

When Arya slits Walder Frey’s throat from ear to ear, she thought she was going to feel better. But, at that time, even though she was smiling as the old man looked upon her, bleeding to death, she was not feeling any better. The hollow inside her chest was still there and she cannot shake the feeling that it was digging deeper instead. So, she travels into the South after cleaning The Twins with Frey’s blood, making sure everyone that orchestrated The Red Wedding paid their due. Nevertheless, there are two more names to cross and then maybe she will feel whole again.

King’s Landing was still the same as when she first arrived with her Father and sister, Sansa. Arya was just one and two at that time and now she was one and eight. A woman grown. Sneaking into the castle was easy. She can do it with her eyes close. Finding Cersei Lannister and The Mountain however was a different story. When she did find them, the queen was often within the presence of someone, making it hard to get to her alone.

When it was finally night time, she used a skill that she developed with Bran a long time ago and climbed the wall before entering straight into the Queen’s chamber.

The Queen of Westeros was lying soundlessly on her huge four—pastor bed. Arya looked down at the woman and took out her favorite dagger from her belt. Ever so silently, she climbed up the bed and pinned the woman with her weight. The edge of the knife was at the Queen’s throat and if she wills it, the blade would cut open her flesh effortless like cutting through butter.

When the older woman finally realizes another presence on top of her, Arya pushed her small weapon deeper until it brought blood. Any thought of escaping immediately vanished from her victim’s eyes.

The Mountain was nowhere to be seen, but she bet he was close. Maybe he was guarding outside the chamber at this very moment. She decides she cannot waste any more time than necessary. But, that does not mean she cannot enjoy her kill. Arya straightened her back and cleared her mind, putting her killer face on to get the job done.

“I’m Arya Stark” she whispers. Cersei’s eyes grow wider every second the words sink in.

“N-No, it can’t be.” Cersei spat back. Arya smirks at that.

“Yes, it can… and I’m going to kill you for everything you have done to my family.” She counters before bringing her face closer to Cersei. “Your reign is now over, Your Grace.”
“Wha- Wait!”

Cersei’s words were cut short when Arya slid the edge of the blade from right to left, leaving a huge opening of her skin. Blood was coming out of her slit throat and she flailed around the bed in panic. But, it did her no good. She was going to die, any second now. Her emerald green eyes were slowly drawing out of life and her body was thrashing weaker than before. A loud thump echoes at the same time as Cersei Lannister drew her last breath.

Arya slowly gets off of the dead body, grey eyes never leaving the dead woman as her emptiness drowns her further. She was not at all feeling fulfilled and it confused her. Perhaps it was because she still had one name left to scrap. And then, maybe after that she will feel better.

A low guttural sound was filling the room and Arya looks up to find half a dozen of men, wearing the lion’s armor. They were the Queen’s guard and one of them stood out as he practically towers over everyone else. She recognized the man immediately. It was the Mountain and the growl was coming from him.

Arya drew her skinny sword out of her belt. With the dagger in her right and Needle in the left, she was ready to kill her next target. The Mountain seems to take that as an invitation as he took a step forward and lunged at the small girl.

Arya used all her tricks she learned over the past years. From the Water dance to the Faceless Men techniques against the half giant. She silently thanked the other men that they were not intervening. Perhaps they thought she was going to lose.

She proved them wrong when her Needle finally found an opening at the Mountain’s underarm. Even with armor, Needle can easily slip through. Though, The Mountain doesn't seems to be affected in the slightest by the cut whatsoever. Frustrated, she danced around him some more as she studied him from a distance at the same time. When she found another opening, the dagger flew from her fingers and it landed in his right eye. He staggered backwards at the force, bending down to take the dagger out. Arya took the chance and dashed towards him, pulling out another smaller knife from her sleeve. She plunged the blade to his left eye so hard, it was a surprise the blade didn't go out the other way. He screams as he flailed around the room blindly. His sword long forgotten on the floor as he tried to pull out both knives on his face. It only took a second as Arya picked his longsword up and rush back at him. She swung the sword over her head, putting all of her force into plunging the blade to his neck.

The choked breath of The Mountain was loud to her ears and with a scream, Arya finished swinging the blade sideways so hard that it flew right off her grip - cutting his remaining neck further. The clatter sound of the steel sword along with a thump on the floor was heard soon after. The young girl let out a heavy breath as she looks down at the Mountain’s head lolling back and his near-headless body crashing down.

She finally succeeds. Her list was finished. She had killed every person in this world that had wronged her family. She was done. But, her heart was still empty and the hollowness was still there. She should be feeling better, isn't she? But, she's not. Not in the slightest. Why?

She didn’t have the time to linger much on that thought as movements caught her eyes. The other men had finally made their moves against her. But, it was of no use. They were nothing compared to the Mountain.

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She doesn’t know for how long she had walked and how far she had gone. Her clothes were
drenched with blood. Others’ and her own. She had fulfilled her goal and now she has nowhere else
to go. She can go back to Winterfell, but it can never be her home again. Home was supposed to be
Father and Mother, her brothers, Jon, Robb, Bran and Rickon. Even her sister, Sansa. But, now they
were gone and she was still here, *alone*.

Her legs gave out and she falls down onto the muddy ground. As she props herself up, a familiar
face caught her attention. It was a deciduous tree with a face carved on their barks. Arya knew it too
well. It was a weirwood tree. She cannot help but to fixed her gaze at the solemn face, drowning her
in its bloodied eyes.

She had long left the belief of the Old Gods from her Father, and The New where her Mother once
practiced. The only God she knew was Death and it never disappoints her so far. But, seeing the
weirwood tree now, a feeling so foreign to her was emerging. Her eyes clouded with unshed tears as
the memories of her family played at the back of her mind. She missed her family with every part of
her body. They were her life once. But, now living doesn’t sound that fascinating anymore.

If only she could see them again one last time. She would give everything she has if she can change
the fate of her family. She was even willing to offer herself more than once if it pleases the Gods. As
she leaned on the tree bark, close to the Gods face, she pleads for whichever Gods that were listening
to give her a chance to save her family.

A whistle of winds blew through the leaves, making an inhuman shrill sound echoes through the
forest. It was as if the Gods were replying to her. Arya cannot help but let out a chuckle at her
ridiculous thought. There was nowhere else to go and nothing else to do. Her job is done. Her lists
finished. Now, the only thing left to do is to rest and perhaps then she can find her peace. She closed
her eyes and let the wind became her lullaby to sleep.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - Old Past*

The throbbing pain inside her head was the first sense that she gained. Then, she felt her skin
comfortably warm against the soft material under her. The smell came next. Though the air was not
smoky, she can smell the pine as it burns. The crackling sound was the proof of that. These were
awfully familiar.

Her eyes shot open and she was greeted with the familiar surroundings of her room back in
Winterfell. The steel helmet was on top of her side table. She always placed it there, reminding her of
the dream in becoming a knight one day.

Arya was lying on her bed and everything in her room was in place, like the last time she
remembered. She got up and instantly regretted her decision. The throbbing was making her seeing
black spots. But, she shrugs it off and climbs down her bed anyway, slowly striding towards the door
and open it. She was greeted with yet another familiar hallway. This place was clearly her home.
But, why was she here? The last thing she remembered was the weirwood tree.

Maybe this was a dream. A vivid one.

“Good Gods! Arya Stark!” a disembodied voice bellowing behind her. Arya spins around so fast,
ready with her stance to attack back whoever it was. “Why are you in your small clothes, young
lady?” the voice continues.
The young girl looks up at where the voice was coming from only to find a woman at the end of the hallways. A woman that she had longed for. “Mother?” she asked, frowning. Her voice barely came out as a whisper. She stood silently as the woman, her Mother, Catelyn Tully-Stark strides towards her.

The older woman raised her brow while shaking her head disapprovingly. “Arya, go back to your room and change to a proper attire for the day.” Catelyn finished. Arya tries to make a sound but gives up when none comes out.

“Well? Go on now. Do I need to get Septa Mordane?” Catelyn orders the second round. When her mother keeps eyeing her, waiting for her daughter to move, Arya’s limbs moved on its own. She was so used to her mother ordering her around that her body seems to obey every command she said in response, even after a long time.

The young girl walked back towards her room where she came from but stops short halfway. She looks to her mother’s retreating form and pinches her arm so hard that the skin was going to leave a bruise later.

The pain was real. That can only mean that her mother was also real. But, how was this possible? This was all too good to be true. This must be some kind of magic. Whoever did this to her must be messing around with her head. That would explains the throbbing that only worsens every minute.

She turns around and walks back towards her intended path. She was going to end this dream once and for all. How dare they mocked her with this memory. As if reliving it for the past years hadn’t been enough.

The hallway soon leads her to the common hall and what she sees makes her stop abruptly, her breath caught in her throat.

They were all there. Her family was here.

“Arya, I told you to change your clothes before you break fast, didn’t I just now?” Catelyn’s voice was booming along the hall, making her other children stops their meal.

All the faces were now thrown Arya’s way and she can clearly see all of them. Her Father, Robb, Jon, Sansa, Bran and Rickon.

She heard a sigh coming from the head of the table and there was her father, Ned Stark. “Arya, listen to your mother.” He speaks up before shaking his head. His lips were curving upwards slightly. If it were anyone else, they would not notice, but she did.

“Are you trying to get to the kidney pie, Arya?” Robb interrupts not before shoving a piece of bread into his mouth. “I’m afraid, Jon here had the last one.” He continues.

Bran let out a chuckle as he starts digging his own meal again.

Arya trails over the edge of the table and find Jon looking at her with guilt. “Sorry, little sister. I’ll ask for Old Nan to cook another.” He said with a sheepish smile. A smile that she once dreamt of.

As she swallows and lets all the faces sink into her mind, she cannot help when the tears start to brim under her eyes. And when it finally spilled at the sides of her face, she let them be. How she had missed them. She was worried that she would forget all their faces, but now seeing them again, she could proudly tell herself, she didn’t forget. She notices Sansa was looking at her with shock and confusion, probably because of the tears which had profusely streamed down her face now.
Arya concludes then, that this was not a dream. It was all too real. If it is not a dream, it can only mean one thing.

“Am I… dead?” she asked. Her voice was deafening to her. Everyone was watching and staring at her like she was crazy. Confusion and worry etched on their faces.

She heard someone calling her name before the throbbing pain inside her head overwhelms her and swallows her into darkness.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is beta-read by the wondrous and magnificent SpaceWives.
Home

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf gets the chance to be herself again.

Chapter Notes

Anyone up for some Stark family bonding?  
Just to be clear, I used the show’s age so, the Stark’s children are:-  
Robb - 18 years old  
Jon - 17 years old  
Sansa - 14 years old  
Arya - 12 years old  
Brandon - 10 years old  
Rickon - 6 years old

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - Old Past*

Even though Arya Stark is a child from the North, she never admits it to anyone that she actually hated the cold. Her home is always warm enough because of the underground hot springs. But, outside of Winterfell is a different story.

As of right now, the cold is practically crawling their way into her every bones. She can feel her body trembling because of the lack of warmth. The only part she felt of warmth was on her face. Which was odd. She decides to flutter her eyes open to find the cause of it.

She is lying on her bed again, but her room is dark, except for the small candles situated across the room, lighting a very dim light all around.

“Oh, thank the Gods.” a voice so familiar echoed in her room. She turns her head to find an older woman who awfully resembled Catelyn Stark was at her bedside. A slight wrinkle on the edge of her eyes appears when she smiles, but she was still beautiful as Arya can remembered.

“Mother.” Arya whispered. All the memories from before she passed out coming back to light. Why is she still in this dream? And if she’s dead, why does she feels weak? It doesn’t make any sense at all.

Catelyn presses a damp cloth on her child’s forehead and Arya knew now where the warmth was coming from.

“You have a fever. Sleep and rest, my sweetling.” Catelyn spoke softly.

“Mother.” Arya trailed, liking the word that she had long stopped using before. “It’s cold.”
Catelyn moves closer and tucks in the fur around her body tighter. But, the cold is still creeping in. “It’s still cold, Mother” she voiced out, almost whining.

The older woman bends down and places her hand on her child’s cheek. It was awfully hot even though Arya claimed it to be the other. She removes the furs and climbs up the bed instead before putting the furs back in place above them. She slides her arms through, engulfing the smaller frame beside her into a tight hug. “Better?” she asked.

Arya hummed in approval before nodding against her mother’s chest.

“Is your head hurting?” Catelyn asked again, caressing the young girl’s head gently. “You took quite a fall when you passed out this morning.” She felt another movement as the girl shakes her head.

Arya nuzzled closer to her mother, wrapping her arms around her. She can’t help as her lips formed a wide smile. All she feels right now are warmth and comfort and she decides she can live like this forever.

“She’s fin.” Catelyn whispered. But, Arya doesn’t want to. Afraid that whatever this may be, will disappears and she will wakes up to nothing but the cold again.

She was asleep long before that thought affected her as she drifts off with her mother’s beating heart.

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The second time Arya opens her eyes, she feels all better. Warm and cozy without her mother’s presence beside her. Her room is filled with the sunlight coming from the opened window and she concludes that it was probably morning again.

She climbs down her bed and strides towards the window where the sun’s warmth bathes her further and the sound of birds chirping can be heard at a distant. She is indeed home and she's not dreaming. Of that she was certain. But, nonetheless, she still cannot grasp what truly is going on.

Was all that she had experienced those years in the run and watching her family's unjustly deaths, a dream? A long and horrible dream?

She looks down at herself then. She notices now that her hands are smaller. Her height is shrinking too. All of her scars she earned are lost. Her skin is as flawless as it can be, and her body is of a small child again. Not the woman that she had once become.

With a frown, she moves towards the chest that stored all her clothes. She settles for a light blue dress when she cannot find anything more comfortable. The material will keep her warm enough and that will do.

She moves to the mirror next to do her hair, but the sight of her face startles her. It is as if she is looking at another Arya Stark. Her face is smaller and it screams youth all over. Her grey eyes are the only thing that she recognized. Somehow, they are older and are the only thing that truly represents her.

A creak sound of the door being opened brings her out of her trance and she turns around to find Jon is entering her room. A tray of food on his hands.

“Oh, you’re awake.” Jon said with a slight smile. “I brought you breakfast… I thought you were still down with the fever.” he continued while placing the tray on the side table.

Arya didn’t even realize her feet had brought her closer to her half-brother. She had to tilt her head
up to see his face and she studied his face like her life depends on it.

Jon looks down at her with a raise brow. “Arya? Something-” he was unable to finish his sentence when Arya threw her arms wide as she jumps to lock him with a tight hug, burying her face at the crook of his neck, content. Her arms secured him tighter without meaning to.

If Jon was puzzled at her little sister behavior, he didn’t show it. Instead he returned her hug and they stay around each other’s arms for what felt like eternity.

“It’s getting harder to breathe, little sister.” Jon whispered, “You’re not actually trying to strangle me to death are you?” he finished with a playful tone. Arya can feel his smile against her shoulder.

But, she cannot smile at that. The thought of his death breaks her linked arms like a spell. Her memory brought her back when she visits Jon’s grave, outside Castle Black. There was only mound of dirt on the ground with his name carved on a wooden marker. He was buried six feet under all alone in that cold and dark ground.

“Arya?” Jon’s voice brought her back. His eyes bore into hers with a frown now. “Something wrong?” He asked, his hands grasping her shoulder.

Arya wills herself to cast away the horrible memory out of her thoughts. After all Jon is here and he's not dead. “Of course not… I'm just starving is all.” she said, forcing a smile. Jon stares at her for a while, studying her.

“Is that kidney pie, I see?” She asked shifting her gaze at the tray of food that had been long forgotten. Her smiles now turn into a genuine one as her stomach rumbles softly.

Jon chuckles, finally releasing his hold. “Aye, the one and only.”

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Roaming the castle has never been this fun and nerve wrecking. Arya had tried to find any flaw to the situation she was at, but to no avail. Winterfell is perfect as she last remembered it. She recognized every face in it and they her.

As she steps outside the courtyard where everyone is already tending to their respective works, two men caught her attention and she wastes no time walking towards them, her robes bellowing behind her.

Her father and her brother, Robb are talking to Ser Rodrik about something of importance. She notices how grim her father looked. But then realized that's how he always looked like with everyone else. Robb on the other hand, is intently listening to whatever the older men were exchanging, studying them.

She stops not far from them, appreciating their presence from a distance. When they finally finished and Ser Rodrik walks away, her father realized he had been watched. His brows raised as he walks to her. Robb following close from behind.

“Arya, what are you doing up and about?” Ned asked, bending down to place his hand on her forehead. Arya only grins back.

“I feel fine now, Father… never been better.” She replied and not long after, throws herself into her Father’s arms. Savoring his smell and warmth. When she's content, she lets go and throws herself onto her brother, next. Treating him the same way.
The two men exchanged a look at each other, feeling lost by the sudden treatment. “Well, it’s good to have you back.” Robb speaks up, breaking the long silence as Arya stares at them both with a smile still plastered on her face. It was becoming rather disturbing with every minutes passed for the two men.

“Ned, I cannot find—” a voice interrupted them then and Catelyn stops short by the small group before fixing her gaze at the person she was looking for. “Arya” she finished with a sigh.

The young girl looks at her mother with the same smile. By the way it's going, it looks like her face will be hurting by the end of the day, though she wouldn't mind that at all.

“I guess you're feeling all better now?” Catelyn asked. Arya nods.

“Her fever seems to have subsided.” Ned said, giving his thought too. Catelyn let out a satisfied sigh.

“Well then, perhaps you ought for an embroidery lesson? Your sister’s already on her way.” the older woman suggested.

Arya instantly lights up at the mention of her older sister. She closes in to her mother and hugs her tightly. “That seems like a wonderful plan, Mother. I will be on my way now.” She finished and lets go of her but not before glancing at the three of them for one last time and running away. The thoughts of seeing Sansa filling her mind.

The three people were dumbstruck as they watched the little girl’s retreating form. “Arya’s excited for an embroidery lesson? I think something's wrong with her head. Should we call Maester Luwin?” Robb asked to no one in particular.

Catelyn gives her son a disapproving look. “Perhaps she finally accepts the way of a lady.” She continued, though not sounded that convincing herself.

Ned lightly chuckles. “Gods be good when that time finally comes.”

Arya made her way to the supposed room where they always had their embroidery lesson with Septa Mordane. She knocks on the door and walks in. Her sister is already sitting on a chair with two other girls. She remembered them as Jeyne and Cissy.

Sansa stops as she turns around to find her younger sister looking at her, grinning from ear to ear. “Arya, if you decided to come at all, you should at least be on time.” she commented before working back on her stitches.

Arya strides closer and takes a chair next to her sister before sitting down. All this while her eyes not leaving Sansa. She can’t help but feel in awe of her sister’s beauty. Truth be told, Arya had always noticed - although bedgrudgingly - that Sansa has the beauty of a Tully just like her Mother. But, she never appreciates it. Not until now.

“What? Something on my face?” Sansa asked, annoyed when being openly stared at.

Arya shakes her head. “No. There's nothing on your face... I just realized how beautiful you are.”

Sansa’s mouth opened and closed a few times. Confused by her little sister’s sudden remark. She tried to find any proof that the girl was actually joking but found none. Instead Arya looks at her with such honesty and longing. She didn’t understand one bit of that. “Um... Well, thank you.” She said hesitantly.
The younger girl smiles before getting up and wrapping her arms around her sister. Sansa blinks as she slowly returned the hug, though further confused. Septa Mordane comes in at the right moment, breaking the trance of both sisters. As Arya turns around and finds the older woman, she can't help but to groan, finally realizing where she is and what she had really walked into.

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Sneaking out of the embroidery lesson was easy when no one pays her any attention. Though she realized that Sansa was aware of her plans of escaping, the older girl didn’t stop her. In fact, Sansa almost looks like she was helping her, talking to Septa Mordane all the time, asking for the woman's guidance when clearly she doesn’t need one.

Arya lets out a breath she doesn’t realizes she’s holding as soon as she is far from the damned room. As she walks along the hallway and towards the ground, a sound she recognizes enter her ears. The swish sound of an arrow before it hit a mark is all too familiar to her.

Sure enough she sees the source soon after. Robb, Jon, and Rickon are there, watching Bran’s practicing and he is failing rather tremendously as his arrows hit everywhere else other than the mark.

The brows on her forehead crease as the familiar situation unravel in front of her. She had been in this same situation six years ago, hadn’t she? She remembered mocking Bran at that time, by showing him how to hit the mark properly and he had chased her after, annoyed with her action.

Finding no immediate answer, she shrugs it off. Perhaps it was just a coincidence and she was just dreaming of that time. A grin automatically adorns her face as she comes across an estranged bow and an arrow near them. Maybe she really ought to teach Bran a lesson. She picks them up and moves to find the perfect spot from Bran and the mark he was practicing with.

Finally had the target locked on her sight, she lets go of the arrow and it swiftly lands on the center of the mark with a definite thud. Everyone turns around at the source it was coming from and her smirk grew bigger as she decides to curtsy - with bigger action than necessary - before them.

Bran’s face is soaring red and he tosses the bow aside before sprinting towards her. Just as expected, Arya knew he was going to do that, so she was already sprinting in the apposite direction when he makes his move. She can’t help the giggle coming out from her with Jon’s and Robb’s laughter filling her ears as she runs.

She manages to glance over her shoulder and finds that Bran is still hot on her heels. She runs further until she comes across a tree and starts climbing. Not long after, another presence is at her side as he climbs past her.

“Are you coming?” Bran asked, from the top of the tree now, smirking. Arya rolls her eyes.

“Shut up.” She huffs while trying to get a good footing on the branches at the same time.

Bran was always a better climber than her and her current attire only makes it worse. After seems like forever, Arya finally arrived beside her brother. The tree’s branch is big and strong enough for the both of them to sit on.

“There you are…did you meet a friend on your way up? I was becoming sleepy, waiting.” He joked, with a ghost of smile on his face.

She punches his arm lightly. “Oh, shut it you. If it weren’t for my dress, I would already beat you, no doubt.”
Bran chuckles softly before staring straight into the horizon. The wind blows on their faces as Arya studies her brother silently.

“You know…” Bran trails, staring back at his sister. “You gave quite a fright to Father and Mother yesterday.”

The young girl looks away, suddenly feeling anxious. “It was only a fever. I’m all better now.” She said, trying to convince him and herself.

“Do you remember what you said before you passed out?” he asked again, not really waiting for an answer as he continues. “You asked; were you dead. Why would you have asked that?”

She stares back at him, feeling lost in her thoughts. “Well, it was nothing.” she settled, don't know how to breach the subject when she is not sure herself. But, Bran is still staring at her, urging her to continue. “I had a dream…a horrible one.” She tried then. "Mother and Father were murdered... Everyone died in some horrifying way. Robb, Sansa and Rickon... Jon, and even you. I was left all alone and it was terrifying.” she finished in a whisper, in fear that it might come true again.

Silence envelops them and for a moment, something she can't quite comprehend passes as Bran studies her silently. But, then his face is clear and he nudges her slightly at the side. “Don't worry, Arya... It was only a dream.” he said with a smile so contagious that she had to smile back.

Their conversation stops short when Ser Rodrik calls for Bran to come down. He is going to witness an execution of a deserter from the Night's Watch whom Father will give the sentence to. The look on Bran’s face is turning grim by the seconds. As he finally walks away with Ser Rodrik, leaving her alone, Arya can’t help the dread rising from her stomach. She remembers all of these too well.

Clearly, a second time is not a coincidence. What if this wasn't in fact a dream like Bran said? Though she has a difficult time imagining whatever *this* is could be.

When Bran comes home later that evening, running with a direwolf pup around his arms, Arya can never admit that she had known all along. Even when Jon gives her, her own little pup, Nymeria, she doesn't want to admit to anything. Not only during dinner, when her Father announced the King is coming to Winterfell that she finally realized that the Gods had actually granted her wish to save her family.

Chapter End Notes

Arya was on a hugging-spree, wasn't she? And she finally knows something ;P
I always fancy some fluff before we get to the shite end of the story... Personally, I thought that the TV shows didn't portray enough family bonding with all the Stark, especially Jon-Arya and Catelyn-Arya. Anyway, enough of my rant...tell me what you think in the comment! Oh, and Happy New Year!
Rebirth

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf starts to gather up the pieces.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - Old Past*

The burden of knowing what lies ahead was wearing Arya out. It was less than a moon away before the royal visit and before everything went to hell for her family. She tried to deny the fact that she had gone back in time and settled on her having a nightmare or a vision instead. But, every day went by only strengthens her belief that she was indeed traveling back through time. Even though her body was of a small child, her mind was not. The experience she had had through the years in the run had matured her. Her muscles and limbs even remembered the sparring and fighting techniques from the famous Braavosi Water Dance to the Faceless Man - which she hasn’t learn yet in this time. Though her strength was shrinking, due to her smaller frame, she still knows how to be deadly enough, and for that she was thankful.

Sleep has not come by easy after learning the truth. Her dark circle under her eyes worsening every day. But she couldn’t care less about it. Not when the knowledge of the future is within her grasp. Just thinking about the fate of her family makes her want to run and tell them what is going to happen. But, she knows better. They would have locked her up in a tower and claimed that she had gone mental if she ever did that. So, she kept her silence albeit with much difficulty.

She has to be smart, of that she was certain. But, how? She wasn’t quite sure yet. The only thing that is important for her is saving her family. So, she will sets her mind on that particular goal.

That is why, she is here in her father’s and mother’s chamber, watching silently in the corner of the room as they lie in their bed peacefully - not knowing their daughter had come by to check on them every night. Where in truth, she had checked in every room of her siblings too. It calms her to know that they were safe and sound.

Arya lets out a small sigh as she looks upon their sleeping faces. They look so calm and peaceful. If only they knew what was coming.

She strides off towards the door, leaving them behind with not a single sound and merging as one with the shadow.

A few corner and stairs later, she’s back in her own room. The dark greets her and she welcomes it. Taking a sit on her bed, she ponders silently on how to change the fate of her loved ones until the light takes turn and greets her.

*****

The dreaded day finally arrives and Arya cannot help but being restless. She has taken refuge in the Godwood with Nymeria, to practice or rather sharpen her sword techniques when everyone is busy attending to their last preparation before the royal escort comes.

She remembered how eager she was at that time. Admiring the knights. The Hound particularly
stood up to her the most.

It was not because of him that the feeling of anger and resentment is radiating from her body at this very moment. But the fact of one evil and manipulated woman among them. The Queen.

Cersei Lannister’s face has been haunting her since last night and she feels agitated to know that the woman is still alive at this time and is making her way to her sacred home.

She thrusts the wooden sword forward with a grunt, picturing the queen is at the end of the sword. It should be piercing right through her gut now. But, somehow her image is still looking down at Arya with an annoying smirk, mocking the younger girl.

Arya tightens her grip on the blade before putting another hand on the handle.

*How dare she!*

With another grunt, she brings the wooden blade upwards, cutting her from gut to throat. She spins to gain enough momentum before slicing the blade along the damn woman’s neck. Her head separated and rolling down the ground to her feet. Arya smiles darkly, satisfied at her imaginary victim.

*That’s where you should be.*

Nymeria stands up in an instant looking pass her, acknowledging another presence besides them. The direwolf lets out a sound as she tilts her head to the side, to let her mistress know. But, Arya is too distracted to notice.

“Seven Hells!” a voice startled Arya from her trance. She turns around to find Jon walking towards her and Nymeria. “Remind me not to get into your bad side, little sister.” He continued.

“I will.” She replied with a genuine smile this time as she studies his clean look. He wears shorter hair with no stubbles on his face. It makes him look younger.

Jon let out a slight smile at her remark. “Where did you learn that? I’ve never seen that moves before.” He asked. Arya shrugged, masking her face into indifference.

“No where.” She answered, cursing inwardly because she was not careful enough of her surroundings. No one is supposed to know she's this good yet. “I’m just playing around.” She said again. Jon raised one of his eyebrow, studying her.

“Well, this won’t do. You’re sweaty and all. Go freshens yourself before the King arrives.” He said with a disapproving look. Arya fight the urge to roll her eyes at him.

“You’re worse than my mother.”

“No, I’m not.”

Arya crosses her arms and looks up at her half-brother with a raised brow, mimicking him.

“Fine, don’t freshen yourself then... I mean, who cares if the youngest daughter of Lord Eddard Stark is disheveled in welcoming the guests. It’ll only be the King of Westeros anyway.” He said calmly.

Arya finally rolls her eyes at that, and let out a sigh as she tossed the wooden blade to Jon, where he easily caught it. A slight smile tugging at the corner of his mouth in return.
“As you wish. Now, if you'll excuse me... I have to go and make myself pretty again. Come, girl,” she said as she walks, Nymeria trailing besides her. “Though I doubt I can be as pretty as you.” She continues with a grin, finally walking pass him. Jon glares at his little sister good-naturedly, her loyal companion hot on her trails.

******

They are standing in a line waiting for the King to finally arrives. Just as before, Arya joined her family and stood where she should be. Her posture and expression calm. But her inside is a turmoil. She's afraid that she's unable to control herself when facing the one that she had killed before and will gladly kill again for the second time.

*Maybe I should kill The Queen and be done with all of this. Surely, removing a big part of the threat will guarantee everyone's safety?*

Her thought is short lived however as the sound of horses and carriages enters her ears. And soon after, the royal escort comes riding in through the Winterfell's main gate. The horses come riding in first and along them were The King and his soldiers. She noticed a golden hair boy riding among them and instantly regret noticing him. It was Joffrey and he was still an eyesore even before it all begin.

Arya then trails over the carriages that came in soon after. So caught up in her own little bubble, she didn’t even pay any attention to The King as her father greets his old friend.

When Cersei Lannister finally emerged from one of the carriage, Arya holds her breath, her knuckles white from clutching her fist so hard. It was a surprise that she was still standing at her place and not throwing actual daggers at the dreadful woman and her son.

She studies The Queen as she smiles and holds out her hand to her father.

*Gods, how fake can she be? Anyone with at least one eye can see how she loathes everyone other than herself.*

Her trains of hatred are in a sudden halt when the said person turns her attention at her. Arya starts for a moment when she has been caught staring, but she composes herself within seconds and holds her gaze - albeit more passionately. Steel and cold grey eyes boring into emerald green ones.

Cersei raises an eyebrow, judging the younger girl and Arya scowls in return. The older woman frowns, not expecting such malice behavior from her subject.

Arya on the other hand has been plotting the woman's second death inside her head while she's at it. But, a nudge against her ribs stops her train of thoughts. She looks to her right, glaring at Bran, the perpetrator.

“Ouch, that hurts!” she hissed, rubbing her side. Bran gives her an alarming look, not believing her sister’s illogical behavior.

“What?” She asked, frowning now. Bran tilts his head, pointing ahead of her.

Arya finally looks at the intended direction only to find that Robert Baratheon, is staring down at her silently, along with everyone else presents. The silence creeps in and every seconds pass in awkward as they stared at the little girl.

Arya curses under her breath silently, forgetting the King of Westeros. “I’m sorry… Did you say something?” she finally asked, breaking the silence while trying to look as innocent as possible.
Robert chuckles.

“I did. Three times in fact.” The King trailed. “I asked what your name is, girl.” He continues, a slight frown across his face.

“My name’s Arya… Your Grace.” She added the last part quickly when Robert stared at her with confusion and something else that Arya cannot decide.

He nods, studying the little girl one last time before moving on to Bran.

******

The feast later that night is an actual pain in the ass for Arya. She literally has to sit still through the whole night with drunk men on her left and right. The King is no exception.

She can’t believe how that man came upon the throne in the first place. She bet he can’t even lift his famous Warhammer now without knocking himself out. The thought of that drunkard ruling over the seven kingdoms is appalling. And with her father soon to be serving as the King’s Hand, it only makes the dread comes in wave again.

She will not let that happen, one way or another, determined.

As Arya raises her goblet and swallows the ale, her eyes wander the hall until she finds her sister. Sansa is drooling with much obvious at the little shit, Joffrey. And her mother is doing her best to entertain the damn Queen.

The laughing and chattering noises are becoming too much for her to bear. With a grunt, Arya finally stands up and walks out the dining hall.

With every steps she takes, the chaos subsides and she starts to regain her sanity again. She doesn’t realize where her feet have taken her. But, the sight of a familiar kennel greets her and she feels a smile building as she walks closer. The direwolf stops short when the rope that binds her hinder her movements and she waits for her mistress to close in instead.

“Hey, girl. What have you been up to?” Arya asked, crouching and reaching her hands onto Nymeria’s side.

The beast nuzzles closer and rests her head on Arya’s lap as she continues to caress her.

A soft laugh naturally comes out from the girl as the direwolf moves to lick her face clean. The smell of raw meat accompanying the after effect.

“I reckon you had your dinner already then.” Arya trailed. Nymeria let out a bark at that. “Good, at least one of us still hasn’t lose her appetite.” she continued with a grin.

Another bark can be heard soon after and Arya shifts her attention towards the direction of where the sound was coming. Greywind is standing at the entry door of the kennel, acknowledging the young girl. Then, Summer and Ghost emerged doing the same. She finds Lady relaxing just inside the corner, tending to her furs, ignoring everyone while Shaggydog is nowhere to be seen. Greywind barks again at her and Arya cannot help but to smile.

“It’s just me… Robb and Bran are still in the feast.” she said as a matter of fact. “I don’t know where Jon is.” she finished, staring at Ghost.
The direwolves simultaneously turns around to their home as they heard the disappointing answer, ignoring her completely. Arya chuckles softly. “Well, nice to meet you lot too.”

She shifts her attention back at Nymeria, caressing her at her favorite spot just behind her ears.

A sudden sound of footsteps from behind, moving towards her makes a chill run down her spine and her senses were on high alert almost instantly. She squared her shoulder, hands still caressing Nymeria as she waits for whoever it is to come closer.

The steps, she realized is uneven, almost like the person is about to fall. Probably one of the men from the feast that has too much to drink, she concludes. And choose to ignore the presence altogether as it should bear no threat at all.

“Cute dog. Is it yours?”

Arya stiffens as the familiar voice echoes through her ears. The memories of being the man’s hostage comes to light. She slowly stands up and turns around then, facing him. “She’s a direwolf.” She said back, looking up at the man.

The Hound seems taller now or maybe because she is shorter this time around. He grunts, seeming to disagree with something as he lifts his cup over his mouth. “Little girl shouldn’t play with beast like that.” He commented, staring down at Nymeria.

She quirks her brow in response. “I couldn’t agree more...” She trails until he catches her eyes. "But, I'm not a little girl and she's not a beast."

Arya moves to release the rope that holds Nymeria. The direwolf instantly is at The Hound’s feet, growling and baring her teeth. Even though she is still a pup, she looks quite intimidating. The Hound startling and spilling his drink is a proof of that.

“Nymeria, be nice.” Arya calls. The direwolf makes her way back to the young Stark, tail wiggling behind her back as she rounds the girl's feet in excitement. Arya bends down to stroke Nymeria's head, whispering “Come on, let’s go for a walk.”

Nymeria instantly relaxes, following her mistress out in the open.

"Have a good night." Arya bids goodbye before leaving The Hound to his solitude. Another grunt is all she gets in return.

*****

The day Arya fear is finally here. The King is out with his father and brother along with a few more men for a hunt in the Wolfswood and they will not be back in some time. She remembered how her brother’s fate is molded on this very day. She bounds to not let anything happen to Bran.

So here she was, running towards the broken tower. She arrives just in time to catch Bran on the opposite direction of her. Arya hastens her steps then. “Bran!” she called.

Bran comes running towards her. “Want to race up this tower, Arya?” he asked, excitement plastered on his face. Arya smiles.

“Maybe later... mother’s been searching for you.” She replied instead. His smile gone, replaced by a frown instead.

“What for?”
“I don’t know… You should ask her that and not me.”

“Fine.” Bran sighed. He is about to leave when his eyes dart towards his sister again. “Hey, aren’t those mine?” he asked, pointing at Arya’s choice of attire.

“Well else will I borrow these breeches and tunic from.” Arya shrugged in confirmation. Bran rolls his eyes at that before storming off with Summer hot on his trails.

When the silhouette of her brother dissapears completely, she sighs, suddenly feeling very tired. “Do you think this is going to be enough?” she asked looking down. Nymeria tilts her head to the side, staring back at the girl. “Should we follow him?” she asked again earning a bark from her counterpart.

Arya sighed again, letting her eyes wander over the abandoned tower. Maybe she ought to take a look, just to be sure.

“Stay.” She ordered. Nymeria whimpers uncomfortably as Arya walks towards the tower but do as she was told.

As silent as a shadow, she climbs the stairs of the broken tower until there are no more steps to go. A wooden door greets her and she pushes it slowly.

She hears more that she can see of what’s coming from the inside room. There is more than one person inside, she is sure of that and they are making unusual sounds. She pushes the door further, revealing almost the entire room.

What she sees shock her and leaves her frozen. She can’t seem to do anything but stares, wide eyes at the two blond before her where The Queen and her twin brother are riding each other’s off with pleasure.

A sudden nausea threatens to come out at the scene unfolding in front of her but when two pairs of eyes are staring back at Arya, acknowledging her presence, she wasted no time fleeing the scene.

She didn’t look back as she runs as fast as the wind until she reaches the Godswood. She lands herself unceremoniously on the ground as she tried to catch up her breath. Her back against a tree where Nymeria joins at her side soon after.

A short mirthless chuckle left her uninvited as the scene from the tower replayed inside her mind and Bran’s demise in another lifetime did too. “It wasn’t an accident, Nymeria.” She whispered, clenching her jaw tightly.

The Lannisters seems to be responsible in harming every one of her family it seems. "The more reason why I should kill them."
Clash

Chapter Summary

In which Arya starts to change things.

Chapter Notes

It's me again! Weekend is coming, so I thought I would grace you with another update. I hope you're ready for our little assassin.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

Mind games are never Arya’s strong suit. Sure, she had learnt it a great deal at the House of Black and White, courtesy of The Waif, and got beaten a lot for it too - she is a terrible player against The Waif and a slow learner - but that doesn't mean she didn’t enjoy playing them nonetheless. Especially if she is the one that has the upper hand against her enemy.

That is why she is here in the dining hall, enjoying her dinner along with the royal family. Even though she had just witnessed a major incident on that very same day. Her father and brother, Robb are still on their hunting trip with The King leaving only her mother and her other siblings. Though Jon doesn’t follow the hunt troop, he is not here. He seems to keep disappearing a lot these days.

Cersei is with her children along with The Imp, Tyrion who finally decides to make an appearance. He is merrily chatting away with almost everyone at the table. Arya doesn’t realize how talkative he is. The occasional giggling and laughing can be heard filling the hall, lightening everyone’s mood.

But, one person is unaffected by all of this. Cersei Lannister is uncomfortable. Even from the corner of her eye, Arya can sense the woman's tension. She is even drinking more than The Imp.

Arya feels a bit of satisfaction at the queen's distress as she puts her own façade in place. Squirming intentionally on her seat once in a while and poking her food, not really eating. If anyone is paying any attention, they might think that the little girl is uneasy about something, scared even. Lucky for her, one woman is doing just that.

A servant boy does his duties and refills Cersei’s glass of wine when it becomes empty yet again. She continues taking another sip, all this while, stealing glances at the young girl.

Arya puts her fork down with a hidden smile. *Can she be more obvious?*

“Mother.” she speaks up, earning full attention from everyone at the table. Cersei stiffened.

The young girl makes a show of catching the queen's gaze. Emerald eyes wavered only slightly before it turns cold again. Arya is almost impressed. *Perhaps she thought I would rat her out now.*

Grey eyes change to find her mother's now. “May I retire early for the night?” she asked for
Catelyn studies her youngest daughter for a while before breaking into a warm smile. “Yes, of course, dear. Go on.”

Hearing that, Arya slowly stands up, facing the queen now. “Your Grace.” She curtsies properly, catching Cersei’s eyes and openly conveying of how scared and frightened the little girl in front of her is through her grey orbs. Arya is aware that everyone, especially her mother is watching.

The young Stark turns and walks out of the room then, feeling the prickling of everyone’s eyes still on her until she rounds the corner and out of sight.

As she places her foot forward one after the other, her mind swims with million of ideas and plans on how to eradicate Cersei Lannister.

******

It was a surprise that Arya had a good night sleep last night. Considering that she had witnessed a rather scandalous affair of the Queen with a certain Kingsguard. She wonders why nothing hasn’t happened to her yet. It was certain that they saw her there and yet they still have not taken any action.

The calm disturbs her.

She stops short, a familiar back enters her vision from not far. She continues walking towards his side now, but still out of his view. The young man is still unaware of another presence as he swings his steel sword onto a torn human-sized sack that was tied up against a pole.

“Will you leave the poor sack alone?”

His steel sword stops mid-air and he turns around to face the little girl. Arya tilts her head to the side, staring back at her half-brother. “It won’t help with your brooding.”

Jon frowns as he catches his breath. “I’m not brooding.”

“Is it? Then what do you call this then?” she asked, nudging her head towards the scene. Jon turns back around, facing the sack again.

“I’m practicing.”

“I see... That’s why you stop our usual sword training? Because you find that practicing with a sack is a lot better than practicing with me?”

Jon turns to her again at that, startled. “What? That’s not it.” he trails, studying her serious expression. “I was just…” he tried but fall short of words to say.

Arya narrows her eyes at him, crossing her arms, trying to imitate angry. But seeing him speechless and restless is amusing. She can’t help it when her face finally breaks into a grin. Seeing that, Jon instantly relax, sighing before chuckling himself.

Satisfied by his smile, Arya continues. “Why aren’t you at dinner yesterday?”

“The Queen was there.”

“So I’ve heard. You still haven’t answered my question yet.”
He sighs again. “It’s not appropriate for me to dine on the same table with the royal family… you know that.”

Arya frowns. “No, I don’t. Who asked you to? Mother?”

He shakes his head lightly before continue. “No. But, I know she wanted to, so I save her all the trouble.”

Arya takes a few steps closer to him. “Well, obviously you know nothing, Jon.” She snatches away the sword from his grasp. The sword is heavy but still manageable for her. She takes a stance in front of the torn sack and takes the first swing. “This is your home, you should be able to eat wherever you like.” She finished, the slashing sound of steel against rag accompanying them.

Jon walks ahead, standing in front of the young girl now. “It’s not that big of a deal anyway.” He shrugged. Arya stops swinging and looks up at him instead.

“Yes, it is.” She held his gaze. “They are our guest and should follow our way, not we them. Especially for that wretched queen and her cunt son, Joffrey.”

“Arya!” Jon shouts, aghast by what came out from his little sister’s mouth. Arya ignores him completely.

“What’s so special about being royal anyway? Respect should be earned, not bought. Just because they are born of highborn family, doesn’t mean they can step everyone else below them.” she argues, anger radiates off her body. “And… and they’ve been walking in here like they own the fucking place. This is our home!” she shouts at the last part.

Arya didn’t even realize that Jon is kneeling in front of her, his hands on her shoulders. His dark grey eyes meet hers, lacing with concern. They stare at each other in silence for a while, accompanying only by her heavy breathing. Seconds pass and then minutes, before she takes a deep breath and calms herself.

“Little sister…” Jon trailed, looking unsure. “I’ve never heard you curse that much before.” He finished. Arya chuckles, rolling her eyes.

“Yeah, well, I save them for the deserving people.” She said softly. Jon breaks into a slight smile.

“What’s wrong?” His face turns serious again. Arya clenches her jaw tight, debating from within.

“Nothing.” She settled, looking away. But, Jon makes her looks at him again.

“Arya, tell me what’s wrong?”

Seeing that Jon will not let it go, she straightened, eyes determined. “What if I tell you that I saw something that I’m not supposed to?” she started. Jon frowns.

“Saw what?”

“Someone who did something that can be considered as treason.”

Jon’s frown deepens. “Then, you should say something about it.”

“But, what if it’s not enough?”

“Why wouldn’t it be enough?”
Arya stays silent, leaving his question hang. She sighs heavily soon after. “Just…forget about it.”

Before Jon can say anything further, she slips off his grip and runs off, leaving him behind with a lot of questions unanswered.

******

Sleep hasn’t come by easy later that night for the young Stark. Not that it ever did anyway since she learnt about her time travelling. The truth is Arya never planned to tell anyone about what she saw inside the tower. But, earlier today, in front of Jon, she nearly told him everything.

She sighs, shifting to her right side on her bed. Though, thinking back now, it might work out in her favor, even though she cannot be sure yet. The Lannister twins still hasn’t make any move. So she can only wait patiently.

When the moon is high up on the sky, she finally able to rest her eyes, although it only lasted for a short while. She hears a creak and on instinct, her hand slides under the pillow where a small knife - which she borrowed from the kitchen - is hidden.

*It looks like the Lannister’s finally here to send their regards.*

Footsteps can be heard now and Arya can’t help but to question this person’s ability. Isn’t assassin supposed to be as quite as the shadows? Or perhaps her ears are always this sharp.

She hears again the rustles of cloth and take that as a sign for her to act. As she rolls off her bed to the other side, the sound of steel slashing enters her ears.

Arya stands up then, and found a man is standing across her, the bed separating them. With the help from the moonlight, she can make up his features. His face is one of ordinary and he is holding a knife too, although his, is a lot longer and bigger. He pulls off the knife from her bed, leaving a huge opening around the center, feathers coming out from the mattress.

“I was waiting for you.” She started. The man shifts his stands.

“You what?”

“Cersei and Jaime send you to kill me, is it not?”

“H- How did you -”

“Because I saw them fucking inside the broken tower.”

The man gapes at her, probably shock of her statement. Arya holds her gaze, quirking her eyebrow as she plays with the small knife around her fingers.

“Why are you telling me this?”

She shrugs slightly. “I reckon you want to know what it is you're killing for…” she trails, gripping the small knife properly now. “And what it is you're dying for.” she finished with a smirk. The man stiffened.

But, not long after, he changed his stance and walks around the bed to her. Arya does the same, leading him to the open space of the room. When the man finally launches himself at her, she dodges his attack with a hair's breadth, a slight tugging at the corner of her mouth as excitement and adrenaline rush in. It’s been awhile since she feels like this.
The man grunts noisily with every strike he takes making it easier for Arya to anticipate his next moves. So, when he strikes next, she pushes it away and gifted him with a cut on his striking arm instead. He stumbles backward, hissing in pain.

Seeing the open mark, Arya reverses the grip on the knife and dash forward. Her blade finding another open flesh successfully. He hisses louder as his flesh is being cut open again. Rage fills his eyes as he extends his knife arm all the way towards her, leaving it vulnerable for a counter attack.

She ducks it away and send waves of disarming strikes, poking through him as much as she can. He stumbles backward, nearly tripping himself and she wastes no time then, throwing herself at him with the knife safely piercing through his heart. His body ends up crashing down with her still on top. The knife stuck on his chest.

Arya stays unmoving, her face close to his until she finds his eyes are no longer seeing. She pulls off the blade and gets up, throwing the bloody knife on the floor.

"Valar Morghulis." she said her prayer softly.

Now that the assassin is dead, she has to do something else to make her plan work entirely. No one would ever believe that a little girl was able to defeat a trained assassin without a scratch, let alone by herself. So, to make it believable, she has to stage her injury.

She thinks.

Arya shakes her head out of her stupor. It's no use in having doubts now. She had make this decision long before the assassin had come and because this is the best solution that she can comes up with.

The assassin’s knife is glowing from the moonlight, calling for her. So, she takes it out from the cold fingers and studies it. The dark provides little to her sight but the handle is striking enough, decorated with tiny golds and gems that screams typical Lannisters.

Not wanting to waste anymore time, Arya reverse the knife, the blade is facing her now. She takes a deep breath, both her hands gripping the handle.

It feels like the time has still as she looks down to the pointy end of the knife hovering near her abdomen. She releases shaky breaths while trying to calm her nerves at the same time. It will not do well to have shaking hands before trying to make a self inflicted wound.

With one last intake of breath, she thrusts the knife - just enough - into her stomach, hoping and praying that she has calculated the angle of the blade to not damage any of her vital organs.

Almost instantly, her knees gave up and she falls to the floor. The pain is no stranger, but it doesn’t make it any easier.

No. A million times not easier.

She can feel her blood oozing out of the edge of the steel as she realizes with an annoyance that she hasn't taken the damn knife out yet. Her breath comes in short spurt as she kneels on the floor with a blade still inside her body.

Arya tightens her grip on the handle one last time and with another deep breath, she pulls it out. Blood is coming heavily now that there is no constraint. The steel clatters against the stone floor as she tosses the knife towards the dead body.

Her time is running short. If she stays like this without any treatment, she can end up dead. Pulling
herself up with all the energy that she has left, she stumbles out of her room and along the corridor, groaning with pain.

Sansa’s chamber is the nearest from her own, so she decides to make her way there. The wall is really helpful as she practically pushes her body forward against the stone walls.

As seconds go by, her vision becomes unclear. She keeps seeing things doubled. She also realizes that blood is dripping heavily from her open wound, leaving a trail on the ground. Maybe this isn’t such a good idea after all.

She chuckled humorlessly. What was I thinking? Stabbing myself.

Arya finally stops when a familiar door is in front of her. She raises her arm and pounds the door with everything she has, though the sound is barely audible for her. Only silence seems to greet her back.

“Sansa-” she calls, but her voice is muffled with something else. It sounded like she's underwater. Her head slumps at the wooden door with a thud, tired. Before she can raises her arm again, her vision blurred completely and the feel of hard stone floor is on her back. She hears a creak before everything disappears.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, many of you have stated that it's stupid for Arya to stab herself and she should be dead, etc.. But, I wanted to portray her action rather impulsive and rash at the beginning. So, I think I'll stick with this one. Thanks for the input tho!
Deception

Chapter Summary

In which Arya lays her plan out.

Chapter Notes

Phew~ Finally got this up. Well, you know what to do.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

Arya has never feel this peace and comfortable in a bed since she learnt about her time traveling. With all the troubles that she has experienced, she finally able to sleep peacefully now.

Although it really doesn’t last that long. There are murmurs floating around her in the darkness and she cannot help but to feel slightly annoyed and wish they would stop, whatever they are.

Again, her wish is not fulfilled. Instead, the murmurs continue and sounded clearer. She can even makes up the words now.

“What if she never wakes up?”

“She will.”

“How do you know? How can you be sure?”

A long silence.

“If she dies, will they bury her in the crypt too?”

“Rickon! Don’t say that! If you are going to sputter nonsense again, you might as well get out now.”

“He didn’t mean it like that, Sansa.”

Arya decides she cannot bear the commotion any longer. Ever so slowly she wills her mind to attach itself to her body, gaining control of her other limbs. She can feel her eyes flutter a few times before they open fully and found herself staring at Bran who sat at the edge of the bed. His face lightens up almost instantly as he notices the movements.

“Arya!” he shouts, smiling. She can only stares back at her younger brother.

“Bran, go get father.” Sansa’s voice echoes next. Bran wastes no time and jumps over the bed and runs out of the room. Rickon trailing close behind him.

Sansa stands from the chair she was seated beside the bed only to plop down again at the edge of it, closer to her sister. “Are you feeling alright? Does it hurt or anything?” she asks, a slight furrow on
her brows. Her eyes red and swollen. Arya swallows a lump inside her throat trying to answer, but her dry throat protest and she ends up coughing.

“Here.” Sansa gently places a glass of water to Arya's lips, urging the girl to drink.

Arya sips them down and naturally let out a sigh of relief as it cools down her throat soon after.

“Thank you.” She said softly. “What happen?”

Sansa’s frown deepens. “You don’t remember?” she asked, waiting for the younger girl to answer. When Arya doesn’t, Sansa continues. “Someone tried to kill you! He stabbed you and I found you passed out outside my room.” She finished looking flushed.

Oh right. How can I not have remembered, I fucking stabbed myself.

Now that Arya thought about it, the idea was too risky and stupid. What if Sansa didn’t come to her aid? What if there were other Lannister's assassin waiting outside? There were endless possibilities and she just risked her life because of her own stupidity. If she had died, her family would be too and that would put all of them in jeopardy.

“Right... Yes, now I remembered.” Arya answered calmly. She finds blue eyes. “I owe you my life Sansa. If you didn’t find me in time, I don’t think I would have made it. So, thank you.”

Sansa stares back, her features softens every seconds pass. She tries to smile but it comes out as a grimace instead. “You’re welcome... Is it hurting? Your stomach I mean.”

Arya looks down to where she had stabbed herself. She lifts her tunic up, revealing a bandaged underneath. “Well, I think I can manage. It's certainly not as bad when I ate old nan's stale apple pudding.” She covers back herself while grinning to her older sister. A small smile tugging at the corner of Sansa’s mouth in return.

A creak enters their ears, interrupting the sisters' moment. Ned, Catelyn, Robb and Jon comes rushing inside in a hurry.

“Gods, Arya. You’re awake.” Catelyn strides off directly towards the bed, replacing where Sansa just sat moments ago. She throws her arms around her daughter and embraces the girl in a tight hug. Arya hesitantly wraps her arm around her mother. Letting her eyes wander to the people inside the room.

Jon is smiling, but it doesn’t quite reach his eyes. Her father is no difference, although he looks actually happy for a change. Robb is clenching his jaw and trying to smile at the same time that it comes out as a grimace instead. At times like this, that Arya finds her brother is similar to Sansa in a way. Even their grimace looks about the same. Bran and Rickon are standing the farthest across the room, eyeing everyone silently and by their side is, Nymeria?

What is she doing here?

Bran grins as he noticed Arya’s startles face. She is brought out of her trance when Catelyn breaks away from the hug. She cup the younger girl’s face with both her hands. “How are you feeling?”

Worry plastered on her mother's face and all Arya feels is guilt. “I’m sorry, for making everyone worried.”

For doing what I had to do and lied to you.

“None of this is your fault, my child.” Catelyn speaks up firmly. Her hands capturing the smaller
ones now. Arya can only forces a smile at that. “I’m going to prepare some food for you. You must be hungry. You were unconscious for two days.”

Grey eyes grew wide at the statement. “I was?” She asked dumbly, earning a nod as an answer.

Not realizing that her body would be this weak only adds on to the list of her stupidity. She didn’t think about the consequences of what this kind of wound would do to her younger and weaker body and she ends up overestimating herself.

“I think Sansa here needs food in her too.” Robb speaks up for the first time.

“Yes. Come, we’ll get something for you too.” Catelyn answered, standing up and caught Sansa’s shoulder.

“But, Arya-” Sansa stops short, reluctant to leave. She locks eyes with the said person. Arya blinks, not knowing how to react with the sudden and obvious care, especially from her sister.

“Your father will look after her, don’t worry. Come child.” Catelyn answered then. Sansa eyes however still lingers at the person on the bed.

Arya holds her gaze then. “Sansa, I’m alright... Truly.” She offered, smiling for good measures.

That seems to do the trick as Sansa finally lets her mother drag her outside the room. Bran and Rickon follow close behind the two woman as her mother ushered them out too. As soon as they were out, Arya trails over the three men that were left. She settles on her father last.

“Is Sansa alright? She seems a bit…strange.”

Ned walks closer and sit at the edge of the bed with a small smile. He takes her hand into his and caress her cheek with another. “Your sister was left shocked and worried when she found you bleeding outside her room. She never left your side, not until today.”

Surprise and guilt wash over the young Stark again. But her father doesn’t let her thoughts wander far as he continues again.

“I’m glad you’re safe,” he said, placing a soft kiss on her temple and lingers. Arya sighs in content as warmth spread her entire body.

He lets go reluctantly to look into her eyes then, searching. “What happened, Arya?”

Her body stiffens as she ready herself for a believable act. She had imagined the possible reactions from her family because of her act and questions they would ask and was prepared for them. Clearing her mind, she put on a mask.

“I killed him.” She started, looking pass her father, remembering the night the assassin tried to best her. The feeling of his blood on her hand felt good at that time but she cannot show that. She is suppose to be an innocent young girl who had just experience a traumatic event, and to kill her very first man. She tries her best to play that role and continues softly. “I- I didn’t mean to. He tried to hurt me and I fought him…but, I killed him.” She finished looking down anxiously, fidgeting.

Ned tightens his hold before pulling her into a full embrace. “Arya, it’s not your fault... You defend yourself against him. Any man would do the same.” He said soothingly.

She closed her eyes as her head lay against her father’s chest. It feels so warm and comfortable and his beating heart is calming. But, her father breaks away and places another kiss on her forehead. His
dark grey eyes much like hers are searching before he continues. “You’re a brave and strong girl… and I’m proud of you.” He finished with a firmness in his voice as if to dare anyone to tell him otherwise. She forces another smile at that.

“Who is he?” she asked, looking unsure.

“He’s an assassin.” Robb answered while moving to sit across the bed, making himself comfortable. Jon is still standing silently looking wary.


Ned clenches his jaw. “Do you remember anything…anything at all that may have led to this? Can you think of anyone that might want to hurt you intentionally?”

“What do you mean, father?”

“Jon said that you were troubled by something that you saw the other day. Something that’s worth treason if being mentioned... What did you see, my child?”

Arya shifts her attention at Jon in an instant. She remembers the day she almost spills the bean at him. I guess it works on my favor now.

“I don’t- it’s nothing.” She stutters, looking down nervously to her hands again.

“Arya… it’s alright, you’re safe now.” Ned speaks up trying to comfort the young girl.

“No. I can't. It's nothing really.”

“Arya, tell us!” Jon interrupts, “Please.” He pleads softly.

Debating for the last time if this is the right thing to do - If this secret that she’s about to tell will save her family. But, she knows she won't find out until she has tried.

She straightens, catching her father's gaze again. “I went to the broken tower the other day, and I saw…The Queen with Jaime Lannister.” she trails awkwardly at the confused face in front of her. "They were doing things that people do when they visit the brothels."

The silence that comes after is deafening to her ears. The three men’s expression are mixed. Anger, disgust and horrified. She wonders if this is really the right to do.

It was night again and as always, the young girl cannot rest and find sleep. One cannot simply find solace with the secrets of the future is within her grasp.

She recalls the event from the day for the hundreds times. It was rather anti-climactic after she had told the royal’s dirty secret. Her father simply listened as she recounts the day that she found out about the Lannister twins. And then, he was gone not before assuring her that everything will be fine.

Arya, on her part cannot feel that way at all. The day goes by with nothing happened. She doesn’t know if that is a good thing or otherwise.

“Argh!” she groans loudly inside her room. A whine can be heard soon after and Nymeria props
herself up from the ground onto the bed, joining her mistress.

“What if it doesn't work out, Nymeria?” she locked eyes with the beast that has grown to a normal sized hound now. “We cannot trust the Lannisters… The bitch queen might already send someone to kill father, or mother.” She continues.

Nymeria simply stares at her, looking with judgmental eyes. It was as if she's saying ‘So, get up and do something instead of whine about it’

“You’re right. I should.” She pushed herself up from the bed and hisses in pain at the sudden movements.

The wound from her stomach is protesting and Arya cannot help but to instinctively wrap her arms around her middle. Nymeria nudges closer and licks the girl's face, pushing her back into bed.

Arya pushed back softly. “I have to go and check up on them.” she groans and the pain soon becomes bearable.

Ever so slowly, she swings her foot over the bed and places them onto the ground. She pulls a warm robe around herself soon after and walks towards the door. She stops short when she realizes Nymeria trailing close behind her.

“I cannot bring you with me. People will see... Stay.” She said, stroking her companion, feeling sorry. Nymeria whines in protest as the door closed leaving her alone in the unoccupied room.


Arya is about to turn the corner when distinct voices echo along the stone wall. She stops abruptly, peeking through the corner of the wall, and finds two men walking towards her direction. Their faces become clearer as they walk closer.

She curses under her breath when the two men are her father and Robert Baratheon. On instinct, she turns the other way around, her robe bellowing behind her as she blend herself among the shadows.

When they walk pass her and out of the way, she wastes no time and follows them. They walk until they reach outside where the cold greets them and Arya tightens her robe around her body. By now, she can guess where they are going and her guess is proved right when her father opens the steel door that leads to the underground crypt.

Robert goes in soon after and Arya silently thanks him for letting the door open. She waits in the corner not far, eyeing for possible intruders besides herself. When she is sure that no one else is there, she strides towards the gate and into the darkness. Her steps short and silent. Her only guide is the voices of the men that carries around the confined space.

“What are you saying, Ned?”

Arya stops as the voice enters her ears loud and clear. It sounded like The King. Another voice which she guesses is from her father’s, can be heard soon after. But she has to strain herself to hear his soft spoken voice. She takes another step forward then, hoping to hear them both.

“She’s just a child, for goodness sake. Are you going to believe her?”

“She’s my child, and I believe her.”

“Ned-”
“She has no reason to lie, Your Grace. The choice is yours, and I accept whatever decisions you make, but… I will make no promises to be your Hand. I will stay here in Winterfell where my family needs me. I hope you understand, Your Grace.”

A long silence as Arya takes another step and she stops again when she can see their faces now.

“She’s The Queen.” Robert speaks up, clenching his jaw.

Ned holds his gaze, unrelenting. “And you’re The King.”

“Ned, if this is true…”

“It’s the truth, Your Grace. I swear by the Old Gods.” Ned reaches inside his robe and pulls out a long knife.

The lights from the candles make the knife glow. Arya takes another step to view it better and soon regrets it as she doesn’t realize she had step onto something on the ground. The foreign noise alarming the two men.

“Who goes there?” Ned’s voice carries along the crypt as he unsheathed his sword, ready for an attacker. Arya wastes no time turning around and runs the other way.

She is still panting hard when she’s finally out of the crypt and safe within the shadows and the walls again. The conversation between her father and the king replays inside her mind, accompanying her as she retreats back to her room.

She stops short however when another presence interrupts her. Two guards that she recognized as her father’s men are chatting along the hallway, blocking her only entrance to her room. She stays inside the shadow silently, hoping the guards to walk away but they stay put, unmoving.

She can of course walk towards them and act as if nothing happen. But, they will no doubt questioned and reporting back to her father of her uncanny strolling activity in the middle of the night, no less.

With a sigh, she turns around searching for another entrance. Luckily for her, her room is not that high from the ground. She can see her open window and dim lights flickering inside from where she stands. Seeing no other way that she can find to her room, she made a decision. With the cold crept into her bones every second, it only strengthens her next action.

The climb is harder than usual. Probably because the fact that she is still in her weaken state and her wound is still fresh. Every climbs and stretches she makes, she lets out a grunt.

The pain is aching now and it feels like forever, but finally she reaches her room. She climbs over the open window with difficulty and landed unceremoniously on the floor.

Nymeria let out a bark to greet her. Arya chuckles lightly as she gathers her strength to stand up again, breathing hard as she did so. “Keep it down, girl... Or you will wake everyone.” She commented looking around the room to find the direwolf.

Her grin fades when she finds dark grey orbs instead. Jon crosses his arms against his chest. “Explain yourself, little sister.”

Shit.
Mishaps

Chapter Summary

In which things do not go as planned and the plot thickens...slowly.

Chapter Notes

Hey, I hope everyone's doing fine. As always, life gets distracted and I apologize for the lack of updates. Your comments were all so nice and wonderful to read. So I thanked you for that. Keep it coming! It what motivates me to write in the first place. Alright then, off you go.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

Arya clears her throat softly, shoulders straight while meeting with questioning pair of eyes across the room. She steels her face into indifference. “Jon, what are you doing here at this hour?”

Jon looks about to jump at the young girl right there and then at her question but he holds himself back, eyes twitching. “Checking up on my little sister, of course.” He trailed. “Where did you wander off at this hour?” his last words mocking her last question.

Arya forces a smile, trying to look innocent. “I was just taking a walk around the castle.”

He chuckles, disbelieving. “Taking a walk, you said? Right, care to explain why you climbed into your chamber then? Last time I checked, the door still works, because I came here through it.”

Arya opens her mouth to say something but Jon gives her a warning look, making her think twice.

He steps forward. “Don’t tell me, it’s because you want to stretch your limbs and decides the best way to do that is by climbing your way inside.”

Arya frowns then. “No. The guards were blocking my entry and I didn’t want anyone to know I went out. So, I found another way in.” She finished, shrugging. Nymeria comes towards her earning a stroke from her mistress.

Jon sighs. His hand rubbing the bridge of his nose. “Arya, do you hear yourself right now?”

She strides closer to the middle of the room then. “Stop making a fuss out of it, Jon. I just went out to take a walk. I’m not a child, you know.” She detaches her fur robe and throwing it onto the bed.

“I’m making a fuss? Well, my apologies then. But, the last time I check, there's an assassin trying to kill you!” he chided before continuing. “You cannot just leave your room wandering alone when-” he stops suddenly as his eyes grew wide in panic. “You’re bleeding.”

“What?” Arya looks down to her body where Jon is looking, to find her shirt stained with red. She is about to check on it when another larger hand beats her to it.
“Seven hells, Arya… Does it hurt?” Jon asked. All the anger dissipates. Only concern flashes on his face now.

She shrugs not really affected by the pain. “A bit.”

He pushes the younger girl softly towards the bed then, making her sit while he removes the bandage that soaked with blood now. “Your stitches are loose. I’ll get the Maester.” He is about to walk away but a hand resting on his arm stops his action.

“Don’t bother Maester Luwin now. He’s probably sleeping.”

“And he will continue his sleep after he treats you.” He continues firmly.

Arya manages to hold her eye roll at his stubbornness. “Leave the old man alone, will you? I’m perfectly fine. Besides, it’s not even that bad. I hardly feel anything.”

When Jon just stares back with judgmental eyes, still crouching in front of her, she reaches for a cloth on the side table and wet it with cold water before wiping away the smudges of blood on her stomach.

“See? It’s not that bad, is it?” she asked with a raised brow. Her wound clean now with only a few drop of blood trailing from the small opening of the loosen stitches.

“You still need those stitches.” His voice stern leaving no argument.

Arya sighs, defeated. “Fine, I have a needle and a thread somewhere around here.” She’s about to stand up, but Jon pushes her shoulders back down.

“Don’t move, you’re going to tear it further. I’ll get it.”

Not wanting to argue anymore, she remains seated while he rummages through her room to find them. A few moments later, he finally brings what looks like a sewing kit from her previous lessons with Septa Mordane from under the dresser. She wonders how it landed there in the first place.

“I’ll do it.” His voice brought her back from her thoughts. Before she can argue, he already makes himself busy separating a needle and a black thread from its bundle.

“Do you even know how?” she asked with a raised brow. Jon looks up at her.

“It can’t be that hard. Now, stay still so I don't mess up your stitches more than you have.”

She sighed heavily, not bother to hide it and does as he said. Nymeria stays calmly beside her on the bed. The time passes as she strokes her companion, lost in thoughts. His father and the King’s conversation still fresh inside her mind.

From the way Robert was talking, he sounded like he believed her story. But, he seems reluctant to do anything about it. And the knife that her father held, which was used to kill her definitely screams Lannister. Perhaps that is not enough of a proof to the king. Cersei was and still is his wife, the queen of the realm and his children’s mother. But, they’re not his children now, are they? And maybe if she can prove that, The King will finally acted and punishes The Queen accordingly.

“There, it’s done.” A voice brought her back from her thoughts.

She looks down to her stomach and found a perfectly align stitches in place of the old one. A slight tinge of pain around the edge of the skin but other than that, she feels fine.
“Wow, Jon. You’re a much better embroiderer than I am.” She stated honestly. “Did you practice secretly in your spare time, perhaps?” she taunts, trying hard to keep a smile from breaking out.

Jon looks up, glaring good naturedly at the girl.

“There’s nothing to be ashamed of. You know I will never judge you if you do.” She continues, grinning widely now.

“Oh, shut it, Arya.” He replies, rolling his eyes. A trace of a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. He finished off with a new set of bandages over the neat and dry stitches.

“Thank you.” Arya speaks up breaking the silence. Jon stands up then and moves to sit beside her on the bed, but not before messing up his little sister's hair - a bit rougher than usual - making the girl groans in protest.

“You can show your gratitude by not wandering off all alone in the darkest of night for a start.” He finished sternly. She holds her gaze.

“I can take care of myself. I thought I have proven myself due to the recent event.”

Jon looks at her with disbelief. “You were lucky then. And if it happens again…”

*Oh, Jon. It got nothing to do with luck.*

“I don’t think they’re stupid enough to try for the second time.” she countered. He sighs in defeat.

“Even so, we have to be careful.” He said back looking straight ahead. She does the same.

The sky outside is still dark over the open window. The crackling sound of the pine burning accompanying them as they both loss in thoughts.

“What’s going to happen now, Jon?” she asked softly.

There is a long silence before he answers, “I don’t know.”

******

The next morning comes by quickly. After Jon left, not before warning her for the hundreds times and making her promise not to try last night stunt ever again, she lays on her bed wide awake until the sun greets her.

And when it did, oddly enough she finally gets to close her eyes. But, as always her slumber doesn’t last long when she hears a creak. Naturally, her senses are in alert. Even though her eyes still rested, she can clearly distinguish the footsteps. It was careful and poised. She knows the sound very well. Her eyes slowly open to find her mother looking down at her.

“Good morning. Did I wake you, sweetling?” Catelyn asked, smiling. Arya pushes herself up while studying her lady mother. There are bags under her eyes and she wonders if her mother has trouble sleeping too.

“Good morning, mother. No, I was already awake.”

The older woman lands herself on the side of the bed. She looks down and gestured to her daughter’s wound. Arya lifts her tunic up and let her mother replaces the bandage.

“It’s healing nicely. If you’re in any pain…”
“It’s fine mother. Truly.”

Catelyn forces a smile, reaching with her right hand to cupped the younger girl’s cheek. “Do you think you can walk then?”

“Of course.” Arya grinned and nodded at the same time. But her grin fades when the older woman's face darkens. Her muscle tense and her lips in a straight line. “Is something bothering you?”

Catelyn shakes her head gently, forcing yet another smile to assure the young girl. “We can break our fast in the great hall together then. But first, you need to change to a proper attire.” She explains, standing up and walks off towards the wardrobe full of dresses that Arya rarely touch.

“Can’t I just wear this?” Arya asked with a pout, gesturing to her current wear. Catelyn looks aghast.

“Certainly not. Arya, how many times have I told you. A lady needs to present herself proper. And your attire is the first step to that direction.” She counters. Arya feels a smile building, don’t know whether to be horrid of what her mother will choose for her to wear or pleased that she finally sounds like her mother. She chooses the latter.

“I think everyone in Winterfell knows I’m no lady. And I doubt any dress in the kingdom will hide that fact.” She said back playfully. Catelyn narrows her eyes at her from across the room.

“I think this will be perfect, don’t you think so?” she asked ignoring the last statement her daughter made.

Arya studies the grey dress with light blue lining from up to down. It looks the same as the other ones she used to wear. “I guess.”

With a sigh, she climbs down the bed gingerly and stride towards her mother.

“The King will be joining us.” Catelyn speaks up suddenly. Both woman eyed each other. One is concern and the other one is caught off guard, but Arya quickly schools her features again.

“Oh,” she trails not sure what to say. The older woman proceeds to change her daughter’s clothes silently. The sound of rustling clothes accompanying them.

“Is he going to ask me about what I saw inside the broken tower?” Arya asked after a moment. Catelyn pauses tying the laces over the hem, her gaze focuses on calculated grey orbs.

"Your father already broke that news to The King. But, he wants to hear it from you. Do you think you can do that?” The older woman said back. A small smile graces her features to bring comfort.

Arya returns the favor by doing the same. "Yes, I can do that."

Catelyn gives an approval nod before smiling more genuinely at the young girl. She continues tying the laces over the dress.

"Do you think The King believes me?” Arya asked again, breaking the silence. Catelyn looks down at her youngest daughter, caressing her cheek with a proud smile.

“I wouldn’t know what he may think. But, it matters not because I believe you, Arya. Your family believes you.”

And that is all Arya needs, she realized as she feels the warmth creeping inside her.

******
The walk to the great hall feels like eternity. And when she finally arrives, Robert’s face is the first thing she sees at the head of the table. Her father is next to him with her other siblings. The other side is surprisingly filled with Tyrion and the queen’s children but there’s no Cersei in sight. She scans around the room and found no Jamie Lannister either.

“Your Grace.” Catelyn curtsies before guiding her youngest daughter to their seat.

“Lady Arya. I’m glad you are well.” Tyrion speaks up loudly from across the table earning everyone’s attention. Arya gave him a wry smile but not saying anything.

“How is your recovery? Great, I hope.” Robert’s voice echoes next.

“Yes, your grace.” Arya answers softly.

Ned locks eyes with Robert for a moment as if they’re having a silent argument inside their heads before The King finally breaks it. He started eating and soon everyone follows.

“So, Lady Arya, do you mind sharing how you defeat a full grown man of an assassin by yourself?” Tyrion asks casually not before shoving a mouthful of porridge into his mouth.

Arya stops playing with her food and looks up at him. Everyone else is waiting eagerly and anxiously for her answers.

“I have great teachers to teach me the ways to best your enemies.” She said vaguely. Syrio Forell, The Hound, Jaqen H’ghar and The Waif are certainly a great teacher to her in a way.

Tyrion stares at her a moment longer than she likes before trailing towards Robb and Jon. “Indeed.”

The great hall goes silent then, only the clatters of utensils against plate can be heard. Arya doesn’t like it one bit. It feels like being in a calm before the storm.

Before long, everyone finish their meal and is walking out of the great hall with the table now clean of the plates and leftovers food. Only a few of them left; Robert, her father and mother, Robb and Jon and Tyrion.

Ned walks closer to his youngest daughter and drags her away from everyone’s ears.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner, Arya. But, I need you to tell The King what you saw inside the broken tower. Can you do it, my child?” he asked, grabbing her shoulders in a firm but comforting grip.

“Yes, father. Mother mentioned it on our way here. I just need to tell the truth.” she answered calmly earning a proud look from the older man.

“I hope you have a good reason to call me here. I was attending a letter from my father.” A voice so sweet and obnoxious at the same time echoes loudly around the great hall. Arya turns around to find Cersei standing not far from The King across the room.

“I’m sure Lord Tywin can wait.” Robert counters as everyone else gathers around them.

“What is this about?” Cersei asked looking bored and annoyed at the same time.

“Lord Eddard’s daughter claim she saw something disturbing the other day.” Robert replied, shifting his gaze to Arya across the room. Cersei turns around and does the same.

Arya tries very hard not to scowl at the bitch Queen. Ned gestures her towards the others and she
follows obediently.

“And pray tell why this concerns me?” Cersei asked, mocking now. Robert ignores her.

“Girl, tell us what you saw. And don’t lie to me or it will have severe consequences.” He threatens. Arya shifts her gaze towards her father who is standing beside her.

Ned gives an assuring squeeze on her shoulder. “Go on.”

She stares back ahead at Robert calmly. “I went to the broken tower and I saw Queen Cersei with Ser Jamie, her twin brother inside.” She finished. But, the man seems to wait for more.

“They were…fucking.” Arya blurts out for a lack of better words, her face straight.

Cersei has the nerve to laugh loudly at her statement. “You dare sputter nonsense of your Queen, wolf girl? I can call for your head now!”

Arya can see her mother and siblings panic at the royal words. But Robert’s own words calm them soon after.

“No one is going to call for anyone’s head.” he said with the voice of authority. Cersei chuckles, disbelieving.

“You’re going to let her get away with what she just said? She insulted me, your Queen and lied to your face. This is treason.” She replies evenly. Robert stares at Cersei and Arya repeatedly, debating from within.

Arya steps forward then, closer to them. “I know what I saw.” She said through gritted teeth.

Cersei cross her hands against her chest, looking towards Catelyn. “Is this how you raise your children? Rude, a liar and wild child. If I have one like her, I would cast her far away. That way, she won’t taunt your family name.”

Before her mother can answer, Arya steps in.

“Oh, but you know your children best, don’t you?” she asked calmly. Cersei immediately tilts her head to the side, startled.

“What did you just say?”

“You’re children are Lannister through and through. Arrogant, selfish and sadistic. Well, at least one of them is.” Arya continues earning a few gasps from her family.

“That is enough!” Robert shouts, although his command falters a little.

“Don’t you hear what I just said, Your Grace?” Arya asked desperately.

“I heard enough, girl. Now hold your-”

“No, you’re not!” Arya shouts back. She hated how her voice sounds so small and seems like everything that comes out from her mouth sounds like a whine from a little girl.

“Arya.” Ned calls her desperately but she ignores him too.

“Why can’t you see it? The Queen’s children is nothing like a Baratheon would. They’re Lannister through and through. Golden hair instead of black and emerald eyes instead of blue. They’re not a
Stag. They're a Lannister's Lion."

Silence creeps in as her words sink in, probably too shocking for anyone to acknowledged. She glances over to Cersei who is fidgeting around now.

“Robert, my love… surely you wouldn’t believe what the girl said? It’s a preposterous thing to think of in the first place.” she said softly, walking closer to her husband.

Robert’s face is a sight to see. Frowning with mixed emotions. It looks as if he's in a battle with his own mind. After a moment of staring and glaring at his wife, a look of disbelief crosses his face.

“You lied to me? Joffrey, Myrcella and Tommen are Jamie’s?” he shouts with wide eyes. Anger and hurt on his face.

“No, I would never!” Cersei is close to him now, reaching for his hands but Robert yanks his hand away, making the Kingsguard step in and drags the Queen away from him.

“You'd rather believe a fucking little girl’s word over mine, your own Queen?!” she asked, squirming around the guards that try to take her away. Her voice bellowing inside the great hall.

Robert turns his back, ignoring her. His hand rest on the bridge of his nose. A headache is starting to grow inside his head.

“It seems you have already label me as a traitor. And since I will never have a fair and just trial, I demand a trial by combat!” she continues, standing tall and proud. Somehow she manages to escape through the guards’ grips and stands where she was last.

Robert turns around then. Anger still visible on his face. He doesn't even sentence her betrayal and yet she already make demands on it. It only proves further that the previous claims to be right. He grips his fist tightly, making his knuckles turn white. “And which lad will fight for you?” he seethes, deciding to go along with it. Cersei smirks, as if she's waiting for him to ask that.

As if on cue, sound of footsteps echo through the room. Arya turns around to find a man walking towards them. A big, tall man. A man that she had once spent her time with. One of her great teachers that teaches her how life works - *Never in your favor.*

“Your Grace.” The Hound bows slightly at the king, making his armor squeak in reaction. “It would be my great honor to fight in the Queen’s name.”

Arya is left speechless. She feels betrayed, angered and confused. But, it all crashes when Robb suddenly steps forward. His face with equal determination.

“Then, I will fight in my sister’s name.”
Trial

Chapter Summary

In which our former assassin takes matter into her own hands.

Chapter Notes

Holy shit! The teaser came out and did you guys see the promo videos that HBO released?! Arya looks so badasss in her new costume! It reminds me of Ned's which is so awesome and cool. I'm so excited! If you don't know what the hell I'm talking about(shame!)


Now, sorry about my rant. But before you go ahead and read, just a warning that this story is going to be very AU-ish(is that even a word?) from now. Okay then, on with the story, enjoy~

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

It's just like any other morning as Arya stood over the open window. The sun was already up long ago, bathing everything that lives under it with its light and warmth. Small birds were flying around, enjoying nature at its best. And people in Winterfell are starting to tend to their daily chores.

The familiar routine has always been able to calm the young girl. She closes her eyes as she breathes in the fresh air, trying hard to will herself for a peace of mind. Gods know that she is in dire need of one at this very moment. After the big revelation of The Queen’s children lineage, The King announced the trial will commence in two days outside Winterfell before she was taken away.

Truth be told, Arya was not expecting any trial at all. Wasn’t the revelation clear as night and day? Anyone can tell that Cersei’s children are not a Baratheon. She just wished that Robert would punish the dreadful woman he called his wife already, but no. He lets her have a chance in getting away instead and because of it, one way or another, an innocent life will be sacrificed for nothing.

She sighs heavily but no one in the room heard her. With all the conversations inside her father’s study, she cannot even hear herself thinking. She tries to build a wall inside her mind trying to stay focus but her wall crumbles as their voices find its way back through her ears.

“Winterfell needs you, Robb. It’s too big of a risk to fight Sandor Clegane.” Catelyn’s voice echoes desperately.

“A risk I’m willing to take. As I have said before, they will get the reciprocation they deserved after attempting murder on Arya. I will show them how well The North remembers.” Robb bits back.
Eyes still close with her back facing them, Arya frowns then, trying very hard to think of something or anything at all to solve this problem. Offering herself to fight in her trial will never be a choice. She can imagined their horror and rejection of it already. **Maybe I can persuade The Hound somehow?**

“I understand. But, you’re the heir to Winterfell after your lord father. If anything happens during the fight…” the older woman trails painfully.

“If anything were to happen during the fight, mother, it would be The Hound’s death and the Lannister twins after.” Robb finished.

A set of footsteps echoes next, walking further into the room.

“Ned, perhaps we ought to change the participant.” Catelyn voiced out. “There is still time before the trial.”

“Mother.” Robb calls before the older man gets a chance to say anything but the she beats him to it again.

“Robb, as much as I have faith in you, my son, this is bigger than you think. We have to think of the consequences. You’re the true heir to Winterfell and you’re too valuable to be put in front.” She argues, a slight annoyance comes through her tone. Arya shares the same sentiment.

Silence stretches inside the room as her mother's word lingers.

“Robb.” Ned suddenly calls making the young man startled. “Are you certain you can win against Clegane?”

“Ned?” Catelyn calls back in protest.

Arya slowly turns around to face the four person inside the room. Her gaze lands on her mother and father who are staring at each other silently, though their eyes scream anything but. After seems like forever her father makes the first move to look away, only to catch Robb' gaze again, waiting. **He cannot be seriously letting Robb fight, can he?**

Robb shifts his stand while clenching both his fist tighter, probably to boost his self-confident. He did it with subtlety and Arya doubt that anyone present would notice but she did. “Yes, father. I’ll make sure of it.” He finally replied.

Arya wants to laugh then, though there isn’t really anything amusing to laugh at. But seeing the tension in the room, she thought better of it. She loves Robb dearly, but he doesn’t have a chance against The Hound. No one can beat the scarred and capable man. Well, just one. Brienne of Tarth did it once. It was quite a fight at that time and she wonders where the woman might be at this very moment. Her thoughts get distracted when voices fly around her again.

“Father, I don’t think it is wise.” Jon finally decides to speak up, moving closer to the older man. “You’ve seen us fight…and you know I’m a better fighter than Robb is. Let me do it instead.” He finished.

Robb quirks his brow. “Trying to steal all the glory to yourself, brother?” his tone lace with sarcasm. Jon turns around to face him.

“There’s no glory in this, only justice. And I intend to deliver it to The Queen and her lover.” He replied evenly.
Robb holds his gaze. “Then, I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

Arya cannot help herself when she chuckles humorlessly at their exchanged. “Justice?”

She doesn’t expect anyone to hear her, but the silence creeping in has stretch long enough for Arya to notice that they are all staring at her, finally realizing her presence inside the room. She stares back at each one of them, before stopping at Robb and Jon. “The only justice would be Cersei and Jamie Lannister received their well-deserved punishment.” She speaks her mind. Barely keeping her anger, she continues. “No one has to die for them but themselves. This trial here is a farce. The King is too damn coward to swing the sword himself. Hell, he can’t even deliver the sentence when the obvious evidence is presented in front of his fat ass.” She finished in one breath, shifting her eyes to her father last.

Everyone stare at her with mixed expression. Her mother and Jon looks at her, startled. Robb merely arches his eyebrow, studying her and her father looks angry, which surprises her.

“Arya.” Ned starts. His mouth set in a thin line. “You will not talk about The King in that manner again. You will not disrespect him. Do you hear?” he asked sternly.

Arya clenches her jaw tight, eyes burning with fury. She cannot believe her father’s reaction. “I’m sure my manner is not at the front line of the situation we’re currently in right now, father. Robb is signing up for his death, and you’re going to let him?” she asked back. Her father looks taken aback by her response but he pulls himself back together.

“Arya Stark.” He calls again. His voice slightly raised. The tension inside the room only grows. “You will mind your manner and never disrespect The King again.” He told for the second time, dismissing her question. “Do you hear?” he stares down at her, unrelenting and clearly waiting for the young girl to answer.

Instead Arya stares back silently. The fire inside her burns brighter and her chest rises and falls in ragged manner. Her mouth twitching, trying to hold herself from uttering the words that she is sure she will regret it later.

Knowing that she can never talks her way through him, Arya turns around and walks out not minding the door when it bumps onto the stone wall, creating a loud thump behind her. She proceeds along the hallway in long strides. Her eyes burning with unshed tears of frustration with everything that happened with her father, the Lannisters, The Hound and Robb.

This is not supposed to happen!

And while her mind is busy reeling and throbbing of everything, she finds herself standing right in front of the weirwood tree inside the Godswood. She doesn’t notice how she got here, but it seems her feet has taken a mind of its own.

The Gods face is staring back at her silently, mocking her, or so she thinks.

“Why?” her voice comes out so soft that she even barely hears it herself. But, the Gods clearly heard her when suddenly wind blows from nowhere, slapping her face.

The sound created from the gushes of wind against the leaves irk her. It's as if they are taunting and laughing at her.

“Why?!” her voice is loud now, trying to win against the wind. “Why would you bring me back here if you’re going to take them away again, one by one?!”
The wind stops abruptly and it's gone in a heartbeat. Her question is left unanswered and she cannot help feeling defeated.

*****

Arya had been sitting by the Heart Tree for what felt like hours and it was – it had been over three hours. The sun had faded considerably, and was fast approaching night. She had so much going on in her head that she just shut down the world around her.

When Jon comes running, panting hard with a relief look over his face, Arya merely stares back ahead, continue with her train of thoughts. She doesn’t even realize that he is leading her back to her chamber. The next thing she knows, the soft mattress is against her back and the warmth of the fur engulfs her body. She sighs softly, feeling content and suddenly feels very tired. Her eyes close and within seconds, she has wandered off into a peaceful slumber.

But, as fast as it came, her sleep comes to its end when her eyes flutter open by themselves. A tray of food is the first thing she sees, sitting by the bedside table, left untouched. She turns around then, her back against the mattress and her face up.

The candles are out. The only light is coming from the fireplace where the pine burns, providing a dim light around her room. The crackling sound is music to her ears and she lets herself lost in it.

But, as her ears catch a set of footsteps echoing outside her room, she brings herself back in alert, ready. The door creaks then and she flutters her eyes close again, feigning sleep, knowing that she will have the upper hand if the intruder doesn’t expect her to be fully awake.

The footsteps are calm and hesitant which she has trouble in recognizing. When it is approaching close to her bedside, it stops suddenly. It has stretch long enough and she wonders if she is dreaming of it all. But, it soon proves otherwise when her bed sink slightly acknowledging a new set of weight. In any other day, she would have open her eyes and launch an attack at whoever it is. But, somehow she doesn’t feel the need to do that. Somehow, it felt safe.

Her instinct is proved right when the said person sitting by her bedside lets out a sigh. She instantly recognizes him. It's her father. When he reaches out to her hand later, it only strengthens her conclusion.

He doesn’t say anything, just caressing her small hands against his larger ones. The warmth is comforting and it nearly brought her back to slumber.

“Sleep well, my child.” His voice soft, entering her ears and then she feels his kiss on her forehead before he walks out, closing the door with a soft thud.

Arya opens her eyes then, staring at the closed door as if no one had been coming in here. She pushes herself up, swinging her legs over the bed before reaching for the tray of food and caught a hard bread.

As she bites into it, her mind has settle on a decision. She will not let either Robb or Sandor die in the trial.

*****

“Are you sure that’s wise?”

A voice suddenly appears out of nowhere making Sandor choked his drink. He coughs violently as tears build up inside his eyes. His voice echoes around the courtyard where he has taken refuge. The
light shining through the gaps of the walls, slowly filling the entire place with its warmth. It was still early for people to start the day and he thanks The Gods for that as he can’t stand another living being at this very moment.

Focusing on his burning throat, he takes another gulp of wine out of his water skin to help settling the pain. He finally looks up to the person who had creep up on him and finds a young girl staring at her with her clear grey eyes. He recognizes her in an instant.

“What do you want, wolf-girl?” he growled, taking another sip of his wine.

Arya stares back calmly, unbothered. “We have good food, you know. You need only ask.” She replied.

“Sod off.”

“I don’t think being drunk all the time is a smart move.”

Sandor stands up from where he was seated, marching towards her in three long steps. Arya stays rooted at her spot as he bends down to her face. His breath hot on hers.

“I said sod the fuck off.” He threatened.

“This is my home. I can stay wherever I like.” She countered.

Sandor glares and grunts before turning around, walking away.

Arya decides to slowly follows him at a pace. She watches silently from his back when he takes yet another sip from his water skin. They are walking in a harmonious stride, separated with only a few meters between them. But then, Sandor stops and turns around abruptly, facing the young girl.

“Is there something you’d like to say to me?” he asked, frustration in his voice. Arya stares back silently, debating inside her mind.

“Well then, go on. Don’t let me stop you.” He urged, grumpily.

Taking a deep breath, she walks closer towards the scarred man and stops just a mere inch away.

“I want to know why you’re fighting for the evil bitch Queen.” She said back.

Sandor raises an eyebrow with a ghost of smile on his face, clearly not expecting foul words coming from such a young girl. “It’s none of your concern.”

“In case you haven’t heard; she and her twin brother tried to kill me.”

“You said that like I give a damn.”

Arya clenches her fist tight, trying hard to keep the hurt from showing. “How much money does she give you? I will pay you more.” She offered.

They stare silently for a while, searching and studying each other, accompanying by only the sound of their breath when suddenly, Sandor lets out a hearty chuckle.

“You’re a fierce one. I give you that.” He said with a glint of amusement in his eyes. Without waiting for a reply, he turns around and walks away, leaving her with a trail of laughter.

This time Arya doesn’t even bother to follow him again.
The long awaited day has finally arrived. It has become a hot topic of the folks in Winter Town as the trial by combat will be taken place there. It is not an everyday occurrence where The Queen is facing a trial let alone in Winter Town, this side of the North.

It’s still rather early, but it doesn’t make a difference for Arya as she never gets to rest her eyes anyway. She walks out of her room then and proceeds to the familiar hallway. Knocking the intended wooden door before Robb comes into her view. With his obvious eye bag, it looks like he didn’t get any rest either.

“Arya, what’s wrong? Is everything alright?” he asked, studying his little sister and glancing around the hallways for any trouble.

“You mean, apart from you going to fight The Hound in a few hours and may get seriously injured in the process or possibly dying? Yes, everything else is okay.” She counters. Robb’s face softens.

He lets the door open wider for her to enter and Arya slips in. He takes a seat on his bed while she stands not far from him, her arms across her middle.

“Arya.” he calls, making the young girl stares at him. “I’m going to be fine.” He continues with a forced smile. She sighs.

“Can you at least look like you meant it?” she asked softly. Robb chuckled.

“Do I look that bad?” he asked back. Arya nods truthfully.

He stands up then, standing right in front of her. “I’m going to be fine, Arya.” He said again with a genuine smile this time, gripping both her shoulders tight in a comforting manner. Arya forces a smile at that.

“I suppose you have a plan then?” she waits expectantly. Robb only raises his brow looking lost.

“Well, I’m going to fight him. Isn’t that obvious?”

Arya closes her eyes tightly, taking a deep breath, calming her nerves.

“How do you plan to do that, Robb? The man is twice your size and strength.”

“He’s not that big.”

Arya ignores his last statement before continue. “You need an advantage against him. Do you know his weakness?”

“He has one?”

“Yes, he does. Everyone do.” She counters. Robb looks away, thinking hard.

“I don’t know. I don’t have time to study his moves or anything.” He finally said.

“Fire.”

“What?”

“Fire. He’s afraid of fire.” Arya said again softly. Somehow, it doesn’t feel right to expose it to Robb.
“How do you know that?”

“I heard someone talking about it.” She replies, her heart digs painfully at the lie. Robb looks pass her in deep thought.

Seconds pass and then minutes before he finally breaks away from his thought.

“Thank you, I’ll put that information into good use.” He said with a slight smile before turning serious. “You don’t have to go to the trial.”

Arya blinks hard. “What?”

“Father doesn’t want you there.”

“But, it’s my trial.”

“It’s alright. You don’t have to be there.”

“I want to be there.” She said evenly. Robb sighs tiredly.

“Arya, can you please just listen to father this one time?”

Arya closes her eyes then, nodding reluctantly. Her lips sealed in a thin line and her face looks defeated. Robb closes in and reach for her, wrapping his arms around his little sister.

“Do you want me to get anything for you from Winter Town?” he asked softly against her ears. He feels her head shake against his chest as she tightens her arms around him.

******

Walking back to her room and waiting there is a torture. The fight should start any moment now and she is still stuck inside her room. Going out through her door is not an option as her father has placed two guards there to keep watch on her, in case she fled.

One way or another, she will get out of this room. She has plans. First, to not let Robb and Sandor fight, well at least to not let them seriously injured each other. Second, to punish The Queen herself. They will never see it coming. The evil bitch will certainly not.

Arya glances over the open window then, finally deciding what she should do next. She is about to climb over it when a knock againts her door stops her.

“Arya, it’s me. Open up.” A familiar voice said behind the door. She sighs before turning around to open the door. Sansa comes in without an invitation.

“I can’t wait alone in my room so I thought of coming here.” She explains absentmindedly, not before landing herself on the bed. But, the younger girl is too busy calculating her climb down.

“Where are you going?” Sansa’s voice slightly raise as she finally realized Arya's attire of breech and tunic.

Arya turns around in alarm. “Keep it down Sansa, or the guards will hear.” she hissed, closing in to the said girl. “I just wanted to go to the Godswood…to pray. I can’t stand waiting here doing nothing.” She continues, explaining herself. “Can you keep watch for me? Don’t let anyone come in here until I get back?” She pleads. Sansa looks confused and stunned that she’s lost of words to answer.
Arya takes the advantage. “Thank you Sansa, I’ll make it short.” she said dismissing her sister before climbing over the window and down the crooked walls. Within moments, she reaches the ground and gives a wave of goodbye at Sansa who stands with her mouth open by the window.

Turning around, Arya runs silently and swiftly through the courtyard and then towards the South gate. There are less people in Winterfell making it easier for her to sneak out. As soon as she gets pass a guard who is too busy chatting with a servant girl by the gate, the cold air welcomes her. Her thin garment doesn’t help much in providing the needed warmth. But, she cannot argue with it as it helps her moves faster. A cloak will only get in the way.

She keeps running through the woods and stops just in front of a tree. If it was anyone else, they would think it was just an ordinary tree. It is. However, that is not the secret. The secret lies within its trunk.

She slides her hand through the hole and reaches for a bow and arrow that she had hid prior last night. She slings the quiver of arrow around her shoulder and holds the bow. A piece of small cloth ties around her face, covering her nose and mouth.

Without wasting anymore time, she dashes through the woods like a wolf. Ducking and jumping around the wild leaves and rocks and the roots. The beginning of the commotion of the people from Winter Town can be heard and she knows she's nearing the edge of the forest.

And sure enough, a few moments later, the roar of the crowd greets her ears. Her eyes catch the sea of people gathering around, cheering for the Hound or Robb, she isn’t sure. She has to go higher for a clearer view.

Ignoring the chaos surrounding her, she strides towards an inn that she's sure is high enough to look pass the gathered crowd. She starts climbing effortlessly until she reaches the roof. As she crouches on top of it, a flaming sword catches her eyes first.

It was Robb’s and surprisingly he is leading against Sandor. It looks like he can almost win this. Arya grips her bow tight, debating if she should just let him be.

No, there is only one person that should die today.

And that person is standing down there, right across the other side from her father, mother, and Jon.

Ever so slowly, she stands up. Her stance relaxes and her back straight as she reaches for an arrow at the back of her quiver. She nocks it before raising and drawing the bow towards her face. With an arrow pointed ahead, she finds her target and holds her breath.

Cersei is smiling as she comes into view and Arya knows something has happened with Robb. At the corner of her eye, the burning sword is nowhere in sight. Without wanting to waste anymore time, she releases her breath and the arrow escapes through her fingers at the same time.

The arrow flies down, splitting through air and find its way straight into Cersei’s heart. A scream from the crowd echoes next, successfully stopping the fight. The Kingsguards are moving swiftly around The King, protecting him.

A look of shock and horror cross Cersei’s face as she glances down at the arrow planting deep inside her chest. As she falls down to the cold ground, Arya was sure that emerald eyes had looked up, noticing her. But it was of no use, the former Queen had long gone before she can do anything about it.
Chapter Summary

In which every actions have its consequences.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I've been wanting to update for some time now and I finally push myself to do it. As you can see (or not) I have add on a new character and tags. So, there will be a time jump later on this chapter. Don't worry, you will notice it right away.

Ok, let's pick up where we left, eh?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

The cold wind swept by, making a few strands of her hair loosen around the knot. It ends up caressing her face in an orderly manner. Arya knew she should turn around and disappear as soon as her arrow finds its mark. But instead, she held her ground. She had to be sure that her brother is unharmed.

Ignoring the chaos below, she looks down to find Robb among the sea of people. It was a challenge as the folk from Winter Town are scattering and running around the place as if it was raining fire when instead it was only one wooden arrow that fell upon them.

She had to squint her eyes to find the one she was looking for. Cersei’s body is lying on the cold ground where she last stand. Her brother, Tyrion looking down at her rigid body from not far, probably still stunned by the arrow firmly planted on her chest.

She glances to another side and an auburn hair catches her eyes then. In an instant it leads to a thick red-brown hair which is Robb’s. Her mother is kneeling down beside Robb where he was lying down. Not far from them, Jon is standing face to face with The Hound, bridging the two fighters in between.

She lets her eyes wander back to Robb and sighs in relief when he shows a sign of life, while trying to get up on his own. He looks fine without any serious injury though she cannot positively sure accessing him from up here.

A sudden chill comes then, making the hair on the back of her neck standing at ends. She trails towards her family one by one when her gaze finally stops at her father. Her body stiffens as her father locked eyes with her. His grey eyes much like her owns are studying her inside and out and Arya cannot help feeling nervous and anxious at the same time.

She is tugged out of her nerves when suddenly a familiar sound of an arrow splitting through air comes into her ears. Arya’s head snapped towards the side where an arrow is indeed travelling and
coming right at her. Her body react almost instantly, side stepping the marked path. But, it becomes a second too late as the sharp steel cut through flesh of the corner of her right arm.

She hisses in pain as she stumbles over the roof due to her lost footing. Deciding that this is no place for her to linger anymore, she gets up and jumps over the roof just before a second arrow finds her again.

The air splits in half as she runs away into the woods once more. Her breath is the only thing accompanying her journey back to Winterfell. She stops by the large tree to hide her quiver of arrows and the bow back inside its trunk where it belongs. Taking a glance behind her, there is no sign of life or whatsoever that had followed her. Though, it never mean that she can rest.

Still panting hard, she wastes no time and begins to run again. As silent as a shadow, she sneaks inside the South Gate of Winterfell just as before.

The climb to her chamber is drawing the last strength that she has and she curses inwardly of her weaker younger body. It seems she will need more training on that. When she finally reached on top, she climbs over the open window and lands unceremoniously on the hard floor. She is still panting hard while trying to calm her nerves when suddenly a hand grip her shoulder.

With the adrenaline still rushing in and her senses on alert, her body reacts automatically at the foreign source. She grabs the hand away, twisting it before pinning the person against the wall. Her knife ready on the person’s throat.

A vivid blue eyes are staring back in confusion and horror at the emotionless steel grey ones.

“Ar-Arya. Wha-what are you doing?” the voice trembled against the younger one’s face.

Arya lets her eyes wander around her captive. Her thick auburn hair caught her eyes first and then her familiar face. She blinks hard when she finally realized it was her sister, Sansa. In an instant, her hand drops and she backs away, leaving the older girl the space that she needed.

“I- I’m sorry. I thought you were someone else.” She said in remorse. Sansa frowns while rubbing her neck repeatedly.

“Did I hurt you?” Arya asked, concerned when Sansa only stares back silently, confusion and shock still visible on her face.

“Who did you think I was?” Sansa asked back instead. Arya turns around then, putting the knife on the bedside table before taking a seat at the edge of the bed.

“No one. It’s just a reflex, I guess.” She said, shrugging her sister’s question.

Silence creeps in as her last words linger around, giving Arya the opportunity to revisit what she had just done.

She did it. She had killed Cersei Lannister.

*Valar morghulis.*

She's sure the arrow had hit the former Queen right in the heart and she knows where the heart is like the back of her hand. With the dreaded woman now gone, everything will be fine. Her family will be safe now, *wouldn’t they?*

*Yes, they will.* She will make sure of it by any means necessary.
“Arya!” Sansa shouts conveniently at her ear. Arya flinches, snapping her head at the source who is sitting beside her now. When did her sister come, she did not realize.

“What?” she asked, frowning.

“I asked you what happen,” Sansa said exasperated.

“What?” Arya asked again looking completely lost. Sansa looks annoyed by now and her hand ends up tugging the younger girl’s arm.

Arya hisses in pain at the movement, glancing down where an arrow from one of the Kingsguard had slashed her right arm. Her cloth ripped open and so did her flesh.

“Sorry. But what happen to you? How did you hurt yourself?” Sansa speaks up. Her face mixed with concern and disbelief.

Arya stands up then, pulling off her stained cloths. “I guess Bran won’t be seeing this anymore.” She commented and throws it onto the fire.

“Arya!”

She sighs. “It’s nothing Sansa… I tripped and fell onto a sharp edged rock thus cutting myself.”

The older girl looks at her little sister incredulously. She lets out a sigh of defeat before walking towards the bleeding girl by the fire. Silently and gently, she pulls Arya’s good arm towards the bed, making the younger girl sits while she rummaged through her room to find what she needs.

They fall into comfortable silence as Sansa comes back and begin to clean the bloodied arm.

“Sansa.” Arya calls softly. The older girl stops her action, looking evenly at her little sister. “You won’t tell anyone about this, will you?”

Sansa looks down to the now clean wound, bandaging it close as she contemplates whether she should. Her little sister cannot seem to escape from trouble, especially from not getting wounded. First, it was the stabbing and now this. It’s like she is collecting scars all over her body.

She sighs again. “I will not.” She settled, but Arya still looks at her with those eyes, wanting more. “I promise.”

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It had not been long when commotion was starting to build up outside the room. Arya has don a fresh new dress now, and her injured arm is taken care of, thanks to Sansa. The older girl seems restless as she eyes the door and her sister repeatedly.

“I think they are back. Perhaps we should go and see?” she asked, clearly distracted by what’s going on outside. Her face clouds with fear.

Arya walks closer to her sister then, reaching for her hand. She can almost feel her rapid pulse. “You should not worry. I have a feeling that everything went well.” She assured with a small smile.

Sansa made a pause as if she is about to say something but a man barges into the room beats her to it. Both the girls snap their head at the intruder before them.

“Father!” Sansa shouts with relief, marching towards the older man. Ned’s eyes flicker towards his youngest daughter first before registering his older one.
“Father, is Robb alright? Please tell me he is.” Sansa asked exasperated. Arya moves closer to them as Ned put a rare smile on his face. The genuine smile he saves for his children.

“Yes, your brother is as fine as he can be. Nothing too severe.” He answered kindly. Sansa sighs in relief but it only lasted a second.

“I suppose The Hound lost then.” She murmured mostly to herself. Ned glances towards Arya again, meeting with similar grey eyes.

Arya stares on impassively as they both study each other. For some unknown reason, she feels exposed under his gaze.

“No my child, he’s fine too.” he finally said back. Sansa frowns, trying to put the pieces together.

Ned saves her the trouble when he speaks up again. “Someone interfere with the trial and murder the queen instead.”

Sansa gasps loudly, covering her hand over her mouth. “The queen is dead? That- that is horrible.”

Arya looks away fisting her hands tight. *She deserves it. It’s her or us. It’s her or us. It’s her or us.*

She keeps chanting them inside her head like a prayer.

“Arya.”

The young girl breaks away from her trance and turns around to find her father looking down on her. Sansa is nowhere to be seen inside the room.

“Yes, father.” She answered softly.

Ned opens his mouth to say something but stops short. He lets out a kind smile instead, moving close to caress the girl's cheek gently. “Come, let’s see how Robb fares.”

Arya nods absentmindedly and obediently walks outside the room with her father.

******

As night fall, the news of Cersei Lannister’s death has spread like wildfire around the North. Ravens keep flying in and out of Winterfell. Robert and Ned had spent their time mostly behind closed doors attending to letters and all sort of other things that Arya can only guess. There had been a simple ceremony for the late queen later that evening and the King had instructed an entourage to return her body to Casterly Rock.

The fact that Jamie Lannister and his brother Tyrion suddenly vanished didn’t help either. The other twin was said to had escaped since the king detained him for further questioning, while the trial was happening. Tyrion on the other hand was last seen on the ground of Winter Town. The common folks were already starting to whisper about the strange circumstances.

Arya looks down to her untouched food. Her other family were sitting around the dining table enjoying their supper rather in silence. But, her mind was far from silence and peace. There are too many things to consider now that she had eradicate the evil woman. She had told herself plenty of times that her action was necessary. The woman was the source of all bad things that had happen or in her case, will happen to her family. And she would do much more than just killing to ensure her family’s safety.
“What will happen to Prince Joffrey, father?” Sansa’s voice breaks the silence in the dining hall, successfully earning everyone’s attention.

“He’s no prince now. Just Joffrey Waters. Better get used to it.” Robb interrupts, casually putting a hard bread inside his mouth.

“The King has decided to send him away to the Umbers, as a ward.” Ned answered gently.

“And what of Myrcella and Tommen?” Bran asked timidly. Ned glance over his son for a moment before speaking again.

“House Royce and Blackwater respectively.”

Silence settles in then, leaving the others to their own thoughts. But, Ned decides to speak up again.

“The King will be taking leave in two days’ time.” he trails, exchanging look with Catelyn before continue, “And I will be his new Hand.”

At the word, Arya’s head snapped to the head table so fast, it nearly twisted.

“You’re going to King’s Landing?” Bran asked eagerly.

“Yes, along with you and your two sisters.” Ned answered, smiling fondly at Bran. Sansa was thrilled by the looks of it.

But all Arya could feel was dread. The incident at the Red Keep where Joffrey was calling for her father’s head and Sansa’s wailing came flashing through the back of her mind uninvited. She didn’t realize she had stands up rather abruptly, making the chair squeak loudly inside the great hall.

Everyone was looking at her expectantly.

“You cannot go there!” Her voice came out desperate. Ned looks at her, frowning.

“Arya – ”

“It’s too dangerous, father. The Lannisters are still out there. And we have a whole month to travel to King’s Landing. They can attack us on the road or send assassin for revenge like they did once with me. We cannot leave Winterfell. It’s not safe there in the South.” Arya finished, gasping for air afterwards. Everyone blinks hard as her words sink into their system. Ned shared a look with Catelyn before settling on his youngest daughter once more.

“Arya – “he tries but again, he was interrupted.

“Father, please listen to me. We cannot leave Winterfell.” Arya said exasperated.

“Child, it will be alright. The King have enough men to escort everyone safely throughout the journey.” Ned counters. “I promise we will be safe.”

Arya looks down, her hand gripping tightly against the edge of the table. She tried very hard not to shout at him. Voicing out on how he should not make a promise so casually, how stupid and naïve of him to think that the King’s men were enough to protect them.

A horrible sound of metal meets flesh entered her memory and she shivers involuntarily. She cannot handle her father execution again. True, there will be no more Cersei and Joffrey there, but nothing good will ever come by going to the South. She doesn’t think she has the strength and the will to go through this again. They cannot make me!
“I don’t want to go!” she shouts defiantly and turns around before making her exit.

She heard faint calling of her name from behind, but she could care less. Continuing her strides, she arrived to her room in record time. She lands herself down on the bed. Her ragged breathing sounding loud to her ears. Not a moment after, a knock can be heard.

“May I come in?” her father’s voice came next. He didn’t wait for her answer though and decides to let himself in anyway.

He takes a sit beside her, making the mattress sinks further. Silence engulf them as both wait for each other to speak up. Arya was contemplating to tell him everything right then. About the time travel and that she was the one who had killed Cersei. It was really inviting at this very moment. Maybe then her father would really listen.

Ned let out a soft sigh. “Arya, if you wish to stay, then I will not force you to come with me.” he said. Arya looks to her side then, searching for his eyes.

“I don’t want you to be the King’s Hand.” She voiced out, almost pleading.

“It’s a great honor to serve as the Hand.” He stated.

Arya tries very hard not to chuckle at his comment. Honor means nothing to a dead man.

“I had a dream, father.” She trails. Ned looks at her curiously. “In that dream, you were being dragged forcefully to the Red Keep. You hurt your leg, so you could not escaped. And so the guards push you forward to be presented to the folks. They were shouting and cheering. And they were calling for your head. Kneeling before them, you were helpless to stop the executioner from using your sword, Ice. As was I. I cannot do anything as the blade came down upon your neck.” She said in a hollow voice. Ned blinks hard to process what she said.

“I don’t want to lose you again, father. I don’t think I can survive it this time.” she continues, her eyes were beginning to cloud by unshed tears.

If Ned notice the strange used of word that Arya used, he gave no comment. Instead he wrapped his arms around her tightly, leaving no space between them.

“Arya, my child, you will never lose me as long as you keep me inside your heart.” He whispers softly, stroking her back in a calm manner. “The day your horrible dream comes true will be the day that when pigs are able to fly, do you hear?” He asked, smiling slightly as he releases his hold.

He looks down on her, waiting for her to answer. Arya force a smile before she gives a slight nod, earning a kiss at the top of her forehead.

******

It was almost dawn as Arya arrives to her solitary place. She never had a chance to rest her eyes after her father’s visit. And so she decides to come here instead, in the Godswood. The heart tree was almost glowing from the moon’s dim light. She stood by the tree, staring fiercely at the Gods face.

On the morrow, at this same time, she will depart to King’s Landing along with her Father, Sansa and Bran. She knows she had shout her opinion to not go there again, but who is she kidding. She cannot leave them all alone in the damn South. All troubles start from that stinking part of the city. The others would be safe in Winterfell. She hopes so.

It breaks her heart to be separated with her family again, especially Jon. At least he will not be
leaving to take the black. Robb will need his support. Rickon will have her mother’s undivided attention now that her younger children are away.

She shivers as the wind came brushing pass her suddenly, making a few noises along the way. Looking up to the God’s face, she leaned on the trunk and shut her eyes. A sense of deja vu was filling her. But, it goes as quickly as her consciousness began to slip away.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

The first thing she felt was the throbbing inside her head. The next thing was the awful smell of rot, piss and blood. Her back sore from the cold and hard ground or bed she was laying on, she wasn’t sure. These were all feeling foreign but somehow the disoriented and nausea feeling she had were familiar. She opens her eyes then, studying the little room she was in. A ray of light was shining through the small opening from on top of the wall and onto the metal bars.

Arya sits up then, instantly regretting her action as a wave of pain shot inside her head. She grunts in response and automatically curled herself inward. Her hands at the side of her head, clutching hard. It was like her brain is being ripped apart from within her skull.

After a moment, the pain became bearable. Arya tries to sit up for the second time. She looks around in panic at the small place she was currently in. The three stone walls at her side and behind her was only an arm length and in front of her was indeed metal bars. It looks like she was in a cell or some kind.

She swallowed dryly, making her throat itch. As she reaches up her neck, panic starts to crawl in as her hand came upon a chain tightly against her skin.

*What the hell is happening? Why am I in chain?!!*

She wanted to scream but all that comes out is a groan. She tries a few times again to make words but to no avail. At her frustration, a guttural sound that sounded like a growl comes out instead, which shocks her beyond reach. She stops her action immediately and tries to recall back how she got here. The last thing she remembered was the Heart tree in Winterfell. She remembers falling asleep there and now she wakes up in here, wherever *here* is.

All the while, she tried very hard to put the pieces together that she did not realized there were people walking to her appointed cell.

“You are making a big mistake by doing this. You don’t know who I am and what I am capable of.” The voice echoes. Arya looks up in surprised to find two men dragging a woman forcefully.

Her eyes linger at the hair a little while longer for her hair is of silver-white. A strange color which Arya rarely see.

“Oh? Enlighten us then.” one of the gruff man said, halting their movement. The woman straightens her shoulders and looks up at the men.

“I am Daenerys Stormborn of House Targaryen, Queen of the Andals and the Rhoynar and the First men, Protector of the Realm, Khaleesi of the Great Grass Sea, Unburnt, Mother of Dragons and Breaker of Chains.” She said in one breath. Threats evidence in her voice.

The men eyed each other and the woman with many titles repeatedly before breaking into a fit of
laugh. Arya can see the woman flinched at the loud sound echoing inside the place.

“The only thing you will ever be is our master’s little whore.” The man commented after calming himself.

They proceed to drag her to their original way and it was close to where Arya was until they indeed stop right in front of her metal door. One of the man unlocked the door, making the sound of chain echoing through the place. The other man shoves the silver haired woman inside roughly before locking the door again.

“Well, if you are not ripped apart by Accalia first.” The gruff man commented suddenly, earning a chuckle from his companion.

They both walk away muttering to themselves leaving the two behind. The silver haired woman back was in front of Arya, probably not realizing another presence inside the cell.

“Let me go this instant or you will suffer the consequences!” she shouts angrily, trying hard to get the men’s attention. The metal door bangs against its hold, creating a loud rattling noise.

Arya winced at the sound as it only worsens her throbbing inside her head. She clutches her head in response not noticing she's growling again, loudly enough for the silver haired woman to stop her action.

As the noise fades away, Arya let out a small sigh. She looks up to find that the silver haired woman is watching her with frighten looks over her face. But all Arya can see is those beautiful pair of violet eyes.

Chapter End Notes

There you have it. Dany is here! I've been itching to write those ridiculously long titles of hers for some time now! LOL

PS: FYI, Accalia is a Latin word meaning she-wolf
Chapter Summary

In which Arya remembers the things that lead to her current situation.

Chapter Notes

I have two things to say before we go on with the story.

First, I have posted the same story in fanfiction. My username is Jung Leo. So if you stumble upon a different title with the same story, it is mine. Feel free to leave a review there if you like.

Second, my version of Arya is heavily based on the TV shows thus she did not hear anything about Dany during her time in Braavos as the shows portrayed (because I believe that she does know a little bit of Dany in the books?)

Anyways, let's move on and see what this new future have for our little wolf, shall we?

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Clear violet eyes meet with steel grey ones. Both eyed each other warily with no movement made. The only thing accompanying them is their breathing. The light from the small opening pour into the small room, conveniently spotlighting the intruder, allowing Arya to comfortably study the woman silently, while she remain on the other side, within the shadows.

The silver haired woman fidget around nervously under her gaze as she steps back until her back was against the metal door from where she came. Arya tried to recall her name again, Daenerys something, of House Targaryen. She swears she heard something about a dragon along the line too.

She frowns then.

Dragons extinct hundreds of years ago, didn’t they?

The name Targaryen was strangely familiar. She ponders over it for a moment and suddenly it hits her. She knew that name. Father used to talk about a Rhaegar Targaryen who had kidnap her aunt Lyanna and not to mention the mad King Aerys who murdered her uncle Brandon and her grandfather Rickard. She must be related to them.

Her face automatically scowled in defense. Why was she here? And where the hell is here anywhere?

Deciding that she should not waste any more time pondering what might and what is, she slowly tries to put her weight on both her feet before getting up. Her throbbing has lessened now and she silently thanked the Gods.
The other woman clearly was not expecting her advanced as Arya heard her taking a sharp breath.

“But...you’re a girl.” The woman, Daenerys speaks up. Shock and confusion lace through her expression. Arya stares back evenly, resisting the urge to roll her eyes.

*Well, what a genius, this one is.*

She walks closer to her instead. At her movement, Daenerys slides away leaving Arya to the metal door by herself. Their position reversed. Hastily she reached for the lock that binds the door together. She tries to pull it away but to no avail.

Arya grunts, frustrated as the door won’t budge at all. She wanted to scream to the bastards that locked her in here for them to release her. But all that came out was again a guttural sound of a desperate growl. Panic was starting to creep on her. She tried to utter a word, but ends up with another groan instead.

*Why can’t I speak?!*

She looks down to her hands then, it was strangely unfamiliar as they are slightly bigger than she had previously woken up to. They were not that of a little girl, and not that clean either as her hands were scraped with dirt and full off scars, old and new. She groans for the hundreds time as she tries to move the bars again, but the result was still the same. Her inside is starting to fume with anger and without second thoughts she banged the rigid door hard with her bare feet.

Arya could not care less as pain started to register. All she can think of is getting out of this damned place. She switched tactics then, preparing her body to go against the metal bars. She takes a few steps back before running straight and throwing herself towards her obstacle. She did this a few more times, but her actions deem fruitless. The door did not budge with its lock still in place.

She falls to her knees, panting hard. Her breath was deafening to her ears. Feeling defeated, she turns around and lean against the metal bars. Her body is already sore all over due to her reckless actions.

Just then, a prickling sensation of being watched registered and she looks up to see Daenerys is observing her with an expression of pity? Or is it concern? She could not tell.

The silver haired woman slides down and mirrored her action, sitting down with her back against the wall. Daenerys doesn’t seem to want to start any conversation with her as she pulls her knees up against her chest, looking forlorn. For that Arya was grateful as she was sure that she cannot answer any of her questions when she barely knows anything herself, much less to express about it in speech right now.

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - New Past*

“Arya –” the voice breaks her trains of thought. She knew that voice anywhere. “May I come in?” he asked. Arya sighed.

“No, Go away, I’m busy.” She shouts. He clearly did not listen as he opens the door, making a loud creak along the process.

Jon’s face emerged from behind it. He looks around the room before finding his little sister sitting on the edge of the bed as her clothes were occupying the other parts of it. Nymeria was entertaining herself with a bundle of clothes scattered on the floor.
“You’ve been avoiding me.” Jon stated. Arya gets up and reached for a dress near her.

“I’m leaving on the first sunlight and as you can clearly see, I haven’t packed my things yet.” She answered instead while absentmindedly folding the garment.

“Arya, if you don’t want to go to King’s Landing, then don’t.” Jon said kindly. “Father will allow it, you know that.”

Arya let out a long sigh then. As much as she wanted to stay, she already made her decision and that is to follow her father to the South. She throws the twisted cloth on to the bed once more before turning around. Jon was staring at her, waiting.

“I’m just worried is all. It will be a long journey.” She commented as a matter of fact.

“Father’s men will be escorting you too along with the King’s guards.” Jon countered. “Don’t work yourself out over nothing. It will be fine. Besides, was not your dream to travel and learn the world? This is your chance, little sister.” He finished with a warm smile that is so contagious that Arya had to smile back. He mussed up her hair for good measure, shaking off all the worry the younger girl had.

“Anyway, I have something for you.” Jon speaks up again revealing a long wrapped package. Arya looks over it with mixed feelings. She was well aware of what that is.

Jon clearly does not notice the change from the younger girl as he was too excited unwrapping the bundle of cloth over it and presented her with a skinny sword.

“This is yours. I had Mikken forge this sword especially for you.” He explains, looking to Arya expectantly. Arya reach for it slowly.

She inspected the rest of the sword. The hilt was wrapped with genuine leather. A symbol of a direwolf was planted on top of the pommel. Her fingers ran across the blade gently. It was exactly the same as she remembered. It was still light and pointed. Still elegant.

“It’s beautiful, Jon.” She muttered, her eyes clouded with tears.

“Lesson number one–” he trails. Arya let out a smile at that as she looks up at him.

“Stick them with the pointy end.” They said together.

Carefully, Arya placed the skinny sword on the bed before throwing herself over her brother, engulfing him in a tight hug.

“You know, every swordfighter who ever lived named their sword.” He implied. Arya closed her eyes then.

“Needle.” She whispers. “It will always be Needle.” She finished. Jon tightens his arms around her in approval.

******

It had been almost a fortnight as the entourage travelled along the king’s road. The journey was dull and uneventful as they went about the same routine almost every day. When they finally decided to made a stop at the Crossroads inn to rest and fill their supplies, Arya wasted no time and take refuge at the river banks near the inn. She purposely brought her Needle with her to practice.
The feeling of the long blade on her grip was soothing and calming as she spins, thrusts and twists. She didn’t notice for how long she had trained but the sweat trickle down her forehead was prove that she had spent quite some time. A soft sound of leaves being crunched enter her ears and she snapped her head at the direction. She swiped her sweaty brows with the back of her hand, relaxed, as Sansa came walking towards her, frowning.

“What is that on your hand?” she asked when she finally in front of the younger girl. Arya raised a brow.

“A sword.” She answered, throwing a pointed look at her sister.

“Arya! That is a real sword!” Sansa said exasperated.

“Yes, Sansa. I believe that is exactly what I just said.” Arya said, amused.

“A lady should not be playing with sword, you know that. Where did you get it from?” Sansa asked with disapproval over her face. At times like this that she reminded Arya of her mother. Oh, how she missed her already.

“I’m not playing, I’m practicing... Jon gave it to me as a present before we left Winterfell.” Arya answered calmly.

Sansa opens her mouth a few times as if to say something, no doubt wanting to reprimand but a noise caught both their ears then.

“Did you hear that?” Arya asked, frowning. Sansa looks at her silently, nodding.

The subtle noise was starting to build up and they can clearly make the sound now. Men’s shouting and metals clashing can be heard and it appears to be coming from the inn. Arya takes the first step and strides along the path back. Sansa was following her closely from behind.

When the inn was in sight, Arya stops abruptly as the scene in front of her register before her eyes. Her breath caught in her throat when she first saw the banner of a lion. [The Lannisters].

Her eyes dart towards the chaos that spread before her. They were so many men, fighting, cutting, and slashing. Their blood pouring the already soiled ground. The Lannisters’ men were clearly hungry for them. For us.

Just then, a scream came from behind her and Arya turns around to find Sansa on the ground. A man with a lion sigil at the back of his armor was standing above the older girl. Before he can swing his sword, Needle made its way through the back of his throat first. Arya pulls Sansa up her feet once more. A look of horror crossed her face as Sansa stares widely at the man that has fallen over his pool of blood.

“Sansa!” the younger girl yanked her arm roughly, making her look at grey eyes instead.

Teary blue eyes only stared back silently.

“We need to find father and Bran.” Arya continues desperately after getting her sister’s attention. Sansa nods lightly at that and the younger girl wasted no more time pulling her close.

They ran as fast as they can among the chaos, using the longer way along the woods to avoid unnecessary attention. As soon as the royal carriage came into view, they carefully walk closer to it.

“Lady!” Sansa shouts from behind and ran pass Arya.
The younger girl clenches her jaw tight when she looks down to where Lady lay motionless. Her white-grey fur stained in crimson blood. Sansa kneels beside her fallen companion, tearing profusely and at the same time, the sound of battle was becoming louder as second goes by.

“Come on, Sansa. We must find father and Bran.” Arya pulls the older girl up again, tearing her from the fallen direwolf. With one last look over Lady, Sansa let herself being dragged by the smaller girl.

As they both carefully continue their search for their Father and brother, Arya was looking for an additional family member too. Nymeria was nowhere to be found along their path and she prays that her furry friend was safe and away from this madness.

Even though the younger girl perfectly schooled her features, in truth, panic was starting to rise inside her. The further they walk, more north-men and the royal escort lay on the ground with holes all over their body. She just hopes neither of them were her Father or Bran.

They stop abruptly as another group of Lannister soldiers were busy welding and yielding their swords against the Northmen, just a few feet away from them. Among the chaos, Arya caught a glimpse of dark brown hair and his profile immediately gave away the person. It was her Father.

He was fighting and struggling against a Lannister soldier. Arya unconsciously takes a few steps forward, contemplating whether she should intervene or not. That is when she realized who his Father was up against. His blond hair was striking against the dull color of their surroundings. Jamie Lannister was swinging his sword again and met by her Father’s own.

And then he leap forward, charging the older man in a sudden rush. Unprepared, Ned stumbles backward earning a cut on his shoulder as his steps were too late to avoid the blade’s path. But, Ned doesn’t let it weaken him. Instead, he retaliates and begin to strike his opponent once more. His sword swung with purpose at the blond man in quick succession. But, his movements were interrupted when suddenly his eyes caught the grey ones much like him not far from where he stand.

Arya’s eyes were unblinking as they stare at each other for what feels like a long time when in truth it was only a second when Jamie started to counter attack again. Ned blocks his advance, stepping back, unaware that one of the Lannister’s soldier was behind him, waiting. Arya saw the Lion’s man and she shouts her lungs off in attempt to warn her Father. But it was of no use when the soldier’s blade was already sliding through her father’s back.

Her world stops then. Her eyes unable to tear away from her Father as he falls to his knee with the steel blade still inside him. He looks over to her with such sadness and regret in his eyes, like he was already defeated. Arya wanted to scream then. To tell him to get up and fight but all that came out was her tears.

Jamie strides forward then and with no hesitation, swings his sword for the final blow. Arya kept her gaze locked silently as her father falls down. His blood was crawling their way onto the cold ground in what seems like a slow motion.

“Arya! Help!”

A disembodied voice called out to her desperately and Arya turns around in daze to find Sansa was on the ground a few feet from her. Another soldier was on top of her, pinning her down. She tries to kick him, but it only come out as a flail. Before Arya can register what was happening, the soldier put a stop to her sister’s effort with a dagger through her heart.

Sansa eyes were wide in shock and pain but soon, they were closed, tightly. Arya looks down to her
sister who was lying there motionless. Her face calm. It almost looks like she was in deep slumber if not for the hole on her chest and the blood soaking her dress.

This must be a dream. A horrible dream. Yes, a dream. It’s not real. It’s not real. It’s not happening.

Her train of thoughts got cut off as a blow landed on her face. She falls backward, hitting her head against the hard ground. She grunts in response as pain started to register but it soon faded as her sister’s face came into view and when she looks up, her father was still where he was, his blood almost fills the ground now.

No, please. This is not happening. They are not dead. They are not–

“This is a nice sword... You won’t be needing it anymore.” The man speaks up. Arya looks up to find the soldier who just murdered her sister came into view, studying Needle with his left hand.

And at that moment, something within her just snap. Rage beyond compare, filling her every bones. Her hand reach for the cold ground and when a stone came into her touch, she grabs it and throw it with all her might onto the soldier. The man yelp in surprise and pain as the stone hit him right in the eye. He stumbles backward, losing Needle on his grip as he reached for his injured eye.

In one swift motion, Arya pushes her feet forward, intentionally capturing the man’s feet. He fell backward, unprepared by the force as he lost his footing. It only takes a few second for her to stand up again, gaining the upper hand. Instead of Needle, her hand automatically reached for the nearest weapon. She paid no attention as she grabbed another rock, this time slightly bigger as she had to carry it with both her hands.

Pinning him down just like he did with Sansa, Arya aims for his head and started to hit him with the heavy boulder. She heard a satisfying crack and as if in possessed, she hit him again and again. Each hit was full of hatred and rage. She didn’t hear herself scream as the only thing that she was seeing and hearing were the crimson blood of his head and the sound of flesh disintegrate.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

A blood-curdling scream wake Arya up. In an instant, her eyes shot open only to find clear violet eyes looking down on her.

“Stop! It’s just a dream!” Daenerys shouts desperately against the loud scream. Her hands on both Arya’s shoulder, shaking her repeatedly.

Only then, Arya realized that the scream was coming from her. She panted heavily as if she had run a mile, exhausted by her own cry. Panic erupted as her heartbeat thumps loudly against her ears. The horror of the image she last seen still stuck at the back of her mind.

"Hush now... It's alright. It's only a dream.” Daenerys continues, softly this time. She tightens her grips on Arya's shoulder in a comforting manner before rubbing circle on the young woman's skin gently with her thumb.

The vision of the young Stark's nightmare ebb away slowly as her breath calms down, following the older woman's own rhythm on top of her. It lasted for a while before she can regain herself back and when she did, Arya finally registers how close Daenerys is. The older woman was still pinning her
down and her face close to hers, with her breath hot on hers.

Feeling a little uncomfortable under her gaze, slowly Arya jerk her body upward, successfully tearing Daenerys away from her. They eyed each other silently before Arya breaks it and sits up, recalling the dreams she just had. Or was it real? She wasn’t sure. She leans against the metal door and stares blankly over the dark hallway outside.

At the corner of her eyes, she saw the older woman slides further into the wall, keeping back her distance, allowing Arya to ponder over her dreams or memories.

*****

She never had the chance to close her eyes again after that horrible dream. Her thoughts are occupied by the vague events that keep creeping their way inside her mind. She keeps telling herself that it did not happen. Her father and Sansa are alive still. She will wake up by the heart tree again to find they are perfectly safe in Winterfell.

But, as time goes by and the sunlight come pouring down her cell, it was becoming harder to convince even herself. Her senses automatically in alert as she felt rather than see movement from across the cell.

“Is ‘Accalia’ your real name?” soft voice echoes, but it was loud enough for Arya to hear, though she paid her no heed.

“How did you end up in here?” Daenerys asks again. Her tone nothing but curious.

Arya chanced a glance at the silver-haired woman who stares back with gentle eyes.

How did I end up in here? How?

The younger girl ponders over it for a moment but nothing came out. It seems she does not have the answer herself.

“How did you end up in here?” Daenerys asks again. Her tone nothing but curious.

Arya chanced a glance at the silver-haired woman who stares back with gentle eyes.

How did I end up in here? How?

The younger girl ponders over it for a moment but nothing came out. It seems she does not have the answer herself.

“Do you know who run this place?” Daenerys asks for the third time. Arya snapped her head, glaring at her. It was becoming rather annoying now.

But Daenerys is far too excited to notice as she continues. “Are there more slaves they keep in here, beside the others and yourself, Accalia?”

At the last word, Arya’s glare intensified. She tried to speak up but again she was unsuccessful. It was like her mouth had lost the ability to speak. Though she can clearly feel her tongue still intact, the words do not seem to get out. At her frustration, a threaten growl came out instead, automatically shutting Daenerys of her questions.

Just then, the hair at the back of her neck raises, alerting her of someone approaching her cell. In an instant, Arya stands up and back away from the metal door, making the older woman shocked by her sudden moves. But, when the same men from last time came into view, Daenerys posture relaxed though there is still wariness in it, but this time towards the men. She stands on her two feet and joins Arya.

“You are alive?” one of the man asks mockingly towards Daenerys. His accent thick under his tongue. He shifts his gaze to Arya then. “I’m surprised you did not tear her apart yet, Accalia. I hope you are not going soft now. We cannot afford you being soft. You know how Master Qazlas is.” He continues. Arya glares at them, not understand one bit of the words he said.
The other man moves forward then, unlocking the bars. The noise of metal against metal loud against their ears.

“Come Accalia, it is time.” he said as the gruff man opens the metal door wide. Arya looks at both men and the door warily.

She does not know what to expect beyond this cell but at the same time, she wants to get out and run if she had the chance.

“Come on Accalia, we do not have all day.” The man said impatiently. Arya decides then.

She glanced at Daenerys who was staring at her evenly. Her eyes were begging her to not leave her alone. But, Arya breaks their connection and walks away with careful steps. The men back away with every step she takes, keeping their distance. If anyone were to see, it almost looks like they were intimidated by her. Arya shrugged that thought off as she finally steps outside the open door and into the hallway for the first time.

To her left and right, no endings can be seen as the hallway continues into the darkness. Only dim light fills the ground, conveniently separated by an aligned ray of lights, much like her cell.

“Move along, now.” The gruff man speaks up. Arya turns around to find them both waiting for her to move the other way. When the man nudges his head forward to get his message clear, Arya glanced one last time to Daenerys who is in the already locked cell. She ignored her very best at the pair of frightened violet eyes and walks away to the intended path.

As she moves further, her eyes roam towards her path only to find similar cells as her own. Some of them were occupied and some of them were not. She stops short to find a pool of blood under her foot. It was coming from one of the cell and Arya grimaced at the man, or rather body that the blood was coming from. The stink of a decay flesh was starting to fill her nose.

“Ha! I knew Bearclaw will not last after that fight.” The man with the thick accent suddenly speaks up. “You better pay up.” He continues. The other man only groans in response.

Without wanting to spend any more time there, Arya strides faster leaving the two men. Though they were a few feet from her, she cannot run as there was no place to go but forward. They will catch up to her in no time.

Finally reaching at the end of the hallway, she finds a metal door locked from the other side. Before she can do anything about it, a voice beats her to it.

“Open up. Accalia is here.” The gruff man ordered. They were standing at a safe distance again, right behind the younger girl.

The door conveniently opens with a loud creak. As Arya steps inside or outside, her eyes caught more men in similar brown gear as the one who were escorting them, standing guard on each corner. The only difference was they were sporting a long club of sharp edges, with a belt keeping it in place.

Suddenly feeling intimidated, her stance changes instantly, ready to attack when necessary. But, the guards paid her no attention and she moves forward carefully until a large opening stops her. The light that was coming from the other side almost blinded her.

“You are up against the man who injured Bearclaw. Manslayer they call him.” The man speaks up making her turns around. “Best of luck little Accalia.” He continues with a smirk before urging her to continue forward. Arya frowns, looking at the opening and the men repeatedly.
She can feel whatever was waiting for her behind the opening is not a way out and she would rather not go there. But, the men clearly won’t budge as long as she is still there. Taking her chance, Arya turns around again to the bright opening. Her jaw clenched tight and her knuckles white from gripping too hard.

As she walks into the blinding light, the first thing she sense was the loud sound of cheering. Next came her vision. She blinks a few times to adjust the now bright light. She swallowed dryly as sea of people caught her eyes. They were shouting and pointing at her like a madman.

“- to you, Accalia! The she-wolf of Qazlas Pit!” she caught a voice among the chaos. She snapped her head at the sound and found no one but another sea of people.

“And her opponent, the Manslayer!” the voice bellowed. Arya swears the crowd cheered louder if that was even possible.

She glanced nervously around the large ground. It was like an arena or some sort. The crowd were conveniently placed high from the ground, watching her from above like she was some kind of entertainment sport.

Through her daze, she didn’t realize that there was a need for a weapon. Someone had placed them on the middle of the ground but Arya was too distracted by a man thrice her size charging forward with incredible speed despite his big frame. A battle-axe was in his hold. She cursed inwardly as the man finally within her reach. The axe swings by and if not for her quick sidestepped, she would be cut in half now.

Before she can find her rhythm, the Manslayer managed to knock her with the back-end of the axe, sending her sprawling on her back. The bile taste of blood was filling her mouth as her head starts to spin. The crowd cheered at her fall.

She rolls her body sideways, spitting the blood on the ground and gets up. Knowing that she need a weapon to keep herself alive, she puts all her might into her feet and run across the arena. A spear was waiting for her there. As she grabs it, she hears the thumping sound of the man’s foot from behind her.

With one swift motion, she spins her spear around to meet with the man, successfully cutting his middle. The Manslayer roared in rage. He lunged forward as if his tear on his abdomen was merely a scratch.

His battle-axe against her spear, clashing. Though Arya was channeling all her strength into each defense, it does not seem to help her. The man’s blow was twice the strength and he managed to put her back three steps when she attacks with one.

She was panting hard as minutes go by making her steps faltered. It only takes a second for the Manslayer to reward her with another hit across her middle. She heard something crack from inside her as she kneels on the ground. Her panted breath was deafening to her ears.

This is just a dream. This is not happening. This is not real.

Her mind keeps chanting the words repeatedly. She didn’t want to acknowledge whatever situation this was. If she did, then she would have to accept the fact that her father and Sansa did in fact had die. But the pain was excruciating and unbearable dismissing any possibility of a dream.

But, can dream be this real?

Another blow to her side makes her groan by the pain. Her face scrunched up in pain as she was
sprawling on the ground yet again. A set of images assaulted her mind then, just like in her dream.

*Jon giving her Needle.*

The Manslayer suddenly came into view, towering over her. His smirk plastered on his hideous face as he looks down on her. At that, another set of images came uninvited.

*Her Father lying on the ground with swords through both his back and front. And Sansa's calming face as her dress was soaking with blood... They are both dead.*

Her sight are blurred by the tears in her eyes as the haunting images become clearer with seconds go by. Oblivion to the younger girl's state of mind, the man above her takes that as a sign to end the battle and pulls the axe up and swing it down on her. Despite the ache inside her heart, Arya was prepared for that. She raised her arms where her spear blocks the axe that was supposed to split her head into two, taking her place instead.

She ignores the splinters that rained on her face as the wooden spear breaks apart and throws the metal end towards the man. The man scream in agony as the steel blade pierce right through his chest. But, it was nothing compare to the one coming from the younger girl as she jumped at the man with another half spear against his chest. He ends up stumbling backwards with Arya still on top of him.

Her inside was in rage and denial as the images of her dream came pouring inside her head again. As if in possessed, she takes half the spear out of the man’s chest only to plunged it back again and again. The crowd was silent as her desperate scream filled the place. The Manslayer was long dead, but Arya could not care less. Blood of her own and the dead man were on her hands. But all she could see was the death of her father and Sansa repeatedly at the back of her mind. Just like in her dreams, no, her memories. And what is more excruciating being the fact that this time, she had no one to blame but herself.
**Closer**

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf attempts to reason with everything.

Chapter Notes

There has been so much happening since I last updated, isn't it? With the official trailer and all. It certainly help keeps me occupied. And while I'm not busy replaying GOT S7 Trailer and watching you-tubers breakdown of it. I was writing this story.

The goddess of muse is pleased with all the comments from the last chapter and she forced me to finish the next chapter. And here you have it. I hope you enjoy this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Her panted breath was the only thing that she can hear as Arya lay down on the ground. Her face up, facing the white blue sky. Her chest rise and fall in a ragged breathing. Her hands feel wet of something, she’s not sure of what and didn’t exactly care either. One thing she was sure is that, she had failed her family. Her father and sister are dead because of her.

If only she didn’t kill Cersei Lannister, then the lion’s army may not attack them on their way down the Kingsroad.

If only she didn’t kill the evil Queen, her twin brother, Jamie Lannister may not have killed her father and Sansa would still be alive too. Even Lady had to take the blame for her crime, yet again.

Why didn’t they kill her too? Why didn’t they end her like they did her family?

She wanted to cry then, but a loud cheering brought her back from her trance and instantly, the tears dried itself. She pushes herself up and let out a groan as pain starts to register on her body, especially her middle. Even breathing feels extremely painful.

Her eyes automatically glanced towards a man lying a few feet from her, motionless. His body covered in blood with many holes on his chest. The broken spears firmly planted on top of him.

“Accalia! Accalia!” the crowd chanted unanimously. Arya looks up to the sea of people in daze.

They were marveling on her, rather in awe as if she had done something worthy of their cheering. She glanced down to the mess of a body and suddenly realize what she had done.

*I killed him.*

A rush of nausea hit her in an instant as she backs away, trying hard not to spill the content of her stomach with so many audiences around. She snapped her head around the arena, hoping to find a
way out. Maybe if she’s lucky, she can get out of this hell place now. But, as she looks around, no exit was visible. The only door, which she guesses lead to the outside world, was right across the opening where she had come from. And it was guarded with two men. Fighting her way out was not an option as seeing that even breathing is becoming rather troublesome and excruciating for her. She would have to find another opportunity some other time.

Or maybe she didn’t have to. Where would she go now? Her other family might have been dead for all she knows. So many years have passed and if her father and Sansa died because of her choices, then the others might have too. The things that she had done only seem to quicken their death. It was as if the Gods are mocking her. Maybe they were angry at her for having the nerve to pray of changing the past in the first place. Maybe this is their way of punishing her. To watch helplessly as her family’s death relived over and over again.

She turns around and starts walking towards the large opening. The noise fades away until she reached the same two men that escorted her before. Their mouth were moving but Arya paid them no heed. She walks pass them and towards the metal door where her cell awaited. As if she had done this many times before, she walks back to where she had come from. To where she belongs.

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Arya didn’t even realize that she had already gotten to her appointed cell. The next thing she knew was the cold wall against her back where she leaned on. The same smell of rot, piss and blood fills her nose. She wrapped her arm around her middle protectively, trying to ease the pain that come with each breathing. Based on her current state, a few ribs might have broken. Though judging by her opponent moments ago, maybe all of them were broken.

She chuckles humorlessly and instantly regrets it as another wave of pain shot her insides. She closed her eyes then and draw in a shaky breath, calming her nerves. But then, a voice echo along the room, more specifically Daenerys’s, demanding her attention.

“She needs a healer! Come back here!” she shouts, banging the metal door along with it.

Arya almost forgot about her silver haired roommate. When Daenerys shouts the same thing again, Arya knew she is only wasting her breath and interrupting her peace but she is too tired to stop her.

As if reading her thought, her voice stops suddenly and quiet fills the cell once again. Arya let out a content sigh at that. A moment later, she can feel careful steps advancing towards her.

“Accalia, what happen?”

Still with her eyes closed, Arya let the question unanswered. First, she’s not Accalia. And second, it’s none of her business anyway.

But, it seems Daenerys doesn’t agree with that as she crouched in front of her and reach for her arm around her middle. Before she can lay a finger on her, Arya beats the older woman to it, grabbing the woman’s pale hand right before she touches her arm.

Arya finally opens her eyes then, looking ahead to find violet eyes staring back at her. Her eyes were nothing but gentle.

“You are obviously hurting. Let me help.” Daenerys speaks softly. But it only seems to get the opposite reaction from the younger girl as her jaw clenched tight in tense.

*Leave me alone.*
Arya stares back evenly, hoping to get the message clear. She tightens her grip against Daenerys wrist for good measures.

Maybe it was the involuntary growl – which comes out naturally to her whenever she feels tempered – or her cold eyes, but either way, Daenerys instantly backs away leaving Arya to her space once more. Once gentle violet eyes are now frightened. Though she can trace some frustration in them too.

Arya closed her eyes again, ignoring the intense stare from the older woman across the cell. As soon as she did, consciousness fades away and she welcomes it.

But it was not becoming at all peaceful as images from the past started to resurfaced from the back of her mind. The same images where she left Jon, her mother, Robb and Rickon in Winterfell. The same images where her father and Sansa got killed. And then there’s an image of a foreign man who keeps beating her and making her do things she did not want. Arya flinched at the last part.

The images only grew more apparent as the same man appears again. His black curly hair and tanned skin almost remind her of someone she once knew, but his face was not at all kind and warm like her dance master. Instead it was wicked and dreadful. And he was not short of ideas on how to torment her body and soul.

Arya involuntarily let out a cry of whimper as the man starts to tower over her in another set of images. Then came a metal rod on his hand with a marker at the end. The color differs greatly with the rod, metallic grey while the end mark, glowing red. As he brought it down in front of her, a hiss sound of flesh meeting hot iron came through her ears. That’s when she knew it was her own body that he had violated as the pain that comes with it was excruciatingly painful.

She awakes with a start while drawing in panted breath. On instinct her hand reach for the neck of her cloth. As she pulls it down, Arya sees a burned mark that she never knew existed on her chest. The skin burned forming along the letter of ‘Q’ hideously. She concludes then that it was not a dream. Somehow after the Lannister’s raid on Kingsroad, she had been taken away and sold across the narrow sea.

Arya slumped further against the wall as she closed her eyes again, feeling defeated. This is her life now. A slave for her master Qazlas. Just then, a trickle sensation of being watched register, and she opens her eyes to find Daenerys staring at her. More precisely at her mark that she left exposed. Arya corrected her cloth back, covering herself while glaring at the older woman.

Daenerys looks away, awkwardly playing with the hem of her own cloth when she had been caught staring. When she steals glances at the younger girl and sees that she is still glaring, she let out a soft sigh.

“Forgive me, I do not mean to stare.” Daenerys trails. “I was just…looking.” She finished, with a guilty smile. Arya would have rolled her eyes at her, but she was too tired to even do that. Instead, she chose to ignore her.

Daenerys opens her mouth as if to say something else but got interrupted when footsteps echo along the hallway outside. They both snapped their head at the cell door, waiting.

Not a moment after, their guest finally arrives. Three men stands behind the metal bars, where the two Arya recognize as the guards and the other one is unfamiliar. He’s sporting a different attire than the brown garment of the guards. His was in yellowish and more extravagant. His curly hair and tanned skin stood out the most to her before his face register. The same face of evil and dread all over his expression, though he wears a large smile, it didn’t make him any friendlier. Arya automatically flinched in response as phantom pains starts to crawl their way to her body.
Daenerys was already on her two feet, looking wary at them. Even though Arya wanted to stand up, she gave up when she is too tired to move. Besides, her position leaning against the wall seems to help lessen the strain around her middle.

“Accalia, my little wolf, you were so spectacular to watch earlier. Such a wild little beast, you are. Well done!” Qazlas spoke with such excitement and proud all over his face. “What would you like as a prize, my champion?” he asks looking down at her still plastered with a smile. Arya glares at him silently.

Silence stretch among them, before Qazlas breaks into a laughter. His laugh echoes every part of the cell making Daenerys flinched in response.

“I’m sorry Accalia. I forgot you didn’t speak. No worries, my little wolf, I will choose the prize for you. I promise you will like it.” He said after calming down.

“She needs a healer for a start.” Daenerys suddenly speaks up. All heads turning at her, realizing her existence.

“Who is this?” Qazlas asked, frowning. One of the guards instantly by his ear, explaining quietly who the silver-haired woman is.

Another silence stretch when the man finish explaining as Qazlas stands there staring with no kindness on his eyes. The man cowered in his gaze.

“I believe another apologize is in order, my wolf. I know how you hate another person being with you. Let alone sharing the same quarters.” Qazlas speaks finally, looking down at her again. Arya frowns at his tone that almost sound like he really cares and find that it’s disturbing.

He then tilts his head to Daenerys, studying every inch of her. Arya was surprised the older woman did not squirm around in nerve, instead she squared her shoulder and look up at him right in the eye.

“You are far from Meereen, Queen Daenerys.” Qazlas commented with a slight smirk. Daenerys was about to open her mouth to say something before his words sink in. This is the first time anyone ever acknowledge her identity.

She blinks hard at him and Arya frowns while looking at Daenerys.

So, she is who she claimed to be after all.

“Welcome to Qazlas’s Pit, your grace. I am Qazlas zo Yunzak.” He introduced himself with an inclined to his head. “After the Sons of Harpy raid Daznak’s Pit, I heard you escaped with one of the dragon. Words are, you still live and ruled atop the Great Pyramid as we speak. Yet, here you are. Curious.” Qazlas said mockingly, trying hard to contain his smile.

Daenerys swallows dryly before speaking up. “She needs a healer.” Her voice calm yet strong as she stated for the second time.

Arya did not know what to feel when she shows that much concern on her. So she continues frowning as she studies her side silently. Daenerys still hold her gaze on Qazlas demanding her request to be fulfilled. At the corner of her eye, Arya knows her master is looking at her, but she could not care less as she is too busy trying to understand the woman in front of her.

“What? You mean Accalia?” he asked pointlessly. “Nonsense. Any slave that needs a healer does
me no good. She can heal on her own.” He finished threateningly. Daenerys shot a look of disgust his way.

“How did you manage a pit of your own? I had all the masters punished for their abominations towards slavery.” She spat back. Qazlas let out a chuckle.

“Obviously you miss one.” He taunted.

“Clearly.” She trailed, “But, not for long.” She taunted back.

They held their gaze at each other. Silence stretch before them with neither making a move when suddenly Qazlas breaks into a smile.

“I changed my mind.” He announced. Daenerys frowns at the sudden change. “I’m going to let you stay with Accalia. My little wolf will be a good company for the queen.”

Arya cannot help but feel there is another meaning behind his words. Was he expecting her to be a bad company instead? Ever since she awoke realizing the time travel, people seems to expect only the worse of her.

I did kill that Manslayer. Brutally, I might add.

She remembers all she ever did here were killing, fighting and more killing. Maybe she’s a wild beast after all and probably that’s why she did not talk. People all around her treats her nothing like a human. Her master most of all as she remembered the scarred mark on her chest. And now he is telling her indirectly to give the queen of Meereen a hard time.

Well, he can go to hell.

Arya let out a threatening growl as Qazlas looks down at her. Instead of cowering like she wanted him to, he let out a hideous grin instead.

“That’s my wild wolf.” He commented proudly before glancing towards Daenerys again. He inclined his head as a goodbye bid and walks away from where he came from along with the guards, leaving the two alone again.

Arya watched his retreating form with a scowl on her face while Daenerys slump against the floor with a sigh. She closed her eyes and leaned her head back, pinching the bridge of her nose while Arya watched her every move curiously.

Is she really Daenerys Targaryan? Mother of dragons and Queen of Meereen?

Arya is still having a hard time to believe any of it. She didn’t realize the said woman was staring back at her with a thoughtful look of her own.

“You won’t hurt me.” Daenerys stated. Arya shifts her attention back at her violet eyes.

Silence engulf them as they weigh each other pointedly. Daenerys has a look of doubt over her despite her statement. As if she was waiting for Arya to launch at her this very moment and prove her otherwise.

No. I will never hurt anyone without a reason.

And right now, Arya has nothing against the silver haired queen. She looks ahead, away from her questioning eyes and not a moment after Daenerys let out a breath she didn’t know she held.
“You are nothing like the men said. I can tell you are a good person, Accalia.” She said comforting.

Arya tightens her arm around her middle and turns her head another side as a reply. Silence surrounds them for a moment before a voice breaks it again.

“I will get you out of here. Everyone who are locked in this place, I will give them freedom. My advisors are surely searching for me as we speak and when they do come with my army, Qazlas will get the punishment he deserved.” Daenerys spoke with a low voice, assuring the younger girl though it seems like she was assuring more of herself.

Arya can’t help herself when she let out a snort at that.

“You don’t believe me?” Daenerys asked, accusingly. Arya closed her eyes ignoring the queen’s question.

She can feel the older woman’s irritation from the back of her head as she slowly drifts off to another slumber.

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It was only when the sound of metal clashing did Arya finally open her eyes. She awoke with a start and instantly tries to get up. She didn’t realize she had changed her position to fully laying on the ground. She grunts as a wave of pain shot through her middle at the sudden movement.

But, the sight of an opened door made all the pain go away. Arya blinks hard at her cell door which is now free of its locked wondering if she is dreaming. She glanced toward the side where Daenerys is also doing the same thing.

“They left it open and just leave.” She said in a daze before locking with grey eyes. Arya was already on her feet when someone suddenly walk by their cell.

It’s not the guards but a slave. He didn’t even chance a glimpse at the two women and continue walking along the hallway in a haste. Deciding that she should do the same, Arya push the metal door further and step out for the second time. More of the slaves are walking towards the path that she took before she fought the Manslayer. She guesses they are heading towards the arena.

“Where are they going?” Daenerys asked softly. Her voice close to Arya's ear.

Arya ignores the older woman and starts walking, joining the others. She can feel Daenerys following her from behind.

The guards are still there by the large opening at their post, watching silently as the other slaves walk pass them and head to the clearing. Their hands at the hilt of their club, ready for any defiance. As Arya steps into the arena, the first thing she sees is a bucket of water. And then some more. There were located at the middle of the ground where the others already huddled around. Washing and drinking to their hearts content. She scans the area and notice the two guards still guarding the main door, separating the outside world with theirs.

A flash of silver hair caught her eyes then and she snapped her head at the back but found no Daenerys by her side. When she looks ahead again, the said woman is already by the main door, talking with the two guards.

*What is she trying to accomplish? Talking her way out of here?*
Arya shakes her head. Partly amused and partly impressed by the older woman bravery. Instead of heading towards her, Arya walks towards the source of water. Her thirst overpowering everything else at the moment. She grabs a pail of water and gulp it down sloppily. She let out a sigh of content as the cool water slide down her aching throat.

Deciding to make good use of the water, Arya reach for the clean cloth on the ground and damps it with the water. She wipes her face first and then her hands and arms. The once clear water now murk with blood and dirt. She proceeds to her body then, lifting her cloth just below her chest. Arya winced at the sight of her stomach and ribs. It was marked with an angry bruised. Gently, she wiped the damp cloth over her injured abdomen. The cool cloth provides little comfort but she is not one to complain.

Her senses suddenly in alert as she felt a rush of movement across the clearing. She glances up to find all the slaves looking at a small group of people a few feet from them. Arya decides to do the same and instantly recognizes one of them. Daenerys stands there with three other slaves that surrounds her. She looks so out of place among the others and her being there alone, attract attention. The three men that circled Daenerys all have a look of hunger and lust across their face, as if they are ready to pounce at their victim any moment. Arya searches around for the guards only to find them already aware of the situation. By the way of their stance, it seems like they don’t have any plan to stop the incoming attack on the defenseless woman. It was like they had anticipated this all along.

Is this what Qazlas planned? To let his slaves, do his dirty work?

Arya frowns then. She looks away and continue her unfinished business. Trying hard to squeeze the water out of the fabric.

Well, she’s not my problem.

Laughter erupts from the group of people and Arya involuntarily snaps her head at them to find that Daenerys already sprawled on the ground. One of the man has her pinned down and at that scene, something within her comes apart then. Her teeth clench so tight that it hurts and her mouth twitching with towering rage. She didn’t even realize her feet has taken off and as she strides pass the other slaves who stood watching, her hand reach for the littered bars of soap that the guards conveniently left for them.

Her eyes never leave the man that was on top of Daenerys. When he is clear within her line of view, Arya takes aim and throws one of the soap at him with all her strength. Within seconds, the soap flies and hits him right on the head, successfully tearing him away from Daenerys. He moans in pain while clutching his bleeding head with his hands.

All heads turn her way. The other two slaves shot her look of confusion as if they were asking if she is really interfering. At that, Arya picks another piece and throws it again to one of the man, hitting his chest as he flinches, confirming their suspicion. The two men shift their attention and make way towards her with anger radiating from their body when she just interrupts their fun.

She backs away as the two men closing in. Her eyes darts around for anything that can give her the upper hand. With the wet cloth still in her hand, Arya takes a handful of soaps and wrap them around the cloth, making her very own personal weapon.

Swift as a dear. Quick as a snake. Fear cuts deeper than sword.

She replayed it over and over her head like a prayer and it gives her the surge of energy she craves. She stops backing away and let them come to her instead. Eyeing the empty bucket not far, she
reaches for it and quickly throws the wooden pail on one of the man. Unprepared, he stumbles backward as the pail land perfectly on his head while his other companion charges towards her. Arya ducks away swiftly as his fist caught nothing but air. She swings her cloth full of soaps then, successfully hitting his side. The man groan in response at the weight inflicted. Arya waste no more time as she swings again, this time to his head. He fell on all four just as his other companion recovered and strides forward with faltered steps.

Finally noticing his friend lying on the ground, grunting with pain, he lunged at Arya. But, of course the smaller woman prepared for it as she quickly side stepped any advance from him. It was just like when she did her water dance. The fact that she had smaller frame than her opponent makes it easier for her to dodge and harder for him to hit the target. She twists and turns some more until her opponent let his frustration get the best of him. At that, Arya put all her force into swinging her weapon at his opening. The weight hit him hard on his unguarded head and he fell flat onto the ground, unconscious.

Arya drew in panted breath as sweat trickle down her forehead. She clenches her jaw tight, trying not to let anyone know she’s hurting. Each intake of breath only worsens her already broken ribs. Gripping her weapon tightly, she scans the area searching for anymore enemy that wanted to try her. Other than the two men that she had beaten and another one that still whines over his bleeding head, no one seems to want to step in and follow the fallen men’s footsteps. She glares at each one of them and intentionally let out a threatening growl just to be sure and not a moment after, the other slaves disperse and head on to continue what they were doing before the commotion.

Arya instantly relaxes her stance at that. Her eyes naturally dart toward Daenerys and finds that she is still on the ground staring back at her, awestruck. Finding no threat surrounding the older woman, Arya turns around and walks away, intending to finish what she started. All the more, now that she got dirty again.

She had a plan now. And after the incident earlier that day with the other slaves, it only strengthens her next course of action. Now that Arya knew this is real and never a dream, she intends to find out the truth. She wants to know what happen to her other family. To Jon, her mother, Robb and Rickon. And even Bran, if he ever got away from the Lannister raid. She needs to know. By staying here, she would not gain any of that and so she decides to escape one way or another.

Back at her appointed cell, Arya instantly removes pieces of cloth that she had collected from the arena where she purposely hid and tied around her leg. Luckily the guards paid her no attention as she picks each cloth they provided for her personal needs. At the hem of her breeches, two long rusty nails – which she gathered along the brick wall outside – join the now pile of cloth. Arya reaches for two clothes and tied their end together, tightly.

“Thank you, Accalia… For earlier.” Daenerys voice suddenly echoes making Arya stops her action. She nearly forgot the woman’s existence as she’s too caught up in her own world.

“Just say anything you wish, and I will fulfill it once we’re out of here – If it’s within my power.” Daenerys continues. Arya tilts her head and focus on the older woman for the first time.

*My wish is to get home. Can you fulfill that Daenerys Targaryen?*

She asked silently. Daenerys only stares back at her dumbfounded by the unexpected reaction she gets. Arya let out a silent huff then, shaking her head lightly.

*Never mind. I’ll do it myself.*
She looks down again and proceeds to reach for another cloth and tie its end to the already tied piece of cloth, making a rope of her own.

“Accalia, what are you doing?” Daenerys asked in a hush tone, slowly sliding towards where Arya sits.

Arya frowns as she heard the name but continue her work anyway, ignoring her question. She can feel the older woman close to her now. Close enough to make out what she is making.

“Are you planning to escape?” Daenerys asked with disbelief. “You are planning to escape.” She declares after a few moments. Her voice echo along the cell making Arya glares at her.

_Tell the whole world, why don’t you?_

“How are you planning to do that?” Daenerys asked again, frowning. When Arya didn’t answer as always, she continues. “I don’t think this is a good idea. I know you can fight well but there are guards everywhere. You cannot fight them all by yourself. Besides, the door is locked. How are you going to get out of this cell anyway?” she finished, breathless.

Silence stretch before them as Arya proceeds tying another cloth between them.

“Accalia, you are only going to get yourself hurt. It would not be wise to act alone. If you just— “

“Arya.”

Daenerys blinks hard at the younger woman, wondering if she heard it right or was just dreaming of it. Arya looks up, staring evenly at the silver-haired queen. Her voice sounds foreign even to her ears. She swallows another lump dryly before opening her mouth again.

“My name is Arya.”

**Chapter End Notes**

The fight scene is inspired by the drama K2 as below link. You guys should totally check it out. ;P

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FND8e_Ed1bg
Chapter Summary

In which we get to hate Qazlas a little more and our little wolf assassin is finally becoming more of herself again...slowly

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Arya didn’t know what possessed her to try and speak for the first time in a long time. Maybe because of Daenerys keeps calling her that name she loathes, that never truly represent her or maybe because she is too irritated of the older woman constant buggering.

Either way, she had spoken and told Daenerys her real name. Arya glanced towards the silver-haired woman and regret starts to fill her as the said person stares at her with a repressed smile. The smaller woman glares in return as to find nothing at all amusing. But, it only has the opposite reaction as Daenerys continues smiling, genuinely this time.

Arya looks away, ignoring her and proceeds to tie the cloth again. The pieces of cloths are becoming more and more like a rope now. Though she had doubts it will serve as properly as one, it will have to do. She steals some glances towards her cell mate.

Well, at least she’s quiet now.

“So, Arya.” Daenerys trails softly. Arya groans inwardly as her peace got short-lived yet again. “You have a lovely name.” she commented.

Arya reaches for another piece of cloth leaving her compliment hung in the damp air. At the corner of her eyes, she saw Daenerys scoots closer to her. She only stops when one of her knees made contact with hers. Arya looks to her side, frowning which Daenerys responded with a perfect arched brow, her smile still lingers on her face. The younger woman tries very hard to ignore the warm skin against hers.

What is she so damn happy about?

“Did your parents gave you that name?” Daenerys asked gently.

At that, grey eyes turn cold and hard. The last memories of her father and mother come uninvited at the back of her mind. The changes did not go unnoticed by the older woman. The tension surrounding them almost palpable by the second. Not wanting to offend the younger girl anymore, Daenerys tries to change the subject.

“What are you going to do with these?” she asked as she reached for a piece of cloth among the others. “How did you even smuggled all of these without notice is beyond me.” she murmurs.

Instead of answering, Arya shoves a cloth over to Daenerys. She held her gaze until the older woman finally takes it from her hands and then mirroring her action, tying them against one another.

“Does this mean you will include me in your plan to escape?” Daenerys asked. Arya looks up to find her looking down, still focus in tying. Her violet eyes calm but a trace of anxiousness is in there.
She thinks I’m going to try and escape alone.

It’s not that the thought had never crossed her mind or anything, but, after experiencing the earlier incident with the slaves, it was obvious that this woman, Daenerys will either die or seriously injured if she leaves her alone in here. The other slaves might try something else the next time the cell door opens again.

And while all of these are not her problems anyway, it seems to be one of Qazlas’s. Though her master showed no specific interest in this claimed to be Queen of Meereen, Arya knows better. After all these years living under his grip, she knows her master like the back of her hand. The man is a sadistic and egoistic bastard. He will try to break your spirit first before finally getting to his true intentions. That was always his way of doing things and it has always work to his favor. With herself being here, struggling to speak is the proof of that. Moreover, this place is a perfect medium to achieve whatever he had planned for the silver-haired queen. Arya will not let that happen naturally, for the sake of pissing off Qazlas, of course. So, there is no other way than bringing the older woman along.

Daenerys looks up, making Arya focus her attention back at her. Knowing that she still has not gotten her answer, Arya gives her a subtle nod. If anyone wasn’t paying attention, they would miss it. But luckily Daenerys had her close by that it’s hard not to notice it.

At that answer, Daenerys looks down again with a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth.

******

When the sun disappeared and the stars takes its place, the young woman stays rooted in her place ever since the last hours. Her back leaned against the wall with her feet straight. Her breathing in an orderly manner and her eyes closed. If anyone were to see the young wolf, they would think she was in a deep slumber. Dreaming of good things and places even. But, that was not the case at all.

In fact, she was waiting and studying. She finds that the other slaves sometimes tried to make conversations with one another despite their captivity. How the guards would ignore the noise and the fact that they only bring food to a certain slave at a time. She still waits for her turn. Also how her cell mate, Daenerys seems to hum a certain kind of song at a times when she thought the younger girl had drifts off, though it never minded her that much. The sound was soothing to her ears.

The faint lullaby grows even fainter until it stops completely only to be replaced with a set of footsteps echoing outside the hallway. Calm as still water, Arya waits until the crunch of boots against cold ground sounded no more. Only to be followed by a distinct thud soon after and then the steps echo again and grew fainter by the seconds. She guesses her food had finally made an appearance.

Perfect timing.

Now she can finally start her plan. But, first thing first. She needs all the energy she can get to make her escape succeeds and naturally the food that arrived become just that.

The first thing Arya sees after opening her eyes is the side of a woman sitting by the metal door. In front of her, a tray of food lay untouched. Her violet eyes seeming focus on the warm meal as if she was feasting with only her eyes. Arya stifle a chuckle at the scene. She made an effort to move closer to her then, making the older woman snaps out of her stupor.

“Arya, you’re awake?” Daenerys asked softly, eyeing the younger girl her every move as she slides over and sit right in front of her. The tray of food now between them.
There is only one small loaf of bread with a bowl of some kind of thick soup in it. Without wasting anymore time, Arya reaches for the bread, breaking it in half and dips it into the soup before shoving it inside her mouth, feeding her hunger. When only that she had taken another bite of the bread that she realizes the older woman is staring at her and at the other piece of bread that left untouched, repeatedly.

Daenerys swallows dryly as she studies the meal in front of her, looking unsure. The bread looks inviting despite its looks making her stomach grumble in response. Even though she had not eaten since they captured her and brought her here, it was obvious the younger girl is in need it more. Especially since her last course of activities.

She remembered back the first time she saw the wolf-girl in the cell. At that time, she almost thought that a beast was in fact in here. Her clear grey eyes shines over the darkness. Her unkempt hair and her clothes, stained with blood and dirt and how she had actually growled at her. But, after spending more time with her, those things had not bothered her that much, now. There is something with this girl that Daenerys cannot point out. She intrigued her somehow.

Arya raises a brow at the older woman blank face as she reaches for the bowl of soup and gulp half the content before finishing her bread. Seeing that Daenerys still in her reverie, she takes the other half of bread on the tray and shoves it to her hands, forcing her to take it.

Violet eyes focus back into grey ones. “You can have it.” Daenerys said kindly, pushing the bread to her again. Arya frowns.

What is this woman’s problem?

“I don’t feel very hungry.” Daenerys continues, trying hard to convince the younger girl. As if on cue, a rumble of noise suddenly can be heard from her way. Arya shot her an incredulous look as the older woman blush under her gaze. Clearly her stomach feels the exact opposite.

“Eat.”

Arya didn’t know if it was because the silver-haired queen was shocked to hear her voice came out again or the fact that she cannot hide her hunger anymore. But, either way, Daenerys finally accepts the bread and starts eating. As Arya stares at the older woman, a huff escaped her, amused seeing how well-mannered Daenerys is while eating, despite the obvious hunger.

As expected from the Queen of Meereen, I guess.

Letting her finished her meal, Arya stands up and walks toward the corner of the cell, where her treasures lay hidden within the shadows. She picks up the tangled of cloths which are now perfectly tied together and wind the make-shift rope over her shoulder and down her chest. The two rusty nails soon follow suits and be kept within her grip.

“You’re escaping now?” Daenerys voice enters her ears. Arya turns around then, finding the silver haired queen already finished her meal.

She strides over to the metal door and reaches for the lock that bind the cell door, answering the question with her action instead.

With the rusty nail in hand, she inserts the thin steel into the bottom of the key hole and another nail at the top. Pressuring both the nails until one of them suddenly goes further into another hole. She pushes the nail further until it catches and a few seconds later, it clicked and the lock opens up. A small smile tugging at the corner of Arya’s mouth as she succeeds breaking her first obstacle. She
looks over her shoulder to find Daenerys standing behind her with a disbelief look.

Carefully, Arya push the metal door further, not wanting to make any unnecessary noise and steps outside. Daenerys follows closely from behind. As expected the guards are not visible along the hallway, though she knows outside the slaves’ resident is a different matter. Arya just hopes the guards for the night had lessen in numbers.

She continues further until a hand over her shoulder caught her, halting her steps. She looks behind to lock with violet eyes.

“What about the others?” Daenerys’s hush voice sounded in the darkness of the hallway. Arya turns fully with a frown, not believing what she just asked.

Did she forgot who tried to hurt her earlier?

Besides, letting the other slaves out is a not a smart move. And even if Arya wanted to save them, time is running out and she will not have enough time to get them free anyway. What she had learned the last hours is that the guards will usually send one of them in a routine to check up on them every fifteen minutes. And the time is ticking away as Daenerys questioned every moves that the younger girl already decides.

She swallowed dryly before trying to form the words. “There is no time.” Arya answered. That seems to shut Daenerys up.

Without wasting anymore time, Arya turns back around and strides faster towards the end of the hallway. Another familiar metal door greets her and she carefully approaches it, afraid of unexpected guards outside. She crouches and takes a peek from the corner of the lock door to find no one is guarding outside. At that, Arya pull out her very own key and stick them into the key hole. Like before, after a few twisting and pressuring, the metal door unlocked itself. Carefully, she pushes it open and steps outside with Daenerys in tow.

The outside surrounding seems quiet, almost too quiet and Arya didn’t like it at all. Even their breathing sound too loud in her ears. She pushes the door close again and put its lock where it was supposed to be hoping it will give them more time and the guards would not notice someone just walk out from here.

Just when she is about to take out the nails out of the keyhole, a sound of footsteps alerts her senses and she instantly snaps her head at the direction it was coming from. But, it becomes a second too late as she come upon a man who stands across them, staring at both of them repeatedly with his eyes blinking hard. Arya tightens her grip with the nails on both her hands.

Well, shit.

“Hey! You!” the guard’s voice booming around them. He takes a hesitant step forward. His right hand reaching for the hilt of his club. “What do you think you are doing?” he asked threateningly.

Arya can sense Daenerys tense up from the back. Earning no answer, he finally takes out his weapon from his belt. His steps become more confident now as he moves closer to the two unidentified figures. Instead of turning and running away, Arya takes a step towards him instead, mirroring his actions. The man seems taken aback by the unexpected advance.

“Stop right there!” he orders. Arya pays him no heed and sprint towards him instead, nails on the ready.

The guard makes the first move as he swings his club over her. But, it caught nothing but air as Arya
ducks away. She thrusts her fist – where the nails had been secure along her fingers – to his opening by his side then, earning a groan of agony from her opponent. Quick as a snake, she thrusts again and again until the nails puncture his neck, cutting his artery. The man kneels on the floor with his body full of holes as he finally falls down. His blood drips from the thin metal joining the already soiled ground.

Daenerys stares from across with a daze. It’s always amazing to see the little wolf moves. It was as if she was dancing a deadly dance, gracefully if she might add. Her trains of thoughts got interrupted when the said person strides towards her and caught her by the arm, pulling her away from there.

As they both run outside the opening and into the arena, a flicker of lights caught their eyes. And sure enough where the main door is, stood two guards who are keeping watch. The lights from the torches surrounds them. Instead of running, Arya slows down and walks with careful steps. Her hand still gripping the older woman’s wrist as they practically slide over the wall, using the darkness to their advantage.

When they are far enough from the guards and the opening, Arya stops her track and turns around facing the wall. Although the height from the ground to the crowd-stand is above her head, it’s not really that high. Plus, with the crooked wall – from where the mismatch bricks – will give her the medium to go up easily. She decides then, taking a few steps back, she runs forward to the wall and lunged herself up. The pain shot her middle almost makes her faint right there as she hung against the wall but she grits her teeth, absorbing it when her hands caught the edge of the brick wall. She pushes herself up, climbing her way using the crooked walls, effectively closes the remaining distance and lands safely on the other side.

She slumps into the floor as she takes shaky breaths. Looking up at the beautiful starry sky, it calms her nerve somehow and ease the pain, where it become almost bearable now. Slowly, she stands up and looks down over the ground. Daenerys is still there, looking around every now and then to check if any of the guards notice them. Arya reaches over the wall, offering both her hands out for the older woman to take.

Daenerys looks up at the hands and at the younger face repeatedly. Doubt showing on her features whether she can go up and join the younger girl or not. But, clearly, she had to go up one way or another. Not wanting to ponder her useless thoughts anymore, Daenerys takes her hands with hers and starts climbing too.

After a few pulling and pushing from both women, Daenerys finally managed to climb over the wall and join Arya on the other side.

“Are you alright?” Daenerys asks. Concern plastered on her face as she studies the girl beside her. Arya gives her a nod, while trying to ease the strain she had force on her broken ribs. There is no time to linger about it now.

She stands up then and walks further upward where the crowd-stand ends. The first thing she sees over the wall and down to the ground on the other side is darkness. And it stretches until her eyes can see.

“Are we climbing down?” Daenerys voice breaks the silence. Arya chanced a glance over the silver-haired queen to see her looking down with a frown, hoping the young girl to tell her otherwise.

Arya pulls out her very makeshift rope from her chest then, unwinding it. Looking around, she found nothing suitable to tie the rope to. So, she takes the end and tied it against her middle instead before throwing the rest over the wall. It is hard to see if the rope ever touches the ground on the other side, but she doesn’t have the luxury to be certain. She just wishes it did for Daenerys sake.
All this while violet eyes follow the little wolf every action. And as second goes by, she cannot believe what the young girl in front of her is suggesting. Her guess proved right when she speaks her precious voice again.


“What? No. You won’t be able to hold me down. And what about you? Who is going to hold the rope for you then?” Daenerys said back, shooting a frustrated glare at her.

“I’ll manage.” Arya replies, ignoring the glare completely. “Go.” She continues the second time.

But, Daenerys still hold her stands, looking around to find another alternative. Arya was about to chew her teeth out at the stubborn queen but her action got cut off by a sound of a bell. Both of them freeze before looking at each other silently. The sound only grows louder by the seconds and down below, the lights from the torches are now becoming larger in numbers.

“Go. Now!” Arya said in a desperate tone. If they linger any longer, everything will be in vain. Daenerys stares at her and at the hustle down the arena repeatedly, conflicted. But as the noise of the men shouting from below grow louder, she made her decision then, to trust the wolf-girl.

As she climbs down, gripping the rope of clothes tightly like her life depends on it, she glanced up to find Arya struggling to keep her weight and to not fall over herself. Glancing down, she notices the simmering of sand from the ground and trust that the distance is close now. She lets go and jump down. Sure enough, her feet landed on the muddy sand.

A sigh of relief escaped her and Daenerys quickly looks up again to find the young girl, hovering over the wall. Her eyes darting down below.

“Arya!” Daenerys calls out. Arya instantly finds glowing violet eyes staring up at her despite the darkness and let out a breath she didn’t know she held.

Wanting to waste no more time, the little wolf untied the rope from her waist and ready to climb over the wall using her well-developed skills. But, just as she is about to do that, a swish sound of something cutting air enters her ears. She didn’t have the chance to confirm her suspicion when the said sound stops behind her only to be replaced by a force knocking her against the wall.

Arya blinks hard as she tries to understand the sudden pain that shot her back. She looks over her shoulder to find an arrow sticking out. Her breath caught in her throat as she looks down again to find violet eyes staring back in shock.

As the sounds of hurry steps echo from behind her, Arya forces herself up. She turns around and finds that the guards have already made their way up. Now here she stands, alone, with two rusty nails as her weapons while more than a dozen men just a few feet before her, their own weapons at the ready.

Gritting her teeth while trying hard not to acknowledge the fact that she just got shot by an arrow, she lunged at one of the guards. Her nails finding another victim as it pokes another hole. The man falls down reaching for his neck, trying to stop the bleeding, but it was of no use. Seeing that the others are not prepared, Arya continues her attack on them. As another one falls down, she isn’t aware of a club swinging her way, successfully knocking the breath out of her. It only takes a second before the other guard swarm her way and pin her over the wall.

As she struggles, her grip on the nails loosen and one of the guard intentionally force the arrow on her back further into her flesh. Arya whimpers as the pain caught her off guard. Her limbs
automatically lose control as black spots keeps clouding her vision. But, as she looks down again at the ground on the other side, she finds no violet eyes looking back, only darkness.

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It was hard to focus when you keep drifting in and out of consciousness. For a moment Arya thought that she was already dead. But, the hot sand on her knees and feet tells her otherwise. The occasional sharp pain on her back keeps bugging her. And there are murmurs floating around. She tries to focus on them.

“–do you hear me?!”

A stinging pain shot through her face making her snap her head to the right. She can almost hear the ringing inside her ears. And then her head is forced up.

Arya grunts in response as she tries to open her eyes. She blinks a few times to adjust the now bright light before registering a man is in front of her, looking down.

“Accalia, my dear. I am very disappointed in you.” The man said. His voice disturbingly gentle as he tightens his grip on her hair. “Has the cunt Queen whispers you good things, that you are willing to help her escaped?” he asked. Arya swallows dryly as she studies the man and soon his features were familiar.

Qazlas.

“Have I not given you enough?” Qazlas asked again, locking with grey eyes for a moment before he lets go of his grip – none too gently – and let out a sigh.

She takes a shaky breath as Qazlas walks away, leaving the space to herself. As she glanced to her right, there is a shackle secured tightly around her wrist. Same goes for the left, making her arms spread wide. Her knees and feet strain against the hard sand. And when she tries to get up, the chain rattles in protest making her stay where she is, kneeling. She looks around then and recognize the place as the arena. A few guards are standing within a safe distance from her.

“I had plans for her, you know.” Qazlas speaks up again, turning around towards her. “And now, I had none.” He finished. Frustration clearly evident on his features.

Arya frowns as she tries to recall back what had happened. It took her a moment but everything falls back in place as she remembers why she is in this predicament. Daenerys face comes flashes back only to be replace with her being gone along the darkness of the night.

She left me behind.

Arya cannot help when a chuckle escaped her dried lips thinking how amusing fate is.

I should have left her here and escaped alone.

But, she didn’t and here she is now. Kneeling over Qazlas, waiting for her punishment instead. She didn’t realize the said man had stride off towards her with anger radiated through his body.

He yanked her hair again, forcing her to look up at him. “Do you think this is amusing, Accalia?” he asked, tilting his head. Arya looks back evenly with calm eyes. The chains that bound her wrists rattles as she pulls them, trying to get loose.

That seems to struck a nerve on Qazlas. He reaches at her back then and twist the wooden arrow that
is still planted inside her. Arya’s eyes grew wide as she stifles a scream at the sudden pain. A whimper escapes her instead.

Qazlas had a sick smile on his lips as he continues twisting and pushing the arrow further. She closes her eyes tightly, clenching her jaw tight as the pain double. It lasts for an eternity for all Arya knew when the pain suddenly stops and she drew in a shaky breath.

“I don’t think so too.” He said, finally letting go of the young girl. “You know what I do to disobedient slaves, Accalia. Let this be a lesson for you not to cross me the next time.” he finished and motion for one of the guards to come to him.

“You do not own me, Qazlas.” Arya spat at the last word. She looks up to find Qazlas staring wide eyed, his mouth slightly open. She smirks at that.

“Not before, not now and not ever. Let that stuck into your thick skull.” She taunts with cold and dangerous eyes that would make men shivers if not for her shackles.

Silence stretch before them as they both stare at each other. Slowly Qazlas walks toward her with cold eyes of his own, though Arya can trace a hint of irritation in there.

“Fifty lashes.” He speaks. Arya gave him no satisfaction in responding. So she stares ahead instead, not giving a damn about what he wants to do.

Qazlas’s mouth twitch in annoyance. “Make that a hundred.” He declares.

When none of the guards responded to his instruction, he snaps his head at them. Instantly, one of the guards walks out to him, a whip is in his hands.

“Master Qazlas, a hundred? She will not survive it.” The guard whispers though Arya can clearly heard him anyway. Qazlas tilt his head to him, furious eyes staring at the man as he cowers under his gaze.

Taking that as a yes, the guard bow his head and strides towards the young girl. He walks pass her and stays behind, whip at the ready. Arya closes her eyes then, bracing herself against what is coming.

The lashing starts immediately. One, two, three – in quick succession.

She grits her teeth and concentrate on not breaking down.

Four, five, six, seven – they keep coming thick and fast. The pain, Arya concludes is not too much since she had worse before, but then as the minutes go by and the blows rained down her body, her skin softened and the pain grew to the point that she felt her back was on fire.

Twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five – she swears she heard something torn apart. Maybe her skin or her cloth or maybe both, she didn’t know. The blows keep coming and when it hit her injured shoulder where the arrow had been, Arya recoils involuntarily. The shackles rattle as she did so.

She vaguely hears the man still counting as her back was still on fire. But, at least she did not scream for the sick bastard’s pleasure. That is all the satisfaction that she needs. Sweat trickles down her forehead as she stifles another scream. She tries not to move that much and hoping to get this over with.

As time goes by and the whipping still continues, Arya can hardly feel anything anymore. She guesses it’s probably time for her. Maybe this is how she supposed to end things, though it makes no
sense. Why would the Gods granted her wish and send her back in time just so that she can die in the hands of a sadistic bastard?

Truth be told, up to this point, Arya could not care less about them anymore, and their reasons. They all had been playing with her, the old Gods, the New, even the God of death. They can go to hell, all of them. At least she can join her father and sister now.

A loud roar suddenly jolts her up. Arya looks up in daze to find Qazlas looking up the sky with a frightened look. The other guards share the same sentiment as him. With the last energy she had left, she mirrors their action and looks up to the sky.

Another roar sounded as a massive beast of black and red colored scales fly by them. Its wide red-black wings spread over them creating a moving shade as it flew around the pit. Arya was left in awe as the said beast fly up further to the blue sky before turning around and dive towards them. At that movement, the men grew anxious and started to wield their club against the incoming beast, though Arya doubt it would make any difference.

Before she thought the beast might crash down upon them, it breathes fire instead while flying off again, conveniently lighting up the men in front of her. Arya swears she notice a flash of silver on top of the beast.

The heat from the fire hit her face as the men screams and flails around in circle but the chaos goes unnoticed by the young girl. A smile tugging at the corner of her lips as she watched the beast fly in its glory.

_Dragons do exist after all._
Safe Haven

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf deals with her injuries.

Chapter Notes

A little FYI before you continue with the chapter.. Since Daenerys got caught by Qazlas men instead, she didn't have the Dothraki army yet. However, she will get it eventually by going to Vaas Dothrak to make terms with the Khals. I won't put it in the story, that's why I said now. Either way, Daenerys gets her army.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Death was a strange and confusing thing. Sure the young wolf had never been fully experience it thus she cannot be comparing it with anything else. Perhaps this is exactly what death feels like, for all she knows. But, nonetheless, it was not at all like she had expected – maybe white fluffy clouds and a rippling river – at least there should have been something resembling the Heavens from all the songs and prayers. Instead, she was stuck in this weird darkness.

Not even a peaceful one at that. She had felt the fire engulfing her as her whole body drench in sweat due to the excessive warmth and then there’s shouting and utter chaos before she was hit with a heavy wind slapping her face. The wind was so strong that it had kept her eyes closed, sealing it effectively even if she wills it to do otherwise. So, Arya had succumbed to the force and continue being in this abnormal circumstances.

Sometimes, she would hear phantom voices around her and not one of them were familiar. She never caught what they said as her head was starting to hurt, along with other parts of her body. It felt like her whole body is beginning to wake up. Piece by piece. Inch by inch. The feeling of her fingers were the first sense that she gained and then her toes, where it flowed through her ankles, up to her knees, and from her arms to her – *Oh gods that hurt!*

Heavens were not supposed to hurt. Perhaps, she was not in the Heavens after all. Why would she be? She had done many things that are horrible and unkind. Killed many people. She even cursed the Gods just before she had died. Maybe she belongs in Hells after all, as she deserved.

The pain was beginning to radiate through her body and she was literally squirming in the darkness. The excruciating pain seemed to be coming from one part of her body in particular, or rather a couple of parts, on her back and shoulder. It was as if an actual flame had lick their way up her back and shoulder, eating her skin and flesh. It had probably lasted for an eternity for all she knows since there is no way to differentiate the time in this darkness.

But, as fast as the pain comes, it went away and she can feel herself getting lost in her own body. It was an unsettling feeling, but somehow Arya felt an odd sort of comfort in it. She felt herself slip into deeper unconsciousness and the dark become impossibly darker.
She had no way of knowing how long she was out for or how long she had let herself get lost in the dark. But all good things come to an end as she was jolted awake by the sharp pain from her back. Her entire body tensed up as she willed her mind to attached itself to her own, gaining her control when she clenched her hands into fists in order to endure the pain.

Ever so slowly, Arya felt her eyes flutter a few times before they open fully. She looks ahead in daze before finally registering what’s in front of her or rather what it is that is staring at her.

Its glossy black feathers were shining from the reflections of the sun. It sits there silently, eyeing her while cocking its head to the side by the open window. Arya stares back at the lost raven and swallows dryly, trying to make sense of it all.

Am I still alive? She wonders.

The raven’s loud croak brought her back from her trance confirming her suspicion. She focused back her attention to the black bird sitting by the window. It tilts its head again as if to welcome her back into the living before spreading its wings and fly off to the horizon.

Arya let her eyes wander as far she can around the place she was currently at. The room was as big as her old room in Winterfell. She was lying sideways in the bed. The side table was prepared with a glass and a full jug of water. She forced a lump down her throat suddenly feeling very thirsty.

She tries to move and gets up but the movement shot fire through her back and shoulder, making her groan in response. Instinctively, she wraps her arms around her middle as the pain subsides slowly. Squaring her jaw, she moves again for the second time. It was still as excruciating as before but at least now she knows what to expect.

A few torturing and grunting moments later, she finally able to get up. Her legs hanging by the bed as her hand reach for the jug of water. The weight of the liquid caught her by surprise as the jug slips through her fingers and onto the floor. The shattering glasses were loud to her ears.

Before she can mourn for the loss, her ears caught a few set of footsteps outside, along with murmurs. She snaps her head to where the door is and suddenly panic starts to fill inside. She didn’t know what and who might burst through the door. The last thing she remember were Qazlas, the burning men and – she stops short.

Dragon. And a red-black huge dragon.

Not wanting to appear vulnerable to whoever might walk in here later, she pushes herself forward, leaving the comfort of her bed. As soon as her bare feet touch the cool and smooth floor, her face follows soon after with a thud. She closes her eyes tight not wanting to make any unnecessary sound. It was tempting to just lay in the floor right then.

But the thought of an incoming possible threat gave her the surge of energy she needed. With every last bit of strength she had, Arya pushes herself up again. She takes the largest piece of the shattered glass along the process, as her legs finally able to hold her weight. With a ragged breathing, she wobbles her way to the closed door and stationed herself against the wall, away from the door’s eyes range.

Calm as still water. Fear cuts deeper than sword. Fear cuts deeper than sword.

She tightens her hold on the pointed glass as her breathing starts to calm down, ready to pounce whoever that is about to come in. The sounds seem louder and closer. Any second now.

The door suddenly creaks open and with it come a flash of silver along with the others. They walk
pass her and further into the room, not noticing the young girl with a sharp glass against the wall.

“The people of Meereen is recovering as best as they can, Your Grace – considering the damages
that have been made.” A foreign deep voice echoes along the room.

“Good. Make sure to disperse both the Unsullied and the Second Sons to aid them. Clear the rubbles,
rebuilt their homes and provide them enough reserve to hold for a month.” Another voice replies,
though this one sounds feminine and somehow familiar.

Arya studies silently from the back as they exchanged their talk. There are half a dozens of people in
front of her. Two women and four men, though one of the men looks much older and armed-less.
There are too many for her to take out with the condition that she was in with her barely able to hold
herself up.

Silence stretch for a moment as the woman – who they called ‘Your Grace’ – walks further into the
room and towards the bed she had been a few minutes ago. Deciding that this is the best time to
attack before they realize she had disappeared, Arya forced herself forward leaving the support the
wall provided. As fast as she can move, she lunged at the person who is the nearest to her.

“Where is – “ the woman’s voice was cut short as a surprise shriek enters their ears.

All heads turn Arya’s way, realizing for the first time of her existence. When three of the men
unsheathe their weapons unanimously and pointed them at her, Arya tightens the grip on her left arm,
securing the neck of her captive against her.

“Let her go.” One of the man said with a thick accent. His head bald and he wears a sleeveless black
armor. His dagger was amongst the weapons ready for her.

Arya backs away and threateningly place the sharp glass below her captive’s chin, which she later
found out was the other woman. She ignores the woman’s heavy breathing against her arm as much
as possible while trying to find a way out of here. But, her threat deems fruitless as the men moves
forward with every steps she takes, until they had her cornered against the wall. It seems they had no
love for the woman in her captive. Or perhaps they need an enhancement. She thrust the pointed
glass further to her skin until it brought blood.

“Arya, stop!”

She stops short – surprised to hear her name – just before she can do an actual damage to her captive.
She scans the men in front of her until her eyes finally caught the other woman. Her violet eyes come
into her view first before her silver-haired did.

The older woman looks cleaner from the last time Arya saw her. Her silver hair in a simple yet
elegant braid. Her clothes was something any royal would be dressed in. She blinks a few times
before settling on her features again. Daenerys was watching her with a frightful look.

Arya swallows dryly before she opens her mouth. “Daenerys?” she called her name for the first time.
Her voice sound small to her ears but clearly it was enough when the said woman forced a smile at
her.

“Yes, Arya.” Daenerys said kindly as she moves closer to her. But, her steps were hindered as the
men put themselves against the silver-haired queen.

“Khaleesi, it’s not wise to move further. She’s dangerous.” One of the men interrupts. His sword still
pointing at her.
“Move away, Ser Jorah.” Daenerys ordered. When the said man just stares at her, hesitating to do what she said, Daenerys turns her gaze towards the others. “Put down your weapons.” She orders again with a regal authority in her tone. “I will not ask twice.”

That seems to do the trick when the men slowly and carefully sheathed their weapons back where they came from. She continues her strides then to where she had intended and stops just a few feet from the confused and pale looking girl in front of her.

“Arya, you’re in a safe place.” Daenerys starts. She locked eyed with tearful brown ones, hoping to give her the comfort that everything will be alright. “This is Missandei. She’s a friend. I would like it, if you restrained yourself in putting any harm against her.” She finished. Arya frowns as she stares at the queen and at her captive, Missandei.

Silence stretch before them as the young wolf studies each one of them. The men possessed no threats now, though she can tell that their body are tensed and ready to attack her at any moment notice.

The suspicious looks did not go unnoticed by Daenerys. “These men will not harm you.” She counters. Arya focus her attention back at the older woman. “I won’t let them.”

Determined violet eyes against doubtful grey ones. Arya let her words sinks in and as she studies the silver haired queen, she traced no lie in her words and features. Deciding to trust the woman in front of her, slowly, her grip loosen and she puts the sharp glass away from Missandei’s neck.

Not until both her arms down to her side that Missandei finally walks away and into the arms of one of the men. The bald one.

Arya did not let go of the sharp glass as her captive reunited with – who she assumed – her lover. Instead she tightens it more around her grip as the other men kept eyeing her warily. She settles on violet eyes again. She had so many questions that she wanted to ask.

*Where is this place? Where is Qazlas? How long was she out? Did the dragon burn everyone and everything in Qazlas Pit? And who the hell are these people?*

“What happened?” Arya asked in a shaky voice instead. A frown on her face as the pain starts to crawl all over her body again. Daenerys strides closer.

“You need to rest.” She said, gentle but firmly.

Maybe it was because of the excruciating pain taking its toll on her or maybe because of the gentle violet eyes in front of her, either way, Arya didn’t even realize when Daenerys had reach for the pointed glass around her hand as she takes it away. But, she wasn’t allowed to protest as her vision starts to spin and before she knows it, she was swept away by unconsciousness as fast as she was awake.

*****

It was cold and then it was hot. And then it was nothing both. Her body seems to have an episode of its own and Arya can do nothing about it but endure. It felt like forever as she struggles to keep it together. Sometimes, she would dream of home, of Winterfell. Of Jon, Robb, and her mother. Even little Rickon. And in some other times, the faces of the dead haunt her.

Her father would appear, smiling at her. Not looking at all grim but for once he looks happy and content. Then Sansa came in with a perfect smile on her face making her ever so beautiful. They both look blissful and for that Arya wanted to believe it. Even if it is just a dream, she wanted them
to be happy and not worry about the living. She let them stays for a while until the feeling of guilt takes over. As if on cue, they both disappear into thin air, leaving her in utter darkness again.

“Wake up, Arya.”

A faint voice suddenly appears out of nowhere. She tries to focus on it but found nothing in the dark.

“Wake up.”

The voice sounded again and this time Arya knew who it was. His familiar voice has somehow turned deeper. The memories of him came uninvited as he ran after her along the courtyard in Winterfell. When they raced climbing on a tree. And when she always sneaked into his chamber to borrow some of his clothes.

As if he’s being called, Bran appears. He looks the same but somehow different. His face wears a sad and knowing smile.

“You will be alright, sister. When the time comes, you will make the right decision.” He said.

Before Arya can response, he vanished into thin air leaving her alone once more. But, it didn’t last that long as she was jolted awake a few moments later.

Her shallow breathing accompanying her as she takes her surrounding once more. She had somehow lying sideways on her bed again. The room was dark except for a few candles lighting at the corner. She blinks a few times as her gaze stops by the open window.

A black raven stood silently while tilting its head to the side, staring back at her. It's pair of black eyes glistening under the moonlight. Arya swears it was the same one which she found earlier. Just like before, it spreads its wings and fly off to the darkest of night. The sound of its flapping wings were the only thing left behind of its existence. But, it too grows fainter and completely disappear. She didn’t have the time to ponder over it as her eyes grow heavy again. And like an old friend, the dark swallows her whole.

*****

The third time Arya was forced awake from her deep slumber, she felt annoyed and frustrated. The movements from behind her make her wanted to scream and kick the person whoever it might be. She can clearly hear the click and clank sound violating her eardrums. Gods only know what they might be doing.

She tries to ignore the noise as much as she can, hoping to continue her much appreciated sleep. But, as always she never got her wish as a rustling sound of cloth was heard soon after. Arya would have let it be but when she felt the corner of her own cloths being pulled up from her body, she jerks her body upwards, turning around to face the perpetrator. She grits her teeth tight as the familiar pain shot through her back and shoulder but she ignores it.

The person startling face came into view next and Arya recognized him instantly. He was one of the men that came in here from before. His white hair and wrinkles on his face confirming of his old age.

“Get away from me.” Arya growls at him. The man held his hand up in defense as he stands on the other side of the bed.

“I am just the healer, girl. No need to be afraid. Let me do my work and I will be off before you know it.” He said back, kindly. Arya frowns as she studies the old man.
“Your wound needed cleaning and a new bandaged after. It can get worse if you let it untreated. Infectious even.” He continues, forcing a smile on his lips.

As if on cue, her back and shoulder shot another wave of pain as if to remind her of their existence. Arya looks down to the bed where a tray of various things she assumed needed to treat her wound was at before settling at the old man.

“I’ll do it myself.” She said.

“Do you know how?” he asked curiously.

“I’ll manage.” Her eyes cold, leaving no argument for the old man. The thought of the old man seeing her half naked strengthens her decision.

Seeing no other way to persuade her, the healer inclined his head as a goodbye bid and turns around for the door, leaving the young girl to attend her own injury. As soon as the door shut close, Arya let out a sigh as her features soften. She reaches absent-mindedly for the new bandages on the tray that has been left behind.

There are a few other things on the tray. A bowl of some kind of ointment, a bowl of water, a piece of cloth, and a pair of gloves. With a frown on her face, she takes them one by one to examine them before putting them back in place, trying hard to find a way to attend all these to her back.

Just when she is about to lifts her shirt up to see her injury, the creak sound of the door echoes through the room.

“I said I can do– “ Arya’s word stop short when not the old man that came into view but a woman instead.

Her brown eyes locked with hers, displaying no emotion. She had fluffy curly hair and darker skin tone. A small bandage was plastered just under her chin and Arya instantly recognizes that. Since it was her own doings after all.

Missandei strides closer to the bed, unaware of grey eyes studying her. “The healer said you shoo him away.” Not a question. “Unless you have a pair of eyes at the back of your head, you won’t be able to attend those wound.” She said as a matter of a fact.

“Get me a mirror then.” Arya retaliates. Missandei arched an eyebrow, surprised. But, there was a flicker of amusement in her eyes.

“I could do that.” She trails. “Or I could just attend to your injury. It will save you a lot of trouble and mine.” She finished, standing by the bed now.

Arya studies her with a frown. She looks harmless. Her eyes show nothing malice. If anyone, it should be the older woman that needs to be wary of her, with what Arya had done to her.

Seeing the doubtful look on the young wolf, Missandei takes that as a sign of agreement. She plops down the bed, reaching for the tray. Arya let out a defeated sigh and turns towards the open window, feeling defeated. She pulls her cloth up, revealing her bare back at the older woman.

Silence stretch among them as both are occupied with their own work. With Missandei washing away the wound on the back of the young girl before putting another new layer of ointment and with Arya trying hard to withstand the pain every contact her skin made.

“Where is this place?” Arya asked after a while. She had been wanting some answers and thought
that this is her chance before she can meet another living person.


“So, she’s really a queen then?” she asked.

Missandei stops her action, not understanding her question. Arya looks over her shoulder to catch brown eyes.

“Daenerys I mean.”

If Missandei was bothered by Arya using her name so casually, she didn’t show it. “Yes, she’s the Queen of Meereen, among other things as well.” She answered back. Arya looks ahead again pondering over her next question.

“How do I get here?”

“With Drogon.”

“What’s a Drogon?”

“It’s one of her Grace’s dragons.”

Her words hung in the air as Arya tries to understand them. She came here with Drogon? A dragon? As seconds go by, her eyes open wider with acknowledgement. She turns around so hard, her waist hurts.

“I rode a dragon?!” she asked, bewildered. Missandei blinks her eyes a few times, startled, before managing a nod at the young girl.

A huff escaped her at the older woman’s confirmation, surprised more than anything, as she looks ahead again.

I rode a fucking dragon. A shame I didn’t remember any of it.

“It was a surprised for us too when her Grace suddenly shows up while the city is at war... with you in tow.” Missandei speaks up from behind.

“War? With who?”

“The great masters. They tried to retake the city and reinstall slavery.”

“I assume you won then. If not, we won’t be here right now.”

“Yes. But not without casualties.”

Silence engulf them at Missandei’s last word. Arya can feel the new set of bandage against her back and she knows her time is almost up.

“What of Qazlas?” she asked.

“I did not know the details but the Queen had freed all the slaves from his pit while Daario and Ser Jorah dealt with him and brought him back to Meereen. I believe he died along the journey. Being dragged by a horse become his undoing.” Missandei replied.

Arya felt no pity at that. The only thing she felt was regret of not having to kill Qazlas herself. Well,
at least now he will not do any damages to anyone ever again.

So caught up in her own world, Arya didn’t even realize the older woman had finished attending to her wounds.

“I will bring some food later.” Missandei’s voice cut through. Arya looks over her shoulder to find the older woman is already preparing to leave. The tray was on her hands as she stands by the bed.

Gingerly, Arya slip into her cloth again before turning around.

“Thank you.” She said. Missandei gave her a nod and turns around to head for the door.

Arya watched as she walks gracefully across the room, pondering over the things she should have said to her sooner.

“Wait.” She said in a hurry. Missandei stops just outside the opened door to turn back around.

Arya swallows dryly before finding the courage to lock eyes with brown ones.

“I wanted to apologize.” She trails, trying to find the appropriate words. The older woman’s judging gaze did nothing to calm her nerve.

*For what? For hurting you? For trying to kill you?*

“For the cut. I didn't mean to...well I did mean it to happen, but that was before I know who you are.” She rambles awkwardly as her eyes flicker towards the cut that she left on Missandei and back up to brown eyes. Missandei stares at her with a slight smile tugging at the corner of her mouth, though the young woman doesn't notice it for she breaks her gaze and looks away after.

"Um...so, you know. I'm sorry." Arya finishes lamely.

"It's fine." Missandei answered after a moment. Arya instantly turns to the Naathi again searching the woman's features.

They exchange a look of understanding silently. When Missandei is sure that Arya knows she had accepted the apology, she gives a dismiss nod and turns around, walking out of the room, leaving the young Stark alone in her room to rest.

*****

It had been two weeks of recovering and boredom for the young wolf. She goes about the same routine almost every day. If not Missandei, then someone else would come by and bring her food and attend to her wound. By the time that her back and shoulder only left with numb pain, she can get on her feet steadily and roam around the pyramid, with discretion of course.

At nights, she would sneak out of her room and wander off into everywhere inside the pyramid. It was delightful to say the least, walking and studying each of the layout. It left her with amazement at the fact that it had three-and-thirty levels to begin with.

Arya had spent her time fully by going into each level. On the second level, where her interest lay, the armory is located while the third level holds the training hall. She would sometimes marvel on the weapons posted there and might have borrow some of it for herself.

She would have gone back home to Westeros, if not for Daenerys intend to see her first before she did so. And Arya agreed, deciding that it’s the least she can offer after the hospitality she received.
The fact that the Queen was away only makes it harder. So, she had to wait until the silver haired queen returned from wherever she might go before she is free to go. And it had stretch another week of her absence.

Arya let out a sigh as her eyes roamed the empty queen’s apartment. It was located in the lofty apex of the pyramid on the highest step. She only come here to confirm her doubts. But, as Missandei said, Daenerys is in fact not around. She proceeds down the steps, passing the audience chamber before she got to her room on the thirtieth level.

She didn’t get any sleep that night afraid of what she might be seeing in her dreams. It had becoming weirder every night. Bran would sometimes come, saying things she did not understand and then Nymeria.

Nymeria would be there, or rather she would be Nymeria. She would howl, run, and pounce at anything moving besides herself. Tearing them apart with her sharp and long teeth before devouring them whole. Arya swallows dryly as the bile taste of blood still lingers inside her mouth.

It was only when the fourth week came, that the Queen had finally return to the Great Pyramid. One of the handmaiden had come by to get her from her room, saying that the Queen is ready to see her. And Arya wasted no more time to linger. She follows the young girl climbing the steps to the Apex of the pyramid and they stop just in front of a huge ebony door that she never gotten inside yet.

Carefully, the girl pushes the door forward revealing its occupant. The first thing Arya sees is the round table and then her eyes dart forward where the silver haired queen was. Her back was against them as she looks beyond the opened wide verandah. Then, came the sound of people talking and Arya shifts her attention back at the round table noticing for the first time they are not alone.

Missandei was there along with the Unsullied commander, Grey Worm – whom Arya had later found out – with a serious expression on their faces. She didn’t have the chance to look at the others when Daenerys voice cut through.

“Thank you for all your concern, truly. But, what’s done is done. I have come back in one piece and along with me a hundred thousand Dothraki army who are willing to cross the narrow sea. All we need now are ships. A lot of them.” she said with that familiar regal tone of hers.

Someone suddenly cleared his throat. “Just so happen, Your Grace. Yara Greyjoy arrived last night to negotiate with you. She is offering the use of her fleet for the conquest of mainland Westeros in exchange for an independent iron islands under her rule.”

“And what did you say to that?”

“I said I’ll take that proposal to the Queen. She’s staying in the guest room in The Heart.”

“Will her fleet be enough, lord Tyrion?” Daenerys asked, moving closer to the round table.

Arya blinks hard as all their words sinks in. She felt like an intruder there, hearing things she should not listen and could not quite understand, but upon hearing the familiar name, her body suddenly tensed. The last time she met him was beside the dead Cersei, after she had killed her. Her eyes dart towards where Daenerys was looking.

“I think so, Your Grace.” Tyrion said with a smile before downing her favorite wine.

“Your Grace, Arya is here.” The handmaiden’s voice suddenly echoes, stopping all other conversation in the room.
All heads turn their way. For the first time, Arya felt exposed. Tyrion’s eyes were on her the moment he realized she was on him. He blinks a few times at her. His mouth opening slightly as if to say something. But, it got cut short.

“Arya, how are you feeling?” Daenerys asked with a slight smile. Arya took a moment to right herself before cutting her gaze with Tyrion.

She swallows dryly as she locked with violet eyes. “I feel fine.” She croaks and stares back silently, don’t know what else to say. At the corner of her eyes, she can feel Tyrion’s gaze still on her.

"I'm glad to hear that." Daenerys makes a move around the table, passing by Tyrion and the others so she can stand in front of the young wolf.

“Do you remember what I said to you during our stay in the cell?” she asked suddenly. A solemn expression on her face. Arya frowns, trying hard to remember back.

“You said a lot of things.” She commented. Daenerys let out a chuckle.

“I did, didn’t I? Well, you can’t blame me, you’re not much of a talker, back then.” she counters. Arya let out a small smile at that, acknowledging it.

She can sense the others watching them both with interest, especially a certain Lannister. But, Arya decides to not let him in her head. After all, she has done nothing wrong. Except killing the bitch Queen, Cersei that is. But, he doesn’t know that.

“I said that I would grant you a wish once we got out of there.” Daenerys continues. “So, tell me what you wish for, and I will grant it, if its within my power.”

Now that the silver haired queen said it again, Arya remembers it clearly. It was right after she save her from the slaves’ rampage, where she had told her the first time. Even though, she wanted to say that they’re even now – since she saves her from Qazlas anyway – but she guessed, she won’t say no if the Queen really insist. She could use a little help along the way.

“My only wish is to go home.” She said back. Daenerys let out a kind smile.

“Of course. I can have my men escorts you back to your home, safely.” She said, comfortably. “Where would that be?”

“Winterfell.” Arya said back, without second thought. Daenerys blinks a few times, wondering if she heard it right.

“Winterfell?” she repeated with a frown.

“Yes.” Arya nodded.

Silence stretch among them as confused violet eyes locked with determined grey ones.

“I believe that you might have stumble upon a lost wolf, Your Grace. This is Arya Stark.” Tyrion speaks up suddenly, breaking the silence. All heads turn to him, letting his word sinks in before they turn to Arya.

“You’re a Stark?” Daenerys asked even though, Tyrion just confirmed it.

The once gentle and kind violet eyes now gone. Instead they were cold and hard. And Arya can’t see nothing but hatred inside them.
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The older woman’s tone of saying her family’s name almost felt like an insult making the young girl frown in confusion. She held her gaze then.

“Yes. As much as you’re a Targaryen and he’s a Lannister.” Arya said back, nudging her head towards Tyrion who is making his way towards her.

“Ah, so you remember me?” Tyrion asked suddenly, raising both eyebrows. Arya shifts her attention at him who is standing beside the silent Daenerys now.

“It’s hard to forget a Lannister face.” She stated as a matter of fact. Tyrion let out a smirk, amused.

Tyrion having senses the sudden tension in the air chanced a glance at the silver haired queen. Her violet eyes seem distant as if she was in a deep thought, mirroring the younger girl in front of them.

He raised his goblet of wine towards her, as if to salute before gulping down the whole content. “I suppose so. I am the most famous of the bunch, after all. Don’t you agree?” he asked lightly. Arya pursed her lips in a straight line as flashes of Cersei and Jamie Lannister came uninvited.

Tyrion having senses the sudden tension in the air chanced a glance at the silver haired queen. Her violet eyes seem distant as if she was in a deep thought, mirroring the younger girl in front of them. He poured another wine as he focused on Arya again.

“I can’t believe it was you who our Queen had brought back. If I had known, I would come by for a visit during your recovery.” He said with an apologetic smile. “It’s a small world for us to be meeting each other like this.” he finished, before taking another sips from his filled goblet. Arya focus her attention back at the dwarf. Before she can reply, someone interrupts.

“Indeed.” Daenerys suddenly speaks. Her voice still cold and rigid as her eyes focus back on steel grey ones. “You know who I was the moment I entered your cell, did you not?” she asked. Arya studies her expression. It was mixed with anger and hurt. She didn’t understand one bit of it.

“Yes. I heard you talking to the guards.” She answered calmly, don’t know where this is going. Daenerys let out a chuckle, though her face doesn’t look at all amusing, only the opposite.

“Of course.” She drawled. “It all makes sense now. Are you trying to end me now, Stark? Just like your family did with my husband?” she asked, gritting through her teeth. Arya’s frown deepens.
“What?” she asked, confused. The others from the room are already on their feet, gathering close by the queen, but Arya paid them no heed as violet eyes intensely seek her own.

Seeing that the young Stark makes no plan to say anything else, Daenerys continues.

“The Baratheon, Tully, Arryn and the Stark had inflicted me and my family nothing but pain and sufferings. Endless of it. They overthrow the crown whom belong to my father, chasing me and my brother exiled. But, you didn’t stop there, did you? No…” she trails, walking closer towards the confused wolf.

“You go and assassinate my husband too. Stealing away the one thing that I have come to love. Tell me one good reason why I should not return the favor. Tell me why I should not send your head over to your traitorous family.” She threatens, beseechingly.

Arya blinks hard at the silver haired queen. The older woman’s words are struggling to sink into her system as her voice still lingers at the back of her mind, trying to put two and two together.

She recalls her saying about the overthrow of the crown who she assumed was the Mad King Aerys. It naturally leads to the famous Robert’s Rebellion. Sure, her father had aid in this battle, but it was not without a reason.

And then, the Queen said another thing that baffles her greatly. She was accusing her family had been responsible for assassination of her husband. It was the first new piece of information that she got of her family since she had escaped the enslavement. She doesn’t know whether to be enthralled or terrified of it.

It gives her hope that perhaps her remaining family members were all alive still during this time, but then the assassination came into the picture. They would have never approved something like what Daenerys had accused of. They had no reason to do so in the first place. Do they?

She shoves away that thought as she realized that the dragon queen had threatens to take her life too. It didn’t bother her that much as compare to calling her family a traitor. Arya clench her jaw tightly.

“My family is not a traitor.” She said sternly, finally finding her voice.

“The Stark is the Usurper’s dog, among the others.” Daenerys replied simply.

“No.”

Daenerys cocked an eyebrow at the younger girl.

“No?” she echoed.

“Yes. No.” Arya replied back.

Silence fills in the room as both women eyed each other pointedly. The others seem to be affected by the tension surrounding them for they stood their ground, not knowing what to make of the scene.

“You deny the fact that your father helped the rebellion against my own?” Daenerys asked with a quiet and dark tone.

“No. I don’t.” Arya answered. Daenerys looks at the young Stark, incredulous. But, before she can say anything about it, Arya continues. “Even so, that does not make my father a traitor. He is one of the most noble and loyal man I have come upon. And he only did it for justice when King Aerys murdered his brother, Brandon and his father, Rickard Stark; my uncle and grandfather in a horrific
and unjust way."

"Your father burnt the Warden of the North with wildfire, claiming it as his champion when Lord Rickard demand a trial by combat. And all the while, he forced Brandon to watch it, before he strangled himself, unable to reach for the longsword the King purposely place out of his reach, for he had thought that he can save his father’s life from the raging fire." She counters. Daenerys eyes flicker with uncertainty for a moment before the cold mask was back.

"Do you expect me to believe anything that comes out from your mouth, Stark?"

"Whether you believe me or not, that is the truth."

Silence surrounding the room again as the tension grows. Tyrion who had enough of it already, clears his throat intentionally, trying to get their attention.

"Your Grace, if I may speak?" he asked timidly. But Daenerys doesn’t seem to acknowledge his presence.

"The truth?" she asked mockingly towards the girl in front of her, dismissing the dwarf. “And what about the assassination of my husband? Do you know about the truth behind that too?” she taunts dangerously. Arya frowns.

“No. But, my family would never do something like that. They don’t have any reasons to.” She bit back. Daenerys let out a dangerous smile.

"Reasons? Why, they have plenty.” She trails. “One, being that my husband, Khal Drogo, was the warlord of Dothraki Khalsars of forty thousand warriors whom all are willing to cross the narrow sea for me. He promised me the iron throne and seeing that as a threat, the usurper and his dogs decides to put a stop to it before it even begin.” She finished. This time, it was Arya who had a look of doubt across her face.

She ponders over the possibility of the accusation. After all, her enslavement through the past years has kept her in the dark and she had no way of knowing if it is the truth.

“I heard that you have been asking for my return impatiently.” Daenerys continues, breaking the young girl’s train of thoughts. “Clearly you have waited long enough. Well? Here I am now. Kill me then.” She said, daring the young assassin. Arya looks back at determined violet eyes.

It was confusing and hurting at the same time what the silver haired queen was implying. Indirectly, she had thrown away the trust that they had built during those days being imprison by Qazlas and she thought the older woman knew her better.

Arya put on a cold mask of her own, keeping her emotion secured far away inside her mind. "Believe me, Your Grace…” She trails. “If I wanted to kill you, you would be long dead and we won’t be having this conversation as of this moment. I would have torn you apart when Qazlas men brought you in my cell, eaten your flesh even. I would have let the slaves have their way at you, back in the pit and I would have left you and escape by myself. Or, I would have use this dagger instead, stick it through your heart when I first came in here.” She finished calmly while pulling out a dagger from behind where she hid under her cloth.

Almost instantly as Arya displayed the sharp steel that she borrowed from the armory, the sound of metal unsheathed echoes around the room. Two daggers and one longsword unanimously pointed her way while successfully blocking Daenerys from any harm.

“Do you dare threatened the Queen.” one of the men suddenly declared. Speaking for the first time.
Arya looks down to his sword, inches away from her face before finding its owner.

The man looks old though he was not that old. His grip on his sword seems firm and his stance alone proved that he knows how to use the blade.

“Did you not hear me, old man?” Arya asked. Her features still calm despite a pointed blade at her face. She can hear someone coughing suspiciously – like he was containing a laughter from breaking free – at the side where Tyrion stood and choose to ignore him. “I wasn’t threatening her. I was explaining different ways that I can kill her, if I wanted.” She finished. The man narrowed his eyes down at her, irritated.

“Enough of this. Ser Jorah, would you please escort Arya Stark back to her chamber?” Daenerys voice suddenly cut through from behind the wall of the men. Though her tone nothing but ordering rather that asking.

Arya chanced a questioning look at the Queen who ignored her completely.

“Of course, Khaleesi.” The man, Jorah which actually was the one that she had been calling ‘old man’ answered. His longsword still held against her face. Arya tightens her grip on the dagger as she clenches her jaw.

She cannot help feeling trapped and all the more as a hostage, once again. She wanted to know more about her family and clear their name from Daenerys doubts. But, the silver haired queen seems to have already made her mind. When Jorah made a move towards her, Arya growls unintentionally.

“Take one more step, old man, and I would gut you up through your throat.” She threatens menacingly. Her dagger twitching for release.

It took only those words for all hell to break lose. Jorah ignored her threat with a smug look on his face. Still with his sword in hand, he tried to reach for her arm but Arya backs away not before gifting him with a slash at his sleeve. He hissed in pain as he backs away, gripping the torn flesh.

In a matter of seconds, he lunged forward with his sword. Arya took another step backward and turned to her left as Jorah’s sword nearly missed her shoulder. She ducked and rolled around the floor, dismissing the slash of sword her way, not caring that she had stumble upon a few things in the room, making a mess along her trail.

At the corner of her eye, she can see that Grey Worm and some other guy – who she assumed was Daario – standing protectively in front of Daenerys. Their own daggers at the ready. Their stance made her groan inwardly. This was not how she planned the event to turn out. She had nothing against the silver haired queen, but the older woman was too stubborn to listen. And then, this man, Jorah had to ruin everything.

She stops then, wanting to end this once and for all. As he takes another step towards her, he swings his sword again where Arya ducks successfully. But, instead of backing away like she had been doing all this while, she sprints forward and landed her kick below his region. His breath caught in his throat as he grunts in pain. The longsword fell down the floor with a loud clatter as he stared wide eyes at the young girl. He kneels down, grabbing his manhood while cursing under his breath.

Arya paid him no heed as she turns around, facing the others. Missandei was looking at her with shock, her hands at her chest. Beside her, Tyrion cocked an eyebrow, his mouth twitching to form a smile. Daario looks at her with interest while Grey Worm just stares back with his famous stoic face.

She glanced towards Daenerys last. Her panting breath deafening to her ears as violet eyes calmly
stares back, void of any emotion. She didn’t like it one bit.

“You promised me that I can go back home. To Winterfell.” Arya started. Waiting for the older woman to tell her otherwise.

“And I will. Have no fear Arya Stark, I will get you back to where you came from.” Daenerys answered back. Her eyes still cold and hard.

“Release me then. Let me walk out of here, unharmed.” Arya demanded.

“That wouldn’t be necessary since I have decided that I should join you and asked your family myself to confirm these truths you were saying.” Daenerys counters. Arya looks at her with her mouth slightly open, not knowing how to react. “We will leave as soon as the ships are ready.” She finished, leaving no argument behind.

“Now, I’m sure you want a well rest before our journey began. Daario and Grey Worm can escort you back to your chamber. And if you refuse, I have many other guards to do the task.” The silver haired queen threatens at the last part. Arya grips her dagger tightly contemplating on what to do. She can’t beat all the Queen’s guard now, can she? The only way out was through the open veranda, but she would like to stay alive when she got out of the pyramid. So, she dismissed that thought immediately.

Before Daario and Grey Worm made a move, complying to their Queen’s wishes, Missandei suddenly sprints forward, beating them to it. She stands in front of the young assassin with her back against her.

“Your Grace, let me escort Arya back to her room.” Missandei asked politely. Daenerys looks back at the Naath with a frown, not believing what she just said before locking with grey eyes. Missandei turns around then, facing the young Stark silently. But her eyes screaming for Arya to complied.

Seeing that there is no other escape than jumping off a three and thirty levels of pyramid without injuring herself – possibly dying – Arya decides to give in. Furthermore, she prefers taking Missandei with her over any guards. Missandei let out a small smile as she sees a flicker of acceptance in the young girl’s eyes. She turns to Daenerys and see that the queen saw the resigned look of the young girl too.

Earning consent from both party, Missandei reached for Arya’s arm, the same one that Jorah had intended to take and guide her through the door where she came from.

“Wait.” Daenerys suddenly speaks. The two women stop their track and turns around to the Queen.

“Leave the dagger.” She orders, eyeing the weapon that Arya still hold. Violet eyes against grey ones.

A huff escaped Arya as she looks down to her dagger in her grip. She tries to contain her rage and hurt but it was becoming rather hard by the seconds. She takes a step forward to the Queen then. While doing so, she turns her dagger so she was grasping the tip of the knife and lift her arm, swinging the dagger forward. The knife turns in great speed in the air before landing perfectly down the floor, across the room, a few inches between Daenerys feet. Where it had planted through the floor and her dress.

Ignoring the shock and incredulous look of the silver haired queen and the others, Arya turns back towards the door, walking pass a stunned Missandei whom later followed her in a hurried step.
As she stood by the open window in her room, the cold breeze greets the young girl, caressing her face with its force, gently. Arya looks pass the horizon of the beautiful starry night as her mind recalls back what happened earlier this day.

After her act of defiance at the Queen of Meereen, she was surprised nothing had happened to her yet. Missandei had already given her an earful when she escorts her back to her room earlier. And Arya had tuned out most of them. By the time they finally arrived to her room and Missandei had finished with her nagging, Arya decides to ask her the one thing that keeps bugging her mind.

“Do you know if my family still lives?”

Missandei looks at her with a sad smile and for a while panic grew inside the young Stark as she waits patiently.

“Yes. They are. Your brother, Robb rules the North along with your mother and little brother.” Missandei answered.

“Do you mean Bran and Rickon?” Arya asked at the last part. Missandei shook her head.

“No, just Rickon. I heard that your brother Bran is still missing – like you were – after the Kingsroad attack.” She trails. Arya looks pass the older woman as her thoughts drift to Bran. He can still be alive and she wanted to hold onto that possibility. “As for your father and sister, they were – “

“I know.” Arya interrupts, shifting her gaze back at brown eyes. “I saw them.” she said calmly earning a horrified look, turning to pity from Missandei.

“I’m sorry you had to witness that, Arya.”

“Me too.” She said with guilt. She looks up to Missandei remembering that she hadn’t speak about the one person that she missed the most. “What of Jon?”

Missandei blinks a few times, gathering her thought before speaking. “The bastard? Your half-brother, you mean?” she asked.

“Yes. Is Jon alive and well?”

“I believe so. Yes.”

Arya released a breath she didn’t know she held at those answers. A smile tugging at the corner of her mouth.

They are fine. Jon, Robb, Rickon and mother. They are alive. And Bran, please be safe wherever you are, brother.

Just then, the door suddenly burst open. Two Unsullied guards came in speaking with Missandei with a foreign language. Arya studies from the older woman to the guards who were secretly glancing at her during their conversation. When they finally finished, Missandei turns back to Arya.

“I have to go now, the Queen is asking for me.” she started. “You are to remain in this room, Arya. Please don’t try anything reckless again?” she pleads.

“Reckless? Like trying to escape?” Arya asked nonchalantly. “I assume those two are for me?” she asked again, nudging towards the two Unsullied guards.
When Missandei just gave her an apologetic look, she had her answers then. With one last plead from the Naath that Arya must remain in the room, she left to answer the royal call, leaving Arya with her own guards. The men left the room soon after and closed the door behind them as they stood watch from the other side.

Her trains of thought got interrupted when a sudden knock can be heard. Arya turns around and walk away from the open window and into the middle of the room. All the while eyeing the door that the sound came from. A creak echoes as the door being pushed open. She saw the same two Unsullied guards still at their post and when she looks down, her face automatically frowns upon seeing the head of a pale blond which belong to the Lannister dwarf.

“Lady Arya.” Tyrion said by a way of greeting. He smiled as he waved a bottle of wine and two goblets in his hands. “Would you like to have a drink?” he asked casually, closing the door behind him.

Seeing that the young Stark just stands across the room, eyeing him silently, Tyrion decides to move towards the small table at the corner of the room. He takes a seat, making himself comfortable before pouring the wine for him and the silent occupant. He raised his goblet then, urging for the young girl to do the same.

Arya strides closer to him but gave him no satisfactory in joining him. “What are you doing?” she asked pointedly. Tyrion cocked an eyebrow.

“Having a drink, of course.” He said making an obvious show of his goblet. Arya narrowed her eyes at him.

“Surely you can find some other comfortable place in these three and thirty level of pyramid to have that drink of yours, Lord Tyrion.” she counters. Tyrion let out a small smile.

“I can. But, there is only one place that held the infamous Arya Stark of Winterfell.” He replied. When the said person only stares back scornfully, he continues. “Please, have a seat. I promise I won’t bite.”

Silence engulf them both as they eyed each other. Cold grey eyes against mismatch green and black ones. Seeing that the dwarf will not leave until she did so, Arya let out a soft sigh as she plops herself on the chair across him, wanting to get whatever this is over with. Tyrion let out a victory smile as he takes the first sip of his favorite wine.

“It has been six years since we last met, has it not? You were so little back then. Look at you now, all grown up.” He commented behind his goblet. Arya looks down to her own full goblet which Tyrion intended for her, ignoring him completely.

“You’ve grown to be a delightful person, I must say.” He continues. Arya looks up at him then with a frown trying to see if he was mocking her but instead a genuine and sad smile crosses his lips before it was replaced with a raised goblet.

Delightful? She was sure she was none of that.

“Why are you really here, Lord Tyrion?” she asked, crossing her arms against her middle.

“Just thought you needed some company.” He shrugged. “And to see if you wanted to ask anything, I’m willing to answer any of your questions. I know the past years has not been kind and it had kept you in the dark.”

Arya didn’t know what to make of his statement. There is no trace of lie in his features and he looks
like he meant every word. Perhaps he was a good actor. She decides to play along then.

“I want to know what happened after the Kingsroad attack.”

Tyrion decides to pour another filled before speaking up. “Perhaps I should begin from the start.” He said with a tired sigh, even though he just about to begin. “After my sister’s trial and untimely death, I tried to go back to Casterly Rock with Jamie. Knowing that Robert held no love for the Lannister even before he lost his Queen, I made a decision. The luck was at my side as I managed to free Jamie of his confinement and we ran away before they started looking for us. I tried to take the children too, but time was not our friend.”

“Jamie didn’t act like himself after Cersei’s death. During our journey back along the Kingsroad, he kept saying that he will avenge Cersei’s death. He wanted blood. And when we heard that Robert and Ned were going back to Kings Landing, Jamie saw that as an opportunity. He gathers as much men as possible, and wait for an ambush, for he knew that the royal escort would cross path with us. And when they finally did, he attacked. I tried to stop him. But he was a man on a mission.”

Tyrion chance a glance at the young Stark across him. She was looking down at her untouched goblet. Her face voids of any emotion and she didn’t seem to be wanting to join the conversation. But, he knew she was listening, so he decides to move on.

“Robert got away though, along with some of the Kingsguard. They continued on to Kings Landing then and when he was safe within his city, he declared war against the Lannister. Saying that we commit treason against the crown. We didn’t even stand a chance. Almost all of Westeros were against the Lannister and here I am, the last living heir to my line.”

He finished softly before gulping the whole content of his wine. Noticing that Arya had looks up at him again with confused and questioning grey eyes, he continues.

“Jamie was killed in Lannisport, trying to withstand the attack from the North. It was your brother, Robb who ended him. And my father, well, he was too proud to surrender and that was his downfall. I’m sure he learned his lesson now, though it was rather too late.” He explained, holding his gaze but the young girl breaks it soon after, looking down at her goblet again with a frown.

Seconds go by and then minutes as neither said anything. Only the sound of pouring wine and the dwarf gulping it down accompanies them. By his seventh cup – yes, Arya had counted them – she decides to ask something else that had bothered her as much.

“Is she going to kill me?”

Tyrion arched an eyebrow, confused. “I beg your pardon?”

“Daenerys.” She said back.

The dwarf looks at her incredulously, before barking a laugh. He controls himself when the young assassin glares at him threateningly, finding nothing at all amusing.

“My apologies. You are serious.” he confirms. Arya gave her a pointed look. “You don’t realize how important you are in this ‘Game of Thrones’ do you?” he asked. When the young girl just frowns back, he continues. “You’re the key to the North. Daenerys needs allies and right now, the North has the biggest and strongest army in Westeros. Robert would not have kept his throne for so long, until today, if not for the Starks keeping the crown in place for his thick skull.”

Arya’s frown deepens. “But, she hates me. According to her, my family was responsible for her husband’s death.” She counters.
Tyrion takes another sip of his wine then. “Your family, among others whom she will be governing upon once she gets the crown.” He shrugs. “Whether she likes it or not, you’re the only thing that can secure her success to the throne. And I strongly suggest you use that to your advantage.”

The dwarf takes the last sip, emptying his cup before getting up. The chair scrape against the floor loudly. “You know, after throwing a dagger at the Queen of Meereen, most men wouldn’t be able to walk away unpunished, let alone having a pleasant quarter. When I first came here, she threw me straight to the dungeon. A bit unfair if you asked me.” he mumbles, while casually walking towards the door.

Reaching for the handle, he stops and turns around, finding the young Stark gaze firmly planted on him. He let out a small smile then. “You have a week’s time before we set sail to Westeros. I suggest you used the time productively. I thank you for your company. Sleep well, Lady Arya.” He inclined his head as a goodbye bid.

Without waiting for a reply, he walks out of the room, leaving Arya to her thoughts. The young Stark stares vacantly in front of her as Tyrion’s words keep juggling inside her mind. Reaching for the filled goblet on the table, she gulps it down in one shot. A throbbing pain was starting to make way inside her head, but it had nothing to do with the wine she drank.

Chapter End Notes

There you have it. The Starks are alive and well, Robert stills rule the Seven Kingdoms and the Lannisters are not faring that well in this new future.
Thoughts? Leave a comment. ^^

Ps: Anyone knows how one gets a beta?
**Haunted**

Chapter Summary

In which our former assassin is forced to face her demon.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Did you guys miss me? ;P  
I'm sorry for not updating in a while... But, even then I still received kudos and comments from you all. What a lovely reader you've been! Thank you!

Anyway, here is the new chapter and it has a whopping 9,225 words! Yikes. That is by far the longest chapter I have written. Initially, I thought to separate it into two but decided against it. I wanted to finished this so we can move on to the next plot on the next chapter. And besides you all kinda deserve this. So, buckle up and enjoy the ride~

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

“Arya.”

The young Stark groans in response at her name being called. She kicks the cover away from her feet when the warmth irritates her. One of her arm draped over her throbbing head and the other over her gradually aching stomach.

“Arya, get up. It’s already midday.”

The voice continues and it echoes loudly through her sensitive ears. She let out another grunt in annoyance and slowly flutters her eyes open. The light from the sun almost blinded her as she tries her best to recognize the perpetrator who had just stir her slumber. She frowns as she met with questioning brown eyes, the one from Missandei.

“Care to tell me what happened? I heard Lord Tyrion came visit last night, and judging by your condition, one might think that you two are best friends now, drinking all night together.” The former slave commented accusingly. She quirked an eyebrow as she studies the dishevelled little wolf on the bed and back at the empty bottle of wine on top of the table.

Arya’s frown deepen at the older woman choice of word but more so because her head was spinning wildly.

“He is not my friend let alone best of friend.” She murmurs as she slowly sits up, feeling a sudden rise from her stomach that wants to get out. Missandei gave her a pointed look urging her to explain more and so Arya swallows dryly and continues.
“We didn’t drink together. I drank the wine alone, after he left.”

And she regretted every last drop she had. Last night had been confusing and overwhelming to her. After Tyrion told his side of the story about how the Kingsroad attack happen and what transfigured after, her mind blanked and her feelings went numb as she tried to connect all the dots together – she guess, that’s what happened when your mind overload with information.

So, Tyrion was the one who freed Jamie and later was the one who brought his troops to ambush the royal escort, massacring Robert’s men alongside the Lord of Winterfell and his oldest daughter. If only he didn’t set Jamie free of his confinement, then her family might still be alive and she would not be so far away from home, living years as a slave.

But, Tyrion was just trying to save his brother. Would I not do the same, were I in his place?

There is this small tugging deep in her heart, that she knows if she hadn’t kill Cersei in the first place, Tyrion would not have to free Jamie at all. She assumed he felt cornered and desperate enough when the trial was interrupted, thus, only trying to save his remaining family. Of that, she can understand perfectly. After all, she was doing the exact same thing when she released the arrow.

But, that does not mean she can easily forgive him either. He is still a Lannister and even though he didn’t directly involve in murdering her father and sister, the doubt and lingering feelings of sceptical are ever present whenever the dwarf is involve.

Arya let out a sigh as her head starts spinning again. Her complicated thoughts only make it worse it seems. And on top of that, she had to think of what to do with her current situation regarding a certain silver-haired queen.

More fucking choices that I have to make.

She rests her head down on both her hands and shuts her eyes, slowly drifting back to slumber. It must have been a while because the next time she opens her eyes, she was lying back in bed, curling around herself and Missandei was nowhere to be seen. Her headache was still there but it was more bearable this time. Given that the nausea seems to disappear too, she supposed the hangover was probably gone by now. So, she sits up with a grunt while trying to get a hold of herself.

This has been one of her worst hangover yet. Even in her previous lifetime, she never struggles with alcohol. But, that was probably because she never truly drinks to her hearts content, much like last night.

She glances towards the table that should occupy her goblet and the empty jar of wine but instead it was replaced with a tray of food. Arya swallows dryly as she realised just how famished she feels. Within seconds she was across the room, making herself comfortable on the seat while sipping the lukewarm clear broth. She didn’t know what it was but whatever it is, her stomach approves of it and her headache seems lighter if that was even possible.

A creak was heard then but Arya didn’t bother to acknowledge the older woman coming inside her room as she was too busy devouring her meal.

“The she-wolf still lives.” Missandei commented. Arya glanced up at that remark and met with a stoic face of the former slave, though her eyes were glazed over with certain mirth to it.

“She-wolf?” she questioned back. Missandei stride closer before taking the seat across her.

“It’s what people called you.” She answered with the smallest shrug. Arya frowns in response.
“What people?”

“Oh, you know – only the cooks, the handmaidens, the healers, and the guards.” Missandei replies with a slight smile when the younger woman was barely holding her eye-rolls at her listing every group of people that lived inside the Great Pyramid.

Arya focus back on her forgotten soup before her mind automatically wanders to a certain man that once called her that and the phantom pain that always seems to follow.

“I hate that name.” she commented, leaving the former slave stunned by the sudden coldness. “Qazlas used to call me that. And the people there would chant and cheer that name whenever blood was spilled in the arena. They didn’t care whose blood it was, only that there is.”

Missandei stared back silently at the confession as the young Stark looks at an invisible point, lost in thought. Her face was calm and collected though her grey orbs seem to struggle fighting the ghosts from her past. She wanted to give some kind of comfort to the young woman but her intention was cut short when she was interrupted.

“What is that in your hand?” Arya asked, focusing her eyes back at the person in front of her. Missandei takes a moment to right herself at the switch of conversation before she remembers the purpose of her coming here in the first place.

“The healers had this concoction stored away for a reason particularly like your own. It will soothe your headache and your urge to throw up every second.” Missandei said, offering the vial to the younger woman.

Arya chance a glance at the vial holding a darkish content inside it and back at the former slave. Truth be told, if the older woman had presented a rather doubtful looking vial to her last week – claiming it can help grow her bones to be taller – she would have trust her words and gulp it down without second thought.

But, things have changed now. Her queen had made it clear for everyone that she hates her or rather her family as a whole. And yet, the woman in front of her still treats her with the same kindness before she knew her roots of the North. Arya did not understand her motive at all.

“I don’t need it anymore. I feel fine now.” she replies, politely rejecting Missandei.

Arya pretends she didn’t see the confused and dejected look that cross the older woman as she continues sipping her soup.

“Are you sure?” Missandei asked softly. The young Stark only hummed in response as she moved on to the bread and cheese next, taking a large bite.

Seconds pass by before it turns to minutes. It was becoming more awkward to say the least with the sound of her endless chewing fills the room as the bread seems to last forever inside her mouth. Missandei’s scrutinizing stare didn’t help either.

“Is something the matter?” the older woman finally asked. Arya stared back towards her with a raised brow, chewing still. “You have something to say…or something that bothers you, didn’t you?” she points out.

Arya swallows the remaining bread inside her mouth before reaching for a cup of water. “Why would anything bothers me? I have a roof over my head, meal served thrice a day, and I’m coming home with 100 fleets of ships – probably more – alongside an angry Targaryen Queen that wants the iron throne that’s taken from her family.” she said back nonchalantly. The sarcasm in her voice didn’t
go unnoticed by the other woman.

“Daenerys is not a bad person. She will be a good Queen for Westeros.” Missandei retiates.

“I don’t know about that. I don’t know her.”

“Well, I do. And I can assure you, she’s not a bad person.” The older woman stated firmly. Arya was about to say something else but clearly Missandei is not finished yet. “She freed me from my master just like she freed and saved your life. She’s fair and gentle with her subject and most of all, she inspires people. The city of Meereen chose her as their Queen as am I.”

Both women stared at each other pointedly, with neither one even blink an eye.

Arya clench her jaw tight, not backing down. “None of those qualities she presumably has will make a difference when her dragons rain fire on my home, killing my remaining family.” She said, accusingly.

The young Stark expects another outburst from Missandei to defend her queen, but instead she let out a small sigh as her face changed to something akin to defeat. “Both of you seems to only expect the worse from each other.” She commented softly.

Arya was dumbfounded at the offset remark that she didn’t even stop Missandei from getting up and walks out of her room. By the time she was aware, she was already been left to her own solitude again.

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It has been two days since she last saw Missandei, or rather considering that she cannot get out of her own room, it has been two days since the older woman has not visit her. Her meals were brought by other handmaiden of whom their sole purpose is to do just that. They hardly made eye contact with her let alone strike a conversation.

The lack of human interaction should bother her but surprisingly Arya was fine by it. After all, what is two days comparing to years being all alone in the dark and barren cell? At least, she doesn’t have to worry about where to scrap from if she was hungry here.

Now that she was alone, all she has ever done in the past couple of days is to think and some more. She thought about the last conversation she had with Missandei and how defensive she had been of Daenerys. Arya ponders over the possibilities of it all. It’s true that the silver haired queen had never treated her badly yet. She could put her in the dungeon – as Tyrion points out that was where he was placed, the first time he presented himself to Daenerys – but instead she had a comfortable room of her own. Only that it is still a prison albeit a more luxurious one.

Then, she thought over the days she was confined in the same cell as Daenerys. Before the mother of dragons knew her family name, she was all of those things that Missandei had claimed her to be. Her cell mate was kind and gentle to her even though all Arya ever did was giving her the silent treatment. It was like Daenerys actually cared. Of course, that sentiment was all gone once the silver haired queen knew whose family Arya belongs to. And Arya can’t help but wonder if she will ever see that side of Daenerys again.

The young Stark blows a sigh as she stares over the horizon outside from her open window. The stars are already taking its turn replacing the sun a few hours ago or so. Arya longed to be outside, to walk or run under that stars. She missed the cold wind that blew her face, not the hot and humid one that currently assaulting her face. If anyone asked her younger and innocent self, would she miss the
snow once she left home, she would answer them no in a heartbeat. But now that she was away from it all, it was the one thing that she vividly remembered and missed about her home. She guesses she truly is a child of the North. At least her remaining family are where they belong.

Arya wonders what Jon would look like now that he’s a grown man.

*Will he muss my hair for his pleasure like he always did? Will Robb be the same protective and annoying brother like he always been now that he is Warden of the North? Will Mother still rain down kisses on my face if she knew I was still alive? And will Rickon even recognize his only living sister when we meet again? Will they all?*

A sudden knock stops her train of thoughts and she glanced over her shoulder to find the door creak open. Tyrion’s head peeks over searching for the occupant inside the room. When his eyes found his target, he let out a smile before fully comes inside.

“Lady Arya, glad to see you are still awake. Care to join me?” he asked as he plops down the chair that he occupies several days ago.

Tyrion sets the jar of wine and two goblets on the small table before pouring generously into each cup.

“You look like you need a drink...or two.” He continues lightly. Arya slowly walks away from the open window she stood and towards him instead, taking a seat across him.

“I will never drink that again. Not in this lifetime.” She stated, pushing her full goblet of red wine back towards the dwarf. Tyrion looks up at her with wide eyes.

“Whatever the wine did to you? They didn’t deserve that treatment.” He asked incredulously.

“They did enough. I don’t like the aftermath.” She said back evenly.

“Oh for the love of all that is Holy, I thought that our Queen is the only one that has the tendencies to be overreacting. Missandei told me about your hangover, but she also said you recovered fast. You don’t even need the shit-taste medicine the healers made.” Tyrion said back pointedly. Arya ignores the comparison he made of her with Daenerys and decides to stare at him silently.

Tyrion let out a sigh when he sees that the young Stark made no attempt to say anything. “Well, if you decided so. It’s your loss really.”

He takes his first sips and the second before Arya speaks up again. “Do you have something else you want to tell me after last time?” she asked, clenching her jaw tight as the event from the Kingsroad attack played in her memories uninvited.

Tyrion swallows the remaining wine and pours another fill of his cup. “Well, if you want to ask anything else, feel free to do so.” He offers.

“Now that I know that you set the killer of my Father and sister loose, I have nothing else to ask of you. It pretty much covers everything else.”

At that cold tone, Tyrion looks up at the young woman in front of him. A sudden chill cross at the back of his neck as steel grey orbs pierces his soul. He knows Arya would come to that conclusion sooner or later.

“I was only trying to save my brother. I know Robert had it arranged to kill Cersei. The trial was never a fair play when the Hound was involved, and Cersei would have walk away without any
punishment. Such betrayal would make any man do so, let alone a King of Westeros. He would have
Jamie killed too.” Tyrion defends. She didn’t bother to correct him about his sister’s killer.

“And you would have saved hundreds of people’s life if you just let him be. You would have saved
House Lannister from extinction. You would have saved my Father’s and Sansa’s life. And you
would have saved my life.” Arya retaliates. Tyrion’s face softens at that.

“I’m sorry about your father and sister. Ned Stark was a great man – an honourable man. And
Sansa…is still too young when death greets her. And I know how terrible it must be with you being
in enslavement…and I truly am sorry”

“Don’t presume to know what I’ve been through, Lord Tyrion.”

“I only—“

“I think you can find someplace else to have that drink of yours from now on. Get out.”

The tension that fills the air is enough to suffocate both of them, but neither made any move to back
down. Instead, Tyrion sits up straighter, studying the hard grey eyes in front of him, his wine now
forgotten.

“Arya…” he begins. “Jamie is my brother, my own blood, and were I given the chance to go back
and change things, I would still stand by my choice. I would save him either way, - and would have
actually stops him from doing anything stupid in the first place – even if it cause others misfortune.
I’m sure you understand how much family means.”

Arya understands it too damn well. She also knows that the dwarf is not fully responsible for
everything that happened. But, she can’t help to voice them out anyway, hoping to find something or
someone else to blame than herself. In the end their choices didn’t matter, since the person they are
trying to protect died anyway. She closes her eyes trying to calm her nerves at the sudden ache in her
chest that tries to swallow her whole.

“It would be best if you get out now. I don’t think I can control myself with you so close.” Arya
speaks softly more for his sake rather than hers.

“What? Are you going to kill me?” he joked lightly.

Arya opens her eyes then to find Tyrion staring back with a forced smile.

“I might.”

His smile drops as the word left her mouth. But, he quickly recovers with a chuckle. “And how are
you going to do that? Do enlighten me.” As soon as he said that, he knew he would regret it later
when the grey orbs in front of him glazed impossibly darker.

“I could bash your head with the jar of wine and when the glass shatters along with your skull, I’d
plunge the sharpest shard left through your neck. Or I can jump over this table right now and strangle
you with my own two hands. But, that will catch too much attention. The guards outside the room
will come to your rescue before I can do any damage. So, I would choose to knock you out cold first
and dump your body outside the window instead. The fall down the pyramid will surely leave you
with broken bones…preferably with broken neck.” Arya finished.

Tyrion blinks a few times as he looks at the young Stark, loss of word. The girl in front of him spoke
of threats to kill him like she was speaking of the weather. There is this strange calmness in her yet it
makes her all the more frightening. What makes it worse is that he believes she can do all the above
if she wants it.

He swallows dryly as he gathers his courage again. “You don’t hate me that much.” He guessed.

“I don’t like you either.” Arya deadpanned.

“Ha! I knew it.” Tyrion shouts, his face lights up suddenly. Arya frowns in response. “Sure, you
don’t like me. Everyone doesn’t like the dwarf, let alone a Lannister dwarf. But…you don’t hate
me.” He finished proudly as if he was winning an argument that only he can understand.

And within seconds, his mood changed to be better. He takes a sip of his forgotten wine before
continuing. “The same as Daenerys doesn’t hate you, and you her.”

Arya quirked an eyebrow at the shift of conversation. “You seem to know better of what others feel
and what I feel when I have a hard time recognizing them myself.” She commented dryly. Tyrion
shrugs off her sarcasm and instead let out a smirk.

“I’m a good judge of character.” He replies. Arya let out a scoff.

Tyrion settles his wine down then, leaning forward against the table. “Don’t you want to have a
home to go back to?” he asked gently, all playful gone from his tone now.

With his face closer, the young Stark’s attention automatically drew to his mismatch orbs. The
emerald in his right eyes sparkle, which give a lovely depth to it. She focuses back to his face,
remembering his question. “Of course, I do. But, those fleets and armies she has will cause more
damage than good in Westerosi land. And you know it.” She said evenly, knowing that the dwarf
was well aware of who she just mentioned. Tyrion didn’t back down though.

“Then, give a reason for Daenerys to not consider you her enemy. She would not harm the North.
She would not harm your family. Winterfell will stand strong just like it always been.”

“Or I can just kill her instead and be done with it.” Arya retaliates with a stoic face. Tyrion let out a
sigh at that.

“And let her dragons fly free without anyone controlling them?” he argues before continue. “Don’t
you have enough blood on your hands to last a lifetime? Not all problems can be solved by slitting
people’s throat, Arya. Believe me if it does, it will save us a lot of hassle. And besides, you’re not
that kind of person. You would never harm anyone for the sake of pleasure. You would never kill
anyone that doesn’t deserve it. And Daenerys has done nothing of the sort. Give her the benefit
of the doubt. She will surprise you, probably more than you can imagine.” He counters, intently seeking
her eyes.

Arya let it for a moment before she breaks away from his intense gaze, confused and afraid that his
words would crawl its way to her heart. “She will bring foreign soldiers across the narrow sea and
cause war to our homeland. Why would you support that?” she asked, fixing her eyes back at the
dwarf.

It’s not that Arya has any care for the current King of Westeros or the iron throne. But, with
Daenerys bringing her army and three grown dragons, without a doubt, there will be a war and Arya
had lived through the War of five Kings to know how bad it can go. It was the people of Westeros
that have to suffer from it. Not the lords and ladies of major houses but the citizen, the common
people.

“I’m supporting her because I believe she can make Westeros prosper. You don’t know how Robert
rules all these years. There are rumours and proofs of his ruling that has caused more damage to
every continent even before I was exiled. Westeros is already at war as we speak. Believe me when I said that no one will miss him when he’s gone.” Tyrion stated calmly. Arya didn’t know what to say to that.

If what the dwarf told her is the truth, then she wonders if the North is affecting by it in any way. Is her family even safe within the walls of Winterfell?

“Most of all, I support her because, like you, I wish to go back home.” He continues with a longing smile on his face. “Besides, it's her homeland too, you know.”

His last words hung in the air before Arya silently leaned back to her seat with Tyrion still holding his gaze. As if he's waiting for her to retaliates back. Arya let out a sigh suddenly feeling very tired. She leaned forward to the table then, reaching for her intended goblet of wine and gulps down the whole content. She scrunches her nose at the tangy taste that leaves her tongue and throat.

“Whatever happens to ‘I will never drink wine in this life time’?” Tyrion asked, amused at the expression from the young woman.

“One glass won’t hurt, I guess.” Arya shrugs lightly.

Tyrion hummed in agreement, though by his experience, more than one cup won’t hurt either. He proceeds to pour another into his own then, not noticing that the young Stark eyed his each movement.

“Can you ask her if she will grant me audience before we set sail? Daenerys I mean. And don’t worry, I won’t try to slit her throat or anything.” Arya said, assuring. Tyrion glanced at her dumbfounded, forgetting that he’s pouring wine to his cup.

When the wine overflows and spills the table, he clumsily stops his action. But it was already too late as the red liquid makes it way to Arya’s side. Seeing that he has no success in containing his damage, he shrugs it off and focus back at the person in front of him.

Remembering her question again, he let out a smile. “I will certainly ask her and let you know.”

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Arya has been patient as she waits for the approval to meet with the Queen of Meereen. But, when it comes to the third day – since she asked of it – and Tyrion comes to her room with an apologetic look, saying Daenerys doesn’t have time for her with all the preparation to sail to Westeros, she called it a load of crap. Clearly, the silver haired queen doesn’t have any intention to meet with her in any way. How busy was she, that she can’t even have mere minutes for her?

Or perhaps she forgot I existed and locked in her pyramid?

With each day passed, her time nearly ran out. On the morrow, at first light, they will finally set sail and Arya wants to settle this before then.

As hard as it was, she had to admit that Tyrion Lannister was right. All those things he said last time he was in her room, it strikes a nerve in her even herself didn’t know she had. She could take the easy way out – kill Daenerys and get out of here to her family – but she doesn’t want to. The older woman doesn’t deserve that and Arya was tired of fighting. Last time, she tried killing a Queen, her Father and Sansa died. So, she decides to take the advice the Lannister dwarf gave her.

Give Daenerys a reason.
That was what she planned to do anyway. But, now that it seems her plan had backfired, she would have to go with another counter plan.

*If she doesn’t want to see me, then, I will come to her instead.*

With her patience wearing thin, it only solidified her next action. Steadily she turns around from the open window, breaking her gaze from the dark night outside and walks towards her door. Reaching for the handle, she purposely pulls it open with a loud creak. Sure enough two unsullied guards are stationed on each side of her door. They turn around and stare at her and each other before settling again at her.

“I’m going to see the Queen. You can come with me or you can try and stop me.” She offers. Neither said a word.

As Arya moves forward, their spears form an 'X', blocking her from going any further. She looks at both of them sharply before turning around and enters her room again, closing the door shut.

*Fine, then. The second choice it is.*

She counts to a hundred silently inside her head. Once finished, she reaches for the goblet that is made out of metal before walking towards her door again. This time, the door opens silently, revealing the same guards faithfully at their post, with their back facing her. Unaware that the little assassin is figuring out whom she should hit first.

Not wanting to waste any more time, Arya secured her grip on the goblet and swing it with all her might to the guard on her right. The force was so strong that it knocked his helm off and then himself off the ground, rendering him unconscious. Arya speeds up then, reaching for the fallen guard’s spear before it hits the ground.

The second guard is more prepared given that he knows there is a threat now. His spear points at her, drawing Arya into the hallway. She noticed the Unsullied glanced down to her left hand that holds the metal goblet and frowns in response. Probably not believing she had knocked his companion out cold with it. She tosses it over the ground to have both grips on the stolen spear instead, pointing it at him too. She waits for him to strike but he never did. Though, she was curious by that, she doesn’t have time to ponder over it. So, she strikes first but he easily blocks it with his own. Spear against spear, they danced along the narrow hallway – turning, twisting, and ducking all the blows – for a minute or so.

And within those times, Arya was the one who initiates the attack while he blocks all of them. Even though he did attack back, his moves were easily expected. It was as if he doesn’t want to hurt her. She decides to put her theory into use and intentionally lower her spear down just when he’s about to counter attack her next moves. She knows where it will go but even then, she made no move to avoid it.

When the Unsullied finally noticed that the young Stark was waiting for the blow, he instantly lowers his momentum before fully stopping his pointed blade inches away from her neck. He looks at her with questioning gaze not noticing that he had left his side open for the young woman to knock his helm off and hit his head with the blunt back of her spear.

Arya watches as his eyes roll over into unconsciousness and join his partner on the ground. She turns around then and walks away towards her intended path with the last fight still playing inside her head. Her guess was right when he doesn’t want to hurt her and Unsullied only takes such order from their Queen.
Stupid. They should just go with me then.

A few steps and corners later, she finally arrives at Daenerys’ private chamber in the lofty apex of pyramid. Her red ebony door stands tall and surprisingly vacant. Arya expects guards to watch over her room, probably more than she has, but instead she doesn’t have any. Deciding that she should give a good impression, she left the spear she stole outside before proceeding to enter the Queen’s chamber. Pushing the unlocked ebony door silently, she invites herself in for the second time.

Her room was still as splendorous as she remembered. She walks further into her chamber and found no one there. Her bed is empty and she wonders if the Queen was out on a field trip again like last time. She was about to turn around when a sudden noise caught her ears. Looking over her shoulder, she notices a small hallway that she never knew existed. She walks to it then, finding the noise much clearer. The hallway has its wall made of glass and inside it, lays all sorts of greenery that she has a hard time recognizing.

So absorbed by the beautiful garden of flowers both on her right and left, Arya didn’t even notice her foot has taken her further than necessary. She stops abruptly when there are no more glass walls and colourful roses but instead another room. Her eyes roam the surrounding and she stops short when she found the person she wants to talk with.

Daenerys was inside a large pool, humming that familiar tune she used to hum when they were locked up together. She was leaning against the wall of the pool with her back against the young woman. Arya let her eyes closed as the tune surprisingly relaxed her tense body. It probably last an hour for all she knows as she stands there, unmoving until the tune sounded no more and was replaced with splashes sounds of water instead. She glanced towards the older woman who was strangely quiet in the bath.

Naturally her feet brought her closer and a frown formed on her face when she sees there are steams coming out of the water’s surface.

How cold is she, if she’s bathing in scalding hot water?

Arya’s feet stops abruptly as her line of view goes further than she intended. She backs away then, feeling that she has invaded an intimate space. She clears her throat awkwardly, trying to get the Queen’s attention. As soon as she made her presence notice, Daenerys snaps her head to the younger woman’s direction.

Wide violet eyes against calculative grey ones.

Daenerys hold her gaze in silence at the young Stark as if she was trying to make sense of her presence in her private chamber and Arya let her. For a moment neither speaks a word but the silver haired queen finally decides that the young woman was real and she breaks her gaze then. Gracefully, Daenerys stands up and out of the pool, leaving a trail of water on the floor as she makes her way towards the corner of the room that holds her cloth.

Arya looks away then, not wanting to invade any of her personal space again. But her eyes seem to have a mind of its own when they steal another glance at the older woman. And what she saw made her breath caught in her throat.

How can anyone be that…breathtakingly beautiful?

Her bare pale skin shines under the candle lights and Arya wonders how it feels like to touch the smooth skin that has never been assaulted by scars before. She studies each part of Daenerys natural form silently, starting from her shining silver hair to her pale shoulder and down to her back. When
the older woman decides to turn around facing her, the young Stark swallows dryly as her gaze continues trailing down her neck and down in the middle of–

“Liking what you see, Stark?” Daenerys voice interrupts as she pulls on a silk robe over her shoulder, successfully covering herself. Arya immediately snaps her eyes back up at the older woman, suddenly feeling very warm.

“Yes. I-I mean… No.” she stutters and curses inwardly. Daenerys lips curve upward automatically at that. It only strengthens her smug smile when Arya looks back sharply at her.

“Is there a purpose that you decides to break into my private chamber, other than watching me bath?” Daenerys asked while tying her robe for good measures. Arya takes a deep breath before the warmth in her face goes back to normal.

“I’ve come here to bargain and strike a deal with you.” She stated firmly. Daenerys quirked an eyebrow.

“Can’t it wait until in the morn? And how do you even get pass all the guards?” she asked curiously. Arya shrugs slightly.

“I was afraid you would be too busy come the next morn. Besides, Unsullied guards that are ordered not to hurt me are hardly a challenge.” She answered back. When Daenerys didn’t even bother to correct her, Arya knows her guesses has proved right. She decides to continue then. “And I didn’t break into your chamber, your door was already unlocked.”

Daenerys fakes a laugh at the last statement. “And I supposed my guards magically disappear as well when you come in here?”

Arya stares back at the older woman with a frown. “There were no guards.” She said softly.

“Yes, of course. Well, if you hurt any of– “

“You had guards outside your room?” Arya interrupts. Daenerys looks at her incredulously.

“I just said so, did I not?”

Arya ignores the silver haired queen irritated question as she turns around and studies the room. It was odd before she came in here, the Queen of Meereen’s private chamber unlocked and unguarded. Sure, the guards would have possibly takes their rest or something but Arya doubts it. The Unsullied are discipline soldiers. They wouldn’t leave their post carelessly unless being ordered to or defeated. Somehow, she believes the second reason to be more plausible.

And whoever that might have defeated the unsullied guards outside Daenerys’ room, may as well be already inside before she came crashing in. Looking around the room, the young assassin cannot find any place where a person can hide. She walks towards the hallway again, and looks through the glass wall. No one can certainly hide in there as it is practically an open field. She turns around again and strides to the pool next, where the clear and hot water abandoned with no signs of living things.

Daenerys who has been watching the young Stark moves around her room ignoring her completely, closes her eyes in irritation. She decides to do the same and walks to the small table across the room, which holds some of the refreshment. She pours herself a cup of wine before settling back at the invader in her room.

“Whenever you have finished ogling my chamber, Stark… I’ll be here.” Daenerys jeered as she takes a sip.
That seems to snap the young woman focus back to her and with one last glanced over her shoulder, Arya strides closer to the older woman, still frowning and her eyes busy. Daenerys waits for her to come closer and her grey orbs to focus back at her before she speaks again, but they never did. Instead, her grey eyes grow sharp and darker at something over her shoulder as she stops a few feet from her.

“I know you’re there.” Arya calls out, narrowing her eyes at the screen that divides the corner, creating a separate space. She didn’t realize there is a divided space before the Queen calls out to her. Now, she was sure whoever it was, is hiding in there since there is no other place to do so.

Daenerys looks at her like she was crazy and delusional, but Arya pays her no heed. The silver haired queen was about to say something when she stops short and caught a blur of movement beside her. She snaps her head at the direction and surprised to find a man walking out of the wooden screen.

His black eyes were scrutinizing the young Stark before he finally settles at violet ones. The man was an average height and his body lean. His attire is as black as his eyes. As Daenerys glanced down to his fingers that hold a dagger, everything that Arya told her and her actions make sense now. She slowly backs away creating a fair amount of distance from the real invader.

Daenerys was rooted in the middle with Arya on her left and the man on her right. Neither of them said anything as they study each other. The stranger shifts his weight and tightens his grip on his weapon before his cold black eyes find the steel grey ones again.

“If you leave now, I shall not hurt you. I’ve come here to take only one name and only one I shall take.” the man offers. His voice soft but cold at the same time.

Arya stares back silently, as his words sink into her. His choice of words is strange to the young assassin but somehow familiar. She had a guess of where he might come from and if she’s right, then she would have close to no chance in winning him over.

Daenerys watches wearily between the determined assassin and the calculating young Stark as they eyed each other silently. "And I supposed that name you're going to take is mine?" she asked then, breaking their intense gaze.

A small smile tugging at the corner of his mouth as he tilts his head to a nod, rectifying her question.

"Under whose order are you doing this?" Daenerys asked again.

“I did not ask and questioned.” The killer said simply.

Arya would have guessed that much. That is how they work after all. The Faceless man never asked and never cared, as long as a face is added to the Hall of Faces. That is also the reason she fled from the cult in the first place.

“What say you, Lady Arya of House Stark? Leave us and you can return home safely to Westeros.” He offers again, ignoring the silver haired queen and looks back at the former assassin.

Arya would have been surprised if it was anyone else who knew who she really was. After all, the youngest daughter of House Stark has long disappeared and presumably dead by everyone else. But, being a faceless man, she expects that much from him. Words must have been going around in the pyramid and if he stays long enough in here, he probably has heard the rumours slipping through the walls. Safe to say, that he probably knows of her background, being the she-wolf of Qazlas Pit too. It was the only reason why he would try making a deal with her instead of overpowering her in the first
Arya shifts her attention on violet eyes that are doing the same. Even though Daenerys face shows no sign of fear but the young wolf can still see flickers of uncertainties. It was as if she really believes the young Stark would take that offer. Somehow, Arya was disappointed of her reaction.

She looks straight ahead at the assassin again, finally deciding. “I’m going home either way, so I think I’ll stay.”

At her declaration, the tension in the room shifts uncomfortably in an instant. The man inclined his head in respect of her decision before sprinting towards Daenerys at the middle. Arya expected that, as she does the same before the man even move into action, gaining her a few steps ahead.

Daenerys stays frozen in her place as both of them race towards her in incredible speeds. But, her violet eyes are drawn to the black figure from her right. She can see his black eyes grow impossibly darker before the tip of the blade replaced them, inches away from her face. A tugging on her left arm makes her body jerked backward, successfully getting her out of the blade’s way. The room spins until it stopped and she realized she had landed unceremoniously on the floor, a few feet from the meeting point of both fighters.

Carefully, Daenerys gets up on her feet. The two fighters are strangely quiet for the chaos they created, not even their breath can be heard. The only sound that fills the room is the sound of the blade cutting through air. Her violet eyes automatically land on the smaller frame of the fighter and she can’t help to think back of what Arya said. Truth be told, Daenerys thought that the young woman would accept the killer’s offer and be gone in a heartbeat, leaving her to her demise. But, once again the young Stark surprised her. Not only did she decline, but she yanked her out of harm’s way and tries to protect her too.

Her train of thoughts got interrupted when a sudden thud echoes loudly in the room follows by a grunt. Daenerys looks over to find that Arya was sprawling on the floor. The man closed in slowly, twirling the blade along his fingers. And for that moment, her body goes rigid. Cold sweat begins to form on her forehead as she truly believes that Arya is going to die. Before she can sprint forward to stop the man, the said woman who was on the floor moments ago, flips herself back on her feet, like nothing happened. Daenerys released a breath that she didn’t know she held, relieved to find out that the young woman is alright. But, it might not stay for long, if she let them go at it. The man is taller and stronger and Arya had just recovered from her injuries not long ago. Not to mention that he has a weapon and she has none. Her eyes instantly search for the way out to find help. But, with Arya and the assassin duelling in the middle of the said exit, Daenerys finds it hard to walk pass them.

The rather one sided fight seems to go on for an eternity, and maybe it had for Arya cannot tell the time when all she can think of doing is avoiding the damn dagger. That is why she doesn’t even try to avoid when the man suddenly kicks her on her chest out of nowhere, as she was too distracted by the blade. The young wolf had learned her lesson and she’s not going to make the same mistakes again. First, that dagger has to go, she decided.

Reaching for the fabric that is left on the small table, Arya goes forward and waits for him to lunge his knife at her. When his piercing arm stretches out, she steps out of the way and wraps the cloth around the pointed blade and his wrist, successfully tying him with her. Though he had another free hand, Arya didn’t let him think of a counter attack as she lands a kick at his manhood.

The man let out a groan of pain as his legs gave out, and he ends up kneeling. His grip on the dagger loosens and Arya takes that opportunity to tighten the cloth around his wrist before she yanks it off completely. At the force, the fabric flies away along with the dagger, where it successfully landed on the floor at the corner of the room, out of reach. So delighted that she finally managed to disarm him,
Arya didn’t realize that the assassin has recovered from the blow she inflicted. The next thing she knows, she heard a crack and her vision doubled. Her steps faltered backward as her hands automatically on her face. But, at the contact, she hissed in pain. She can feel warm liquid trailing down from her nose and into her lips.

Seeing the red that smeared on her palm only confirms her suspicion – that her nose is broken. She glares at the man in front of her, before walking towards him again. Now that he is unarmed, Arya can fight with him equally. She attacks first with a right hook and the man blocks it with his arm before he counters with a right jab at her face. Arya ducks away and gave a murderous glare at his choice of place to attack – which he probably wants to put more damage on her face again – before she spins and land a kick to his head in retaliation. It successfully hits him and he staggers backward to recover from the blow. Arya didn’t waste another time as she lands another kick at his ribs and a strong punch to his face soon after. Blood trails down his broken lips but he is still far from being defeated. The man wipes away the blood with the back of his hand and walks towards her again like it was nothing.

This time it was him that strikes first. Arya raises her arm to block his hit but somehow the force has double since last time, making her arm painfully weakened. The surprise must have been obvious on her face as he smirks down at her before he proceeds with another hook at her open side. She managed to block that one too, although she wonders if it is really a success - when her arms throbbed in pain as she done so. She didn’t even bother to counter his attack, not believing that her force will be enough.

That seems to be her downfall as her body weakens and a blow managed to slip through her defences and land on her ribs, knocking her out of breath. Before Arya managed to recover, another blow hit her face again. Though this time, the force is more powerful than before that it sends her face first down on the floor. Her ear rings with a strange buzzing sound before it was replace with someone calling her name. She forces her eyes open and sees a pair of leg walking away towards the person across the room. And when she looks up, Daenerys face comes into view. The familiar violet eyes are glazed with concern as she looks down down at her and back at the assassin nearing herself. Daenerys desperate face pulls Arya back into focus. She shakes her head lightly trying to get a hold of herself before pushing her body upwards. Afraid that her legs might not hold on any longer, Arya sprints toward her assailant silently and jump over his back. The man never sees her coming. Not only after she latched herself onto him that he struggles, trying to pull off her arms around his neck and head, and her feet around his middle. It didn’t work out the way he planned and Arya can hear his hitched breath as she tightens her arms, blocking his airway. He staggers backward and away from Daenerys frozen form.

With the man wobbling around the room, the exit opens up and Daenerys makes a move towards it before she stops and looks over to Arya, conflicting whether she should leave her alone with the assassin. Before she can make her decision though, the man catches her attention by sprinting backward and further away from her, crashing his back with Arya against the wall.

A painful groan escaped Arya’s lips as her back slams with the hard stone wall. Her grips loosen on the man’s neck as he pushes his body backward again. At the contact, her back is practically on fire as her old wound seems to re-open and black spots cloud her vision. Her assailant takes the opportunity to his advantage and grabs her loosen arm before pulling her over his shoulder and tosses her onto the floor like a rag.

Arya curls around herself protectively as the fire from her back tripled. She wanted to scream but the pain was so excruciating that she barely had any energy left to do so. Her breath was loud to her ears as she tries to contain the pain away. And the familiar pain were making her seeing flashes of her
past. As she's writhing on the floor, the perpetrator that is often assaulted her dreams, shows up uninvited at the back of her mind. His wicked smile is so hideous that Arya has to close her eyes even tighter to force him out.

A scream assaulted her ears then and for a moment she thought it was coming from her but when another sound that of people fighting and struggling can be heard soon after, she knows it was not from her. She wills her eyes to open and after blinking the tears away, her visions clears again.

Her grey eyes search her surrounding tiredly and she notices the dagger her assailant used is lying on the floor just a few feet from her reach. Making a mental note at that, she continues scanning the area until her gaze stops at the form of a man sitting atop a woman. The man had both of his hands around the woman’s neck, strangling her. And all of a sudden, all Arya can see is red. Her heart beats faster and her breath laboured as her past decides to haunt her again.

This time it was an image of a young girl with thick auburn hair and bright blue eyes, lying helplessly on the ground. She called for help, but Arya didn't do anything. Her younger self just watched silently as the soldier pierced the knife through the young girl's chest, putting a stop to the once beating heart. Arya grits her teeth so hard, that it hurt. "No…not this time." The young Stark whispers as she pushes herself up. She staggers for the abandoned knife and reach for it. Gripping it tightly, she turns around to the man and run at him like her life depends on it.

The assassin was too slow to react as Arya already plunged the knife to his side. He grunts in agony before the force takes him down to the other side and away from Daenerys. The young wolf still had a hold of the dagger as he crashes down. She pulls it out before pushing it back through his flesh, inflicting another wound. A scream escaped the man’s lips as the blade pierce through his ribs. He rolls over trying to get away from his attacker but Arya crawls back to him and sit atop him, reversing his position moments ago. Instantly, she drives the dagger to his chest and his heart, not caring that the black orbs staring at her is slowly drifting away from life. She plunged the blade at his body again and again until the red that she sees matches the red from her mind.

Daenerys scoots away from the both of them on instinct, while struggling to will air inside her lungs again. As soon as her breath evens out and her coughs settle down, she looks over to them. Her eyes wide in shock to see what Arya is doing and still is. The dagger she had is still firmly planted around both her hands where she pierces it inside the assassin for maybe than a hundred times, for all Daenerys knows. The blood splattered on both of them but the young woman doesn’t seem to mind.

“Stark?” Daenerys calls out to her, but the said person made no response.

Daenerys moves closer then and calls out to her again but it was still the same. She crawls her way to be in front of her and watched in horror as the woman seems to be in trance, as if in possessed while mumbling something along the way.

“Arya!”

Arya stops with the knife over her head, before slowly lowering it down. She glanced up to find violet eyes intensely seeking her.

“He’s dead.” Daenerys said again, assuring the young woman.

Arya looks down at the now unrecognized assassin and tosses away the dagger, making it clatter against the floor. She climbs off the body then and lands herself tiredly on the ground. Daenerys moves closer and sits in front of her trying to gauge her attention. But her grey orbs seem to be far away from here.
"Arya?" she tries again, but the young Stark is still inside her own world. As Daenerys glanced towards the battered body, she wonders what kind of a world had Arya lived through if it makes her do things like whatever that mess would be called. But, then she remembered the young woman's time in Qazlas Pit and how horrible and how inhuman Arya looked the first time she met her. The thought greatly upset Daenerys.

The silver haired queen doesn't know what else to do to bring the young woman back to reality, so she does the only thing she can. She leans forward and wraps her arms around Arya's shoulder in an embrace. At the contact, the young woman's body went stiff as a board. But, Daenerys tightens her arms around her anyway, stroking her back gently in a circle. It takes a while but gradually, Arya seems to relax inside her hold as her head rests inside the crook of Daenerys neck. Even when the young woman's body grows heavier, Daenerys doesn't let go.

Chapter End Notes

Don't fret, we will hear what bargain Arya wants to make in the next chapter. For now, let the poor girl rest :P
Comment? Please?
Allegiance

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf makes her choice.

Chapter Notes

Hey! So, we're back with another chapter. A quick thanks to everyone that take their time to leave comments and kudos. You guys are great!

And thanks to Wanda for volunteering to be my beta for this chapter! She's millions ways kind of awesome! Other mistakes are solely mine.

Now, why are you still reading my rant?

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Chaos.

If Arya had to choose a word to describe her mind as of this moment, it would be just that. Utter chaos.

Horrible gruesome memories came flashing unwillingly through all her five senses. She hears the noises, the screaming, pleading and shrieking of people through her ears. She smelled the sickeningly sweet metallic stench of blood that assaults her nose, suffocating her breath while tasting everything inside her mouth all at the same time. She sees men tearing at each other’s limbs. Her father’s head separated from his body and Sansa’s holed chest were among them. Their bodies battered and broken almost disfigured beyond all recognition. And she sees her brother, Robb –literally – carrying their house sigil over his shoulder. Blood seeping through the stitches that holds Greywind’s head to his body. She feels her skin crawl as it touches upon the decayed and abandoned body of her lady mother, stopping it from drifting further into the river. Every inch of her body trembles as it feels the familiar pain inflicted on her, scarring every part of her limbs, marking her permanently.

She wants all of those memories, dreams, feelings or whatever the hell it is, to be gone. She wants them out of her system. She wants an exit but as hard as she tries to turn it off, she’s unable to. And the chaos keeps finding its way back to her head, assaulting her every second. Fatigue slowly begins to creep inside her and she silently begs the power up above for mercy, to stop this maddening torture for if it goes on any longer, she’s afraid she might be lost in them forever.

The Gods must have listened somehow, because all of a sudden the mayhem of her mind starts to slowly subside. Piece by piece it draws out until all that she hears is her breath and the warmth she feels surrounding her body. It probably lasted longer than Arya intended as she lets herself get lost in the strange peacefulness.

Her entire being had never been this restful but the odd calm pass away as quickly as it came.
Slowly, reality grabs a hold of her as she recognizes the sound of a beating heart, loud against her ears. What was even stranger is that, it does not belong to her.

Arya forces her mind to attach back to her body. As she gradually gains every part of her limbs again, she automatically winced in response upon the contact at her back. In an instant, whatever that has been touching her back removes itself from her form.

“Arya?”

Before Arya can recognize the owner of the voice that called her, she was pulled away, leaving the temporary serenity. With her terrifying images finally gone, a pair of crystal violet eyes takes over her line of view and she stares at them unblinking.

“Are you real?” she croaked. Her voice barely came out as a whisper.

A moment passes before the clear violet orbs glazed over with that of compassion as she replies back. “Yes. I am… as are you.”

As the words sink in through Arya’s conscious, her mind unwillingly reaches back to reality as she finally recognizes the person in front of her. Daenerys watches as a flicker of emotions swam inside the grey irises of the young woman’s eyes.

The grey eyes glanced down towards her painfully sore neck and stayed there for a long time before the young wolf features turn into one of realization and second’s later horror. Arya takes a deep breath before she chanced a glance over her shoulder, afraid of what she will find. Her breath caught in her throat as she sees a lump of a body – battered and fragmented – covered in a pool of blood, was lying still not far from her. She realized then that her nightmare was real after all.

*I did that. I killed him.*

And suddenly she was sick to her stomach not because of his torn flesh or hollow chest but because she was the one who has caused it all. She was dragged away from her stupor as a pair of hands gently turns her shoulder, forcing her to look into the violet eyes of the queen. But, all Arya can see is the disfigured man she killed, planted firmly at the back of her mind.

Daenerys held on as she studies the trembling young wolf in front of her. The grey eyes were lost in her world again and the older woman grips her shoulder tighter, wanting her back. “Arya, you’re alright.” She tries.

But, the said person is still unresponsive. The silver haired queen lets go of her hold then only to reach out for the bloodied and bruised face of the lost wolf instead. “Look at me.” Daenerys said harder, cradling Arya’s face gently.

The grey orbs instantly flickered and focus back to Daenerys.

“You’re alright.” The older woman tries again. Arya wanted to believe that, but her ghosts seem to have a different idea.

When the warm hands on her face tighten in a comforting manner, and the sea of violet flows through again, her demons scampers, leaving only the warmth and comfort. She lets her vision get lost in the lovely sparkle of violet that assured her of the words that were just spoken.

The dragon queen held on until the young woman’s tremble ebb away and her grey eyes relaxed. But, even with those ashen orbs calm, Daenerys can still see a flicker of emotions pass through them.
Scared, disgusted, and despair. And they are all begrudgingly directed at the young woman’s own self.

The emotions were so bare that Daenerys felt like she was intruding an intimate moment. And during those vulnerable moments as the wall of Arya Stark crumbles, for once, the silver haired queen has the strangest feeling and urge of wiping those insecurities away from the young wolf. Before she can act on it however, heavy footsteps echo along the hallway that connects to her main chamber and soon two Unsullied soldiers emerge.

“Your Grace, wha-“ One of the soldiers speaks in his common tongue but stops short as he studies silently the state of the room.

Daenerys reluctantly let’s Arya go and looks up at them. “Get the healers…Now.” She barked at the last word as the two guards made no move to do her bidding.

One of the Unsullied snaps out of it at that and he instantly straightens his body in a salute before rushing out of the room again.

“Are you hurt, Your Grace?” the remaining soldier asked, moving closer. His eyes glanced at the Queen’s companion before focusing back on her.

“No, I’m fine.” Daenerys said back, dismissing him before continuing. “Find Grey Worm and tell him that the pyramid has been breached. Gather a team and search inside the pyramid and outside where the fleets are. I want anything or anyone that is remotely suspicious apprehended.”

“At once, Your Grace.” He straightened in a salute and turned around, walking away to do as per instructed.

Daenerys watched until the back of her soldier disappeared before turning around to the young woman again, only to find that her cold mask of indifference was back on. The once vulnerable grey eyes were gone, instead in its place are the hard steel ones.

Arya looks away instantly as the violet eyes in front of her linger too long for her own liking, studying her inside and out. The young woman scoots away then, uncomfortable by their closeness. She tries to get up but hisses at the pain that assaults all over her body. A hold on her arm prevents her from falling on her face and the young Stark glanced to her side to find Daenerys supporting her as she gets to her feet.

“I’m fine.” Arya said stubbornly, earning a glare from the Queen. She straightened herself up then, trying to make a point before brushing the older woman’s hold off of her.

Daenerys sighs inwardly as the young wolf proceeds to stride across the room on her own, like nothing happened. Taking a last glanced over her shoulder at the disfigured assassin, the silver haired queen follows Arya’s trail through the hallway into her main chamber.

“Stay. The healers will be here soon.” Daenerys informed. Arya stops and turns around then, facing the Queen in the middle of her chamber. Her mouth opens to say something but it was cut short. “If you’re going to say you’re fine one more time…” Daenerys threatens. Arya quirked an eyebrow at the older woman’s outburst.

“I was going to ask if I can take a seat.” She replies instead. The silver haired queen let out a tired sigh as she closes her eyes then, pinching the bridge of her nose.

Taking that as a yes, Arya lands herself on the nearest seat which is the bottom of the Queen’s bed. She would have chosen another alternative, like the chair across the room for instants, but fearing
that she would not make it to her destination without embarrassing herself by falling on her face, she plops herself tiredly on the soft mattress instead. A sigh of relief escapes the young Stark as the weight lifts off her weakening feet.

If Daenerys was uncomfortable by the young woman landing herself on her bed so casually, she doesn’t make any sound of protest. Instead, she heads for the seat in the corner of the room and flops down on the chair. But before she can even relax, the door to her chamber bursts open causing Daenerys to shoot back up on her own two feet.

Arya would have joined the queen if her body had actually listened to her command. But, seeing that it didn’t, the young Stark opted to move the only part of her that she still has control of and looks up at the intruders instead.

Daenerys sighs and gradually relaxes as the three men that she recognizes as the healers bow down in respect to her. The silver haired queen dismissed them then and explains in brief what had transpired; all the while their eyes were busy darting between the Queen and the young Stark.

The older man of the group walks closer to the Queen then, while ordering the other two to attend to the silent form of the young Stark. Taking back the seat from before, Daenerys let the healer attend to her sore neck. She flinched as he smouldered something cold along the sore skin. But, it soon leaves her with a numb feeling, the ache almost gone and suddenly she feels much better.

“Thank you.” She said. The older man gave her a slight smile in return.

“The bruise will be gone in less than a fortnight if you apply the salve every night, Your Grace.” The healer explained. Daenerys gratefully thanked him again before she dismiss him and sending him to the young woman across the room that needed more than a salve to heal the wounds she gained.

The silver haired queen watches silently as the three healers swarm around the young Stark, attending to her injuries in an orderly manner. Arya’s face shows no inclination that she was in pain – despite the bruising marks gradually appearing on her cheek and nose – except the tenseness of her body and the deep frown on her features.

A sudden creak of the door snaps the older woman out of her observations, as she turns around to face the commander of the Unsullied.

“Your Grace. I came as soon as…” Grey Worm begins, stopping in the middle as he takes in the form of the queen. “You are hurt?” he asked worriedly, moving closer. His accent is still thick to Daenerys ears.

Before the silver haired queen can answer, another form that of Jorah comes into her view. He, like Grey Worm asked the very same question. And then, Daario and Missandei decide to join them too bearing the similar inquiry. Daenerys leaves their worried questions unanswered as she waits patiently for the last person. And sure enough, seconds later, Tyrion comes in walking in long strides – as long as his short legs allow – to finally join them.

“I’m perfectly fine.” Daenerys answered then, holding up a hand to assure everyone.

“But the blood-” Daario lingers, nudging at the Queen’s attire that has dried blood on certain parts.

“It’s not mine.” Daenerys continues.

“Then, who does it belong to?” Jorah asked in concern, taking a step closer then.

“The man that was hired to end my life. He managed to sneak into my private chamber and hide
himself in here, waiting for the opportunity to finish the job. He’s in the other room, past the
greenery.” The silver haired queen said back.

At her declaration, the others silently share a look of shock among them, before Grey Worm, Jorah
and Daario head off to the said room.

“Judging by the amount of blood on your clothes, I suppose we can no longer inquire from the
assassin who hired him?” Tyrion guessed. Daenerys hummed in response.

“But, who would want this?” Missandei suddenly voiced out. Daenerys turned to her then.

“I can think of some names, particularly the lords in Westeros. They killed Drogo before and now
they’re after me.” The silver haired queen answered back.

“We know Robert has spies all over Essos. Word must have gone around that you have an armada
filled with armies ready to sail across the narrow sea. And Robert being Robert…he would try
anything to secure his kingdom.” Tyrion points out.

“And if it weren’t for the assassin’s hands around my neck instead of his dagger moments ago, the
usurper would have had his wish granted. He was close to achieve that.” Daenerys bit back,
frustrated not at her advisors but at the situation itself.

Both Missandei and Tyrion glanced silently to the Queen’s swollen neck in concern, waiting for the
fire from the silver haired queen to subside.

Tyrion shifted his weight uncomfortably before he decided to step closer to Daenerys. “I’m sorry you
had to experience this horrible incident, Your Grace. We should have put more soldiers guarding you
and securing the pyramid. I should have expected that this kind of attempt on you would be
inevitable.” He said in remorse before continuing. “But, now that we know he’s coming after you,
we will be ready. The guards certainly did their best to defend you against the killer. And if we can
beat him once, we can do it again and again until Robert has run out of assassin to hire.”

Daenerys stared at the mismatch orbs of the Lannister dwarf that shone with both guilt and
determination, and let out a small smile at that. She was about to correct him about her defender but
someone else beat her to it.

“You would have to try really hard then, for the Faceless Men never relent once a name is given.”

Daenerys turned then to the voice and found that Arya remained seated on the same spot on her bed.
The healers are at her side, busying themselves packing their equipment back into the bag they
carried into the room earlier, clearly finished with their treatment for tonight.

The young Stark looked better although not by much. Her once bloodied face is now clean except
for the angry bruises marking her features, particularly on the bridge of her nose. Her clothes still
coloured with dirt and dried blood but clean white bandages that wrap her skin stand out from under
it stopping at the base of her neck.

“Arya?” Both Missandei and Tyrion call out in surprise as they finally realize the young Stark was
present in the chamber.

Shocked to see the state of the young woman, Missandei strides forward in response. “What
happened to you?” the former slave asked, worry evidence in her voice.

“What is she doing here?” another sound echoes around the room then interrupting the small group.
Four people snap their heads at the direction to find Jorah standing at the hallway’s entry. His gaze fixed at the young woman seated on the Queen’s bed. Grey Worm and Daario stand at each side wearing a wary look on their faces.

Arya narrows her eyes silently at the knight’s tone of addressing her. But before she can defend herself, another has already beaten her to it.

“Arya is the one who saved me from the assassin. I would not be standing here as of this moment, if it weren’t for her.” Daenerys informs, resolutely.

A mix of reactions cross everyone’s features, of shock and worry, and another of amazement. Silence surrounds them as everyone lets the information sink into their system before their gazes focus on the tired and uncomfortable young woman.

“You did that to the killer?” Daario asked with disbelief and awe, pointing at the hallway which he came out from. Arya looked away and left his question unanswered as the gruesome images of what she did to the now extremely disfigured assassin assaulted her mind again.

“What is she doing here in your private chamber in the first place, Khaleesi? She should be in her room, guarded.” Jorah points out, while closing in on Daenerys. Arya looks up at the man with a glare, annoyed at him talking like she’s not present.

“I’m right here in case your eyes have failed you. And to answer your question, I have an important matter to discuss or planned to discuss with the Queen right before that assassin decided to interrupt.” The young Stark replied, indignantly.

“Speaking of the assassin, you said something about a Faceless Man?” the dwarf cuts in. He stands in front of the young Stark, blocking her view of anyone else, forcing Arya to focus her attention on him.

“Yes. That man was one of them.” She answered tiredly.

“How do you know that?”

Arya was about to open her mouth to answer but she stopped short when she realized her mistake. She can’t say that she recognizes the faceless man’s way of speech and fighting style since she was one of them herself in another lifetime now, can she?

“It’s just a guess.” She finally said with a shrug. Tyrion raised an eyebrow at that.

“And how do you happen to make this assumption in the first place? Did the man has any significant marking on him or something?” he tries again. Arya chanced a glance to the others only to find they are all waiting for her to answer.

*Damn Tyrion and his persistence. And damn my mouth.*

“Maybe…” the young woman trails, shifting her seat uncomfortably. “I heard him whisper something right before he died. He spoke of the word *Valar Morghulis*. Isn’t that something the Faceless Man says?” she lied easily. Tyrion looked away, loss in thought as if he was trying to remember something.

Missandei suddenly straightened. “That phrase would often be associated with the cult of Many-faced God in Braavos. And the traditional response to that word would be *Valar Dohaeris*, or –”

“All men must serve. Yes. I think I read somewhere about that.” The Lannister dwarf continued,
confirming the former slave’s statement. Arya silently released a sigh of relief as everyone seemed to believe her reason, unaware that a pair of violet orbs were watching her every move silently.

“Well, if Arya is correct and the assassin was indeed a Faceless Man…then I believe we are well and truly fucked!” The half man suddenly declared dramatically.

“Was it not just moments ago, you assured me that we’re going to put an end to every assassin that makes any attempt on me, and kill them all ‘until Robert has run out of assassin to hire’ they were your exact words.” The silver haired queen spoke up with a raised brow. Tyrion looked up at her with a wry smile and is about to defend himself when Grey Worm decides to interrupt.

“Faceless Man or not, the Unsullied will protect our Queen with our lives.” He said to the half man before focusing on Daenerys. “Forgive me, Your Grace as I have let this killer come to close to you. We will be as ready as they are when they come the next time, and I am not going to let something like tonight happen again. I will not let them touch you.” He assured, clenching his jaw tight. The silver haired queen’s features soften at his remark.

“There is nothing to forgive, Grey Worm. And I never doubt your words or the Unsullied.” Daenerys replies back softly before sending a subtle glare at Tyrion. The dwarf swallowed dryly as he forces a smile, feigning innocent towards the Queen. Daenerys let him be as she focuses on Grey Worm again. “Are the ships safe in the harbour?” she questioned then, wondering if the assassin had tried anything else to sabotage her means of transport.

“Nothing seems out of the ordinary the last time the Unsullied reported. I have sent another group to scour the areas as you instructed.” Grey Worm answered.

“Good. Double the patrol, just in case. Can the Seconds Sons be of any aid?” Daenerys directed the last question at Daario.

“I’ll have them join the search. That way, we can cover more areas.” The man suggested earning an approved nod from the silver haired queen before someone else decided to speak up.

All the juggling words seem to float around Arya’s head as her eyes grow unfocused and heavier by the second. She let the others continue their conversation as she finally gives in to the comfort of closing her eyes. But, it only lasted a moment as she forces her eyes open again at the sound of her name to find a pair of worried brown eyes looking back.

“We should get you back to your room. Can you walk?” Missandei asked. Arya blinks a few times, trying to get her consciousness back. She looks around the room then, to find Daenerys across the room in the corner of the chamber, talking with one of the healers, with Tyrion rooted by her side. Jorah is escorting two Unsullied that carry a stretcher with them into the small hallway between the rooms. There is no Grey Worm and Daario anywhere, and the young Stark wonders how long did she actually let her eyes close for.

Focusing back at the older woman in front of her, Arya remembers her question. “I need to see the Queen first. I have something to say to her.” She said back. Missandei pursed her lips in a thin line.

“I’m sure whatever you need to say to her can wait. You need to rest.” The former slave said with disapproval.

“I’m fine… I’ll just wait here until she’s done.” Arya said back in defiance. She ignores the exasperated sigh escaping the older woman as her gaze shifted to the silver haired queen across the room.
Daenerys somehow must have realised she’s been watched as she tilts her head to the young Stark in return, with the healer still talking something of an importance. A moment passes when Tyrion turns to her as well as the healer. She had the strangest feeling that they were talking about her but she brushes that off and sits straighter as the silver-haired queen decides to dismiss the healer and walks towards her, with Tyrion in tow.

Daenerys glanced at Missandei and raised a questioning gaze as the Naathi seems to have a defeated look on her face. Before she can ask Missandei about it, the young Stark decides to speak up.

“If you have a moment, may I have a word?” Arya asked as soon as the Queen is in hearing range. Daenerys raised a disapproving gaze.

“You need to rest.” She stated, repeating what Missandei just told the young wolf moments ago. Arya held in her sigh of frustration.

“I will rest after I’ve talked to you.” She stated firmly. Tyrion moves closer into her view then.

“You know, I’m glad you took my advice and everything… but have you seen yourself in a mirror, Lady Arya? You look like hell, and I’m being generously kind in my choice of words here. I’m surprised you haven’t succumbed to the power of that soft, comfortable bed yet… Not that I know how it feels exactly, since I’ve never sat on it before. But, it looks like an extremely soft and comfortable bed.” Tyrion mumbles in a long breath, earning an equally amused, questioning and annoyed glare from Missandei, Daenerys and Arya respectively.

Seeing that the young Stark made no action to move, Daenerys finally relented. “Alright, then. What do you want to talk about that it cannot possibly wait until the morrow?”

Arya focuses her gaze back at the silver-haired queen, aware that this is her only chance to speak her mind, without any more disturbances. Clenching her jaw tight, she pushes her body upward to stand on her two feet, leaving the comfort of her temporary refuge. It takes a while for her to find a stable stance with the pain and soreness attacking her every limb – each time she makes a move – but she finally did. The young Stark held her gaze at the violet orbs as she straightened her shoulders then. Her mind searching for the right words to start the conversation.

“I know we had a few differences in opinion about our family before. And I know how much you hate my father for aiding in the rebellion against the crown…” she begins. “As I have come to hate your father too but not for executing my uncle and grandfather that I didn’t get the chance to know. But, for the reasons that your father’s actions affected mine.”

“My father was a cold and grim man although he loved us very much. But, the war broke something in him and I saw it in his eyes every time he thought I was not watching. I saw how sad his dark grey eyes became when he was alone. I saw how tormented he was when he explained why he joined the rebellion. And because of that, I hated the Mad King you called your father and still do.” She finished. Daenerys tightened her clasp on her hands while studying the young woman with a slight frown.

“Is this what was so important that you wanted to tell me, Stark? That you hated my father?” the silver-haired queen asked back. Though her tone remains calm, the fire inside her was starting to build up, wondering if the young woman is trying to rile her up intentionally.

Out the corner of her eye, Arya could see that Tyrion and Missandei both uncomfortably shifted their weight as if waiting for the dragon to breathe fire. But, the young wolf ignores that. “No, it’s not. I’m telling you that because now, I can look past it all and see you for who you are. I don’t know you… that is the truth. But, I know what your people think of you especially what Missandei and Lord
Tyrion think of you, and I’m betting all that I have in that…in their beliefs. All I need is for you to do the same for me.”

Calculating violet eyes stared into unwavering grey ones. Moments pass which then turn into minutes as Arya waits patiently for the other woman to say something.

“I believe you.” Daenerys starts. “I believe you don’t have any ill attention towards me. You could have left me to die with that assassin but you didn’t. And for that, I owe you my gratitude and my life. I’m aware of what my father’s ruling was, albeit too late and I admit that it was hard to acknowledge it. But, I’m not my father as you are not yours.” She stated, her composure remained unperturbed.

“Then, I’m asking you not to attack the North. Let my remaining family live in peace.”

“That is an entirely different tale, Stark. If they stand in my way of claiming the Iron Throne, then I would have no choice but to treat them the same as any of my enemies.”

“They wouldn’t do that. They didn’t care who sat on the iron chair. The North has always been an independent continent of its own.”

“You don’t know that for sure. Your family doesn’t even know you’re alive.”

“Yes, I do. As what you called me, I’m a Stark. The northern blood runs through my veins. I was born and raised there and I know how they think. How we think.”

Daenerys chanced a glance to her right where Tyrion stood strangely quiet. As he glanced up at her, a slight smile covered his features as if to tell her to consider the young woman’s words. But, it takes more than just words to convince the silver haired queen and she is about to make her point known but before she can the young Stark decides to speak up again.

“That is why; I wanted to make a deal with you.” Arya continued. Daenerys tilted her head at the young wolf with a questioning gaze.

“A deal?”

“Yes. Let the North remain as it is. You will not attack the North without reason and swear that you will rule us fairly and honestly. And in return, I will pledge you my loyalty.”

Daenerys eyes were unblinking as she stared at determined grey orbs in front of her, trying to make sense of the young woman’s words. She chanced a glance at Missandei who also had a slight smile on her face and then to Tyrion who looks up with proud eyes at the young Stark before she decides to do the same.

“Your loyalty?” the Queen asked, wondering if she heard her right. Arya takes a step closer then.

“I know I’m no knight. I don’t even own a sword, a dagger or any weapons really… and I might not really have a say in the Northern people or my family, when I assured you we do not care for the iron throne - which I still strongly doubt the North want any part in, but if that is the price of our safety, my family’s safety, then I would have done this many times over.”

Seeing the dumbstruck look on Daenerys face only makes Arya more determined in her decision. She will not make the same mistake again. She will not be the cause of her family’s demise. Jon, Mother, Robb, Rickon and Bran are still alive and she’s going to make sure they stay that way, one way or another. Even if it meant that she had to kneel to the Dragon Queen.
Arya makes sure that the violet orbs stay with her all the time she gingerly bends down on one knee before she speaks up again. “I, Arya of House Stark offer my services to Daenerys of House Targaryen. I pledge my loyalty to you and I will support your claim as the rightful heir to the Iron Throne. I vow to shield your back and keep your counsel until you need no longer of my service. I swear it with my life.”

Her voice is strangely loud to her ears as she stares silently to the said person that she just pledged loyalty to. Arya was starting to doubt that her words and vows would mean something to the silver haired queen as the older woman keeps her gaze down at her, unblinking.

Daenerys was literally stunned into silence as she looks down at the broken and injured wolf in front of her. The dragon queen remembers how much her Hand had pestered her to go and see the young Stark she kept locked up inside the pyramid a few days ago, insisting that the young woman had something important to say. The silver haired queen had tried her best not to do that, afraid of what Arya had in mind. Seeing that their last meeting ended with a dagger planted between her feet and the young wolf imprisoned, Daenerys had a premonition that their second meeting would be absolutely disastrous. And she was right in a way, when both their life are hanging by a thread because of a certain Faceless Man. Even later, when Arya stated that she wanted to strike a deal, Daenerys would have never thought that she was going to offer her service willingly. But, it was not without a reason. The youngest daughter of Ned Stark pledged her loyalty to the dragon queen in return that her family and the North would not be harmed. Such love and sacrifice from the young wolf had left Daenerys with a strange feeling of envy. And truth be told, the dragon queen could not come up with any reason to not accept the young woman’s pledge.

The sound of someone clearing his throat loudly and intentionally snaps Daenerys out of her thinking. She glanced to her side in response to find Tyrion tilting his head pointing ahead of her. Daenerys turns away at the intended direction then to find Arya is still waiting patiently for her answers. Seeing the resolute and hopeful look crossing the young woman’s features only strengthens the Queen’s next choice of words.

“And I vow that you shall always have a place by my hearth, and meat and mead at my table. I will not ask any services that would bring you dishonour and I will not force my army to the North without any reason to do so. And I pledge to rule the people of Westeros fairly and with honesty. I swear it with my life.” Daenerys finally replies.

The young wolf let out a breath she didn’t know she’d held and pushes past the pain to stand up on her own two feet again, swaying slightly before she straightened herself successfully. As she studies the pair of violet orbs that are still intently seeking hers, Arya can’t help but to wonder what her choices will lead her to, this time.
Chapter Summary

In which realization comes apart and secrets are shared

Chapter Notes

*Knock knock..anybody there?*

Sorry my lovelies for the big gap in updating! I know I've been M.I.A lately...but I have this HUGE writer's block and well nothing happen. It was so frustrated when you know what should happen next in the plot but you can't take it out. It was the worst feeling ever. Gahh! glad that it passed though. Oh, and a quick shout out to the awesome Biruchi who created an account in AO3 just for me...well I'm sure he/she didn't exactly, but I'm going to assume it's because of me anyway. Welcome my friend~ ;P

UPDATE: This chapter is now completed and in full length! (Which is around 12k!? words.. Goodness me!) Really appreciated your feedback, my cool and awesome readers~ Anyway, you may now enjoy the complete version. PS: This chapter is not beta proof

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Under the high cloud that whitens the night-hour, the ship would sometimes sway along the calm waves. Its anchor is at the bottom of the ocean, holding it in place without drifting away. Arya sucks in the salty air, relishing the open sea as she sat on the highest part of the vessel, in the crow’s nest. This has become her favourite spot since she sets sail along the Targaryen Queen a week ago. The space is fitted of two people at most, with wooden railing surrounds for safety. Regardless, it is perfect enough for the young Stark to lie down and make herself comfortable. She prefers the stars that shine bright over her head and the chill air assaulting her body than the wooden ceilings and stuffy air of her intended cabin.

And within that one week, the young Stark has used the time to recover fully from her last injuries. The once bluish-purple bruises on her ribs and face are almost gone now leaving only a yellowish colour that soon will be matching her skin tone, leaving no trace behind. But, the scars she gained from the past years living in Qazlas pit at her back and other parts of her body still remained. Those marks will never go away as long as she lived in this lifetime.

Arya closes her eyes then, willing herself to slumber in this strangely comforting space. The gush of wind and the occasional waves hitting the bottom deck becomes her lullaby. But, her mind remains awake and her eyes shot back open to the dark sky in frustration. She blows a sigh and groans loudly, aware that no one will hear her in this ungodly hour anyway. It seems that she will get no sleep tonight either.
The young woman raises her hand towards the night sky, leisurely creating an illusion that she can touch the vast clouds and the burning stars. And as always, when her sleep won’t come, her thoughts would accompany her until the sun decides to take its place.

She thinks about a lot of things, since that is all she can do at the moment. She thinks of her family. Of Jon and Robb. Of Mother and Rickon. *I wonder if they can see the same stars in Winterfell as I see them right now.*

Of Father and Sansa. If they are somewhere up there along the stars and moon, in the heavens. *Does it even exist, the heavens?*

Of Bran. Wondering if he’s finding his way back home too as she is.

And of Daenerys. The Targaryen Queen that she had pledged her loyalty to.

Arya has not seen the silver haired queen since she steps onto this ship. The first time the young wolf had a visitor in her cabin, it was Missandei. The Naathi had come to check up on the young Stark and had strictly instructed that Arya to properly heal before she can moves around the ship. And of course, the young Stark had disagreed.

“I’m not delicate, Missandei.” Arya had retaliate earning a disapprove gaze from the older woman.

But, when Missandei had answered back using the Queen’s name, Arya pursed her lips in a thin line. She doesn’t know exactly how to offer her service towards Daenerys when she pledges so. But, she presumes being disobedient at the Queen’s order was not a way to start. Besides, it does not affect Arya badly in any way. So, she relented and agreed at being tended to until her health fully recovered. Arya can still remember the smug smile Missandei wore after that, as she walked out of the young Stark’s cabin. Remembering that now, the young Stark can’t help as a chuckle lightly escapes. It was strange how Missandei seems to genuinely care for her while being annoyingly the same. Arya decides that she can get used to that. At least the Naathi is easy to read.

Unlike a certain older woman who mothered three grown dragons and has probably nearly thousands of soldiers – probably more – at her back. Arya reckons the dragon queen has more, since the other ships that sail along the current ship she is in right now are as wide as her eyes can see on the vast ocean. And the thought that all of these people are going to Westeros, *to her home*, to start a war makes her shudder.

To top it all off, she has sworn loyalty to the person who owns all of these soldiers. She’s not certain of what Daenerys expects from her service. Will the queen demands her to fight along once the battle occurs? Will she demands information of Westeros? Or of the North? Arya let out another sigh. She has no idea what the silver haired queen’s plans are to conquer Westeros.

Her train of thoughts were interrupted as a massive winged shadow flew pass her line of sight along the starry skies. Grey irises automatically focus on the sudden intrusion. As she slowly stands on her two feet again, looking up, the winged shadow grows clearer and Arya’s breath instantly caught in her throat.

*Drogon.*

Even though she has seen Drogon before in Qazlas Pit, she can only vaguely remember what it looks like, with her on the verge of being unconscious few moments later. Now though was a different story. She can clearly see and studies Drogon’s scales, shining as it reflects from the moon’s light. Its scales are darker than the night skies if that was even possible and once in a while as it stretches its wings, the red would sometimes glimmers.
Arya didn’t even realize she was smiling as she cranes her neck up at the beautiful beast. She didn’t know why she did the next thing either as she raised her palms to her mouth and shout. “Hey! Drogon!”

It was a stupid thing really, calling a dragon like it was some kind of trained dog. And she managed a crooked smile as she chuckle at the possibility of Drogon listening to her call. She watched as the winged beast circle leisurely up the skies as if it was entertaining itself somehow. She decides to entertain herself too then.

“Drogon! I’m Arya!” she shouts again. Gasping another breath, she continues. “I rode you once! With Daenerys! Do you rememb-“

Her words got stuck in her throat at the change of sound in air. She swallows a lump dryly as the said dragon turns to her. Its red eyes focus down to the ship, specifically towards the young Stark as it changed its course towards her.

“Oh, shit…” she murmurs absentmindedly as Drogon flies downwards towards the crow nest she is at.

It only takes a moment for Drogon to lower itself so it was the same eye level with the little wolf. The gust of wind that comes from its wings as it hovers above the ship almost knocked her out of the crow nest if not for the railing and her tight grip on them.

If Arya thought that the beast was beautiful before, now it would be an understatement so much that she doesn’t know what to call the magnificent creature. Its eyes which are not exactly red but orange-red like the sunset are staring straight at her and its hot breath brings warmth to her face and for a flicker moment, the young Stark worries that it will breathe fire. But, the feeling soon drowned with her being too awestruck and mesmerized by the black-red dragon.

Unconsciously, she raised an arm towards its open jaw. A low guttural sound similar to a growl escapes from Drogon at the advance. But, the little wolf doesn’t seem to care if it decides to bite her arm off or worse, burn her alive. She can’t help herself and she realizes she was still smiling all this while. It was only a hair breadth until her hand could reach the dragon’s scales, but before she can feel it under her skin, Drogon release a huff of breath and pull its head away, forcing its wings to fly him upwards again. Before long, it was already gone, flying away from the vessel leaving the young Stark all alone.

She let out a breath she doesn’t know she held as she watches Drogon flew off. A small smile is still tugging at the corner of her lips as she savours the moment with the breathtakingly beautiful creature. Just like your mother. She thought.

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When the sun decides to show itself and the ships start to sail again towards their intended course, Arya decides to finally pay the dragon queen a visit. After all, her injuries are almost healed now and she felt better than the first day they set sail. The fact that she remains unscathed after her encounters with Drogon only elevates her good mood.

Two Dothraki men come into view as she strides along the narrow hallway inside the vessel. She stops near them and the closed cabin door. Both men immediately turns to her, eyeing her up and down suspiciously while one of their hands grip to the arakhs at their side.

“I’m Arya Stark.” She starts. But both men only stare back silently. “I’m here to see the Khaleesi.”
She tries again.

At the last word, recognition sparks in their eyes and one of the men steps up signalling he’s going to search her. Found nothing, he gave a curt nod at her, allowing her to pass which she replied the same in return. Seeing that the Faceless Man is still actively pursuing the dragon queen, Arya expects nothing less from the royal guards.

She knocks on the wooden door and steps inside after hearing a voice telling her to do so. Two set of eyes inside the cabin instantly land to the newest addition.

“I didn’t know you had company. I can come back later.” Arya speaks up as she looks at Missandei and then at Daenerys who is sitting behind the desk.

Daenerys eyes linger for a while on the young Stark before she straightens herself. “No, it’s fine. I was just signing off these letters.” She answered. Arya strides closer then, standing in front of the small table that scatters with parchments as Missandei stands close between them. The Naathi is holding some more parchment in her hands and Arya wonders what content they hold. Before she can take a peek at those letters scattered on the table, a voice demands her attention.

“You look better.” Missandei said with a slight smile. Arya turns to the older woman with the same reaction.

“Thank you. I feel better too.”

“That’s good to hear. See? Are you not glad that you listened to me?”

Arya held her eye roll at the comment as she hummed a sarcastic reply. A small smile still plastered on her face. "Indeed... I don't know what I would do without you."

Missandei throws a knowing smirk at the young woman admission, pleased with herself.

Daenerys silently watch the exchange between her advisor and the young Stark. It was a rare sight to see Arya to be comfortable with other person. She guesses the Naathi had that effect on people around her. And Missandei was right, the young woman did look better. The bruise on Arya’s broken nose is gone now and Daenerys is grateful that the young woman’s features didn’t seem to be disfigured or flawed in any way. She didn’t realize she was staring rather openly at the young Stark until her grey orbs turns to her own. Daenerys compose herself in a matter of seconds.

“And to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit this early morning?” she asked.

Arya let her eyes trails to Daenerys features for a while. She noticed the slight bags under her eyes and wonders what caused the older woman sleepless nights. Remembering that the dragon queen asked her something, Arya clears her throat and focus on violet orbs again. “Well, I already pledge myself to you and offer you my service.” She started.

“Yes, I am aware.” Daenerys said back with a raised brow and waited.

“I don’t know how this thing works, but aren’t you supposed to assign me to do something?” Arya asked back uncertainly. Daenerys leans backwards to her chair as she regards the young Stark.

“You mean like fetching my meal, bringing my bath and the like?” the dragon queen asked with a straight face, trying hard to conceal her amusement. Arya blinks a few times at that.

“Yes... I guess so. But, don’t you already have handmaiden for that? And Missandei too.” The young Stark replies evenly though her tone stills held some uncertainties. Daenerys brows arched
perfectly upwards at the young woman’s remark.

“Did you just assume that Missandei is my handmaiden, Stark?”

Arya opens her mouth to answer but closes back as she glances towards Missandei who is strangely quiet and currently shooting daggers through her brown eyes. The Naathi looks at her in a serious expression as if she was offended by her earlier remark calling her a handmaiden. She snaps her attention back at the dragon queen who is still waiting for an answer.

“No, of course not. I mean… aren’t you?” she answers hurriedly and turns to Missandei at the last question with a frown.

Daenerys let out a grin as Arya’s focus shifts to the Naathi who is trying hard to look displeased at the young Stark that the dragon queen almost believes that Missandei actually is. Daenerys decides to save her friend the trouble of answering as she signs off the last parchment quickly and hand it over.

“Thank you, Missandei.” She offered which the Naathi gladly took and put it along the letters she already held and take that as her sign to leave.

“Your Grace.” Missandei said back with a nod, ignoring the confused little wolf. She held back her grin until after she steps outside the cabin, shutting the door behind her.

Arya follows Missandei’s every movement with an exasperated look, not knowing what had just transpired, unaware that the two older women are playing her. The young Stark snaps her attention back at Daenerys.

“Why is she angry? Did I say something that offends her? I mean what’s wrong with being a handmaiden anyway?” Arya asked continuously. The dragon queen reaches for the jar of wine on her table then.

“Nothing’s wrong at all with being a handmaiden.” Daenerys answered, pouring the wine to her goblet. She looks up at confused grey orbs and finally let out a small smile that threatening to escape since before. It was a surprise that the young woman standing in front of her can be so innocent and endearing when Daenerys knew what the little wolf is capable of.

Arya blinks hard at seeing the change in the dragon queen’s features, as she comes to a realization that they were just playing her. She narrows her eyes at the older woman then, not feeling at all amused by their trick. Even more so that she fell for it.

“Though I assure you, Missandei is more than just my handmaiden. She’s my advisor and a close friend.” Daenerys continues, unperturbed by the wolf’s glares. “Wine?” she offered with a slight smile.

Arya straightens her back then. “Is it not a bit early for that, Your Grace?” she asked with a raised brow.

“It’s never too early for a cup of wine.” Daenerys replies evenly.

“It seems that you’ve been spending too much time with Tyrion.”

“He is my Hand.”

Arya gave a slight nod at the statement and say nothing else. Silence surrounds them for a moment as Daenerys takes a sip of her wine while studying the young Stark whose grey eyes are busy studying the cabin instead.
“Now, where were we again?” Daenerys starts. Arya instantly focus back at the older woman.

“The topic of my service.” She offered.

“Ah, yes. I’m guessing that you came here with something in mind.” The dragon queen challenge.

Arya swallows dryly as Daenerys is right with her guess. The only problem that if it didn’t go as Arya planned, it would be because the older woman is not convince enough that Arya could do what she claimed. She decides to get on with it.

“I swore to shield and protect your back, so I think it’s only fitting that I’d be your personal guard.” The young Stark offered confidently. Seeing that Daenerys only stares back at her silently though, the confidence swayed a little. Arya shifts her weight and continues. “You know, like a royal guard?”

“You would do that? Become one of my protectors and ready to fight when necessary?” Daenerys asked back with a straight face.

“Have you heard of the saying; ‘The North remembers’, Your Grace?” Arya suddenly asked, not really expecting an answer as she continues. “It means we Northerners never forget anything…be it an oath, our roots and even betrayal. And I did promise that I would offer you my service in any way. So, yes, if needs be, I would do just that. It’s what I’m good at.” she finished evenly.

Daenerys doesn’t deny that as the memories of the young Stark fighting the Faceless Man come uninvited. She leans forward then and clasps her hands together, resting them on the table. “Ser Barristan Selmy was once my advisor and Queensguard back in Meereen. And he had the privilege to serve the crown prince, Rhaegar before the rebellion of course. He said that my brother was good with his sword and fighting in general. But, Rhaegar never liked it one bit. What he really enjoyed was actually singing… though I can’t personally say if he’s actually good at it.” Daenerys stated fondly before she focus on the confused grey orbs once more.

“So Arya, I want you to be honest and tell me…do you like to fight so much that you’re offering yourself to be my Queensguard?” she finally asked even though she can guess the answer to that, given the state the young Stark was in after defeating the assassin is any indication. Daenerys can still remembered the hollowness of those grey orbs as they got lost in its own nightmare and how Arya’s tremble ebb away only after the dragon queen soothed it out from the young woman.

Arya blinks hard at the unexpected question and at the queen calling her on first name basis. She shrugs off the latter and thought about the former. Of course she didn’t like fighting. All her life, in this timeline and the previous one, all she ever did was just that, if not for her survival and vengeance then for the entertainment of others. Violence is a part of her now and she hated it. She staes back at the calm violet orbs in front of her and decides to speak up the truth. “No, I don’t like to fight… But, it’s what I do and what I have always been doing. Besides, I don’t know what else I can offer to you other than that.”

Daenerys let out a gentle smile. “I have enough protection as it is. And correct me if I’m wrong but you also swore that you’ll keep me counsel.”

“Well… yes. I did.”

“So, you can tell me everything there is in the North that Tyrion can’t tell me. The tale that only a Northerner like yourself know of.” Daenerys offered. Arya didn’t know how to answer to that – still dazed by the unexpected turn of events – so she gives the dragon queen a nod instead, agreeing to the suggestion.
Daenerys let out a triumphant smile as she takes another sips of her wine.

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And counsel she did. Sometimes it would be over tea, books, and even board games as Arya sat opposite the silver haired queen. Daenerys was the one who mostly did the asking and Arya would answer them as best as she can. Their topics of conversation would be mainly about the North as the dragon queen suggested. Be it their culture, the people and the landmarks there.

But, lately it has strays to become even more personal, at least for Arya. Daenerys seems to be interested in her family and Winterfell in general. It was subtle as the dragon queen changes their topic from “Where would be the most dangerous forest and mountains in the northwest?” to suddenly one of;

“Are you and your siblings close?”

“Yes.” Arya had answered after a moment of regaining herself.

“That’s nice.” Daenerys said back as a small smile grace her features. Arya realized the dragon queen had been doing that much lately with their session together, though this smile held certain sadness to it. And it was proved right when Daenerys continues, “Viserys and I are not. He always has a say to everything I did and wanted.” She finished with a faraway look.

Arya can see there is still some unspoken things lingering in those violet orbs and she imagine it was nothing fondly. She decides to steer the conversation away from the older woman’s seemingly bad memories and spoke. “I guess older siblings are the same in every part of the world.” She commented and continued as those sad orbs focus on her again.

“Sansa and I always fight and truthfully all I remembered of her now were those of our quarrels. One time, she annoyed me over something… I don’t quite remember about what… but I remembered feeling angry about it. So, I went to the kennel and grab a pile of horses’ or dogs’ dung with me…I really can’t tell since they all look the same. After that, I sneak into her room and tear apart her bed, filling them with horse shit before I sew them shut again.”

Daenerys eyes are wide as she heard the tale. “Oh, no…tell me you didn’t…” she trails unbelieving. Arya grin at that.

“Oh, yes…I did.” She replied. “It was days when Sansa finally realized where the source of the smell was coming from. And I take pleasure in knowing that she slept on horse shit for a night or two.” Arya finished and let out a proud smile. Daenerys looks at the young woman as her grey eyes glistened with playfulness Daenerys had yet seen. A chuckle escapes her but it soon turns to a full laugh.

The dragon queen clamps her own mouth instinctively, surprised at her own sound as she clears her throat. But, the tale Arya told were still playing inside her mind and she imagined if Viserys was the one at the end of it instead. The dragon queen can’t help herself as another laugh threatens to escape. The smug look Arya gave her didn’t help either. An unladylike snort instead escapes Daenerys’ lips making both of them laugh at the ridiculous sound.

Arya let out a chuckle as the memories of her time with Daenerys comes flashing back. It was nice when they talked. When there is nothing to be concerned about. No family name to consider, no country to conquer and no worry for the future in this new timeline. It’s just them, talking. And for a while, in those strange moments of an hour or two, Arya found peace as she escapes the madness called life. She decides serving Daenerys Targaryen could be good for her.
She was brought out of her trance when a loud cheer echoes along the lower deck she’s currently at, where the meal is served for the soldiers. A group of ironborn is hurdle around in a circle at the provided table and seats, talking loudly among themselves. Arya shoves a mouthful of fish stew then, focusing on the men seated across from her.

“…she has the best pair of teats I tell ya. Karol, her name is. She has long black hair that goes until her bottom. Big brown eyes and nice teeth. Oh, what I would give to have her by my bed tonight,” one of the man said.

“Well I don’t know ‘bout her teats, but if yer desperate enough…ya can use ma ass an’ squeeze it all ya want.” Another replied provocatively,

Laughs escape the others, disrupting any peace in the area.

“Fuck off!” the older man shouts against all noise and throws his empty cup at the said man who’s literally offering his ass, as he stands up and flash his white hairy bottom to his friend’s face.

Arya rolls her eyes at the scene as she looks down to her food again, tuning out the rest of the ironborn’s conversation. She tried to continue her meal but realized she had lost her appetite after the gross displayed from the man across her. Wasting food is never a choice especially when every men and women on this ship are on a ration, in keeping tab of their supply. So, she forced the fish stew down her throat anyway and gulp her ale last as she finally finished her meal.

_I should have listened to Missandei and eat in my cabin instead._ Arya thought begrudgingly as she swipes her mouth clean with her sleeve.

She walks pass the men to hand over her empty bowl and cup at the small counter that separates the dining area from the kitchen. Another man from the kitchen side gladly takes them from her with a grunt before turning and walking out of view.

Arya knew something was wrong the moment the lower deck becomes strangely quiet. Her senses are on high alert as she knows she had become the group of men’s attention now. It was proved right when that familiar voice sounded again.

“Yer the She-wolf of Winterfell, aren’t ya?” he asked. Arya turns around then and sure enough all eyes are on her.

“Who’s asking?” she asked back, putting her cold mask on. Though she hated that nickname, it seems she will be hearing it for a while still.

The man leans back to his chair as he regards her up and down openly, though Arya is sure that the other men are doing much the same. “They say ya eat men in the fightin’ pit…after ya tear ‘em apart like a rabid wolf.” He stated, confident that the young woman is in fact who he said.

Arya raised an eyebrow at the nonsense remark. She would love to meet whoever is spreading that kind of rumours about her. Before she can reply however, another man beats her to it.

“I doubt that. Look at ‘er! All bones and no meat. A scrawny little wolf I’d believe.” He japes. Laughs erupted at the words.

Arya takes a step closer then. “Better than having a fat hairy ass like yours.” She retaliates with a straight face. The others seem taken aback by her statement, not expecting the young woman to jape back before they burst into another laughs.

But, the said man who had become the amusement of others only let out a chuckle as he stands up
and strides towards her. “Oh, yer been staring at ma ass now, girl?” he asked, exposing his rotten smile.

“It’s really hard to miss when you flashed it to the whole world to see. I’m surprised you can still walk carrying those bums. I imagined it’d be heavy.” She deadpanned, earning another round of laughs from their spectators.

Another disbelief chuckle escapes the man as he stares at the little wolf, loss of words.

“I bet the she-wolf can beat ya in a fight.” One of the men suddenly speaks.

“Aye, she already won in this fight of wits. I reckon she’d kick his fat hairy ass in anythin’ else.” Another joins as the others burst into a fit of laughs again.

“Oh! Shut yer hole. I ain’t lost nothin’ yet.” He retaliates as he faced his comrades. When the men settle down, he turns around to the young woman again. “Alright then, she-wolf… I challenge ya to a match.” He offers with a smug smile.

Arya tilts her head to the side, faking innocent. “Oh, I don’t know. I don’t fight anymore… trying to retire from the sport. You know, it’s bad for my scrawny bones and all.”

“Not that kind of match. What ya take me for? I don’t hurt little girls.”

“I’m not little.” Arya said, glaring.

The man ignores it and continues. “I ‘av sometin’ in mind if yer up for it.”

Arya studies the man in front of her and found no ill will from him. In fact, he only looked enthusiastic and eager. A slight smile creeps at the corner of her mouth as she decides to go along with it. After all, what’s the worst that could happen anyway?

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One thing led to another as Arya follows the man – who goes by the name Derwin – to the upper deck of the ship. The group of other ironmen are trailing close behind them. The said match turns out to be a race, where the first person to untie the sail from its leech wins. Since the vessel has been put on berth for the time being, its sails were rolled up so the wind would not caught on. To make it more interesting, Derwin suggested that instead of cutting the rope that holds the sails securely at the floor of the deck, they would have to climb up the spar and untied it from above the sails head instead.

Arya cranes her neck upwards as the crow’s nest where her favourite hideout was, is situated just slightly above the spars and the sails that she would climb later. This would be easy enough for her as she already knew her way up there. She only needs to use the arrangements of ropes that are aligned conveniently to the spars where then it would lead her to the closed sails. Only, this time she needs to climb them faster.

“Yer havin’ second thoughts, wolf girl?” a voice interrupts her. Arya looks to her side to find her opponent, Derwin grinning.

“I’m just worried about you. How are you going to carry those bums up there?” she answered in mock concern.

“Oh, don’t ya worry ‘bout me… I’ll show ya how this fat hairy ass goin’ to beat yer scrawny little one in a minute.” He retaliates. Arya let out a small smile as she tilts her head to him.
The sound of a building crowd snaps their attention away from each other and men are starting to fill the deck. The Ironborn and the Dothraki alike are standing around her and Derwin like they are waiting for a show. Only the Unsullied are nowhere to be seen. She turns her attention back to the man with a questioning look which he gave a shrug instead. Somehow, almost the entire occupant in the vessel knows of this little race and decides to come and see. She remembered how Daenerys had requested her not to attract any unwanted attention for her own safety. Arya reckon sailing in the same vessel with the men and soldiers from different background and culture might cause the older woman’s worry and Arya had of course complied then for both their sake.

Well, so much for laying low, now.

The gradually cheering and shouting reminds the young Stark so much of when she was in Qazlas Pit. But, somehow it didn’t bother her like she thought it would. The fact that she’s doing this willingly probably is among the reasons. Besides, she hasn’t felt this kind of excitement in a long time. She remembered that Bran used to challenge her in climbing all the time back in Winterfell and how he would always win against her.

“Here ya go…” a voice cuts in, making Arya snaps back to reality as Derwin’s face comes into view. “The knife’s for cuttin’ the rope of the sails. Ya need to ‘ave the sail fully untied an’ spread…it meant nothin’ if ya reach up there first.” He explains the last rule while handing her a small dagger.

Arya takes the dagger and gives him a pointed look. “You have a lot of requirements for a simple race like this one. Is there anymore you care to add?”

Derwin takes a step closer then. “Aye, only one… when I win, I want ya to admit that I ‘av a beautiful an’ fine ass. An’ maybe I’ll show ya more aft.” He answered with a flirtatious smile. Arya tries very hard schooling her features to indifference.

“That's a very good offer... A shame that I will never get to see more, when I win this.” She replied, faking her disappointment. Derwin chuckles lightly.

Just then, out of the corner of her eyes, she can see movements from the crowd. Turning to the direction, she realizes that the murmurs of the men have quieten down and the crowd are parting ways as if they’re allowing a passage for someone to get through. And surely enough, moment later, a group of people emerges from the crowd. The silver hair caught her eyes first and the violet eyes soon after.

Daenerys strides to the middle where she was standing and Arya thought she can see a flicker of worry and anger in her shining orbs. Judging by the setting they are in right now, Arya can guess that the dragon queen probably thought something bad is about to happen. Missandei, Tyrion and even Jorah are wearing similar expression, except for one woman who dresses like the ironmen. The only difference is she wears a long coat over her shoulder and her demeanour screams authority much like the dragon queen. She seemed to be in her mid-twenties, lean and long-legged, with dark eyes and black hair cut short.

“Harlow.” The said woman speaks up first as she gives Derwin a pointed look. “I know someday your potty mouth would get you in trouble…but does it have to be today of all day?”

“Wer’ just havin’ a friendly race ‘ere, Captain.” Derwin said in protest. Arya focused on the supposed woman that the man just called captain. She knows the ship that she’s in right now is called Black Wind, captained by Yara Greyjoy, Theon’s sister, the supposedly rightful ruler of the Iron Islands and Daenerys’ ally.

“The wolf girl called me fat an’ I’m tryin’ to—“
“Ass… I called your ass fat. There’s a difference.” Arya corrected. Derwin let out a huff.

“Ya ‘ear that, Captain? She mock ma most wonderful asset. So, I’m just goin’ to win this race and make ‘er take ‘er words back.”

Arya tries very hard not to roll her eyes at the statement, but all gazes are on her as they gave her a judgemental look. “He called me scrawny first.” She blurts out in defence.

“This race of yours… has a need for knives?” Daenerys finally decides to speak up. Her eyes glued to the young Stark and then to the small dagger in Arya’s left hand.

“It’s for cutting the rope that binds the sail.” Arya replies with a slight shrug as if that explains everything. A frown graces Daenerys features as she tries to connect the information.

Derwin decides to interrupt then. “Wer’ racin’ towards the top. The first who set the sails free, wins.” He explains, pointing upward at the folded sails.

Daenerys turns to him, letting his words sink before she gave a short mirthless chuckle. “You’re meant to say that you’re going to climb up there?”

“Aye, Your Grace.”

At the confirmation, Daenerys turns to Arya who only stares back like none of those bothers her.

“Wow…that’s a long way up and also a long way down.” Tyrion joins in as he cranes his neck up. “And what would you say… a fall of this height do to you?” he asked, voicing the concern that Daenerys held.

“Oh, I wouldn’t know m’lord… I’ve never fall off before.” Derwin answered with a shrug before giving it a thought and continues. “Probably a broken leg or an arm or maybe both…worse of all, mayhaps a broken neck. But, don’t ya worry… I know ma way up and down the mast like any Ironborn would… only better.” He assured with a grin.

Daenerys turns to the young Stark then with a pointed look.

“I’m a good climber.” Arya answered as if she knows the dragon queen’s unspoken concern.

Daenerys let out a soft sigh as it did nothing to ease her worry. “When I asked you not to draw any attention until we get to Westeros… well, being in some kind of a race that is highly life-threatening and making the whole crew watch that said race…is certainly the opposite of not drawing any attention, wouldn’t you agree?” she asks sarcastically, gesturing to the growing mass that surrounds them.

“In my defence, Your Grace…they already know who I was.” Arya answered calmly. “And I don’t know how the others knew of this race. They just came, seemingly out of nowhere and make themselves comfortable.” She finished with a shrug. Daenerys opens her mouth before closing it back frustratedly.

“Words do travel fast especially in a confined vessel.” Yara commented.

“Aye, captain… but not nearly as fast as I’m about to, in a while.” Derwin said with a smug smile. Arya turns to him then.

“You’re a talker…if only you put the same work for your ass, maybe it wouldn’t get so big and plump.” She answered with a straight face. Derwin scoffed before retaliates with another remark.
Daenerys tunes out the words as she studies the young Stark in front of her who seems to enjoy herself responding to the man with her own dark humour. When they decide to excuse themselves to get ready for the said race, Daenerys let them go but not without sending a warning glare at the young Stark, making sure Arya knows just how much she disapproved of it, though it doesn’t seem enough to stop the young woman from participating in the race anyway.

“I bet fifty gold dragons that Arya will win.” Tyrion suddenly declares. Yara turns to the dwarf and let out an amused smile.

“You’re going to lose that money, Lord Tyrion. I have you know that Ironmen are natural climber… especially inside ships and vessel alike. And Derwin Harlow is a fine climber as he claimed to be.” She stated.

“Which is why, I’m betting on Arya… the rules of betting is you should always go against the obvious win.” Tyrion answered with a smirk.

“That is the worst advice I’ve ever heard… I’ll bet a hundred gold dragons for Harlow to show you that.” Yara said again confidently as she crosses her arms below her chest.

A smile creeps at the corner of Tyrion’s mouth. “Oh, this is going to be fun. Jorah, care to join in this bet?” he asked, turning to the said man.

“A hundred gold dragons for the man.” Jorah answered without a second doubt.

Tyrion’s smile widens as he imagined the money he’ll win later if the luck is on his side. “How about you, Missandei?” he asked expectantly. Missandei let out a frown.

“The practice of risking money or valued items against someone else’s unpredictable outcome is not something I enjoyed doing. And what more is that I don’t feel comfortable gaining profit against other’s misfortune.” The Naathi explains in length.

“Alright then… you know… a simple ‘no’ would suffice.” Tyrion commented dryly before he turns to the dragon queen last.

His smile fell completely at the sharp glare from the violet orbs. He clears his throat and force the smile back up. “I’m guessing you don’t want to bet too?” he tried pathetically. Daenerys’ glares only intensified.

Tyrion shifts his weight uncomfortably then. “Your Grace, I’m sure Arya would be just fine.” He tries again. “Honestly, we already know how much of a wildcard she’s going to be…and given her previous experience I think she knows how to take care of herself.” He finished with what the dragon queen assumed a comforting smile.

Daenerys had nothing to say to that as she knows what Tyrion said is true. But, the fact that it doesn’t comfort her in any way is starting to worry her. She should not – could not have this protective feeling towards the young Stark. It baffles her that her feelings are this strong. Perhaps their little session has wormed Arya in unexpectedly to her soft spot. Or perhaps Daenerys knew how valuable Arya is to her success in ruling the seven kingdoms. And losing the young Stark now would be a catastrophe. Daenerys decides she prefers the latter. That would make much more sense.

The crowd cheering brought all their attention towards the centre of the ships. Arya and Harlow are standing there, their back against each other, ready to run the opposite sides, where the two masts that hold the sails are.

Daenerys notices that the young woman has gone barefoot and her trousers hung loosely. She made
a mental note to find Arya a more comfortable and more fitted one later. The voice of someone counting down breaks apart the crowd’s loud murmurs then and suddenly the upper deck has become quiet except for their breaths and the countdown. Arya had placed the small dagger conveniently between her closed lips before she sprints off at a horn’s blow. And then, the noise falls back like waves crashing the shore, cheering both competitors.

Both of them had run off to the opposite side in incredible speeds and Daenerys decides to focus on the left side of the vessel, where Arya is starting to climb up the ropes that are situated at the side of the vessel. She was using all four limbs to her advantages with the blade still secured between her lips. It seems that the young Stark had no trouble at all with those ropes and she seems to know her way through as if she had done this many times before.

With the second goes by, the higher Daenerys has to tilt her head to watch where Arya is going. The young woman hops on to a spar before moving on to another level of ropes that connects to the centre of the pillar. There, she starts to thread on more carefully on the shrouds that are holding the mast. Her speed slowed down as she hold the angled shrouds and use them as a ladder to advance towards the head of the sail. And all the while, all Daenerys can do is pray that the young woman doesn’t miss a step and fall, for if she did, the dragon queen is sure that Arya would break her neck at this height.

It all happens so fast when Daenerys realizes that Arya had safely arrived at the topsail. The young Stark crouches along the horizontal pillar that binds the sail as she takes a breath and cut the first rope free. Arya then stands up and walks with such balance – as if she’s walking on the ground – that Daenerys is again amaze of what the young woman is capable of. The sail seems to be taking in a form slowly as the young woman cut off another and then another binding.

Daenerys watches dutifully as Arya hastens her steps then towards the opposite pillar and crouch down to cut the remaining ropes off. With the last bind breaks free, the sail rolls down gradually until a red three-headed dragon, on a black field emerged. It ripples and billows from the wind with glory. The crowd grew wilder and Tyrion besides her is shouting with excitement though Daenerys can hear the same flapping sound of the sail from the other side the same time Arya has freed hers. If the dragon queen were to guess, both of them seem to have a tie. But, the fact is that Daenerys doesn’t care about the result of the race at all. Her violet orbs seem to have glued to the silhouette of one that is Arya Stark and little by little, the noise from the deck get swallowed down and becomes unimportant.

The young woman is standing up the topsail, with her arm reaching for the nearby rope to balance herself. A few strands of her dark hair come loose and assaults her long stern face but the wind makes clear of it, revealing her, smiling.

And it was the first time Daenerys sees how honest and innocent Arya’s smile was. The way the young woman’s lips lifted upward, the way her teeth are perfectly aligned, the way her eyes narrow in slits. The warm glow her happiness gives. It was like the sun opened its eager light to shine about her.

And then the young Stark looks down. Her grey eyes immediately found one of Daenerys’ own and Arya lets her smile widen into a brilliant grin. For a few moments, the dragon queen only stared back, dumbstruck. There was something about her smile that makes butterflies seemed to escape from the pit of Daenerys’ stomach and the way the sun had somehow toppled down from the sky and made a home right there in her heart, where that unexpected warmth rushes through her. Her eyes grew wide in surprise and instantly the dragon queen breaks her gaze, turning around so fast that it startles her advisors.
Missandei turns around then, as she regards the dragon queen with concern. “Your Grace? Is something the matter?”

Tyrion and Jorah silently study their queen with a crease on their brows.

Daenerys looks up at the Naathi but no words came out. Her thoughts are clouded and she’s confused and unsure of what just happened. Only when another call from Jorah finally brought her back from her faze.

Daenerys straightens her back and force a smile then. “I’m fine… I’m just tired is all… I’ll be in my cabin for the rest of the day.” She finally manages. Missandei instantly relax and gave a nod of acknowledgment and so did the others.

Without wasting any more time, Daenerys walks away from the crowd that seems to be celebrating still, with Missandei in tow. Once the Naathi is sure that Daenerys doesn’t need anything else, she left the dragon queen to rest in her private cabin. And Daenerys welcomes the silence as she tries to sort her thoughts out. But, even when the stars greets the skies and the night’s waves crash against the inside of her cabin’s walls, Arya’s smile still haunted her.

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The next day as Arya wakes up from her slumber, which she had the pleasure of sleeping in for a few hours – before being jolted awake by yet another nightmare – she walks out from her cabin and into the upper deck, climbing her way again to the crow’s nest to get some fresh air. She leaned forward, resting her arms over the railing as she overlooked the sea. The thick grey clouds are cast over the sky and she closed her eyes to feel the cool wind that comes with it. A content sigh escapes her at the calming surrounding. It was becoming her routine now to wake up – or not sleeping at all – before everyone else and climbed her way up here to watch the early sunrise.

Gradually, the sky glows and the sun emerge as pure gold. Even the cool wind is starting to feel warm against her skin. She stares absentmindedly at the horizon for a while longer before she climbed down to greet the day. As she walks down to the lower deck and to the kitchen to break her fast, she realizes she had a session with Daenerys first thing in the morning. She decides it is best not to ponder it over, at least not before filling her stomach first.

The lower deck is starting to get busy and men are bustling in and out. Some even acknowledge her in passing which Arya return with a nod. Her race yesterday with Derwin seems to be attracting a lot of attention. And Derwin, the blasted man, actually agreed the race being a tie. He even apologized for calling her scrawny and throws in a flattery or two of her skills. Arya decides she could like the man, but he had to ruin it by being all smitten with her again. The first time he did it, she thought it was only a joke. After all, no one has ever shown any interest, in that way to her before and honestly she didn’t care because she knows she’s nothing close with being a beauty let alone being called one. But, the second time Derwin made a move on her, Arya guessed the man is somehow strange in his taste and best to avoid him altogether.

The thud sound of a plate being placed down in front of her snapped her attention back to her surroundings. She thanked the kitchen crew as she grabs the plate of food ready at the counter and takes a seat. The talking and murmuring of other men becomes music to her ears as she enjoys her meal silently. Once done, she heads toward the dragon queen’s cabin for their session. The guards who are stationed at Daenerys’ door have been changed to the Unsullied this time. They let her through after finding no threats on her person.

When Arya walks inside the cabin, she had expected that Daenerys would be angry, and ready to hear a mouthful from the dragon queen even. Given the glare the older woman had openly directed
towards her with her participation in the race is any indication. But, instead the said dragon queen
does the exact opposite. The older woman’s face is void of any emotion and she didn’t even look up
from her study to acknowledge the young Stark’s entering.

“Good morn, Your Grace.” Arya greets her guardedly, walking further to the inside of the cabin.

The dragon queen only hums in response as she begins writing. The room became silent after, apart
from their breaths and the scratchy sound the feather makes from Daenerys’ writing. Arya is starting
to wonder if the older woman already forgets her presence. As if reading her thoughts, Daenerys
suddenly speaks up.

“Captain Yara Greyjoy mentioned that her men need assistance in the lower deck. I want you to lend
a hand and aid them in any way.” The dragon queen finished, not even glancing at the young
woman in front of her. Arya blinks a few times as she let the information sink.

“Alright… What is it that they need helping with?”

“You’ll know when you get there. She probably has someone waiting for you right now.”

“Right now? What of our session?”

Daenerys reach for the ink bottle then, and dip the tip of the feather before proceed in writing again.
“I’m stopping it. I have no need for it anymore. It seems to be a waste of time when I have much
important things to do. Besides, if I have anything else to ask, I’ll seek you out myself.”

Arya didn’t know why the words hurt, but it did. Though she has enough experience to cover that
emotion and schooled her features, it didn’t really matter, when Daenerys doesn’t even look up at
her. Arya guessed yesterday’s event still angered the Targaryen queen, so she speaks up then.

“Your Grace, I apologize if the race yesterd–”

“I’m sure the men needed all the help they can get. Best you get going now.” Daenerys interrupts, as
she diligently dips her feather pen again.

Arya bit the inside of her cheek at the obvious dismissal from the dragon queen. Her brows knitted
together as she stares at Daenerys with confusion. Finding no answer from the calm and cold features
of the Targaryen queen – who still won’t look at her in the eyes – the young Stark decides to comply
and not to disturb Daenerys further on her seemingly important writing. So, with a nod Arya excuses
herself and heads to the lower deck where she is needed.

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With her session now completely stopped and ceased to happen, Arya had been spending most of
her time in the lower deck, helping out as the dragon queen had ordered her to. The men were indeed
shorthanded with no one to take care of the hygiene maintenance. Most of the crew were handling
the operation side of the vessel, keeping the ship safely sailing all this while. And Arya realize just
how much effort is needed to move the big vessel.

So, when asked if she could clean the dishes, doing their laundry and sometimes even cooked a meal
or two, she didn’t mind them at all. She prefers doing the work rather than wasting time and lazing
around anyway. At least, it would get her mind off of things, like longing for the session with the
dragon queen for example. Arya can’t help reminisce over it as it was the only time where she was
able to completely be herself. When even Daenerys laughs at her dark humour, the young Stark
thought maybe they could be friends back then.
Foolish girl. After all this while, I should’ve known not to let any hopes up. When did I ever get what I wanted?

The cleaned plate she was holding made a loud clashing noise as she throws it begrudgingly into a tray that hold other cleaned dishes.

“Oi, you angry about something, wolf girl?” a voice from across the kitchen shouts at her. Arya looks over her shoulder to find the old man who’s in charge of the cooking gave her a questioning look.

“Don’t mind me… I’m always angry.” She answered, before reaching for another dirty plate. The old man let out a chuckle as he murmurs something under his breath.

Arya focuses back her task at hand and let the work occupies her thoughts instead. Time seems to move fast when she always had something to do and somewhere to go to. When dusk is falling rapidly, and her duties are done for the day, she decides to retire to her compartment. But, someone stops her from doing so. An unsullied who surprisingly can talk the common tongue, ask her to bring a jar of wine to serve in the common cabin.

Arya heads toward the intended course with the biggest jar she can find, full of wine. The Unsullied guards are stationed just outside the door. Once they let her through, Arya didn’t think of anything else than completing her work here and off to bed soon after. So, she didn’t even bother to glance at the occupant inside. But, a familiar voice sounded then.

“Arya?”

The young woman looks up to find a pair of brown eyes staring back. Missandei looks at her with confusion.

“How did you find us here? I just send men out in search for you.” Tyrion asked then.

Arya turns to her left where Tyrion was seated along the rectangular table. Yara Greyjoy seated across him. And at the head of the table, Daenerys is there, with Jorah and Grey Worm standing close by her side. Her grey orbs trail to violet ones and judging by the look, Arya can feel that the dragon queen doesn’t want her here.

The young woman focused on the Lannister dwarf then, answering his question. “You request for wine?”

“Yes… but why are you the one bringing it?” he asked with a quirk of his brow.

Arya’s eyes instinctively flicker towards the Targaryen queen again before she made a quick scan of the others. It seems that no one knew what Daenerys had ordered her to do, except maybe Yara Greyjoy.

“I’m helping out the crew since we’re short of people.” She finally said.

An uncomfortable silence ensued then as Missandei, Tyrion, Grey Worm and even Jorah turn their heads towards Daenerys with a surprised look.

Daenerys straightens her shoulder then, unperturbed by the others’ silent inquiries as she locks her gaze with Arya. “You can leave the wine on the table. We can tend to ourselves.” She said dismissing the young woman.

For a moment, Arya only stares back silently as she tries to read Daenerys. But, the dragon queen
gave nothing away. So tranfixed was Arya at the violet depth and Daenerys at the steel grey orbs, that they are unaware the room had gone eerily quiet as the others awkwardly regard both women’s intense gaze. Recalling the dragon queen’s instruction, Arya gives a slight nod then, walking further to the room and place the jar of wine on the table before she make her leave.

“Arya, hold on.” Tyrion suddenly said. The young woman halts her track from walking out the door and turns around to him. But, Tyrion turns to the head of the table instead.

“Your Grace, as I’ve said before… Arya needs to know what’s happening in Westeros, and of her family before we can—“

“What do you mean? What happened to my family?” Arya cuts off as she strides back to Tyrion. Panic starts to build inside her as she imagined the worse. The dwarf turns to her, with his hand raised, dismissing any concern from the young Stark.

“Oh, nothing happened. Nothing as you fears… I promise. I only meant about how your family are faring in the North.” Tyrion answered with an apologetic smile. Seeing no lie from him, Arya let out a sigh of relief before Daenerys decides to speak up.

“And as I’ve said before, none of it matters anyway.” The dragon queen starts, looking at her Hand before she continues. “I’ve made my decision and we’ll be heading to Dragonstone first. We’ll take the castle from Stannis and then I’ll fly to King’s Landing with my children and take the throne.” She finished with a pointed look, daring anyone to say otherwise.

“Then you’ll be the Queen of the ashes.” Tyrion said back, exasperated. “Even if Robert is a shit King, and I’m more than happy to see you burn him with dragon fire… Westeros is still a united kingdom. They won’t let a foreign queen lead them. Are you going to burn each and every one that doesn’t acknowledge you as their queen?”

When Daenerys doesn’t say anything back, Tyrion continues. “We need allies… and right now, the only ally we’ve got is the Greyjoys.” He said softly. “The North is where we should be headed. If they know Arya’s alive and is in our – your care… they will see you in a different light. Even if they won’t provide us with military forces, at least we’ll know they won’t help Robert then. That will be three great houses in our hand, the Starks, the Tyrells and the Martells, three out of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros.” He explains in length.

“Why would the North be any part with those Houses?” Arya asked with furrowed brows, still trying to sort the other information. Tyrion turns to the young woman then.

“Well, they come in a package you see. The Warden of the North, your brother, Lord Robb is married to Lady Margaery Tyrell, the Princess of Highgarden. And Lord Rickon is betrothed to Prince Doran Martell’s daughter, Alarra Martell…the Princess of Dorne. So, I’m sure that if the Starks join our cause, then the others will come along too.” Tyrion answered confidently.

Arya stares at the mismatch orbs of the Lannister dwarf absentmindedly. She didn’t know Robb was married and Rickon is betrothed. The young Stark hadn’t thought to ask about that sort of thing before. Knowing they’re alive and well in Winterfell is enough for her. But the new information only made her happy for them. She wonders if Jon’s married too. Her trains of thought got interrupted as the dragon queen finally speaks up again.

“We can discuss this further on the morrow. For now, leave me here to my thoughts.” Daenerys said tiredly as she leans backward to her chair. When the others only stare back guardedly, Daenerys let out a sigh. “Alone.” She ordered.
At the obvious dismissal from the dragon queen, the others reluctantly complied. Missandei is the one standing up first, leaving the room before Yara, Grey Worm, Tyrion and then Jorah followed soon after. Daenerys let out a soft sigh as she rubs the bridge of her nose, closing her eyes tiredly for a moment before she opens them again. The dragon queen expect to find the room empty when she opens her eyes, only to find that it’s not. Arya is still rooted to her spot silently.

“You’re still here.” Daenerys said. “Why are you still here?” she asked with obvious irritation, before sipping to her last wine.

Arya tilts her head to the older woman, finding they were alone in the cabin. She didn’t realize the others leaving as she was too preoccupied with her thoughts. The wheels inside her mind keeps turning to connect the information together. She decides to let her questions free.

“What Tyrion said… if it’s indeed true, why wouldn’t you sail to the North?” Arya finished. She agreed that it was the perfect plan for the dragon queen. Daenerys could get more allies and secured the seven kingdoms gradually in time. So, when the older woman seems reluctant to do it, Arya cannot think of a reason why.

Daenerys let out a sigh as she knows there’s no way that Arya will leave her alone now. The dragon queen stands up with her empty goblet in hand and walks around the table to the jar of wine the young woman brought. “It doesn’t concern you.” She said coldly while pouring a generous amount of red wine to her cup.

Anger is starting to rise inside the young Stark at the queen’s word. “Doesn’t concern me?” she asked with disbelief, shooting glares at Daenerys. “I was born and raised in the North… my family is the ruler of the vast region since even before your ancestors’ conquest… which we’re still is till this day. And as I hate to admit it, I am the Princess of Winterfell. Which part of those things that doesn’t concern me?”

Daenerys turns to the young woman then, her wine now forgotten. “So, now you know your worth… you want a say in everything that I decided?” she asked dangerously.

But, Arya was having none of it. “Don’t put words in my mouth. That’s not what I said… I only want to know why you wouldn’t consider going to Winterfell.”

“I don’t have to explain myself to you, Stark.” The dragon queen seethes.

So, now I’m Stark again. Arya thought begrudgingly.

The young woman ignores the comment and takes a step closer then. “What are you afraid of? That my family would hurt you? That they wouldn’t believe you? That I would betray you?” she asked calmly.

Daenerys only stares back silently, but Arya can see a twitch at the corner of the older woman’s eyes when she mentioned the last part.

“I wouldn’t do that… I won’t betray you. My Father always thought us to be honourable and true to our words. I pledge myself to you and I will do so until my last breath.” Arya continues, hoping that the older woman will have no doubt about her again.

But, Daenerys let a short, mirthless chuckle. She turns around and reaches for her forgotten wine on the table before taking a long sip then. For a moment, only the sound of her drinking and Arya’s breath surrounds the room. “You said that… but then you go and do the exact opposite.” Daenerys finally said, putting down her empty goblet with her back still facing the young woman.
A frown appears on Arya’s face as she tries to solve the dragon queen’s riddle. “If you’re talking about the race… it was not my intention to–“

“Yes, the bloody race! Do you know how reckless, thoughtless and impetuous your action was?” Daenerys cuts in, turning around and facing the young woman again. Seeing the dumbstruck look on Arya’s face only raised the older woman’s anger. “If anything were to happen to you… what would your family say? The lost daughter of Ned Stark, *dead*, on a Targaryen vessel. Do you think your words would mean anything to me then?” she asked, exasperated.

Arya blinks hard at that, loss of words. Truth be told, she never thought of the worst scenarios, only because she knows she will be fine, since she had climbed her way up many times before. But, Daenerys doesn’t know that and Arya felt guilt creeping inside her for making the older woman worried. But, before she can express it, the dragon queen continues.

“And you speak of honesty and honour… but you don’t tell me all the truths.” Daenerys accused with a pointed look.

Arya’s frown only deepens. “All the things that you’ve asked me, I answered them as best as I can with no intention of deceive and pretend. And now, you’re telling me you don’t believe me?” She asked back, trying hard not to sound upset.

The thoughts of her counsel with Daenerys and the possibility that the older woman’s just playing her is starting to crawl their way into Arya’s doubt. She remembers back all their interaction, the older woman’s questions and her reactions. Was it all an act? Did Daenerys want something else entirely than what she really said? If she did, then she was a great actor and Arya was the fool who believes her.

“Fine, then tell me… truthfully, how did you know the assassin was a Faceless Man?” Daenerys asked then.

“Wha– What?” Arya stutters at the unexpected question that seems to come out of nowhere.

Seeing the uneasiness coming from the young woman, only strengthens Daenerys belief that Arya is hiding something. The truth was the dragon queen always wanted to ask the young woman about it someday. Daenerys wants to start by building their trusts to each other little by little, before she drops the elephant to the young Stark. But, things don’t always go according to her plan. And now, she’s demanding the answer from Arya like a tyrant queen and she hated herself for it. But, at least Daenerys doesn’t have any reason left to feel attached to the young woman once she gets the answer she craves for. And maybe then, her dreams would be free of the young woman.

“When you came to my private quarters back in Meereen, and fought off the assassin… How did you know he was a Faceless Man?” Daenerys repeats her question more clearly. Arya looks at the violet orbs as she regains herself.

“As I’ve told Tyrion, the man whispers something –“

“Oh, cut the crap… you said you’ll answer without deceive. We both know how your state was after the fight. The moment you stab the assassin to his side, you’re not there… you’re somewhere else entirely and the only words I hear from him was his scream of agony. He didn’t say anything else as you claimed.”

The gaze from the accusing violet orbs seems too much for Arya to bear. She snaps her head away, thinking hard on how to get away. But, Daenerys doesn’t budge and Arya starts to wonder if she should tell the older woman the truth about it. *All of it.*
“I know he was a Faceless Man the moment he shows himself and spoke. They have distinct accent and certain sentences that only meant something to themselves.” Arya began softly. She tilts her head back in front of her, to Daenerys.

“And how did you know all of those things?”

“Because I was a Faceless Man, once.”

The violet orbs grew wider at the young woman’s declaration. The dragon queen’s heart is starting to beats faster by the second, as she imagined that Arya would lunge at her and finish what the Faceless Man was tasked for. But, Daenerys shakes that fear away as she realized what Arya said. “Was? But, you’re not anymore?” she asks.

“No, I’m not.”

Daenerys instantly relaxes at the confirmation but it only lasted a second as she sense something uncanny. “So, you went to Braavos then? When did you join the Faceless organization?”

“I took a merchant ship to Braavos when I was one and five, and remain in the service of the House of Black and White until I was one and eight, before I decided to leave.” Arya explains calmly as if she’s reading it out of a book.

“And that’s when Qazlaz’s men caught you? After you left the cult?” the older woman asks deeper.

“No, I was in the fighting pit longer before that…” Arya trails uncomfortably. She swallows a lump dryly and decides to tell the truth. “After Father and Sansa were killed during the Kingsroad attack, I ran off… trying to find my way back to Winterfell. But, there were men, snatchers I assumed… they caught me and sold me along with other children they took. Qazlaz bought me then and decides to put me in his pit.”

Daenerys stares openly at the young Stark as she tries to make sense of the words. The dragon queen knew Arya was only one and two when the Kingsroad attack happens, and when she met Arya the first time in the cell, the young Stark could be no older than what she is right now, a woman of one and eight. “Your stories aren’t aligned. How did you travel to Braavos when at the same time you’ve been captured and sold off to Qazlaz?” Daenerys asked with a quirk of her brows.

“Yes. I did.” She answered excitedly. “I know it sounds unreal and unbelievable but that’s what happened.”

“Do you take me for a fool, Stark?”

Arya’s smile completely fell at Daenerys question. The dragon queen gives a light chuckle of disbelief as she shakes her head. “All I asked is the simple truth… and you tell me this tale of time travelling?” her eyes were narrowed, rigid, cold and hard.
Arya clenched her jaw tight as her eyes squinted in response. Her hope that Daenerys would believe her vanishes into thin air. She wants—needs the dragon queen to believe her but instead Daenerys threw it back to her face. A logical part of her wants to convince the dragon queen further with words, but the shame and anger parts won. “Maybe the truth is not that simple, Your Grace.” She defends, trailing mockingly at her title. “You demand the truth but once it was given to you… you shove it away because it was not what you expected. The same thing happened back when I told you about the truth of your father, the Mad King… Maybe you ought to tell me the reason then, why I knew the man was a Faceless Man.” She challenged.

Daenerys fixed Arya a glare that could have set the entire ship aflame. “Careful, Stark… you don’t want to cross the line.” She warns, beseechingly. But, Arya isn’t afraid.

“If I did… are you going to punish me then? Make me clean the chamber pot perhaps? Or burn me to ashes?” she asked with a sick smile on her face. “Mayhaps you should do just that. Let Drogon set me aflame and be done with it. You don’t have to worry about my family. They already thought I was dead anyway… You’re actually helping them by giving them closure.” Her grey eyes shine wildly.

“Stop talking, Stark.” Daenerys orders, her tone regal.

But the young woman only laughs back. Her ashen orbs grew darker and wilder as she lets all her frustration out in the open, not bothering at all with the mask she always wore.

“And now you want me to shut up… it must be nice being a Queen. Where you make everybody listens to you, everybody believes you. But, I’m done with what everybody wants and needs! They can protect themselves and wipe their own shit off their asses, themselves. All I’ve ever done is for the sake of others. I’m tired of this…this fucking life and the Gods… who are making me their personal plaything.” Arya said out of breath, panting hard.

The young woman was trembling with something akin to anger as her words flew from her mouth. Her grey eyes grow unfocussed as if in trance. The situation reminds Daenerys of the similar state the young Stark was in, when she killed the Faceless Man back in Meereen. The dragon queen should feel threaten, but surprisingly she’s not. Instead, her own fury starts to dissipate and now replaced with worry.

“Stop talking, Stark.” Daenerys orders the second time, though her tone grew softer now, more for the young woman’s sake than herself. But Arya doesn’t seems to be hearing anything as she closes in and only stops when she’s merely inches from the older woman. At the close proximity, Daenerys can almost get a whiff of Arya’s scent. Of pines, faint earthy smell and something else that is entirely her own. It immediately calms her, but it seems that it only affected the older woman as the person in front still held her feral gaze.

“Kill me now. Drown me or burn me… I don’t care either way, as long as I’m dead, and be done with it.” Arya pleads like a madman. When she looked into the violet orbs, Daenerys expression turns intense, almost threatening. For a moment, Arya thought that maybe the Targaryen queen would agree to her wishes after all.

But instead, Daenerys grabbed Arya forward and placed her lips onto the young woman in a hurried kiss. And in an instant, the dark cloud in Arya’s mind vanished and cleared. The dragon queen’s mouth was so warm, the caress of her lips softer than Arya could have imagined. But, she was too dumbstruck to react to any of it.

Daenerys seems to realize the young woman’s lack of response as she suddenly pushed Arya away, as if she’s been burned. A look of surprise covers both their faces and they stare at each other until
the awkward silence stretch. But, it doesn’t last long when Daenerys suddenly clears her throat and excuse herself out of the cabin in a hurry. Arya stares at the empty space absentmindedly, as she trails her lips with her fingers, wondering what the hell just happened.

Chapter End Notes

You know what to do, right? ^,<
The Exodus

Chapter Summary

In which everyone took a step for a better change

Chapter Notes

Greetings everyone! I want to wish a late Happy New Year to you! ^.^ It's been a year since I upload the first chapter. How times fly... I'm really grateful for everyone's support that left me their comments, kudos and subscribed as well as bookmarked this story. I love you amazing readers!

Anyway, I hope you stay on for another year and I'll try to update every week, but no promises. You know how life can be. But, fear not... I'll keep you company until the last season of GOT comes out.

Now, enjoy this fluff (but not so fluff?) chapter. Have I ever tell you guys that I'm bad at writing happy things, rainbows and unicorns and the likes? Yeah, proceed at your own caution...

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

To say that Arya Stark is stupefied would be an understatement. The young woman can’t recall if she ever get back safely to her intended cabin, after what happen with a certain dragon queen last night. She might have remained inside the common cabin all night long for all she knows. She can’t even remember how she had come to the kitchen in the lower deck, now scrubbing the wooden plate the next morning. At first glance, the crew would think the young Stark is absolutely diligent in her daily chores, as she scrubs the dirty plate over and over again. But, in actuality, Arya was none of that. Her mind was thousands leagues away and in a state of stunned confusion.

And Arya Stark is rarely confused. She’s not someone that is easily bewildered or perplexed. Her teachers in the House of Black and White thought her better. There were only two times in her lifetime that she was utterly confused about what had happened; the first, of when she traveled through time – twice, and the second, of when Daenerys Targaryen had kiss her last night.

Arya tries to make sense of the incident. She remembered telling Daenerys the peculiar truth of her time travelling. And as expected, the dragon queen didn't believe her. Truthfully, Arya doesn’t really blame the older woman for that. Her old self wouldn’t believe it either if someone told her they can turn back time.

And then after, they were both arguing about it. The remaining details were a blur to the young Stark, but she recalled feeling dejected and furious. The next thing she knows, the dragon queen’s lips were on hers. She can almost taste the wine that Daenerys drank that night mixed with something else that is sweet. Arya absentmindedly slides her tongue over her own lips, wondering if it would still taste the same if she kissed the dragon queen again. The pit of her stomach churned at
the thought.

Immediately, it snaps her sense back as if she had done something shameful. She let out a sigh, shaking her head slightly in disbelief. It would do her no good to think about it deeper. Perhaps Daenerys was just drunk and had mistaken her for someone else.

Yes, perhaps she was.

“With all those scrubbing, one might think that you actually enjoyed washing dishes tremendously or that you actually hated it with your gut and try to sabotage the innocent plate by making a hole on them…scrubbing the same spot for the past ten minutes.” A voice sounded then.

Arya stops her actions to look over her shoulder and finds Tyrion giving her a slight smile in greeting.

“Don’t stop now…you almost made it. I think I can see the light shines through the plate already.” He continues his jape lightly. Arya’s only reaction is the quirk of an eyebrow, unimpressed.

The last thing she needs right now is the Lannister dwarf’s nonsense chatter to add into her chaotic mind. So, she turns back around, facing her chores as she puts away the over-cleaned plate and take another dirty one. She heard the shuffling of feet before Tyrion comes and stands in her view.

“Good Gods! You’re not actually enjoying this are you? There’s simply no other explanation why you’d be here.” He said dramatically. She stops scrubbing again and locked eyes with mismatch orbs in front of her.

She didn’t have it in her to reply and honestly she was too tired to come up with a witty reply of her own. Instead, she blinks a few times and waits for whatever else he wants to say.

“And Missandei has been getting her lovely bushy hair in a knot– I mean both figuratively and literally, since you’re not in your room last night and this morning… When she couldn’t find you, guess who she called for help? Yes, me. Who does the woman think she is? Ordering me around… I merely followed through because I have something to ask of you. Definitely not because of her frightening looking face when she’s agitated.”

At that, the corner of Arya’s lips curved into a slightly slanted smile. Tyrion seems mildly pleased with himself for it.

“So, why are you really here…doing–this?” he asked after a moment, gesturing to the pile of dirty plates inside the basket between them and later continues. “And don’t say because you’re helping out the crew.”

“Everyone needs a hobby, perhaps I just found one.” Arya retaliates. Tyrion let out a huff.

“I don’t think washing dishes is among the top list of anyone’s ‘favourite things I enjoyed doing in my spare time’. I don’t think it would be on any list actually–especially for people like you.” He answered back. She narrows her eyes at that as she tilted her head slightly.

“People like me?”

“Yes, people like you, who would rather enjoy sparring and horse riding perhaps… I don’t know, but something far more exciting.”

Arya hummed in agreement before speaks up. “Well, since both options aren’t available, I make do with what I have.” She shrugged.
They exchange glances for a moment as Tyrion gathers his thought before speaking again. His playful smile gone now as he asked. “What did you do to Daenerys?”

Arya immediately tense at the sudden question. The thought that Tyrion actually saw what happened last night made her anxious, and she doesn’t know why it makes her feels so. She didn’t actually do anything to the dragon queen other than arguing verbally with the older woman. If anything, it was Daenerys who did something to her. Arya chews her lips on instinct as the thought of a certain soft lips violated her mind again. And suddenly, the pit of her stomach stirs again.

“I mean you obviously did something to anger or irritate the Queen…for her to send you away, and making you attends to these chores.” Tyrion finished with a pointed look, not realizing the young woman in front is having a battle of her own.

Exactly three seconds pass before Arya regain herself from her torturing thought and her unsettled stomach. Perhaps she’s coming down with a fever for her body to react this strangely. She held her gaze at Tyrion then who waits for her to explain herself.

“I didn’t do anything to upset her…” She answered back but pauses as she gives it another thought when Tyrion shot her an incredulous look.

The memories of them arguing last night come uninvited. But, that happened after Daenerys assigned her to the crew. If anything, it should happen before that. “I think she’s mad about the race I had with Derwin the other day.” She guessed.

Tyrion let out a soft sigh. “Well, I think you’re probably right.” He concurs. “And there goes my plan down the drain.”

Arya quirked an eyebrow as her interest perks up. “What plan?”

“I thought you could help me convince Daenerys that we should sail to the North.”

A chuckle escaped her uninvited. “You’re Hand of the Queen yet she didn’t listen to you… What makes you think she’ll listen to me?”

Tyrion gave the smallest of shrug as he answers. “Who knows, perhaps you can charm your Northerner way into her.”

Arya shakes her head slightly with mild amusement. “I think not… I’m not her favorite person if you still haven’t realized.” She commented as she focuses back scrubbing the plate before continues. “And furthermore, she’ll think I would only want to go back home if I suggested it.”

“Sure, you want to go home and all…but politically speaking, sailing to the North is the best choice for us to win this war. Your family is tied down to other two great houses in Westeros and what more is that, Robert would have surmise for Daenerys to make her first stop in Dragonstone or Lannisport– since he knows I’m her Hand… Who knows what army and defences they prepared at those castles? And I’m trying to prevent as much casualties as possible, from both sides.” He explains.

Arya held her gaze at the Lannister dwarf whose features turns expectant, like he’s waiting for her approval.

“I suppose… I’m not the one born with the gift of politics.” She finally replies, keeping her face indifference.
Tyrion sighs and the disappointment from his demeanour didn’t go unnoticed by the young Stark.
“No, I guess you’re not.”

“I’m not.” She said again, affirmatively. “Now, if you’ll excuse me… I need to get this done and I
can’t do that if you’re here harassing me every second.” She shot him a glare.

But, Tyrion doesn’t seem to finish yet as he ignores it and continues. “You know that Daenerys will
burn her enemies down to crisp when it comes down to it…and right now, the Starks are not in our
side yet. What are the odds that– say your Lord brother, the Warden of the North…is waiting in one
of those castles to defend them from us? Daenerys wouldn’t be able to differentiate him from friends
and foes when the battle happens. Would you fight him then? Or would you switch sides and betray
us instead?” He accused.

Arya’s face was its usual expression of neutrality, revealing nothing of whatever is going on inside
her mind. For a few seconds her face remained impassive as the last sentence from Tyrion hung
heavy in the air. And as the silence passed, Tyrion starts to regret his straightforwardness and
offensive way of approaching the young woman’s help as the grey eyes in front of him change
hostile.

“No, I wouldn’t go against my family…and no, I wouldn’t betray Daenerys.” She declares calmly
despite her threatening gaze. “But, I can’t say the same thing to the others…in those upcoming
moments of madness and chaos you called war, anything is possible– No rules to follow and no
honour to question. No one counts how many men you cut down but yourself.” Her chilly voice
finished.

There was nothing Tyrion can say to that except swallowing a lump dryly at the subtle threat from
the young wolf. Though her words were vague in stating she wouldn’t mind killing the others beside
her family and the Queen, Tyrion knows exactly who she meant to cut down.

His chance to seek help from Arya in that moment was lost as he realizes he had crossed the line.
Not wanting to antagonize her further, and decides he will never get her help anyway, he dismiss
himself. As he walks away, it takes him all of his willpower not to look over his shoulder, for he was
certain Arya would have attempted to throw her hidden dagger at his back any moment.

Not only after a few turns and stairs later did he look over and found nothing.

*****

A few days passes on as usual and the young Stark who thought to be dead by her family had been
spending her time helping out the Ironborn inside their vessel. It was the same each day as she starts
her morning down the kitchen and then to the upper deck to clean. Usually, she was free of her
duties before the night approach. And when Arya has nothing to do, she would climb up the spar
and just watch everyone and everything.

Sometimes of the crew, as the Ironmen calmly maneuvered the speeding vessel or when the Dothraki
and the Unsullied tried to communicate among themselves, as they unintentionally created a comical
relief for the young woman when they use their body vigorously instead of spoken words to deliver
whatever they intended to say to one another.

But, mostly she would silently watch the vast ocean and the blue skies that spread infinitely along the
horizon for hours, seeking that calmness she needs so badly. Since Tyrion last visit, which she’s still
pissed off about– how dare he questioned her loyalty towards the dragon queen when he’s the one
that pushed her to take the step in the first place. And asking her to choose between her family and
Daenerys is like asking her to choose who she loved more, Father or Jon. And of course she loved
them both equally. Sure, Arya isn’t in love with Daenerys or anything of the like, but the analogy applies still. Her family is of her blood and Daenerys is of her duty. All of them are her pack.

And they should stay that way, especially for one particular silver haired queen. To this day, Arya cannot find a bloody single reason why that kiss with Daenerys happened, besides the dragon queen was indeed drunk. But, as days went by, the claim weakened when Arya remembered staring back into clear albeit flustered violet eyes soon after, not sluggish or confused ones from being drunk. What is more frustrated being the fact that she cannot stop thinking about how she wanted to feel those lips again too.

It was quite late when she was in her cabin, lazing on her bed. The same thoughts for the past few days occupy her mind, torturing her from inside. Her turning and flipping on her bed got interrupted when a knock sounded outside her door. Arya immediately stiffens as the first person who comes into her mind was Daenerys. Her grey eyes fixed sharply at the wooden door as she waits a few seconds more, wondering if she misheard it. Another knock then is heard soon after, ending all her doubt.

Finally mustering her courage, she gets up and opens the door revealing a pair of brown orbs instead of violet ones that she had secretly hope to see. Arya shakes off the odd feeling of disappointment as she returns Missandei’s smile half-heartedly.

“I hope I’m not bothering you.” The Naathi said as a way of greeting.

“If I said you were…would you leave me alone?”

“Probably not.” Missandei answered lightly as she shoves the door further before inviting herself inside.

Arya finds her lips curving upward out of their own volition again- sincerely this time, as she proceeds to close the door before facing the older woman standing in the middle of the room. Her gaze immediately fell on Missandei’s new hairdo and outfit.

“I thought Tyrion was joking when he said you had your hair tied in a knot.” she commented with a quirk of her brow.

“I’m trying something new.” Missandei replied.

“It suits you.” Arya said with an approved nod as she studies the older woman attire of black half high-neck dress which she’s sporting it with fitted trousers underneath. A circular three-headed dragon brooch planted on the left side of her chest and her hair pull-back in a knot.

Missandei inclined her head with a smile. “Thank you. In fact, that is the reason I come to visit you tonight.”

Arya blinks a few times before asking, “You’re here to do my hair?”

Missandei releases a soft laugh at that. “As much as I would like to...no, I’m not here to do your hair. Perhaps we can do that some other time?” She trails as she moves closer to the young woman then, extending her hands to her. “Here, this is for you.”

Arya looks down to find the older woman is holding a bundle of neatly folded clothes. The young Stark looks up again with a frown. “I don’t need new fancy clothes.”

Missandei shot the young woman a look. “The weather’s getting colder by the day…you need to wear something warmer.” She retaliates and shoves the bundle of clothes to the stubborn young
Stark anyway.

When Arya looks back with hesitant gaze, the Naathi reaches for the young woman’s hands and place the bundle on them, successfully making Arya accepted her offer.

“Besides, I altered them to best suit you…no one else would be able to wear it.” Missandei adds on.

Arya blinks a few times before she realizes the older woman’s declaration. “You made these?”

Missandei only hummed in response. Arya wanted to ask why but the Naathi beats her to it.

“The Queen asked me to…but, even if she didn’t, I would still make them for you.”

At the mention of Daenerys, Arya’s tongue froze. More questions swam inside her mind but she knows none of them can be answered by Missandei.

Looking at the confused and solemn young woman in front of her, Missandei let out a soft sigh. “I don’t know what happened between you and Daenerys but I think she’s trying to make amend.” She said, assuring. Arya started, as her grey orbs instantly focus to brown ones.

“Huh– What?” she stammered earning a smirk from the older woman.

“I said you should consider accepting the Queen’s apologies.” The Naathi replies.

The young Stark tries her best to ignore the silly smile that graces Missandei’s feature. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. Nothing happens between us.” She defends with a shrug although her mind is actively thinking the possibilities of what Missandei’s claimed.

“That doesn’t look like nothing happened the other day, when you brought us our wine in the common cabin. The tension that surrounds both of you at the time was as loud as what’s actually spoken– even louder to anyone that pays any attention.” Missandei retaliates. Arya opens her mouth to respond but closes them again when no words come out. She settles with a scowl instead when Missandei shot her a smug smile.

“I hope both of you reconciled soon…it was unsettling to get caught in between. A lover’s quarrel does not even last this long.” the Naathi tacked on.

Arya’s face turned an intense shade of red at the ridiculous comment. She let out a huff before trying to find words to defend herself but again she was left speechless. Missandei tries her best to hide her amusement as much as she could muster at the moment, but seeing the young woman’s feature only turns redder by the second, she knows it wasn’t actually working.

After a few more seconds of embarrassment, Arya finally shot the older woman a sharp glare that could make any man petrified. “Are you quite finish?” she asked after finding her voice again. The young woman didn’t know why she should feel embarrassed about Missandei’s comparing her and Daenerys as lovers or why she feels affected by any of it in the first place.

“Yes, I am. I’ll be on my way now and let you retire.” The Naathi answered back, unperturbed by the wolf’s glare as she starts her retreat out of the room. “I’ll come again in the morn to do your hair.” She decides without waiting for the young woman’s reply and left.

Arya stares at the closed door silently, dumbfounded by what just happened. It takes her a few moments to realise Missandei will be here again come morning. She didn’t know whether to feel terrified of the fact that the older woman seems to see through her façade or the fact that she will get her hair done. She decides it was both.
True to her words, Missandei comes knocking on Arya’s door the next morning. There are no mentions of a certain silver-haired queen on the older woman’s lips as the Naathi works her way through to tame the wild lock Arya called her hair, and for that, the young Stark was grateful. It was enough to think about the dragon Queen silently inside her head. She doesn’t need anyone else to whisper Daenerys name to her ears aloud too.

It only took Missandei an hour to complete Arya’s hairdo. The young woman doesn’t remember the last time her hair got braided. But, she remembered she hated it because of the long hours she had to sit through and how uncomfortable she was at someone pulling her hair around. The fact that none of that affected her anymore with Missandei, surprised her. What is more shocking is that she actually liked how her hair turned out.

It was a simple braid that starts from above her left ear and it goes in a diagonal line across her head, until it combines with the rest of her longer hair from the right, making the braid falls over her chest. It wasn’t the most neat and perfect hairdo as any common lady might wear on normal occasions, with a few strands and locks escapes at some places, but Arya likes it nonetheless. It was sort of messy but in place at the same time and what’s more important is that it’s functional. She won’t have to worry about getting all her hair slapping on her face anymore every time the wind goes wild. All in all, it was definitely a step up from her usual pull-back and let-loose hairdo.

The sentiment was shared with the older woman as Missandei let a triumph smile at her completed work. Earning an approval by the young Stark, she dismisses herself soon after to let Arya attends to herself and properly readies herself for the day.

Arya immediately unfolded the bundle of clothes that Missandei gave last night to find a much more thicker white tunic than she currently wear. A black half dress almost similar to Missandei’s, but it was shorter and the leather lacing start from the front with silver and blue linings –House Stark colors; she noted, and also fitted trousers.

She proceeds donning them one by one until she notices the silver brooch of circular three-headed dragon left on the bed. It must have fallen when she untied the bundle earlier. The brooch is identical to the one the Naathi wore and Arya pin it on her right side, over her chest without second thought.

With a last glance over the mirror, she heads out of her room to start another repetitive day in the infamous vessel, Black Wind.

They must have put up a notice that Arya isn’t aware of because almost everyone in the ship have sported new looks. No more jerkins for the Unsullied, instead they wore long-sleeved padded jacket over their torso. Even the Dothraki are showing less skin and covered with another layer of clothing.

The weather is definitely getting colder than the first time they set sail from Meereen, as Missandei claimed, and the young Stark acknowledge it. But, Arya doesn’t pay it any heed as it doesn’t affect her that much. Truth be told, she liked it colder as it reminds her of home. With the drop of the temperature though, it can only mean that they’re getting closer to Westeros and the thought terrified her. She doesn’t know what to expect of the future in this new timeline.

“Pardon me, m’lady…” a voice trails from behind her snapping her from her musings. Arya doesn’t have to look over her shoulder to know who it belongs to. She continues her walk along the hallway instead, knowing that Derwin will follow. “But, ‘av ya seen a woman…wit’ wild brown ‘air, murderous grey eyes, and sharp tongue walkin’ around ‘ere?” he continues. Arya halted her steps then as she turns her head to him, giving him a stink-eye.

“Aye, that’s the one… ya ‘ave the same murderous glare as the she-wolf… and ‘bout the same ‘eight
“too.” he commented as he reaches his hand over her head, literally measuring her height.

“Go away, Derwin… before I murder you for real.” Arya threatens as she slaps his hand away before continues walking her intended path.

“I wouldn’t mind if ya did… ya can put yer lovely hands on ma throat an’ squeeze it all day if it pleases ya.” Derwin shouts as he picks up his pace to match the young woman’s.

Arya can only rolls her eyes at that as she takes a right turn and enter the kitchen’s quarter. As always, old man Xander is already there stirring something along the big pot. She inclined her head in greetings and he stares back for a few seconds as he takes her new transformation, before finally grunts in response.

Without being told, she naturally moves to her station besides the older man. After washing her hands, she takes the first peeled potato from the basket and starts to chop it into cubes. For a moment, only the sounds of knife hitting the board and the stirring of boiling stew accompany them until another sound of footsteps echo from outside.

“Wat ya cookin’ for today, ma beautiful murderous little wolf?” Derwin asked, popping his head from the small opening that separates the kitchen from the dining hall in the lower deck. Arya manages to repress a sigh as she continues her chopping. Imagining the potato as Derwin really helps.

Luckily, old man Xander is as annoyed at Derwin as Arya is, perhaps more, judging by his stiff demeanour when he stops his stirring and walks over to where Derwin is. “Fuck off, Harlow. What do I tell you about not wanting your filthy mouth anywhere near my kitchen?” he seethes.

“I meant no harm ‘ere, old man… just tryin’ to keep ya company.”

“What you’re doing is actually pissing me off. Now, do you think angering your cooks is such a good idea?”

Derwin looks mildly terrified by the threat as he slowly free himself out from the small opening.

“And stop pestering the poor girl… you’re not her type.” Xander finished as he slides closed the opening for good with a wooden plank, before picking up where he left of.

A few moments passes in comfortable silence as Arya proceeds dumping the potato cubes inside the stew.

“How do you know he’s not my type?” she asked, breaking the silence.

“Anyone in their right or twisted mind wouldn’t want that peeve of a man anywhere near them.” He answered. Arya chuckled at that.

It takes them another hour or so to finally finish everything. Arya is about to head out for the crews’ distribution but Xander stops her before she can as he shoves a tray of food to her instead.

“Take this to the Queen’s cabin.” He orders. Arya stares at the old man and down at the tray in her hands, dumbfounded.

“The Queen? Wha– I mean… why?” she managed to blurt out.

“Because like everyone else, the Queen needs to break her fast too.” He answered as a matter of fact.
“I’m aware of that…but why me? You can bring it to her instead. I’ll take care of things here.” Arya retaliates, shoving the tray back to the old man.

But, it was to no success as Xander puts it right back on her arms. “She specifically asked of you… Off you go now.” he said back and walks out for the distribution, leaving Arya contemplating on her own.

The young Stark let out a long sigh soon after. Straightening her shoulders and taking a deep breath, she starts walking to the familiar hallway that leads to Daenerys room. A few turns later, the Unsullied guards appear in her line of vision. They let them through after the usual inspection but Arya finds herself rooted in front of the door. Millions of thoughts cross her mind at the same time making her anxious and relentless. She doesn’t understand any of these changes that are happening to her. But, she reckons running away is not the answer.

So, she pulls herself together before pushing the door and steps inside after Daenerys permits her to do so. The young woman doesn’t even bother to look up to where the dragon queen is. She can feel the older woman’s gaze on her the moment she opened the door. After successfully putting the tray of food on top of the table, she inclined her head at the silver haired queen in greeting before planning to escape right after. She already turns around and heads for the door when Daenerys calls.

“Arya.”

She halts her step then and slowly turns around to face the dragon queen again. “Your Grace.” She said back, still with her gaze down. She heard the shuffling of feet before that said feet appears in her line of vision.

“Do you mind joining me?”

A frown graces the young Stark’s features as she glance over the tray that she brought in. Only then she realizes that there are two portions of food in the tray. How can she miss that important details, she wasn’t sure. Was her mind so clouded that she didn't even notice Daenerys had this planned out? Arya decides she can’t bear having whatever this feeling might be to affect her judgement. It’s always better to stay aloof. It’s what keeps people around her and herself safe.

“I already ate, Your Grace.” Arya answered politely. It was too polite for Daenerys likings. “If that is all…” the young Stark continues and ready to turn away again.

“No, that is not all.” Daenerys said quickly, stopping the young woman’s escape. “I have something to say…to explain.”

Arya’s frown only deepens at that. All the happenings from their last meeting played in her mind especially the kiss that keeps torturing her insides. She doesn’t know if she wants to hear the reason from the older woman.

“You don’t have to explain yourself to me, Your Grace.” Arya replies, using the statement the dragon queen once used.

A soft sigh escaped Daenerys. “I didn’t mean it like that, Arya. That night, I wasn’t thinking clearly and with all the things that’s happened, you pulled the last strain I had and I end up taking my anger out on you… And for that I owe you an apology.”

Daenerys voice sounds so sincere that Arya had to look up and see her for the first time. Her violet gaze staring at hers kindly and Arya couldn’t find it in her to look away again so she stares back silently.
“I’m sorry for keeping you hanging and for treating you unfairly for the things that are not even yours to blame.” Daenerys continues, taking a step closer towards the young woman. Arya can sense that there are some hidden meaning behind those words but she shrugs it off when the dragon queen speaks up again. “And about the Faceless Man, and the time travel—“

“It meant nothing.” Arya cuts in, effectively stopping Daenerys. “I don’t quite remember what I said that night. It was probably all nonsense... Though, I was serious about having retired from the cult.” She assured the older woman. Letting other people know her secret would do nothing good to anyone, she decides. And when some of the tension from Daenerys seems to alleviate, it only strengthens Arya's decision.

For a few moments they stand there silently, holding each other’s gaze like they’re tied to each other. Arya used those moments of silence to really study the silver haired queen. Similar to the others, the older woman also sports a new look. The red and black half dress and trousers hugs her body in all the right places. A silver big chain with a dragon’s head planted on her right shoulder. And she has a red sash hanging from it. Arya thought the older woman looks even beautiful than the last time she saw her.

Her grey orbs focus on violet ones again to find Daenerys is studying her too. It takes all Arya’s willpower not to fidget around under the older woman’s patronizing gaze. She intentionally clears her throat loudly, bringing Daenerys focus back to her face rather than her body.

“Is that why you asked Missandei to sew me new clothes? To make amends?” she asked lightly, trying to lift the tension that surrounds them. Daenerys hummed in response.

“Among other things as well.” She replies. Arya quirked a brow and waited. “I don’t want people say I’m treating the Princess of Winterfell poorly.”

And now Arya is pretty sure the dragon queen is jesting with her.

“What more is when we arrived in White Harbor, I have to make good impression both on your family and the North.” Daenerys adds on. Arya felt her throat choke up at the last remark.

“We’re sailing to White Harbor?”

Daenerys gives a nod in response. The young Stark was left speechless at the new information. It seems that Tyrion did manage to convince Daenerys after all. She can’t believe she’s finally going home. Her heart speeds up in anticipation as the memories of her family swam inside her head.

“So, when we travel to Winterfell, do I have your word that you’ll support me?” Daenerys asked suddenly, snapping the young woman from her trance.

Arya blinks a few times to clear her head before she answers. “I’m offended you still had to ask that… Yes, you have my word.” She concurs. A slight smile tugs the corner of Daenerys mouth in return.

“I supposed I owe you an apology too…I must have crossed the line, that you had to shut me up using such desperate measure.” Arya speaks again after mustering up her courage to do so. Daenerys shot the young Stark a questioning look.

“I mean when we…when you kissed me. I must have said something to upset you that–“

“No, you hadn’t.” Daenerys interrupts.

Arya studied the look on the dragon queen’s face but she seemed rather certain about it. “I hadn’t?”
she questioned back with a frown.

“No.”

“Then, why would you–“

“Because I wanted to.”

Arya gapes openly at her declaration. She swallowed a lump feeling her mouth dried up as Daenerys words hung heavy in the air.

It takes Arya a few hard blinks and a mirthless chuckle later to find her voice again. “Because you wanted to…what exactly?” she asked back with another frown.

Daenerys takes another step then, closing the gap between them with only a few inches apart. “For a woman of your reputation, Arya Stark…you are pretty slow in this, aren’t you?” she teases making the young woman turns to a shade of red.

“The only reason I kissed you is because I wanted to, nothing else.” Daenerys finished calmly leaving the young woman stunned to silence again.

Arya doesn’t know if the warmth fuzzy feelings she felt had something to do with Daenerys being so close or because of her confession, though she can guess it was both. She wanted to move away, but her feet froze and her rationality seems to get lost in that sea of violet in front of her.

Just then, without warning, the floor beneath them sway violently as if the ship has been pulled. The tray of food and other things inside the room ends up tumbling down the floor, clattering noisily by the sudden motion. Unprepared, Daenerys jerks backward by the force and she readies herself for a fall.

But Arya’s hands immediately reach for the falling dragon queen, on instinct. The young Stark managed to grab a hold of Daenerys arm and over her back as she pulls the older woman upwards until a pair of violet eyes enter her vision again. And Arya soon find herself lost in the violet depth yet again. The pit of her stomach stirs wilder this time as the feel of the older woman's body are consciously wrapped close in her arms.

As their breaths are hot on each other faces, Daenerys notices the young woman’s gaze flicker down towards her lips. And she expectantly waits for something to happen. But, before the young woman can act on it the door burst open, breaking their moment and pushing them further apart again.

Missandei comes running inside, still panted. “Your Grace, there’s something you need to see.” She breathed out.

Seeing that Missandei doesn’t comment about their compromising position when she enters the room and about how flushed Arya's face has become, Daenerys reckons something big must have happened. The troubled looks on the Naathi’s face only strengthens her guess.

The dragon queen takes a few seconds to right herself before she follows Missandei out of the room with a flustered looking Arya a few steps behind her, as well as the guards. They arrived at the upper deck in record time to find not only Black Wind but all the other vessels have stopped and put in berth. The soldiers are in position and armed with weapons. Yara Greyjoy and Tyrion are standing at the top of the ship’s deck with their back facing them, as the pair looks over the horizons.

Arya closes in towards them then, following Daenerys and Missandei’s footsteps as she brushes off the last remnant of a certain silver-haired queen alluring lips from the back of her mind. As her grey
eyes focus over the vast ocean in front of her, mirroring the others, the last thing she expects to see is another fleet with a black stag on a gold background sails and the silver kraken sails with a third red eye inscribed onto its head. But, those are exactly what the young Stark saw. The hundreds of familiar sigils from one of House Baratheon and of Euron Greyjoy's personal ships and vessels are sailing directly towards them.
Chapter Summary

In which the battle ensues in fire & blood and our little wolf takes her stand as cold as an ice

Chapter Notes

A quick fact here...Tyrion still hasn't got his battle scar because there is no Battle of the Blackwater Bay in the new timeline. But, you guys know how the butterfly effect works and how it will catch up eventually. So yeah, sorry Tyrion~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

A sudden wave thrust backward in great amount of power, resulting the ship to sway violently. It is as if the ocean’s teasing at the appearance of another fleet that are still sailing towards the Dragon and the Kraken’s vessels, with the waves appear to only speed the foreign fleets’ course. And as minutes passed, the fleet only grew larger and Arya guessed there are probably around hundreds of ships or more in front of her. As she muses over the possible volume of the foreign vessels, Tyrion’s loud voice brings her attention back to her surroundings.

“We don’t know what they want yet…it’s possible that they want only to talk– to seal a deal perhaps?” he shouts against the loudness of the wind that suddenly blow wildly like a storm about to appear soon.

Arya rejected the Lannister’s guess almost immediately. She had a feeling that today’s evening would not be any peaceful than the current moment. Even the wind seems to be mocking them.

“Starting an attack now would be very unproductive.” The dwarf continues, looking up at Yara Greyjoy, stopping her from commanding her crew to prepare for an attack.

Yara clenches her jaw tight before her gaze shifted to the silver haired queen who’s listening intently. “Your Grace, that’s Euron fleet… And Euron fucking Greyjoy is incapable of making deals. The man murdered my Father, his own brother in cold blood and later, claimed the Salt Throne for himself. He’s a vile, unpredictable and cruel man even among the Ironborn.” She reasons bitterly.

Daenerys frowns, contemplating between the two that seems to have a point in them.

“I don’t think they have any intention to stop.” Arya voiced out to no one in particular as her eyes fixed on the coming fleet again. But it was enough to catch the attention of the dragon queen.

Daenerys turns her head then, mirroring the young Stark and the others soon follow. As the former assassin said, the Usurper’s fleet and Euron’s ships are sailing with unchanged speed towards them. If it goes on any longer, they will only crash against each other and perhaps that is what they had
intended. The silver-haired queen reckon they are stupid if they think they can cripple her army in any way. Finally decides that she would rather take an offensive stance rather than defensive, she is about to open her mouth to voice her command, when an unexpected movement from one of the Baratheon’s ship caught her attention.

It was a tiny red-orange ball that flew upward from the ship and into the sky. However, it doesn’t stay that long up the sky because after a moment passes, it goes down and falls to her direction. And then, it grows bigger and bigger until the dragon queen realizes that the now huge ball is literally on fire. Chaos erupted as the men hastily make a retreat when the ball in flame ended up falling towards one of the ship, breaking and vandalising the upper deck of the vessel along the way.

“Is that enough of a proof yet?” Yara asked with gritted teeth at the dwarf as she points the burning hole in one of her fleet. Tyrion only managed a grimace.

The Ironborn Captain doesn’t need anymore consent from the dragon queen, given the anger shown on her face is any indication. Knowing that they both share the same desire to repay the enemy’s greeting, Yara walks away and does the first thing she should be doing when her crew spotted the foreign fleet; she orders the men for an attack. Within seconds, several horns blew off, carrying through the distance and alerting the other crews of their next course of actions.

Arya flinches involuntarily as the noise of the horns loudly surrounds the vast ocean. It reminds her of when the Titan of Braavos welcomed her with similar horn sound, only this time the young woman is sure that she will not be feeling excited after.

The Ironmen scatter in an orderly manner as Yara Greyjoy commanded them to take their position. Even the Dothraki and the Unsullied seems to be ready for the upcoming mayhem.

“Your Grace, it’s unsafe for you to be out here.” Jorah speaks up then, just as the second of the many upcoming balls of fire launch in the air again at the same time, successfully pulling everyone’s attention to the enemy’s fleet.

The first one was nowhere in comparison to the current sightings of what’s happening when the balls of flame rain upon them and Arya decides that if the world would somehow end, it would involve something similar to the one she witnessed at this moment. The hundreds of flames move towards them like they’re tearing apart from the sky itself. The red trails that the flame left behind reminds her of the ‘Red Comet’ she saw when she’s travelled with Yoren to the Night’s Watch another lifetime ago.

*Or the ‘Red Sword’ as Gendry called it.* Arya thought with a silent melancholy at the memory of a certain blue-eyed boy.

There’s a moment of complete silence before the many tiny fires that grow bigger by the second fall in crazy chaotic drops onto their ships, creating mass destruction. The young Stark watches the chaos silently from where she stands as the war erupted further. A natural reaction would be as Jorah said; to find a safe place other than the openly upper deck they currently at, but Arya finds no will to do so when her feet stay rooted at the same place bound by the sheer astonishment of what’s happening. A familiar velvety voice brings her attention towards it and automatically her grey orbs focus on the face of the woman who has been unexpectedly stirs her feelings and desires even she doesn’t know existed.

“I will not hide and cower in a corner while these men—my men, fight this battle.” Daenerys speaks up with determination on every inch of her features as she gives a pointed look to Jorah, daring him to disagree with her. Finding the resigned look on him, her eyes stray to the others in the same notion and they too seem to have nothing to add.
The steel grey orbs are the last Daenerys sets upon and they were staring back at her with such intensity that she almost got lost in them again. But, thankfully she didn’t have to dwell on them further when a shriek of her children snaps her back to reality of the ongoing war, successfully tearing the connection between the young woman.

Drogon comes flying out of nowhere towards where its mother is and within seconds it was hovering near the upper deck of Black Wind. Taking that as an invitation, Daenerys manages one last glance at her advisors and at a certain young Stark before fixing Yara another glance, which the Ironborn Captain return with a nod. The silent exchange didn’t go unnoticed by Arya as she send Daenerys away, climbing onto Drogon’s wing soon after.

As soon as Daenerys was seated in her usual place at Drogon’s back, the black-red dragon pushes itself upward and goes charging towards the enemies’ fleet. Viserion and Rhaegal flew close behind them.

Arya watches silently as the dragon queen’s form grow smaller and further away from the scene of destruction. She expects nothing less from Daenerys when the older woman decides to be in the front-line of her army, but no one can protect her up there in the sky. Sure, she has the dragons but all it takes is one stray arrow or those damn fireballs that could have hit her. The young Stark made a mental note to insist the dragon queen on wearing at least armor plate later.

The thought of finding safety seems trivial now since the queen herself is out there, especially at the head of the battle. And as minutes goes by, the fleet only seems to be closer towards them. It was getting close enough when the young Stark able to make out the men that are standing on the deck of one of the Baratheon’s vessel that is sailing towards them.

“I take it you know how to wield a sword?”

Arya turns her head to the voice to find Yara offering her a shortsword, which some of the Ironmen along the Unsullied are currently using. “Yes.” She answered, taking the hilt of the sword in her grip.

Yara nodded in approval before handing over another shortsword at Tyrion who is standing beside her.

“Well, I don’t know how to wield a sword... And don’t we need armor or some sort? Preferably the one with metal plates and chain-mail.” Tyrion asked then as he took the offered sword albeit reluctantly.

“Metal plates and the ocean are not the best pair. And if you fell into the sea, it'll only weigh you down.” Yara answered, fixing her gaze on him.

“It matters not once we die from getting stab in the gut first.” The dwarf remark dryly.

“Don’t worry Lord Tyrion, stay close to me and you might survive this.” Yara assured with a slight smirk before she fixed her gaze at Arya again. “Same goes for you, Lady Arya…but not too close or I might accidentally cut you.”

Arya let the title slips pass, not bothering to correct it when she finally understood the brief exchange Yara has with Daenerys earlier. She should feel touched by the dragon queen’s concern but when that said person flew off to the hundreds of the enemy’s fleet alone and not caring about her own safety in return only drowns the gratitude she felt. “I can take care of myself… I don’t need any protection.” She said back through clenched jaw. She should be with Daenerys and protect her instead. That was after all what she swore to do when she pledged herself to the Targaryen Queen.
Yara stares silently at the determined grey orbs in front of her contemplating the young woman statement. Even if she believed the young Stark’s words, she still have to abide by the dragon queen’s wishes and truth be told, Arya is worth more alive than dead in this war. But, the girl had a reputation of surviving years in the fighting pit and she believed Arya is more than capable in taking care of herself. So, Yara tilted her head in acknowledgement at the young woman not wanting to antagonize her further and turns to the real problem instead.

Just as the first waves of flying flaming balls ended, the second waves of thousands of arrows hits them a moment after. Arya curses under her breath as she realizes she has nowhere to hide on the open deck she stands. She swallows a lump as she grips the hilt of the shortword tightly and readies herself for the incoming rain of arrows. Before she can take action on the closing arrows, a jerk on her right hand pulls her down and she ends up crouching. The shimmering black eyes of Yara Greyjoy enter Arya’s line of vision then and she finally notice they were hiding under a wooden shield big enough for the two of them to take cover.

It was seconds after when the sound of the arrows drops heavily in each part of the vessel. Arya takes that moment to study her surroundings and she breathes in a relief when Missandei and Grey Worm are hurdlng together in their own shield. The same goes for Tyrion and Jorah a few feet from them.

When the arrows finally ended showering upon them, Yara stands up and tosses away the shield, turning towards her men then. “That is the second attack those fuckers gave us. What are we still waiting for? To be fucked the third time?!” she seethes, particularly at the Ironmen. “Now, show them what the Kraken is capable of!”

The men scream in return as they prepare for a counter attack that was interrupted before. The archers step forward then in formation as they light the tip of their arrows with fire and place them on their bow.

“Draw!” Yara shouts and soon after the command carries through several ships near them. “Aim!” she continues turning around to the enemy then. “Fire!”

The arrows release in several set of interval as the command carried through. But it was a success nonetheless, as the hundreds of arrows fly in the opposite direction this time. And Arya felt content for a moment as the fleet opposite them bathes in flaming arrows. But, it only last for a while when she caught sight of the less fortunate men that are too slow to take cover. And when Drogon, Viserion and Rhaeghal comes into view and breathes fire to the remaining vessels that are too far to reach by the flaming arrows, she doesn’t know how to feel about that. She tries not to dwell on the fact that there are men on those vessels and that they are currently being burnt alive. But somehow their desperate screams manage to enter her ears or perhaps she was just imagining them when it was actually the wind that is blowing wildly. She didn’t even realize her hands are shaking as she watches silently the horrifying battle ensued before her.

Time must have went by for some time because the next thing the young Stark realizes, her breath got knocked out from her as she landed unceremoniously down the floor. Her sword clatters against it as she loses her grip. Arya looks up in a daze to find a man flashing his rotten smile down at her, looking quite pleased with himself.

She can feel her pulse pounding in her head and she tries hard to focus on what’s happening, but her brain fogs up and her thoughts go nowhere at all. When the man approaches her closer with a raise of his sword, definitely deciding to strike the final blow at her, he ends up falling down her feet instead. Arya blinks hard at the fallen man and at his torn flesh on his back. Blood was gushing through the open wound and she swallows bile down her throat.
“I thought you said you don’t need protecting.” A voice brought her back from her reverie and she looks up to find Yara, her sword already stained with blood.

The former assassin took Yara’s offered hand and pulls herself upward again. She reaches for her fallen sword soon after before taking the scene around her. And it was chaos surrounding the vessel. A few of the Baratheon’s ships and Euron’s fleet had already managed to trespass the Targaryen and Yara’s vessel. The men are all engaged in a fight one way or another and Arya wonders just how long she had lost herself in her own world again.

Taking a deep breath and trying to calm her nerves, she turns around to face the Ironborn Captain, remembering her question again. “I don’t.” Arya answered with all the confidence she could muster. Yara shot her a judgmental look before finally giving the young woman a nod, leaving her alone once again and help her men cut down another Baratheon soldier.

The sickening smell of burning flesh is blanketing the air in a choking aroma and Arya swallows the burning smell that violates her nose. It doesn’t help that the wind whipped around wilder this time. And when the sound of crying and screaming men enters her ears and the sight of them whimpering in pain and clutching their grievous wound sinks down in her mind, the young woman senses are in a full alert then. The terrible moment was interrupted however when a man wearing an armor of a stag shows up from nowhere, slashing his way through the young Stark with his longsword. Luckily for her, she was ready then and with a turn of her body, she managed to sidestep the attack before awarding the soldier a blow to his head by the hilt of her sword, rendering him unconscious.

She decides to look around then, taking another step among the chaos and fights her way through, leaving unconscious men—that decides to get in her way, along her trail. But, amidst the sea of people she had not yet seen anyone familiar. It was even harder to recognize which one of them are foes and which are allies. It was truly maddening and Arya feels suffocated by the sight of it. The flashback from the Kingsroad attack comes in involuntarily then as the sight before her keeps changing. She sees her Father fall down on her knees then before another Ironborn man takes his place and falls down completely in his own pool of blood.

Arya shakes her head repeatedly, willing her mind to stay focus. She tries to even her erratic breathing but when a flash of pale blonde hair caught her attention, it only grows harder. Jamie Lannister’s figure emerges then as he raises his sword in the air to strike the final blow to his Father. The scene was interrupted however when a man lunges forward to her instead. Arya deflects his attack just barely as he recovers and screams at her like a madman he is before plunging his sword at her face. The former assassin escapes the sharp blade by a hair breadth and swings her sword to his attacking arm in retaliation. His sword falls and clatters loudly on the deck despites the obvious noise that surrounds them. He whimpers in pain as he grips his bleeding hand.

When she caught sight of the blonde hair at the corner of her eye for the second time; she thought her mind is playing tricks again, but the familiar mismatch orbs and the face she knew too well shakes away her doubt. She notices how frightened the Lannister dwarf looks and judging by his opponent, she knew why anyone would feel that way. The man is twice the size of even a normal man should be and the fact that he decides to pick a fight with a dwarf of all the people in this ship makes the young woman’s eyes twitch at the sight. A surge of rage suddenly churns from within her. She never liked a bully to begin with and right now the soldier is taunting Tyrion, knowing that he stood no chance against him.

Arya is about to teach the half giant a lesson when suddenly the man from before decides to throw himself at her from behind. Unprepared, the young Stark stumbles down the wooden floor with him on top, knocking the wind out of her. She groans in pain at the hard fall that her head took and tries to get away from his body-trap but to no avail. The man sits atop, putting all his body weight on her
and caught both her hands with his.

“Get the fuck away from me!” she growls and twists her body in the side to get him imbalanced and off of her.

Though, it only had the opposite effect when he screams back at her face, before moving both his hands to her neck in a strong hold, blocking her air supply. Panic starts to creep in the young woman as she gasps for air but none could come through her lungs. Desperately, she reaches for his throat, trying to strangle him back, or punch his face, and poke his eyes but it only came out as a weak attempt as he manages to dismiss them all. She tries moving her body again but it seems her strength must have been subdued when the man on top of her doesn’t even flinch.

Arya shuts her eyes tight trying to withstand her burning lungs and how lightheaded she feels. With each seconds pass, little by little, the chaos surrounding her become deafening until a clattering sound echoes loudly through her ears. She wills her eyes to flutter open again and immediately her grey orbs are drawn to a scene where the Lannister dwarf is. She forces her head to turn to the direction to get a clearer view, with the man's grip still around her neck– and find that Tyrion sword is lying on the floor. He backs away as his opponent approaches with a raise of his striking arm. The look of Tyrion’s defeated face reminds her of how her Father looked at her for the last time during the Kingsroad attack.

Her breathing wavers wildly at the scene and the rage from before boils inside her again. Arya turns to her strangler then and fixed the mad man a furious gaze. Gathering every bit of strength she has left, the young wolf reaches for a finger on her neck and twists it towards his wrist until the sweet, crunchy, dislocating sound fills her ears. The mad soldier’s eyes widen in shock and his screams of agony fills the air in return. But, his grip does not seems to loosen, so she decides to take another finger with her other hand. Same as before, she twists it with all the strength she could muster until it ended with a satisfying crack. It took another finger to break before he finally let go and get off of her, rolling over to mend over his injuries in whimpers.

Wasting no more time, the young woman wobbles her way towards where Tyrion is, reaching for her sword along the way. When the half giant is about to strike, Arya raises her sword in return and pushes the metal blade right through the only place that is not armored then; at the back of his head. The sound of metal cutting through flesh proved that he will pose no threat now just as the thud of his body fell down soon after.

Arya focus her attention at Tyrion then, gasping for air as she closes in. But, the emerald and black eyes in front of her only stare back lifelessly. It was as if he’s not even here anymore. She is about to ask him if he’s alright when the sudden blood come rushing down his head and the skin on his forehead splits open, down until his chin. Her breath stuck in her throat at the sight. When Tyrion sways and his feet finally gave in, she manages to catch a hold of him, cushioning his fall.

“Tyrion.” She calls, shaking him softly. His eyes are shut completely now and his blood flows down to her hands that are holding him against her. And he shows no sign that he even heard her calling.

Her body moves in a defensive stance as she drags the half man to the most secluded part of the ship and stay there to watch the sea of people around them battling each other. Arya doesn’t know for how long she sat there, at a corner, cradling Tyrion’s head in one of her arm and the other free to wield the sword at anyone who dares to close in. Only when the screams and shouting of men seems to subside and the familiar face of Grey Worm comes running towards them both, she lets go of the sword.

“Is he…” Grey Worm trails as he take in the state of the Lannister dwarf, frowning at the possibility.
“I don’t know.” Arya breathes out, tiredly.

The Unsullied Commander reaches for Tyrion’s neck then, deciding to check his pulse himself. “He is alive.” He stated with sigh of relief.

He stands up then and shouts in his mother tongue at someone across the deck. Not long after, two Unsullied soldiers run towards them with a stretcher before taking Tyrion from her arms. Arya let them as the last words that Grey Worm said keeps repeating inside her ears. She should be happy that Tyrion somehow manages to survive this but the guilt keeps gnawing on her and all she keeps thinking is how she had failed him, just as how she had failed her Father and Sansa.

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They had won the first battle of the many to come and most of the Queen’s soldiers; the Ironmen, Unsullied and the Dothraki managed to survive the attack but some, still perished by the enemy’s blade, and more suffered grievous injuries. The Baratheon and Euron fleets seem to have only one hundred vessels strong which was why it was an easy win. Not to mention the dragons are certainly the key player in securing the victory. The Ironborn Captain believed that the enemy fleet had larger in numbers but they may have separated their course to search for the Targaryen vessel among the vast sea and were given orders to attack once been found. That would explain the lack of important figure in the Baratheon and Euron’s ships. Or perhaps Lord Baratheon and Euron himself are dead, floating somewhere over the ocean and they never had the chance to introduce themselves.

A mirthless chuckle escapes the young Stark involuntarily. That would be such an irony and Arya knew better than anyone how Death can fucked you up in the ass and then some more. After all, the God of Death was her friend, foe and companion. She knew how it was. It wasn’t kind. It snatched where it could, take people who are far too young, far too good. It didn’t pretend to care, it didn’t pretend to distinguish. And every person Arya has come to know, to loved, to care; they will end up being seized by Death somehow in some way and she wonders if perhaps she was cursed by Death itself.

Which is why when she caught sight of the familiar faces of old man Xander and Derwin among the pile of bodies they gathered for burial in the deep sea, the young Stark felt the hollow inside her chest is starting to dig its way again. She was angry. She knew that. But, not at the God of Death because this is what it does after all. She was angry at herself for letting these people in, to let her feel something again after a long time. And she decides it must stop now before she goes in far too deep and get lost in there for eternity. When the other men starts to drop the lifeless bodies one by one onto the ocean, and Derwin’s sky blue eyes stare at her for one last time, it was in that moment Arya tossed away her feelings together with them.

Even the sun seems to concur when it’s starting to disappear and daylight slowly fades away. The young Stark decides to retire to her cabin then to get some rest. But, as soon as she turns around, a familiar figure stops her action. Daenerys walks closer to where she was and Arya wonders just how long she’s been there. Her silver hair smeared with dirt, creating black smudges that go along her cheeks as well. But as far as the young Stark can tell, the dragon queen has no grievous injuries on her person.

Daenerys stops her track with a few steps separating them as she debates from within on what to say. “Are you alright?” she settles and regretted how stupid it sounds soon after.

Arya knows the dragon queen meant well, but she cannot wipe off the bitterness the question held. “I’m alive and we won the battle. Isn’t that what matters.” She answered calmly. The dragon queen held a questioning gaze at the young woman.
“Arya-“

“I’m tired, Your Grace… I would like to retire, if I may?” Arya interrupted then.

Daenerys doesn’t like how cold the young woman’s tone was and how emotionless she's suddenly become. Perhaps it was just a long day for all of them as she decides to grant her leaving. “You should take that bruise looked after.”

Arya wanted to say the bruise along her neck is the least painful wound she felt right now, but instead she managed a nod and a quick bow at the dragon queen before walking away with heavy steps. She shrugs the last image of how hurtful the violet eyes looked at her before emerging herself with the familiar shadows in the lower deck.

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The Targaryen fleet continues on its journey after some mending and repairing were done in the last couple of days. They had lost quarter of their ships due to the last battle. But, luckily for Black Wind, it still sails strong with only a few holes that the Ironborn can take care of. As such, a few days later they were back in the ocean, splitting the sea apart.

And during all those days, the young Stark had distanced herself from everyone else, keeping true to her own promise. With them all being occupied of the aftermath of the battle only ease her way then. She decides there is no need to be in the others’ constant presence when she can watch them from afar anyway. Arya has been telling herself repeatedly that its better this way, especially for a certain dragon queen. Sentimental feelings are worthless when one own life is involved and Arya knows Daenerys would thanked her for it later if the older woman knows how she had escaped being cursed by Death.

A loud flap sounds snaps her thoughts then and the young Stark look up to the starry night to find the famous black-red dragon is flying towards the vessel. Arya narrows her eyes into slit to look better when she swears she saw a flash of silver on top of Drogon. Her intuition is proved right when the dragon finally flew pass her on top of the crow’s nest and down to the deck. Arya wastes no more time climbing down the railing and the spars then.

Just as Daenerys climbs down Drogon, her attention drawn at the figure of the young Stark who’s been climbing her way down swiftly as if she’s done this many times before. A light chuckle escapes her as she finally able to connect the missing pieces from the race that seems to happen a long time ago. Her feet naturally brought her forward just when Arya finally landed and does the same, until they both meet in the center. “Why do I have a feeling that you’ve been up there more than once even before the race?” she asked lightly. But her smile vanishes when the young woman in front of her fixed her a raging glare.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Arya asked instead, stopping at arm’s length. Seeing the confused look on the older woman only enrages her further. How can the older woman casually be out there all alone when there are claimed that the enemy’s fleet are wandering along the ocean in search for her? “You can’t go out there all alone when there are people trying to murder you.” She finished with a twitch of her eye, barely keeping it together.

Daenerys blinks a few times at the young woman before she can understand what’s been said. A smile threatens to escape the dragon queen again as she witness Arya’s angered face. She decides she likes it better than the emotionless one the young woman seems to wear the past few days.

“I thought you wouldn’t care.” Daenerys said back.
The word jolt the young Stark back to her usual self. She takes a deep breath then, regaining her composure. “I swore to protect you and it can only be done when you’re alive.” She answered.

The young woman’s tone is now back to the calm and calculated one and Daenerys instantly hated it. She takes another step then, closing their distance. “Is that all you truly felt, Arya? Do you feel nothing else?” she whispers. Arya clench her jaw tight at the familiar stirs deep in her gut that the older woman seems to cause when she’s getting too close for her liking.

Daenerys studies the depth of the grey orbs in front of her like her life depends on it. It was hard enough for her to acknowledge that her feeling for the young woman was real. After all, it took her a few sleepless nights later to finally accept it as it is. But to say it out loud is another matter entirely. And she has been meaning to speak about it to the person responsible since the first time she learnt about it. So, she gathers all the courage she has and softens her gaze on Arya before reaching out to her hand.

The first graze of their fingers send shivers through Daenerys body- and she notices the same reaction on the young woman in front of her, before she slowly reached to fully take Arya's hand in hers. She was about to say something when the young Stark interrupted.

“What are you doing?” Arya asked, frowning and lowering her eyes then; successfully breaking their intense gaze before she pulls her hand away from the older woman’s grip too.

Daenerys shoves away the hurt at the rejection as she tries again. “You know what I’m doing. Isn’t it obvious or do I need to spell it out to you?” she asked, perhaps a bit straight forward than she’d have like. But, the dragon queen knew that the young woman felt the same connection as she did since the last kiss they shared last time.

Arya takes a step back, away from the older woman then. “Whatever this is that you’re doing, Your Grace...” she trails as her eyes meet violet ones again. The obvious care in the older woman's eyes almost suffocating. Deciding she should end this once and for all, she harden her gaze. “I'm afraid you have mistaken. All I feel towards you is nothing more than an oath. You're my duty and I will serve you as long as I'm capable. But, I cannot serve you more than that... Perhaps, when we reach White Harbor, I can propose the most favored brothels. You can have any lad or lass as much as you desire then.”

She expected that the dragon queen would be angered by her sharp remark but instead it was the opposite. The look on Daenerys face soon after only breaks the young woman’s heart to million of pieces if it’s still there, that is. The silent night was deafening to her ears as Arya waited the older woman's response. And with each seconds pass, it only strengthens her regret.

“I see. Perhaps I should.” Daenerys said as she slowly turns away, trying to hide the sadness in her eyes. “We have a long journey still ahead of us…sleep well, Arya.”

The young Stark stares silently at Daenerys retreating form. Her knuckles turn white and her nails painfully biting down her skin as she clenches her fists tightly. She keeps telling herself that this was the right thing to do, but somehow, the older woman’s disheartened look tells her otherwise. She would be damned, but she swears she would pay a lifetime for saying that hurtful word to the older woman though she decides she wouldn’t mind that punishment at all.
Arya is such a cold-hearted little wolf isn't she? But can you blame her? Anyway tell me what you think as always in the comment, my lovelies, especially YOU..who's been reading since the first chapter and yet to leave any comment! This is the perfect time to do so, don't you think? Still nah? Kay then~ >,<

PS: I'm happy to say that only one chapter left before we get to see (I mean read about) the Starks! Now, don't you just want me to write faster? ;)

Chapter Summary

In which life teaches one how to loose and gain.

Chapter Notes

[UPDATE: Ok guys, I have felt your wrath and hate and now I present to you the complete chapter. No more tricks, I assure you. So hop on!]

But before you do... I know most of you have been waiting a lifetime for the Starks to appear but fret not, you'll just have to go through this chapter first. But, I don't know if you guys will like me after this. You'll probably going to hate me further once you're done and believe me when I say, it's hard for me to go through with this too (hence the late update). I hope the last bit will cheer you up again tho.

Did I raise your curiosity enough? Okay, I'm going to run away and hide now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

They had gathered by the upper deck when the Ironborn Captain notified how close they’re getting in reaching White Harbor. The young Stark however doesn’t need to be told for she had been among the first one to caught sight of her homeland up the crow nest to begin with, just after her daily chores had finish and as she takes refuge up there later in the evening.

It wasn’t night yet, but the sun’s rays cosseted behind the grey cloud makes it looks like nightfall is fast approaching. The lone castle up in the hill takes a shade of grey as a result and so do the taverns and homes of the villagers near the harbour down below. Others might find that the scenery was rather glum and bleak, but to Arya it was a perfectly beautiful sight. It was familiar and it was her home.

Black Wind is sailing with much less speed now ever since the northern harbor is in sight. And when the murmurs down the upper deck becomes more prominent, gingerly Arya climbs down the spar, walking pass the soldiers and head over by the deck where the silver haired queen stood, watching over the horizon.

The purple eyes instantly caught hers even before she gets close enough. Decided to keep her distance, Arya tilts her head to a nod at the Targaryen Queen in acknowledgement. They hadn’t spoken since the night she boldly rejected the dragon queen’s confession and Arya is more than glad that her plan had worked - judging by the cold and distance treatment she received by the older woman is any indication – though her heart still strangely ached by her own actions, she doesn’t regret any of it. The young woman is confident that whatever she’s feeling towards Daenerys will pass eventually. When the said woman focuses her attention back to Jorah who’s still talking without throwing her a second glance, Arya decides to do the same.
“You must be thrilled to finally see your family again.”

The familiar voice sounded before the figure emerges fully at the side of Arya’s line of vision. Missandei looked straight ahead over the horizon mirroring the younger woman as they both watch the infamous largest harbor in the North getting closer by the minute.

“On the contrary.” Arya replied softly.

Missandei tilts her head to the young Stark curiously. “Don’t you miss them dearly?”

The question lingers for a long while as Arya ponders over that simple question which seems to be much more complicated than that. She thought about the endless possibilities of how her coming back home could affect the fate of her loved ones, whether it was right to be coming home after a long time with a Targaryen queen nonetheless. What would her family think about her allegiance then? What would Jon think? Truth be told, she was scared of their reaction. “I do miss them.”

“Then, you have absolutely nothing to worry about.”

Arya finally chance a glance at the Naathi then as she gifted one of her trademark smile. The young Stark has long since stop trying to decipher how Missandei seems to know what she truly felt, so she only stared back ahead when her voice sounded again, clearly not finished yet.

“I’m sure your family would be thrilled to find out you survived.” Missandei tacked on.

Of course Arya wouldn’t know that for sure until she saw them with her own eyes. For all she knows, they might not even recognize her with all the changes she’s been through. Without wanting to, she suddenly becomes more self-conscious of all the scars over her body now. She’s nowhere near a perfect lady, let alone a Princess of Winterfell.

“If they truly love you, they wouldn’t mind how or whom you come home with. I know I would feel the same if I were in their place.”

Arya shot the older woman a look. “Even if I brought along thousands of foreign soldiers back home with me?”

Missandei arched a perfect eyebrow as her lips curved into a slanted smile. “Only if those soldiers meant no harm to the North and the Targaryen Queen behind them gave her words to the lost Stark in return.”

A slight chuckle escapes Arya involuntarily. Again, the older woman seems to know just the right thing to say to relief some of the tension she felt. Perhaps by knowing nineteen variations of languages help. She takes another look at Missandei then.

“Do you have a family?” she asked, mostly curious now. The older woman’s gaze turns sad for a flicker of seconds that if Arya wasn’t paying attention, she would miss it. But, being an expert in face reading herself, she doesn’t and instantly she regrets ever asking.

“I have a mother and a father of course…same as every babe that came to this world, for without the either one I wouldn’t be here. But, I never had the chance to know them. You see, I was enslaved at a young age of five by the Masters of Astapor. If I had siblings, I wouldn’t know them as much as they wouldn’t know me.” The former slave explains.

“I’m sorry.” Arya offered.

“Don’t be. None of it was your fault.”
Arya doesn’t say anything further because what Missandei said is true. But, part of her still felt sorry for the older woman’s fate and how unfair the Gods were. “Don’t you want to go back home and find your own family?”

Missandei looks away then as she silently thought the question over. “I don’t need to go back to the island of Naath. There is nothing for me there. I am exactly where I want to be…with the people I want to be.” She declares, shooting the young Stark an honest smile. Arya can’t help but to mirror a smile in return.

Anymore words that are about to come from either woman stops then as the horns of the fleet blow loudly, snapping their attention on them. The crew moves swiftly at the call and rolled the sails in an orderly manner before throwing the anchor in the ocean to secure the vessel in place.

“It’s time.” Yara calls from not far just as her crew arrange for a small boat to change their means of transport to get to the land.

Without another word, Daenerys walks over to where Yara is. Tyrion, Grey Worm and Jorah trailing close behind her. Arya takes a deep breath before she pushes her leg forward, walking close after Missandei and Yara. Another Unsullied and a couple of Dothraki men join them soon after.

Not a single word is said when the small boat starts moving to the edge of White Harbor. It was a short but torturous journey for the young Stark as she tries to calm her nerves and abnormally rapid beating heart. When they finally arrive and step on the northern land, they are greeted by small troops of northern soldiers. The murmurs from the common folks behind the wall of men fill their ears as they warily eyed each other. Among them, a man with a massive belly and fingers the size of sausages stands in the middle. His white hair and wrinkle on his features betray his old age.

“Who are you and what matters do you have in White Harbor?” his voice looms over the entire harbor, making the murmurs from the villagers quieten down instantly.

Daenerys takes a step then, presenting herself apart from her advisors and guards. “I am Daenerys Stormborn of House Targaryen.” She answered with no stretch of her voice though it resonates perfectly through everyone present. “Now, you have me at a disadvantage my lord as I have yet to know yours.”

Silence ensues as the dragon queen’s last word hung heavy in the air. The said man only stares down at her as his face contorted into a scowl. “The name’s Wyman Manderly. Lord of White Harbor.” He finally said.

Daenerys let out a slight smile. “Lord Manderly, pleasure to have your acquaintance.”

“Say that for yourself. I don’t feel any slight pleasure at all meeting the Mad King’s daughter.” Wyman spat back. The dragon queen is sure the words uttered are meant to hurt her but she felt nothing of importance. Perhaps she has finally accepts and comes to term that her father was indeed a mad man.

“The only reason we are here is to get pass and head to Winterfell. I gave you my word that my men, dragons and I meant no harm. We can raise our own tent and camp out outside the village.” Daenerys explains and stares back defiantly, unperturbed by the earlier comment.

Wyman’s eyes narrow into slits. “Did you say dragons?”

Daenerys didn’t have the chance to answer when her children decides to show up at that exact moment, shrieking loudly as they fly pass the harbor in a leisure manner. She would have laugh at
the dumbfounded look Manderly wears as he tries to take covers when Drogon flew low enough to the men in front of her before taking the sky again, but her face remains calm and her composure still.

As the gasps and murmurs of the town are alive again, the dragon queen speaks up then. “As I’ve said before…my men, dragons and I meant no harm to the North and its people. We only seek safe passage to Winterfell.”

Wyman and his men don’t seem to be paying attention to any of the words the mother of dragon uttered. The awestruck on their faces are hard to miss as they openly gape and shout curses among themselves, and all the while their gaze fixed at the flying dragons above them with the villagers acted more or less the same.

A few minutes passes by as the Targaryen Queen waits patiently for the Northmen to focus back at her. When Drogon, Rhaegal and Viserion finally flew further and far away from the harbor, the Lord of White Harbor immediately snaps his head back in front. “We aren’t afraid of those beasts. If you think you can come here and take our home from us without a fight, you’re deeply mistaken.” He seethes as his hand reaching for the sword that hung over his belt. His narrowed eyes burn silently, challenging the dragon queen to make the first offense.

Daenerys only let out a tight smile in return as she clasps her hands together. “I came here with no intention to take anyone’s home…only to seek mine. My enemy is the usurper, Robert Baratheon and I plan to take back the throne from him… Now, my lord… according to my informant, the North doesn’t care about the Southern King or the Iron Chair and for that, I intent to leave them be as my army and I made our way South… Unless you proved me wrong, then I gave you my word that we will not cause any harm to any of you.”

A mirthless chuckle escapes Wyman. “The word of the Mad King’s daughter is worthless to me.” He trails as he takes another step forward, automatically pulling the foreign soldiers guarding the dragon queen towards him too, as they stand in a protective manner around her. “If anyone wanted blood, this lot of yours are the first to attack us… The Imp Lannister, the exiled Mormont and these savages.” He said as he nudges his head towards Tyrion, Jorah, Grey Worm and the Dothrakis.

Arya chanced a glance at the Lannister dwarf who is strangely quiet. Truth be told, she expects Tyrion to lead the conversation with the head of house of White Harbor but instead, he stands unbelievingly still beside Daenerys. Given that the Lannister is the traitor to the crown with a bounty on his head, Arya can’t really blame him. Though his scarred face shows no fear, she can still see discomfort along those lines.

“And who the hell are you? Your face seems familiar.”

Arya tilts her head forward again to find Wyman and all the others are looking at her. Her eyes flicker to the violet ones on instinct as she silently seeks the dragon queen’s approval to answer the question that is directed to her. Daenerys gave nothing away but the determined and calm look which Arya took as consent. She settles back her gaze at Wyman then. “People always say I resemble a lot from my Father… You knew him as Lord Eddard Stark.”

A moment passes by as Wyman's frowns deepen, trying to put two and two together. His eyes grew wide as realization finally hits him.

“Yes, I’m Arya Stark.” she spoke before he can.

“But, Arya Stark is dead!”
“Well, obviously I can’t be if I’m here now.”

Wyman scowl in return, clearly not amused. “I can kill you right now for even saying that name.” he taunts.

“I appreciate you defending my name, Lord Manderly. But, it’s unnecessary to do so.”

“You’re a fool if you think I’m going to trust your word that meant nothing more than the Mad King’s daughter.” He commented snidely.

Arya pursed her lips in a straight line as she takes a few step closer to Wyman. Her steel grey eyes harden by the second. “The way I see it, this event could turn into two possible outcome…the first is; you let your stupid pride in the way of you seeing reason and we end up fighting a meaningless battle which I’m sure you can guess the winning side given the dumb look you gave away when the dragons flew by a few moments ago…” She trails with a raised brow. Wyman shifts his weight uncomfortably as the young Stark takes a few steady steps towards him.

“The second is; you somehow miraculously won the fight against hundreds thousands of Dothraki, Unsullied and Greyjoys combined, alongside three grown dragons… And when Robb found out that you murdered his long lost sister along the battle, he’s going to look pass your victory and demand your head then.” She finished calmly.

The tension that surrounds them is palpable to everyone presents as her last words hung heavy in the air. She proceeds closing her distance with Wyman then, as they are barely inches apart now. “So, what do you say, my lord? Which of the two possible outcomes will you choose?”

A few seconds pass by in silence as they eyed each other guardedly until that tension breaks apart when Wyman cracks a laugh out of nowhere. His cackle rips apart the seriousness and gave way to confusion instead for both his men and the Targaryen group. Arya only raised a brow and waited.

“By the Gods, you really are a Stark. I wouldn’t say you resemble Ned but Lyanna instead… she was a fierce young woman once, even more so than Ned…same as you are.” Wyman finally commented.

“You’re too kind my lord… My aunt Lyanna was to be said a true northern beauty and I’m nowhere close to her in any way.” Arya replied with a slight tilt of her head.

Wyman let out a chuckle at that. “Alright then, I’ll be damned but I’m going to follow my gut and let you through only until I send a raven to Winterfell. The King in the North will have my head if I let you lot pass without informing him, especially if you’re his sister.”

Arya blinks a few times at his choice of words. “The King in the North?”

“Yes. Haven’t you heard? Robb Stark is king now… we don’t need no king in the South, who doesn’t even know shit about how his people get by.”

“And Robert is alright with Robb being the King in the North?”

“Don’t you hear what I just said? Robert doesn’t give a shit about anything.”

Arya turns her head to Daenerys who is staring back, with her brows furrowed. Clearly the new information startled her too.

"In the meantime you can stay at New Castle. I’ll have rooms prepared for you and your company.” He trails as his gaze narrowed at the Targaryen queen and her advisors before he focus back at the
young woman in front of him. “If you will follow me, Princess.”

Arya tries very hard not to let the others know how mortified she felt at the title Wyman just called her by as she follows his retreating form. She can sense Missandei’s building smile at the corner of her eye as the others follow close behind her. It doesn’t help in the slightest bit when the young Stark turns around and caught the amused look on Tyrion’s and Yara’s face soon after either.

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Later that night found Arya wandering around the castle after Wyman had tried his best to accommodate and settling them in that same evening. Since New Castle is not as big as Winterfell and most rooms are already occupied by its regular occupant, not everyone have the luxury to stay behind the stones wall. The remaining soldiers proceed to raise their own tents and camps as per planned on the outskirt of the town.

The young Stark walks down the hallway silently with the shadows envelop her frame as she studies the layout of the castle. It would do her good to memorize the routes if the needs arise. It never hurts to take precautions. As she turns a corner to an open veranda, she did not expect anyone to be there. But, a familiar figure of a silver haired woman emerges, standing silently with her back against her.

Arya glance around the lone Targaryen Queen and found not a single soul near her besides herself. A frown automatically forms on the young Stark’s feature when no guards are on duty.

“Are you going to stay there in the shadows and watch me silently like a creepy stalker?”

Arya focuses her gaze forward again to find Daenerys is staring back with a raised brow. She decides to move towards the dragon queen then. “You shouldn’t be here all alone. Where are the guards?” she asked as her eyes roam over the open space and at the darkest night down below.

“Sleeping I presume, as they should be. And you might find it alarming, but I do need my personal time…without anyone breathing down my neck all day.” Daenerys replied making the grey orbs stay on her. “Besides, I don’t think Lord Manderly has any ill will towards our entourage given the treatment he gave you is any indication.”

Arya held her gaze for a moment as she studies the violet eyes in front of her. Now that Daenerys has opened the subject of what’s been worried her all day since she knew of her family status, she decides to let her question free. “Does that bother you? With Robb being King in the North.”

Grey orbs against violet ones silently measure one another as the question remain unanswered before Daenerys looks away and stared ahead to the dark sky. “Tyrion thinks its great news. He’s positive that I can convince your brother to bend the knee… being your lifesaver and all. And since the North has obviously become independent, the chance of them getting involve with me claiming the Iron Throne is slim to none.” She finished calmly.

“And what do you think?” Arya asked back. Daenerys turns her head to the young Stark in question.

A few moment passes as the dragon queen silently ponders over her thought. The shimmering grey eyes in front didn’t help in providing the answer she needed. “I don’t know… I’ll decide when I meet your brother.”

Arya tilts her head to a slight nod, acknowledging the dragon queen’s word before she stares back ahead. Daenerys mirrored the young Stark as they fell into a comfortable silence, enjoying the night view. The moon is full tonight and its light shone down, a diffuse glow, lighting the forest from pitch black to charcoal grey. And when Arya steal a glance beside her, the moonlight spilled onto
Daenerys features, making her glow heavenly stunning.

The young Stark didn’t realize she had openly stared at the Targaryen queen without shame and even when the said woman had notice and is now staring back at her with the same intensity, Arya held back. It takes all of her strength not to succumb to the power that is making her wanting to lunge at the older woman and ravished her soft lips again.

But, fortunately she still had her sense and the promise she made to herself keeps popping up inside her mind, swallowing down her desire for the dragon queen. When Daenerys lips open and about to form a word, Arya immediately intercepts. “I should go.” She said, looking down and closing her eyes for a moment, regaining herself, before opening them again. “Good night, Your Grace.” She said and turns in a hurry.

Daenerys let out a resigned sigh as she silently watches the retreating form of one that is Arya Stark.

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It had been two days since the Targaryen fleet set afoot on the Northern land and after Wyman had send out a raven to Winterfell as he said he would, they decides to wait for a reply before heading towards there in a hurry. Furthermore, the Dothraki and the Ironborn were reportedly enjoying their time in the village taverns and brothels alike with the Unsullied and the Northern soldiers to supervise them. And Wyman was more than happy that his people have increased their business prospects in some way even if he still treats the others wearily. But, not only after Arya had told him that the Targaryen queen had saved her life and asked him to look pass family names, did he relented and tried to shake off his hate.

Arya deems her effort as successful when the next day at midday the lord of White Harbor invites everyone to the common hall to have lunch together. She was about to head there herself when she spotted the familiar bushy hair in front of her. A smile naturally forms on her face as she gradually walks closer towards the older woman. But, that smile vanished when she spotted the woman in front of her is walking on a slight limp. “What happen to your leg?” she calls out.

Missandei let out a short gasp, startled as she turns around to the source. Both her hands are holding a tray full of glasses and a jar of wine. “Good Gods…you surprised me.” She sighed with relief. The young Stark raised a brow as she gestured to her limping leg.

Missandei let out an assuring smile then. “It’s nothing… I fell down the stairs last night. It was really embarrassing and I appreciate if you didn’t say a word to anybody about it.” She explains further.

Arya gave a calculating stare at the Naathi as she looks the older woman over. “Alright, but you should get a Maester to look at it…just in case.”

Missandei only nods back. “I’ll do it later. I promise.”

Arya gave a satisfying smile in return and decides to lessen the burden of the older woman as she reached for the tray. “I’ll carry it for you.” She offered.

“No, it’s fine.” Missandei answered back in haste.

An uncomfortable silence fell down upon them as Arya stared back in confusion.

“The Princess of the North can’t be seen carrying a tray full of wine or I’ll lose my head.” Missandei answered dramatically.

Arya let out a sigh. “I’ll never stop hearing about it, won’t I?”
“It’s best you start getting used to it now.” the older woman tacked on with a smile earning another sigh from the young Stark.

They proceed to the common hall side by side in silence and notice that everyone else has already arrived. The silver hair automatically caught Arya’s attention and the violet orbs soon after. Daenerys held her gaze in return before Arya breaks it and addressed the head of House Manderly.

“Lord Manderly.” She said in a way of greeting. Wyman smiled widely as he gestured for her to take a seat. She did just that at the opposite side of the rectangle table with Daenerys across her.

“Princess, I believed you haven’t met my son, Wendel.” Wyman speaks up as he nudges to a man sitting beside him.

Arya tries to control her expression and not to cringe at the title yet again, but judging by the amused look Daenerys wears in front of her, she knows she had failed terribly. “My lord.” She said politely.

The said man smiled back. “Princess Arya, pleasure to finally meet you.”

The young Stark forced a smile in return as her eyes roam around the table. Jorah and Grey Worm are sitting beside the dragon queen with Tyrion and Yara join at Arya’s side of the table. Missandei is still busy pouring down the wine to every occupant of the table before she finally takes a seat beside Grey Worm. The moment she did, everyone at the table starts eating.

“So how did you say you come to be in the company of a Dragon Queen again?”

Arya turns to the head of the table to find Wyman looking at her, waiting patiently for her to answer. She glances to Daenerys again like a second nature before she turns to Wyman. “I didn’t... It’s a long story.” She answered short and takes a full bite of the cut pork.

An awkward silence fell upon the hall before Tyrion decides to jump in and save the conversation. “If you must know, my lord…it all begins when…”

The young woman decides to tune out the rest of the words as she continued devouring her meal. She lets her eyes roam down the table as she chews her meat. She caught Missandei staring at her with a raised goblet before she looks away again. Arya puts another meat over her mouth as she silently glance towards Daenerys instead who is concentrating on what Tyrion is saying before the dragon queen decides to put a few comments of her own.

The young Stark is about to look down to her plate again to cut the remaining meat when she felt another gaze from across the table. When her head turns slightly to the source, she caught Missandei staring again, but this time at the Targaryen Queen.

Something flashed beneath the surface of Missandei’s calm expression as her gaze stay rooted on Daenerys and Arya hurried to investigate the sudden shift. But, it was gone as fast as it came. She was too late, the emotion disappeared before she can identify it, like reaching for a fish through a stream of river with bare hands; the water made the appearance of the fish so tantalizingly close but the bare hands that caught in between pushed it away and it’s lost forever. Though, it was enough to put the young Stark on edge and the beginning of a stir in her gut.

The Naathi seems to notice that she had been caught staring and instantly let out a small smile at the young woman before she focus on her own meal again. A slight frown appears on Arya’s features as she too, looks down to her meal. But, the pit of her stomach continue to rumble in anxiety and dread as millions of possible and horror thoughts crosses her mind. Her jaw clenched tight as she looks up again.
“Missandei, do you remember when you said that you were taken at a young age of six by the Masters of Astapor?” Arya suddenly speaks, successfully rendering everyone silence including the on-going conversation. Missandei blinks hard at the unexpected question, but before she can answer, the young Stark continues. “You said that your brother was killed by the Sons of Harpy when they attacked Meereen…what was his name again, I couldn’t recall.”

The Naathi frowns in confusion as she glanced over the people around the table who sport the same look as her. “I think you’re mistaken…I told you that I don’t have a brother or siblings. Even if I did, I wouldn’t know if I had one.” She answered with a sad smile on her face.

“Right…forgive me.” Arya said with a tilt of her head before she proceeds looking down her meal again. She can feel the others penetrating gaze but she couldn’t care less about that now.

All Arya can think of is that Missandei hasn’t corrected her age of when the Master of Astapor enslaved her. It was supposed to be the age of five not six and the Naathi should know about that damn well because she’s the one that told her so.

A moment passes before the conversation goes on as per normal again around the table and Arya decides to shake the ridiculous doubt that surrounds the older woman. Perhaps, Missandei didn’t hear her say her age correctly the first time and she’s just being paranoid. But, when the young Stark looks up and found that the older woman is stealing glances to the dragon queen yet again, all the doubts inside her made an appearance for the second time.

Her knuckles are white from gripping the fork and knife too hard as she thought things over for the hundreds of times. When Daenerys reached for her wine of glass that is still full, Arya decides she couldn’t let any harm falls to the dragon queen.

“Stop.”

Though her voice is not loud, it is loud enough for everyone to hear as they halt their conversation and regard the young woman in question.

“Don’t drink that. It’s poisoned.” Arya said through gritted teeth as she locked eyes with Daenerys. The dragon queen blinks a few times before the words sink. “What? It couldn’t be…poisoned.” Her frowns deepen as she lowered down her glass anyway. She snaps her head where Wyman looks back with the same confusion.

Arya decides to turn to the person who she thought is responsible instead. “You brought the wine and you served it to us yourself…” she trails.

A mirthless chuckle escapes the dragon queen uninvited. “Are you accusing Missandei of poisoning the wine?” she asked incredulously.

Before Arya can answer, another already beats her to it. “If the wine is indeed poisoned as you claimed, we all would be dead by now…since the others and myself already had a sipped.” Jorah suddenly speaks up with a crease on his brows.

The young woman takes a breath, regaining her composure. “The wine isn’t poisoned…the cup is.” When she locks her gaze at brown ones again, the older woman is sporting a look of confusion that Arya almost believes it. But, as more time passes by, the angrier she felt at the act.

“Ar–Arya…do you hear yourself right now? Why would I want to poison my Queen?” Missandei finally said.
“Because you’re not Missandei. You’re not her.” she muttered under her breath. Her grey eyes grow impossibly darker as her breath turns labored. “Where is she? Tell me where she is before I gutted you open like a pig.”

Something flickers beneath the face of the Naathi for a second before it turns horrified at the words directed to her. “Arya, stop this… You’re scaring me.”

The young Stark's grip on the cutting knife was so tight that if it weren’t made from steel, it would break in half already. “You should be scared… because if you don’t tell me now where the real Missandei is, I’m going to do a lot worse than just kill you. You’re going to wish you were dead.” She taunts as her face distorted with rage.

The silence was deafening to everyone presents as they eyed the two women in shock and confusion still. But, Arya was tired of waiting and with a speed of light, she threw the knife towards the woman who claimed to be Missandei.

A few gasps and shouts echo around the table as the knife flew but found no flesh. Instead it planted straight at the back of the chair the Naathi sat where she managed to dodge it.

“What are you doing?! You could kill her!” Grey Worm shouts in rage as he stands up. But, when he turns to the said woman, he doesn’t know whether to be relief by the fact that Missandei swiftly escapes the line of the moving knife or to be alarmed that she could do it so easily. Even he himself didn’t saw the knife coming at her.

Missandei eyed a watchful gaze at the perpetrator before her face turns expressionless with no sign of feelings. Her brown eyes changed to hollow and without warning, she abruptly stands up and flees. Arya had expected that as she jumps over the table, kicking the plates of food that got in her way and follow suit soon after. She ignores the calling of the others from the common hall as her feet speeds up to catch the woman.

Her breath came in small spurt, hot and furious. At her sides, scarred fingers curled into sweaty fists, swinging forward as if it would make her run faster. In front of her, Arya could see the long legs of Missandei running further away and she wills her own two feet to speed up. She keeps running down the hallways and corners until a door greets her face. Without second thoughts, she pushes the door open with such force that the hinge might go off as it bumps to the stone wall with a loud thud.

The many eyes of cooks and maids in the room were all looking at the young woman in confusion at her bold intrusion. Her heart pounding sounds loud to her ears as adrenaline almost burst through her skin. With calculated step, Arya steps forward to the kitchen quarters. Her eyes are busy scanning the room and its people. Before she decides to move on to the next door across the room that could possibly lead to another space, her feet stops abruptly as her gaze fell upon a familiar appearance.

She was a pale woman with a gaunt bony face and dark eyes that look as big as saucers. The memories of that said woman assaulting and beating her to a pulp another lifetime ago in the House of Black and White came rushing to her brain. Arya blinks rapidly, willing the taunting image to disappear from her mind but the perpetrator was still there. The Waif was still there, watching her with a mix of confusion and intrigued crossing her features.

It only takes a moment before hell breaks loose. The Waif swings her hand forward propelling a knife flying towards the young woman. The seconds Arya realized what happened, her hand automatically reached for an empty pan beside her, successfully blocking the rapid blade from slicing her head into two. And with the flying knife clatters down the floor noisily, chaos erupted inside the kitchen. Curses and screams of the cooks and maids fill their ears as they scurry out of the kitchen quarters in a chaotic manner, leaving the two women to their unfinished business.
“You know me.” The Waif speaks up. Her familiar voice sounds loud now that only the two of them left. “But, we’ve never met before, yes?” She finished as she thinks her own words over.

“Where is she?” Arya asked back instead, seething. The Waif shrugged in response as she gifted her slanted smile.

“If you’re smart enough to recognize a Faceless Man and the poisoned cup, then you’re smart enough to know that it doesn’t matter where your friend Missandei is, Princess.” She taunts.

Arya had her fists so tight that her nails are digging the skin painfully. Her eyes twitching and her body trembles with pure rage. “Where.Is.She?!” she shouts.

“I’m doing you a favour. You don’t want to see the last image of her without a face now, do you?”

The word triggered something feral inside the young Stark and she squeezed the pan tight in her hold before she screamed and lurched forward, pouncing at the woman. The Waif however easily side stepped the attack before she reached for an abandoned knife on the working table near her.

The assassin advances and slices through the young Stark in return. Arya slapped the blade away with the pan each time it tried to cut her flesh open. The anger guides her in defense but somehow, she didn’t notice the leg that swings to her side. The feeling of the boot against her ribs was excruciating but she didn’t let it get to her as she finally saw an opening. Without further ado, Arya slammed the pan to The Waif’s throat in return. The woman choked her own breath as she stumbles away, gasping for air, with the knife lost on her grip.

The black eyes turn hostile as The Waif grab her own throat, trying to soothe the pain. When the older woman decides to advance again, Arya mirrored her action. They meet in the center as the young woman swings her deadly pan towards the assassin again, trying to find a landing. But, it wasn’t easy as the first time when The Waif effortlessly ducked and dodged the attack. The young Stark begrudgingly thought about her time sparring with the woman in the House of Black and White where The Waif was always a better hand to hand combat than she could be. Her train of thoughts are proved right when a fist found her ribs again and then her face soon after.

The pan Arya held was kicked out of her grip as she tried to regain her composure. And when she decides to lounge at The Waif anyway, fists ready, she did not expect the said woman to throw a handful of foreign powder on her face, that she grabbed over the working table. On instinct, she tries to block away the substance but it was too late when she can feel a huge amount of it slips through her eyes.

The sensation that came soon after was literally burning her eyes out. And when she rubs against them, attempted to clear them and regains her vision, it only becomes worse. She couldn’t open her eyes and darkness swallowed her whole as her chest takes another force of the boot from the assassin and her body ended up crashes against the cupboard on the wall. A grunt escaped her lips as she was down on all four. The splinters on her back are painfully digging through her skin. She heard the approaching footfalls and she can’t help the sudden itch to laugh. And so Arya did.

It started with a chuckle before it turns to a full one. She was laughing so hard even though there was nothing funny to be laughing about. Missandei is dead, The Waif killed her and it’s all her fault. Just like last time with Lady Crane. And now she’s temporarily blind yet again, fighting her nemesis. There is certainly nothing amusing to those things at all yet the young woman can’t help the sound that coming out from her mouth. Perhaps all the time travelling has finally made her go insane.

“Care to share what’s been tickling your feather, Princess?” The Waif sounded.
Tears or sweat – Arya couldn’t tell – was leaching through her closed lids and over her face as she tries hard to stop laughing and compose herself. “You wouldn’t understand but…” she trails as she takes a breath and pushes herself upward again. Her eyes are still burning like hell. “I’m going to kill you and peel the skin of your face myself just like last time.” She said assuring. The corner of her mouth curved upward, taunting the assassin. Though she can’t see The Waif’s face, she’s pretty sure that she had gotten under the older woman’s skin. Even if it didn’t, the young Stark wanted to believe that anyway.

As soon as the words left her mouth, Arya heard the rustling of clothes before she felt the sudden change of air to her left side. In an instant, she twists her body to the opposite side, successfully avoiding a blow before moving in towards her opponent. The Waif clearly didn’t expect such moves from the temporary blind woman as she left her side unguarded making the young woman able to land another punch to her throat, rendering her imbalance and kept a hold of her in close proximity.

The two women grunted as they took handfuls of each other’s clothing and attempted to wrestle the other to the ground. The Waif released a hand-hold and used it to start jabbing the young Stark in her already broken ribs she caused. But, Arya only clenched her jaw tight, absorbing the familiar pain like an old friend before released both hands and grabbed the assassin’s head at the side, poking both her eyes with her thumb until she can feel hot liquid oozing out of her fingers and the satisfying scream that matches her own, coming out from the older woman soon after.

Though her vision is nothing but black, Arya can almost see the red of the blood that flowed from The Waif’s eyes socket as the said assassin noisily staggered backwards with a painful moan. And the imagination satisfied her dark sadistic heart. The young woman took steady and calm steps towards the noise then when she suddenly heard the clashing of steel blade against air. Somewhere along the way, the older woman must have come across an abandoned knife. She waits for the clumsy approach as the blade sound clearer to her ears by the minute. And when she notices the change of air again, this time to her right side, Arya blocks the incoming blade with both arms and land a kick at The Waif’s left leg that she remembered was injured, when she saw her limping down the hallway earlier.

A grunt escaped the assassin’s lips as her knees buckle and she ends up kneeling on the floor. With her hand still gripping the knife, Arya put all her weight into twisting the arm towards its owner. The sound of bones breaking and then of blade cutting through flesh were like music to the young Stark’s ears and she keeps thrusting the older woman’s hand towards her own chest, repeatedly stabbing herself.

Decided to end this once and for all, the young woman pulls out the armed knife again only to push it further, but this time towards The Waif’s throat instead. She heard the gurgling and choked breath from the assassin as if she tried to say something for the last time. But, Arya couldn’t care less and with a scream she ripped apart the knife away, taking partial of the victim’s throat with it. The assassin’s body slumped heavily against her until it slides down and fell to the floor with a thud.

The guards decide to show up at that moment then, bursting through the door. For a moment, all the heavy footfalls and shouting gets swallowed down as she takes refuge to her own comforting world, that is until she felt the soft hands caressing her cheeks and heard the soothing velvety voice calling her name soon after.

The young woman wanted to lean in to the hands that are cradling her face with such gentleness, but she knows she doesn’t deserve it. So, with difficulty, Arya tries to pry her eyes open. Her vision was blurry at first but as seconds go by, the frightened and concerned purple eyes in front of her becomes clearer.
“What is going on? Where is Missandei?” Daenerys asked with a frown. Her own eyes wildly searching the swollen red-rimmed ones in front of her, desperate to hear the answers.

Arya pulls the dragon queen hands off of her face, leaving the comfort as she stared back through painful breaths that has nothing to do with her broken ribs. She ignored the sting of sweat in her eyes as she answered. “Missandei is dead.”

The young Stark doesn’t know how she got to her room, but somehow she did and now she’s sitting on the edge of the bed, her eyes glued to the stone wall and she just stares at the blank wall as it paints with memories of a certain Naathi. With each images flashed by, the heaviness in her limbs and her mind doubled. Things she used to find funny now only caused a deepening of the pain. She should have been there when Missandei needed her. She should have been there to protect her. But she failed.

She failed terribly just like she had failed her Father and Sansa. Just like she had failed her family in another lifetime ago.

Her chest ached. With each intake of breath, it was impossibly painful to get air inside her lungs and it was becoming exhausting by the minute. Though, however excruciating it felt, it can never be compared to the aching and emptiness in her heart, the numbness pounding her brain, and the sheer nothingness that now took hold of her soul threatened to engulf her entirely. The awful hollowness, the waves of wretchedness are there again welcoming her like an old friend.

Time was moving, she knew that but she couldn’t care less. She had remained in the same position for hours, perhaps days. Her body sore all over though her chest ached less now and her breathing aren’t labored anymore. Her eyes hurt and her head pounding in return demanding for rest but Arya doesn’t give in. What right does she have to such liberties anyway? And so, she stays awake.

A knock and a creak soon after were loud against her ears but she remains still not even moving her head to acknowledge the person coming inside her room. The heavy boots were calculated as they approach and stops a few feet from where she is. At the corner of her eye, she saw the silhouette of the Imp Lannister.

“You should get the Maesters take a look at your injuries. It could be fatal.” Tyrion pleaded.

Silence.

A sigh escaped him as he takes another step closer. “We searched everywhere. From inside the castle to outside the town and down the piers…but we couldn’t find her body.” He said, trying to gauge a reaction.

But, he was greeted with another silence.

Gingerly, he moves closer and takes a seat on the bed next to her. Another silence passed by as he waits patiently for the young woman to tell him to get lost but she never did. “You know, I never get the chance to say thank you.”

A frown graces her features as she turns her head to him in question. Tyrion let out a satisfying smile when he finally gets a reaction from the young Stark. “For saving my life.” He explains further.

Arya trails her gaze down the scarring on the dwarf’s face. The memories of the naval battle flashed at the back of her mind uninvited. She could only see another one of her failure in those images. After all, she was too slow to kill the man that gave Tyrion that scar and she was unsuccessful to
save Derwin and old man Xander from getting killed.

"Don’t be too hard on yourself, Arya… You cannot save everyone.” Tyrion speaks up softly as if he knows what’s going on inside the young woman’s head.

Arya closed her eyes tight, willing the hurtful memories to go away. When it did, she turns her head to the wall again, ignoring him completely.

Another sigh escaped Tyrion’s lips as he gathers his thought. “Daenerys needs you…and despite what you may think…you’re the only one that can truly protect her. If it wasn’t for you, our Queen would be dead by now and millions more as well when her dragons go on a rampage knowing their Mother had been murdered.”

The only reaction Arya gave was the clenching of her jaw and the tight clasp of her hands on the bed sheet. But, it was enough for Tyrion as he decides to stands up and makes his leave.

“She hasn’t let anyone inside her room since…since the incident yesterday. Wanting to be left alone to her thoughts or so she said. I know it’s inconsiderate of me, but if you have the time, would you please go and see how she’s doing? I have the feeling that you would find your way inside despite how many locks she used to bar the damn door.”

With that, he turns around and walks away the same way he did as he walks in, leaving the words he said floating around Arya’s head. She thought it over for the hundreds of time before finally making her decisions. With a grunt, she pushes pass the pain and stands up, walking out of her room.

A few turns and stairs later found her along the hallway of the dragon queen’s quarters. Two Unsullied guards are stationed outside the room and for a moment Arya debates inside her mind whether she should proceed or not, given the guards are already there should the need arise. But, her swirl of thoughts vanishes into thin air when a crash sounded inside the said room.

Her feet moved into their own accord and the young woman found herself intercepting both the guards that are trying to unlock the door when she completed their job herself. She bursts inside once the door is unlocked with the guards close behind her.

The mess of the room was the first thing her eyes lay upon. The table got turned, the chairs are upside down and the floor scattered with parchments, quills and ink spots. The only thing that remained untouched is the bed which Arya is sure the Targaryen queen hasn’t used.

“I’m alright…the glass just slipped my fingers is all. Leave me be.” Daenerys voice sounded and Arya turns to the opened window where the older woman’s back was against them.

One of the Unsullied takes a step forward then. “Your Grace—”

“I said leave!” The dragon queen cuts in. Her cold voice leaving no argument behind and it was brought to fruition when the Unsullied reluctantly turn around and make their leave.

Arya followed suit until she let the guards out and closed the door behind them. She turns back around and waited silently against the inside of the door. A moment passed before Daenerys let out a sigh and finally turns around. She froze as her eyes fell upon the familiar grey ones across the room.

The look on the older woman’s face tear Arya’s inside apart as her guilt doubled. Daenerys looks like she hadn’t slept in days. Her eyes swollen and there were dark circle under her eyes. Her face gaunt and her skin have lost its usual glow. The young Stark wonders how anyone can change so drastic in a day. But, she knows better what the death of your loved ones could do to you. And Daenerys once said that Missandei is more than just her advisors.
“Did Tyrion send you here to watch me over?” the dragon queen speaks up with a raised brow. Her face voids of any emotion. “Don’t worry, I won’t drop dead just by slipping a glass through my fingers.” She tacked on.

Arya chance a glance to the wall across the room where the remnants of the said glass decorated the paint and the remainings lie shattered down the floor. She’s pretty sure the glass didn’t just slipped like Daenerys claimed.

“Now, leave me be, Stark.”

The only response Arya gave was a blink of her eyes as she silently stared back ahead.

Daenerys clench her jaw tight as she takes a deep breath, knowing that she will never have the young Stark does as she instructed. Her eyes twitching with anger at Arya’s silent defiance, but two can play the game, she decided. She walks towards the overturned chair and reach for it, trying to correct it to its original position before she can take a seat, unaware that her fingers slipped through splinters of wood instead. She hisses in pain as it cut her palm open leaving blood dripped down the floor.

Before Daenerys can take a closer look at her wound, another hand has already beats her to it. She looks up to find Arya looking down her bloodied palm and then at the splinters with a ferocious gaze as if she wanted to murder it. The young woman then bit the edge of her clothes with her teeth and rips apart the fabric, before wrapping the said cloth around her bleeding palm, successfully stopping the bleeding.

Daenerys couldn’t find it in her to look away as Arya worked over her hand with utmost care. Even when the young woman has done attending to her injury and are staring back at her silently, the dragon queen still won’t break their gaze. There is something peaceful in those ashen grey orbs as she decides to get lost in it and perhaps if she stays there, then Daenerys won’t have to face the shit reality of life.

“Don’t do this to yourself.”

The violet orbs instantly focus back to the young woman as she tried to make sense if Arya really said something.

“None of this was your fault… If you wanted to blame someone, then blame me.”

The voice sounded again followed by the resigned look on the young Stark’s face. A frown appears as Daenerys finally let the words sink. “What are you talking about?” she asked with a shake of her head.

“I let The Waif… I let the Faceless Man get close. She murdered Missandei and she almost poisoned you. I should have known better.” Arya said through gritted teeth. Saying it aloud, acknowledging it is even harder than knowing it deep in her gut.

Daenerys blinks hard a few times before she reached out the young woman’s hand with her good one and sighed. “If I wanted to blame someone…then I would blame the assassin. I would blame Robert for hiring the assassin. And I would blame myself, even if you said I shouldn’t…but I would blame myself, because every decision that I’ve made had brought me to this very day. It had brought me deaths after deaths… loss after loss.” She trails as the grey eyes in front of her turns gentle. “I would never blame you, Arya… You saved my life. And you should never blame yourself for it either.” She finished, squeezing the calloused hand tighter for good measures, daring the young woman to say otherwise.
They stay like that, holding hands for a long while as they stared at each other’s eyes. Time seems to take a stand still as Arya felt the warmth on her grasped hand building towards the pit of her stomach. Even the guilt and hollowness inside her seems to subside and filled with the violet depth of the dragon queen instead and it frightened her beyond measure. In an instant she looks away, breaking their gaze and then pulled her hand away from the older woman’s grip soon after.

“I’ll get the Maester to check your wound.” Arya said as she slowly turns around and head for the door.

A mirthless chuckle sounded then, rendering the young Stark’s advance. She snaps her head to the owner where Daenerys looked at her with frustration written on her face.

“Why do you always do that?” the dragon queen asked with a crease on her brows.

“Do what?”

“Walked away when we have something…a moment or whatever you called it. Because I know you feel it too. I can see it in your eyes.”

Arya opens her mouth to say something, anything at all but no words came out. She closed her lips and eyes, shaking her head. “I can’t.” she finally said.

Daenerys takes an advance towards the young Stark then. “You can’t?” she echoed incredulously.

“You don’t need…you don’t want me like that, believe me.” Arya said with a harden gaze, hoping that the older woman will let the subject go.

But, it seems to only get the opposite effects as the violet eyes harden in return. “All my life, people always has a say in what I should do, what I need. I married men against my will because they say I need to, for political gain. And I killed men, burn them to ashes because that’s what I needed to do to win the war. And now here you are telling me that I don’t need whatever this is between us.” She said with another mirthless chuckle. Arya opened her mouth to say something, but quickly got interrupted by the older woman when clearly she’s not finished yet.

“I’ve never wanted anything more in my life…even the Iron Throne, than I wanted you. You have no idea how much I care. So, go on and tell me that you don’t feel the same way.”

Silence stretch as Daenerys words hung heavy in the air. None of them backed away from the intense gaze that is directed upon one another but neither said a word either. The wheels inside Arya’s head keeps turning and turning to find an escape that wouldn’t hurt the older woman more than she already has. The correct and logical action is to politely reject her like last time she did, but Arya found that she didn’t want to. She had done that before and kept her away, kept everyone away really, but look where they are now. Death still took away her only friend, Missandei, even though she promised she would not let them close. And at that moment, for the first time, all she wanted to do was to follow her heart.

“Be honest with yourself and tell me what you really want, Arya.” Daenerys tried again.

Grey eyes focus on violet ones as Arya finally decides and made up her mind. Her fists tighten with determination. “Right now...all I want to do is to kiss you. It’s all I’ve ever think of since last time.”

Something akin to relief and approval flickers beneath Daenerys features. “Then, what are you still waiting for?” the dragon queen asked.

Nothing. Arya decides, as her feet slowly moves forward and closer to the older woman. With them
merely inches apart from one another, she let her hand rested below Daenerys ear, her thumb caressing her pale cheek as their breath mingled. Glancing to the purple eyes again, Daenerys gives no sign of rejection at her bold actions, as the older woman only stares back expectantly.

Hesitantly, Arya leans in, brushing her lips, just barely against the older woman’s soft ones, debating for the last time inside her mind to pull away before she lost herself but the young Stark can’t seem to. In this moment of closeness, her senses has been subdued and she can no longer think straight. So, she finally moves in and presses her lips against Daenerys.

She can feel her lips naturally moves against the older woman, tasting every inch of Daenerys plump, soft ones in a tantalizing slow pace. Hoping against all that she is doing this right somehow. Gods know she lacks the experience. The older woman's lips are agonizingly delicious, sweet and addicting all at the same time and when Daenerys responds much the same way, Arya sneaks another hand up the older woman's neck, pulling her impossibly closer together as she continues her long overdue kiss.

Daenerys ran her fingers down the young woman’s spine in return, pulling her until there is no space left between them and she can feel the beating of Arya’s heart against her chest. She inhales sharply and the familiar scent of pine and faint earthly smells assaulted her senses. Their lips are moving, dancing around as the young woman continued to press her lips more impenetrably and rougher onto hers.

“Daenerys.” Arya whispered slowly, trailing and savouring every bit of sweetness of the older woman's lips as they break apart to catch some breath.

Daenerys let out a smile, her heart fluttering at the voice as she rested her forehead against Arya’s. Never before has her name ever sounded so wonderful from anyone, she thought as she lean in for another kiss.

The two continue to taste and test each other and only breaks apart when the air seems to be missing from their lungs. Shaky and shallow breaths are the only thing that can be heard inside the room before they open their eyes.

And they stare, deep into each other’s eyes. Arya’s full of wonder and curiosity, Daenerys full of care and passion.

Feeling more confident of herself now and unable to contain any longer at the separation, even for a while, Arya pulls Daenerys into another fiery and passionate kiss. Her mouth and tongue work in ways she never thought possible as a soft moan breaks out from the older woman, sending the warmth satisfaction down the pit of her stomach. She can’t believe she had waited so long for this to happen as her hands ventures over Daenerys curved body, exploring.

That seems to spark something for the older woman as she pulls away and guide their body, moving to a certain direction and when Arya wanted to ask her about it, Daenerys silence her with her own mouth. The young Stark happily obliged as she staggers backward while trying to fight dominance over her lips at the same time. She let out a short gasp as the back of her knees hit something hard and she buckled down, falling on something soft behind her back. But, the sensation turns to pain when Daenerys weight pinned on top of her, crushing her bruised ribs. She can’t help the groan that escapes.

“What…What’s wrong?” Daenerys asked with shaky breaths, instantly breaking apart and lifting her body off the young woman.

Arya closed her eyes tight, willing the pain to go away as she shakes her head. “N-Nothing I can’t
handle.” She replies. Her voice wavers, exhilarated from the tension between them and the shooting pain. She opens her eyes then and pulls the dragon queen close again before continue what they had left off.

But, Daenerys was having none of it. “You’re hurting.” She scolded as she pulls apart again, concern laced her features.

Arya only sighed. “It’s fine… I’ve gotten hurt a lot worse than this before.” She reasoned.

“Does that supposed to be comforting me?” Daenerys breathed out with a raised brow.

Arya only hummed in response before she stopped and blinked hard, wondering if she should say something else when the older woman shot her a glare.

Daenerys fights the urge to smile as she saw the adorable befuddled look that cross the young woman’s features. Keeping a straight face, she gently leans in and kisses Arya’s warm lips for the umptenth times before pulling apart again. “We should stop.” She decided.

At Arya’s confusion and later aghast features after her declaration, the older woman finally let out a smile. “You need to rest and heal.” Daenerys continues as she finally gets off the young woman completely.

Arya released a defeated sigh as the dragon queen’s warmth and closeness left her body, already missing it. “Fine, you should try and get some sleep too.” she relented.

The young Stark was about to stand up and head for the door when a hand caught her arm. She turns her head to find Daenerys looking at her incredulously. “Where do you think you’re going, Stark?”

“To my room?” the young woman answered hesitantly.

“I find it better if you rest here instead.”

Arya swallowed a lump as her eyes wander to Daenerys perfect face and then the bed that they are currently sitting on.

“We can sleep together.” The older woman tacked on making Arya choked on her own breath.

Daenerys can’t help the chuckle that escapes her as the young woman’s face reddens by the second. And when the said woman squirms uncomfortably under her gaze, Daenerys cupped her face and lean in for another short passionate kiss that seems to relax the young Stark instantly.

“We’ll just sleep…nothing else.” The dragon queen breathed out, resting her forehead against the young woman.

Arya managed a nod then. "Alright."

The dragon queen takes the young woman’s hand and guided her to the center of the bed. They make themselves comfortable as they stretch their legs and lay side by side. A comfortable silence ensues as they lie, their face up facing the ceiling, with the feather bed against their back and their hand still clasped together. Arya almost succumbed to the power of the soft bed when suddenly Daenerys voice sounded.

“This reminds me of when we’re in Qazlas Pit, locked together in the cell…don't you agree?”

Arya let out a huff at that. “I believe you and I remembered Qazlas Pit very differently, Your Grace.”
She commented earning another chuckle from the older woman.

Arya's mouth quirked upward in her own volition at the beautiful sound until the older woman's laugh quiiten down and leave them with a comfortable silence. A beat passes when Daenerys voice sounded again.

“I remembered meeting Missande in Astapor where she works as an interpreter for the Masters…she was so young back then and too smart for her age. Have I ever told you how she managed to filter every awful word the Masters directed at me and come up with her own version of pleasant word instead?”

Arya turns to her side then as she looks to Daenerys. The older woman features turn sad as her violet orbs shine with unshed tears. She decides the only thing that the older woman needs now is a friend and she’s willing to give everything that Daenerys ever needed and wanted. “No, you haven’t.” she said softly.

Daenerys turns her head in return. A small smile playing between her lips before she turns her body fully, mirroring the young woman. She closes in their gaps then as she decides to continue and tell the story.

Chapter End Notes

(・_・)
The Gift

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf hope to find comfort in a time of great distress

Chapter Notes

Okay guys, I'm out of my hole now. Thanks to Biruchi, Vero and ? (and many other commentors that I can't fit writing here) for digging me out.

Let's get back to the story shall we? I really enjoyed every comment and reaction after the last chapter, so thanks for that and over 1000 kudos?? Seriously guys, you're the best!!! I hope to compensate your grieving heart after last chapter by giving this one that are filled with Danarya and a certain Stark-Targaryen. Lets pick up where we left off.. Hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Cold licked her face and crept under her clothes. But Arya knew it was not at all because of the weather. This is more sinister, more wicked and familiar. She tried to open her eyes to investigate where she is, but found they were already opened, though it makes no sense as her surroundings are pitch black. It was as if she was blind again. She brought her fingers to her eye sockets, checking if perhaps her eyes had been gouged, but they were still there.

She keeps turning and turning to find light or anything at all to escapes from this heavy darkness and coldness and her wish was answered then as she found sudden light that conveniently poured onto a figure of a woman. The woman’s back was facing against her. She has bushy black hair and is sporting the famous Targaryen black outfit. In an instant, Arya knew who the woman was.

Missandei.

Arya uttered the name against her mouth but no sound came out. Though, it didn’t matter when the said woman turns around as if she heard her. An ominous boom started from her inside, sending another violent tremor all over her body that has nothing to do with the cold as her eyes take upon the face of Missandei, or rather the lack of the older woman’s face. Her breath turns laboured as she felt the tears coming out from her eyes, wetting her cheeks.

No. Not Missandei. Please.

The inside flesh that is supposed to be covered by skin becomes prominently visible as crimson blood drips down, staining the older woman’s neck and clothes. Missandei’s brown eyes were scrutinizing and her mouth slacked as she takes agonizingly slow steps forward. Arya cannot help as she staggers backward clumsily, hoping to get away from the faceless figure.
A harsh grating and loud cawing sound echoes through the darkness then like a shrill cry, pulling her
attention towards it. Arya snaps her head to the source and was surprised to find another figure from
not far. It took her a few moments to focus on the said figure to recognize it was actually a man. It
was strange how despite the darkness, she can still see that he has short dark auburn hair and blue
eyes.

“Go home, Arya.”

He sounded and Arya recognize the deep voice somehow. It was Bran’s and she was positive of it.
His features have matured, similar like the last time she saw him in one of her dreams long ago.

“Everything will be over soon. You’ll know what to do when the time comes.” He said again. Arya
wanted to ask what he meant but no sound came out from her mouth.

“Go home!” he shouted, so loud in fact that it was ear-piercing and almost deafen her.

Arya awoke with a gasp. Her eyes opened, eyelashes faintly batting against her lids when she
blinked again as she evened out her breathing. With a grunt, she pushes her body upward, sitting up.

At the corner of her eyes, she saw movement coming from the opened window and she turns her
head to the source. A black raven was there, perching on the sill as it tilted its head to the sides,
staring back at her for a few moments before flapping its wings and flew off to the dark night.

She didn’t have time to ponder over the peculiar raven when the figure from her nightmare decided
to show up too. Missandei was there behind the shadows against the wall, standing and staring at her
silently. Though her face is perfectly intact now, the scrutinizing gaze of the brown eyes did nothing
to soothe her. Arya knew she should be prepared for this. After all, many others before her had done
the same. They all had visited her in her dreams and nights. Her Father, Sansa, Derwin, Xander.
Even Jon, Robb, Rickon and her Mother had appeared at some point when she forgot that they are
still alive in this new timeline. And now, Missandei is among them.

The bed she was sitting on rustled noisily before she felt the warmth of a hand wrapped over her
fingers soon after.

“Hey, everything alright?” the voice sounded.

But, Arya couldn’t find it in her to answer let alone acknowledge another human presence beside her
as her gaze fixated onto the silent form that is against the wall, binding her to it.

She felt the hand moved away from her fingers and is now cradling her face before her vision
replaced with something as it successfully blocked the haunted figure. “Arya.” The soothing voice
sounded again.

Everything is blurry and for a second the young woman didn’t remember where she is and how she
got to where she is. But, as each seconds passed, piece by piece she remembered and the blurred
vision in front of her becomes cleared as her eyes finally focus to find the violet depths and the face
of the older woman that she has come to care for, looking back at her.

“Nightmares?” Daenerys asked softly. Her eyes stared back kindly with no judgement. Arya
managed a stiff nod.

“Do you want to talk about it?” the dragon queen asked again, caressing the young woman’s cheek
with her thumb gently, hoping to bring comfort.

Arya leans in to the touch with a tired sigh and closes her eyes. She knows the older woman has
good intention, but the last thing she wanted is to cause Daenerys losing her sleep too at the haunting and horrid images she decides to share with. “No.” she croaked, shaking her head lightly.

A moment of comfortable silence passed on as they stay like that, with the older woman caressing the young Stark’s face in a soothing manner before Arya opens her eyes and reluctantly pulls Daenerys hands off of her. “I should go.” She decides begrudgingly.

A frown automatically graces the dragon queen features. “Why?”

“I don’t want to disturb you. It’s still night time and you deserved your sleep without me interfering.” Arya reasoned as she moves to leave the bed.

But, Daenerys was faster as she took a hold on the young woman’s wrist, stopping her from moving. “Disturbing me is the last thing you would do.” She replied before pulling Arya’s shoulder to face her again. “Besides, you of all people deserve sleep more than I do… and if I let you go now, you’re probably going to wander off the hallways again.”

“Maybe I should.”

Daenerys shot the young Stark a look, successfully rendered her silence. “Let me take care of you for a change.” She offered softly.

The dragon queen takes the conflicted look that graces Arya’s features as consent when she finally lets go of her grip on the young woman’s wrist, believing that she will not fled at moment notice. When her gaze falls upon the full outfit Arya wears, her hands automatically reach for the front lace, untying them loose.

“No wonder you have nightmares, everyone knows you shouldn’t bring leather to your sleep.” The older woman japes lightly. Arya’s mouth curved slightly at the remark.

Only the sound of Daenerys diligently working the knotted laces of each section of the cloth accompanies them in the room. When the dragon queen looks up, Arya already had her eyes closed again. At that moment, Daenerys can’t help but find how young and vulnerable the woman in front of her looked, and how deeply Arya trusts her, allowing her to do so much and gets so close.

Gently, Daenerys proceeds shedding the heavy outer layer off the young Stark’s shoulders and her arms completely. A small grunt escapes Arya’s lips uninvited as the awkward movement caused pain to her ribs. The older woman took mental note to call the Maesters first thing in the morning to take a look at the young Stark’s injuries.

As the violet eyes travel to the inner shirt Arya wears, she can’t help but to stare at the shirt’s low cutting of the neckline, conveniently exposing the young woman’s perfect collar bone. She would have admired them a bit more if not for the scarred flesh on Arya’s chest that becomes visible too. The last time Daenerys saw the scar was back at Qazlas Pit when Arya herself had slipped and exposed the mark accidentally. Now that the older woman is merely inches from that said mark, the view is as clear as glass and the scarring forming the letter of ‘Q’ only angered her further as she clench her jaw tight. She wishes she could maim and kill Qazlas over and over again for what he did to the young woman. Lucky for him, he was dead.

Moving on to the boots next, Daenerys proceeds taking off the heavy boots of Arya’s feet and throws them onto the floor. Finally, she guides the young Stark to lie down and wraps the covers over her before she slides under it too. A sigh which the dragon queen assumed as content can be heard from the young woman as Daenerys closes their gap, wrapping her arms around Arya’s middle. The movement initiate the young woman to snuggle closer then.
Daenerys almost succumb to sleep at the warmth and cosiness of them together when suddenly Arya’s voice sounded.

“Can you sing that song…or lullaby that you used to sing to yourself?”

“How did you know about that?” the dragon queen asked back, curiously.

Arya only hummed sleepily with her eyes still closed. For a moment, Daenerys thought the young woman has gone to sleep but she speaks up again.

“I heard it once…when you thought I was sleeping back in the cell at the pit. And the second time… when I invited myself in your private quarters back in Meereen, while you were bathing.”

A slight tugging forms at the corner of Daenerys mouth as she thought about those times. She presses her forehead against the young woman, spreading the warmth further. “Then, you must know that I’m a bad singer.”

Arya hummed again. “You’re the worst…” she concurs with a smile making the older woman chuckle lightly. “But, I don’t mind hearing it again.” the young Stark tacked on.

Daenerys closed her eyes then as she decides to grant the young woman’s wish.

Arya nestled closer as Daenerys’ smooth and clear voice resonates through her ears and soothes her inside, successfully vanishing the remnants of the haunted images of her nightmares. Their bodies moulded perfectly together as the song go on. Everything about it was beautiful and Arya wished Daenerys would never stop.

*****

Fresh lavender and earthy smell with a little hint of after smoke assaulted Arya’s nose. On instinct, she takes a deep breath and the soothing fragrant magnifies, sending content and peaceful quiver over her body. The sound of waves crashing the shores come barrelling in, heightening her senses then and little by little Arya felt herself awake from her slumber.

The beginning sounds of small birds and seagulls charged in next, indicates that morning has arrived. Still with her eyes closed, she felt the body that is pressed against her, warming her inside and out. Begrudgingly, she wills her eyes to flutter open and a tangled mane of silver hair ended up obscuring her vision soon after. Her lips quirked up in response as her heart flutters at the sight. She had never felt so free and this good after waking up before, in a long time. Nightmares and gruesome visions are the constant things that kept her awake at night, befriended her even. And she never had the privilege to rest peacefully even if she wanted to, so badly.

But, last night Arya had fallen asleep like a babe at Daenerys lullaby. It was as if the song held such power that it can melt away her ghost and nightmares, giving her the much needed sleep she craves for. Or perhaps it was all because of who she was with at that moment. Arya let out a content sigh as she tightens her arm around Daenerys middle, pressing her chest tighter at Daenerys back and dived in to the tangled silver hair, savouring the lovely smell.

At the movement, Daenerys stirs and turns her body before wrapping her arm over Arya’s waist in return. The older woman still has her eyes closed and her lips parted just slightly as her breathing evened out again. Arya blinks hard as she takes a moment to calm herself at Daenerys sudden advance. She tries to ignore how their skin comes in contact as Daenerys legs intertwined with her own and how close the older woman's body feels against her as she takes in the features of the woman who is still peacefully sleeping.
Fully awake now, Arya let her gaze trails from Daenerys hairline to her eyebrows and down to her closed eyes, her eyelashes against her cheeks, her nose, lips and jawline. Inch by inch, Arya marvelled at how perfect and beautiful the older woman is. How everything was placed and created without fault. It was as if the Gods have paid an extra attention just for her.

Her grey eyes lingers for Daenerys lips again and stays there as yesterday event assaulted her mind. Arya’s face heat up and the warmth spreads to her chest as she remembers the sensation of the older woman’s lips pressed against hers, at how soft and sweet it tasted. And Arya still cannot believe that it had happened. She had kissed Daenerys, the Targaryen Queen of all people and various emotions swirls inside her.

Overwhelmed, nervous, afraid. But above all those, she’s happy. And she had never felt this way towards someone in her life before. Both of her life.

Sunlight begins to pour onto the room then through the opened window, and it spill onto the person in front of her making Daenerys divinely beautiful than she already is. In that very moment Arya realised just how much she cared for Daenerys. Not because of how breathtakingly stunning the older woman looks but at how fragile and young she looks underneath it all. Yet, despite the vulnerability that the older woman was willing to share as they lay together as of this moment, she knows Daenerys is strong and brave regardless. And that’s what had caught Arya’s attention, long before she can even acknowledge it to herself.

A trail of dried tears caught Arya’s gaze as she continues studying the older woman’s features. She lifts her arm and grazes a finger to Daenerys cheek, finding an excuse to touch the older woman again even though the tears had dried by now. Arya’s fingers end up only a hair breadth upon contact before she froze as her mind conveniently recall as to the reason why Daenerys was crying in the first place. The young Stark closed her fingers tightly into her palm as she pulls away, the guilt expertly guiding her.

It was obvious that Missandei was the reason of the tears. Even if the Targaryen queen had not cried when she spoke fondly of how she met the Naathi and then some more of their past encounters last night, Arya guessed Daenerys must have had done it in secret or in her sleep.

And it was all Arya’s fault. She can’t help but to wonder if Missandei would still be alive if she had not met the older woman in the first place. If she hadn’t release the arrow that had killed Cersei during the trial, she wouldn’t be in this predicament– finding her way back to Winterfell with the Targaryen fleet– and perhaps Missandei wouldn’t be dead. But, then Arya wouldn’t have met with Daenerys the way they did back at the fighting pit in the first place and the thought of Daenerys not knowing her only ached even more.

A soft groan escapes Daenerys lips as she snuggles closer and tightens her leg over Arya’s, successfully eradicates all the thoughts that the girl had in her mind. She swallows a lump painfully at the warmth of their stomach press so close together. The thin shirt Arya wears provide little barricade as her mind wanders off to inappropriate place beyond the fabric. Luckily, another groan escapes Daenerys and her eyes slowly flutter open. Arya focuses and waits silently as the violet orbs in front of her slowly awake herself from her slumber.

Daenerys blinks a few times before she registered the young woman’s face. “Do you even sleep?” she croaked. Arya’s lips quirk slightly at the cracked voice of the Queen.

“Yes. More than I have been in a long time.”

Daenerys let out a small smile. “The lullaby works then?”
“I doubt it...” Arya trails. Daenerys raised an eyebrow slightly in question. “I think it was because of your terrible voice...you scare away all the monsters in my dream.” She finished softly, trying hard to keep a straight face.

Daenerys on the other hand did not. Her smile widens as she tilts her head for a better angle to glare mockingly at the young woman, brushing off the last remnants of her sleep. “Hmm, is that true? I’m glad that I can be of assistance anyway.” she replied with feigned annoyance.

Arya wipes off the smirk on her face as she held her gaze more seriously. “Thank you, Daenerys.” She said, a genuine smile playing on her lips.

The Targaryen queen froze for a moment, marvelling the rare and beautiful smile from the young woman. She buries away the butterflies at the pit of her stomach before she returns the honest smile. “You’re welcome.” She trails. Lifting her arm to leave the girl's waist, she tucks in a brown lock behind Arya's ear before speaking again. “You should know that my voice, as terrible as it may sound...comes with a high price. I’m afraid you would have to pay more than just a simple thank you.”

Arya swallowed another lump dryly as her mouth dried up. With Daenerys looking at her expectantly with a playful smirk on her lips did nothing to ease her nerves. All the boldness from yesterday seems to have left her body as Arya blinks hard, contemplating on what to say and do. Furthermore, the young Stark is pretty sure she looked like a deer caught in a hunt, waiting to be slaughtered or in this case, devoured by the dragon.

Daenerys stifles a laugh at how adorable Arya is as her grey eyes suddenly grow busy searching for a way out. “Fret not, my little wolf... I'll show you a way how you can pay it off.” She finished light-heartedly.

Arya waits expectantly as the older woman slowly props herself up with an elbow, towering her before Daenerys leans in dangerously close to her face. Their noses graze against each other as they share the same breath for a moment and then Daenerys let out a smile and drapes one of her arm over the young Stark’s shoulder and the other slides under Arya’s neck, pulling her in a tight embrace instead, as they fall back in bed closer than before. Daenerys released a content sigh as she snuggled in.

Arya snickered then. “A hug?” Her tension melts instantly.

“You sounded surprise...do you have something else in mind?” Daenerys whispered out suggestively at the young woman’s ear.

Arya can feel Daenerys smile grew against her cheek as she decides to put her arms around the older woman in return, resting her palms at Daenerys back and close the distance until there is no gap left between them. She settles at the crook of Daenerys neck, satisfied. “No.” she managed to answer. “Good... I expect the same payment, next time.”

Arya didn’t even bother to ask or correct the older woman’s statement. She knew she would come again to Daenerys regardless. In fact, she knows she wants to. She wants whatever this feeling is to continue existing and the only way she knows how is by having Daenerys close. Naturally, Arya’s arms squeezed a fraction tighter and she breathed more slowly, her body melting into the older woman as their legs tangled around one another.

They stay like that unmoving for a long time. Both seeming content with the simple gesture of being in another’s arms, lost in it yet felt so fulfilling all the same. But, of course it couldn’t last forever as
much as they wanted, when a knock sounded against the closed door, breaking the moment.

“We should probably get up.” Arya suggested begrudgingly.

Daenerys doesn’t reply and for a moment Arya wonders if the older woman had gotten back to sleep. But, when the knock sounded again for the second time, more urgently, Daenerys lets out an annoyed groan not befitting of a Queen in response that Arya can’t help but to smile.

“Go away.” The Targaryen queen spoke with no enthusiasm at all that the young Stark is sure the person outside won’t hear her command.

“It could be urgent.” Arya said back softly, still amused at the older woman’s childish display. “We should be up and get ready for the day.” She reasoned, slowly pulling away.

But, Daenerys pulls the young woman back into her embrace. “Just for a little while longer.” she said, tightening her arms.

Another knock echoes soon after followed by a voice. “Your Grace, may I come in?”

At that, Daenerys let out a sigh as she reluctantly pulls away from Arya and lock eyes with grey ones. “We should get up.” She concurs bitterly.

Arya nods, a small smile still playing on her lips as they both finally parted. When Daenerys finally sits up and gets out of the bed, walking towards the fur robe hanging across the room, Arya decides to do the same. Gingerly, she sits up and reaches for her leather jacket that is placed on the end of the bed and puts it on. She stifles a groan as the pain from her bruised ribs conveniently reminded her of their existence. Not even bother to tie the front lace of her jacket properly, she wears the boots next and stands up, leaving the comfort of the feather bed.

She glanced to where Daenerys is standing, only to find the older woman has been watching her like a hawk. “You’re not going to leave this room until the Maesters have that injury look over.” The dragon queen commanded.

Arya’s lips twitch into a smile at the concern as she tilts her head lightly. “As you wish, Daenerys.”

Pleased with the reply from the young Stark, Daenerys pulls the robe around her shoulder more securely, successfully obscuring the thin nightgown she wears to sleep. “Come in.” She finally said to the occupant outside as she shuffles closer to Arya. Strengthening her stand, Daenerys waits expectantly for her guest.

The door creaked loudly before it opens wide, revealing three figures outside. The two Unsullied guards who are faithfully stationed by the end of each door and Tyrion Lannister who finally steps inside the room.

Arya ignores the questioning and penetrating gaze of the Imp as he sees her. He didn’t look shocked by her presence there – since the guards would probably have told him in advance– but merely curious and worried.

“Good morning, Your Grace…” Tyrion speaks up then as he focuses to the dragon queen before looking at the young Stark again. “Arya, I didn’t expect you to be here this early.” He inquired.

Arya was about to speak up when another beats her to it.

“It is to be expected when one spends the night here, is it not?” Daenerys asked instead, calmly.
The dragon queen last words brought an awkward silence to the room, enough to suffocate them all as Tyrion blinks hard at the two women in front of him. Arya keeps a straight face as she chanced a glance to Daenerys only to see she is staring down at Tyrion instead, as if to challenge him.

Tyrion clears his throat suddenly, forcing a smile. “Spend the night? Like together...the both of you? With yourself and Arya?” he asked, choking a laugh in attempt.

Daenerys only hummed in response. “We slept together.”

The look on Tyrion’s face changed to one of horror as his eyes widens in realization, no doubt taking the dragon queen’s statement literally. Arya could have interfered then and stopped Tyrion’s wild imagination but seeing the horrified and dumbfounded look across his face, rendered her from doing so. It was a rare sight to see the Hand of the Queen in such manner and judging by the slight quirk of Daenerys lips, Arya knows the dragon queen thought so too.

Tyrion takes a moment to right himself again as he shakes his head lightly. Clearing his throat again, he straightens his stance. “Well, that’s lovely...really... I’m glad Arya can provide you the much needed protection in close range. However, the reason for my interference this early morning is that I come bearing news.” He said calmly, not before shooting a pointed look at the young Stark and Arya was positive she will hear Tyrion’s further inquiry about the sleeping matter once the Targaryen Queen is not around.

“Is it good or bad?” Daenerys asked back.

“Both actually. Which one do you want to hear first?”

Daenerys chanced a glance at Arya, already missing the young woman’s warmth before she reluctantly focuses at Tyrion again. “Let’s hear the bad one first.” She decides.

Tyrion’s face turns grim in an instant. “The bad news is...we still couldn’t find Missandei’s body anywhere. Grey Worm has his men search in every possible place...even with Manderly’s men willing to help, we still couldn’t find her.”

Arya’s body instantly goes rigid as the words left Tyrion’s mouth. Her thoughts wander off to her last encounter with The Waif. The now dead assassin’s taunting words never left her mind as she gritted her teeth. Fury and guilt rising from inside her, finding its way at her heart again. She can only imagine what Missandei had to go through being at The Waif’s mercy and her stomach churn at the thought. A calling of her name brought her back from her trance as she focuses to Daenerys and then Tyrion who are watching her with concern.

“Did she say anything?” Tyrion asked and waits expectantly. Seeing the questioning look from the young Stark, he continues. “The assassin, I mean... Did she say anything or indicate where she could have left Missandei?” he explains further.

Arya looks away for a moment as if she was thinking even though she had the answer already. She knows the search was a waste of time and energy. The Faceless Man would never be so careless as to leave a faceless body around, especially if they intent to be that said person soon after. It was too much of a great risk and she remembers the cremation chamber in the House of Black and White for all the bodies after they took their faces.

“No. The assassin didn’t say anything.” She finally said.

Tyrion’s face fell further before he shifts his weight uncomfortably. “Well, is it possible then that Missandei is still out there? Alive? We can never be sure... Perhaps the assassin just knocked her
unconscious and left her somewhere?”

Arya’s fists tighten, making her knuckles white at the tight grip. How bad she wanted that to happen. “No. It’s not possible… That is not how the Faceless Man works.” She said back instead.

“But, how can you be sure?” Tyrion asked again with a pointed look. Doubt and hope crosses his features.

Arya let out a soft sigh. She doesn’t want to have to explain the gruesome process of how a Faceless Man takes a person’s face. Above all, she doesn’t want to taint Missandei’s memory. “Missandei is dead… There’s nothing that can change that.” She said with finality and great burden.

The Lannister dwarf opens his mouth again looking about ready to argue when Daenerys decides to interrupt. “Tyrion, order the men to continue the search at every possible region again… It’s a vast area we have to cover, we might overlook at some places.” The dragon queen instructed. She has no doubt of what Arya claimed even if she desperately wants Missandei to still be alive. But, she will not give up in retrieving the Naathi and Daenerys intend to give Missandei the respected and proper burial she deserved.

Tyrion press his lips in a thin line as he reluctantly nods his head, acknowledging the Targaryen queen.

Arya chanced a glance at Daenerys, silently thanking her for the interference. “I’ll help in the search too.” She offered. She could at least do that.

The violet eyes look her over with worry before Daenerys gives her a nod of approval in return. The Targaryen queen turns back to her Hand then. “And the good news?” she inquired, hoping for the better.

Tyrion slips his hand inside his pocket, revealing a tiny scrolled parchment, already unsealed. “The King in The North wrote back.” He said, fiddling the letter between his fingers.

Daenerys waited expectantly while Arya felt her back straightens further at the next words.

“He invited us to Winterfell…and he’s sending an escort. They should arrive at New Castle earliest on the morrow, given they already rode here before this letter come to us.” Tyrion explains.

Arya can’t help feeling tense as she takes a step forward. “Do you know who is coming?” Tyrion nods then. “Your half-brother, Jon will be leading the escort.”

*****

One day.

Only one day left until Jon arrives at New Castle, and until Arya gets to see her dearest brother again.

The young Stark realises that she knows next to nothing of Jon besides that he is alive and well and is riding to White Harbor as of this moment. Wanting to keep updated of all her family, she seeks out to Lord Manderly – having left Daenerys with Tyrion for their private discussion, only after the Maester has tended to her injury of course – and began pampering him with inquiries of her remaining family.

The first thing she acquired was Jon is no longer a bastard. Robb has legitimized their half-brother after winning the war against the Lannisters and kept him by his sides, acting as part of the King’s
inner council. Arya couldn’t be any happier for Jon, knowing how he grew up with people looking down on him just because of his bastard title. At least now they won’t hold that against him anymore.

The second thing she learnt was that she has a nephew, three years of age who goes by the name Eddard. She cannot help the smile that form as she imagine there is a little Ned running around the courtyard of Winterfell.

She also learnt that Lord Manderly respected and feared his King as were all the north men. The people called Robb, The Wolf King. His deeds and reign has kept the North stable and in peace despite the harsh winter that seems to worsen every day. And Arya felt conflicted at that fact. It was no doubt that she was proud and happy for Robb and the people, but she didn’t know how it would work out or against Daenerys and her claim to the Iron Throne. She decides to lock that thought away for later.

Arya would have learnt more about her remaining family if not for Lord Manderly had to excuse himself to attend to his lord duties for the day. She didn’t mind as she decides she will ask Jon further once he gets here anyway.

Breaking her fast with thoughts of her family that she soon will be reunited with, especially Jon; Arya didn’t even know what she had eaten. But, nevertheless her plate is emptied and her stomach filled. Thanking the servant maid, she was about to exit the common hall when a young man nearly runs her over at the archway.

“My apologies, Princess.” He speaks in between breaths. His chest is still heaving and his eyes wild with unspoken terror at colliding with the Princess of the North.

Arya let out a small smile in assurance. “It’s fine.”

The young man visibly relaxed as he returns the smile wider. “Lord Manderly request for your attendance out in the main gate.” he explains.

“Why?” she asked curiously having to just meet him earlier before breakfast.

“Lord Stark and his company have arrived.”

A beat passes as Arya let the words sink into her. She looks into the man, unbelieving. “Jon is here?” But, he was supposed to arrive on the morrow.

When the young man only nodded to the question, something inside Arya snaps her back to reality and her body starts to react. She wastes no time as her feet finally move forward. The need to get outside, to Jon, burning with every steps and she urges her feet faster, sprinting along the hallways and stairs until the cold wind greets her face.

The young woman takes a moment to suck in the much needed air back to her lungs after her abrupt run. The cold air slaps her face and body making her shivered for the lack of warmth on her person. But, she couldn’t care less about that now as her eyes fixated on a group of men across the yard. There are half a dozen of men getting off their horses. Their faces are worn out and tired as they pass the reins to the stable boy where he gladly took and guides the mounts away.

Lord Manderly is there too, welcoming the men with a smile on his face. He shakes his hand with one of the man from the group and Arya felt her breath stuck in her throat as her eyes land on that said person. His dark brown hair much like hers was pulled back, revealing his long face and dark grey eyes.

Seconds pass, her brain taking him in, struggling to comprehend that he isn’t one of her dreams, that
he was real, that this person is her brother, Jon. He looks the same in many ways but somehow different too. He has the same kind-hearted and brooding set of eyes. But, his stance is more confident now as he regards the Lord of White Harbor. And somehow, Arya saw a shadow of her Father in him. It filled her with pride and ache.

When those dark grey eyes finally flicker towards her, Arya felt the cold creeping in further. She swallowed a lump forcefully as her heart began thundering inside her chest loudly and faster. Time seems to stand still as Jon stares at her with wide eyes. Arya wanted to run and wrap her arms around him, but instead her feet seem to be planted on the same spot.

She waits expectantly as Jon suddenly moves forward, taking a calculated steps as if he was nearing a wild animal. Any normal days Arya would have laughed at his face, but seeing his scared yet curious features directed at her, she only feels nervous. What if he didn’t recognize her? What if he didn’t like what she had become? And what if he blames her for being the only one to survive?

She was aware that everyone in the courtyard is watching silently with baited breath. The sound of Jon’s boots against the hard ground filled the air and Arya wishes that he would just sweeps her off her feet already, taking her to his arms like he always did. Gods know she craves the contact desperately.

But, when Jon suddenly halts in his steps and looks at her with wide horror look, Arya’s heart dropped, believing that Jon didn’t recognize her at all or worse, hated her.

“Ghost! No!” He shouts as he looks to her right.

Arya thought his voice sounded the same before she saw movements out of the corner of her eyes. When she turns her head to investigate, something hit her hard and she stumbles over the hard ground and landed on her back. A massive weight on her chest successfully knocked out the wind from her. She grunts at the sudden forceful contact and opens her eyes to find a pair of red eyes and massive long canine teeth on top of her. A soft growl was coming from the beast and Arya blinks hard at this unexpected encounter.

“How did a wolf find its way here? A beautiful exceptionally large white wolf at that.

Before she can ponder over that thought, the wolf’s tongue lolled out and it began to licks her face in earnest. Arya visibly tense as she waits for the beast to rip out her face. But, it never happened. Instead, it keeps licking and nuzzle at her as if it was playing. Jon’s first word suddenly strikes her again at that moment.

“Ghost?” she calls out between breaths.

Ghost’s answer is another wet tongue across her face. A chuckle escapes her at that action and another when Ghost decides to move to her hair next. Arya can’t help but to giggle like a child. All her tension melts away as Ghost decides to clean her up his own way.

She didn’t know how long they were on the ground, but when she feels that the direwolf has seemingly content with his job, Arya gently pushes him and tries to sit up. Ghost seems to know her intention and he backs off to give her the space. A wide smile forms on her lips as she finally stands up not before wrapping her arms around Ghost and rubbing his head affectionately.

When she lifted her head again, Jon’s face came into view. Her smile fell as her gaze find humourless dark grey orbs. He was closer now, only an arms apart. She swallows a lump as the tension suddenly finds its way again. Ghost was at her side, moving on to lick her fingers. Arya decides that she cannot handle the silence anymore and when the direwolf gives a slight nudge at her
sides as if to encourage her, Arya carefully speaks up. “Hello, Jon.” She forced a smile and was glad that her voice came out strong.

Jon only stares back unresponsive. But, after a moment his wall shatters and his face betray his emotions. His eyes swim with unshed tears and Arya flinches at the raw reaction coming off from her brother. She wants to look away, not wanting to invade the intimate moment. But, she couldn’t when all that emotions are for her and because of her.

“Jon, I –“

Before Arya can finish her sentence, Jon rushed forward and finally sweeps her off her feet. His hands are folded around her back, drawing her in closer. Arya can feel his firm torso and the hearts that beat within as their forms melted together.

“You’re alive. You’re alive, Arya.” Jon chanted as if he was in a prayer. Arya tightens her arms around him in return.

His body shakes then before he let out a chuckle and a choked laugh. Arya moves her hand to stroke his hair gently, hoping to soothe him out of his misery. Jon instantly relaxed before he pulls his head back to face her. “You’re alive.” He said again with a smile. His eyes are eating her as he studies every inch of her face, running his hands through her dishevelled hair.

When a tear escapes him, Arya wipes it away with her fingers as she cradles his face. “I’m alive.” She assures him with a smile in return.

Jon laughed at that before his face buckles again and more tears roll unchecked, washing a path to his dark stubble below his cheeks and chin. Arya tries to clear the tears away, but it was becoming harder when the tears show no sign to stop. She didn’t realize that she was in much the same state, not only after Jon swipes her cheeks with his thumbs, trying to wipe her tears off her face too.

Arya let out a smirk at what a mess the two might look to the people around them. “You’re crying like a girl.” She commented good-naturedly.

A chuckle left Jon freely. “You’re crying like a girl.”

Arya rolled her eyes then. “I am a girl, stupid.”

Jon’s smile only widens further at the remark before he pulls Arya in his arms again. “I missed you, little sister.” He sighed against her ear.

“I missed you too, Jon.” She whispers softly and settles at the crook of his neck as she lets Jon holds her in an embrace she never wants to end.

Arya decides she could live like this forever, within his hold that tells her everything will be alright as long as she stays there. That she won’t lose him again.

Chapter End Notes

Woot! Jon is finally here peeps!! Thoughts? I DEMAND it of you!!! *clears throat* I mean pleaaaase?? (OvO)
What is Dead May Never Die

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf tries to move on with life before it goes down the drain and secrets are shared, yet again.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to the stunning, warm-heart and loving character of Missandei. RIP.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

“Has anyone ever told you, that it’s rude to stare at people?” Arya quirked an eyebrow in question. A small smile is tugging at the corner of her mouth as she held her gaze evenly to her brother.

“Not directly to my face, no.” Jon answered unperturbed as he sips another mouthful of hot stew, still not breaking eye contact on his sister. His dark grey eyes shine with unspoken mirth of their own.


Jon gives the slightest shrug at that. “Probably because they’re too scared of me, given I’m a respectable lord now.” he reasoned.

His tone is unmistakably one that is bragging. The only thing that is missing is his puffed chest as he uttered the words. But, Arya sense no offense in there and it only makes her grin wider.

“So I’ve heard… Do I have to call you Lord Stark now?”

“It would be preferable. But if you start calling by my title, then I would have to return the gesture… Princess.” he tilts his head in mock salute, stifling a smile as he does it.

Arya glared in return. “Then, Jon it is.”

A smile finally graces Jon’s features as he down the last stew inside his bowl. He wipes his mouth clean with his sleeve and released a content sigh as his stomach is satisfyingly full. Arya watches her brother’s every move in comfortable silence. His shoulders relax further as he leans back to his chair, eyeing her still. The crackle of the burning pines in the fireplace warming Arya’s temporary room in New Castle and thus the two people inside it.

“I just can’t believe you’re still alive.” Jon suddenly said, softly. The smile on his lips now gone, replaced by a thin line instead. “Everyone believed you were dead and we’ve mourned you…along with Father, Sansa and Bran.”

A beat passes as Arya can only stares back, loss of words. Jon looks devastated as soon as he said those words. His eyes show a depth that is full of wreckage and pain.
“When Jamie Lannister wrote to us that he’s going to kill Robert, we rode as fast as we can to get to Father. But, we were too late.” He explains further, looking sad at that certain memory.

Arya blinks hard as she registers the words. “Jamie Lannister wrote to you?” she asked, surprised.

Jon only nods. “He was rather adamant about wanting revenge. He accused Robert and our Father of tampering the trial and murdering Cersei, as if that justified his next action... And so he wanted to repay back with blood.”

Arya suddenly felt sick as she remembers the moment she released the arrow for Cersei. She looks away from Jon’s heavy gaze as her guilt doubled.

“We found Father and Sansa among the others. But, we couldn’t find you or Bran and we were hoping that you two somehow made it out alive from the attack. But, six years has passed and we were losing hope...so Robb made a tomb for you and Bran in the crypt last year. We were ready to move on. I was ready to move on.”

Arya slowly turns her head to Jon again. His dark grey eyes looked at her with such vulnerability that she couldn’t tear away from them again. “I’m sorry, little sister.”

Of course Jon would apologize for something like this. He shouldn’t feel sorry for wanting to move on with his life at all. It’s not like he can control every horrible things that has happened to their family. Though Arya knows she couldn’t either, but she had one chance that the others don’t. She has the knowledge of what’s coming for her family, yet she still couldn’t save them. If anyone should apologize, it should be her.

“I’m sorry too, Jon.” She said in remorse. Jon let out a frown, not understanding what his sister is apologizing for.

“I was with them when Jamie Lannister killed Father and when a soldier took Sansa’s life. I was there and I couldn’t do anything to protect them.” She explains, her shoulders slumped as she looks down to her feet.

Jon reaches out for her hand across the table, taking them into his hold. Arya looks over to their joined hands, feeling his warm hands on top of hers. His thumbs running circle at the back of her hand in a soothing manner. Jon didn’t say anything to comfort her and Arya was grateful for that. She knows she doesn’t deserve it. His understanding gaze and supporting presence are more than enough to fill the hollowness inside her heart that seems to deepen every time she thought about her failures.

Silence engulfs the room except for the crackling pine that burnt loudly. Arya let her eyes fall to the dancing flames in the fireplace. A moment pass by in comfortable silence as the both of them seems to be lost in their own thoughts before Jon decides to break the silence then.

“What happened, Arya? How do you survive all these years? Were you with Bran?”

Arya closes her eyes for a while as she regains herself, having already anticipates the set of questions. It’s true that she had ponders on what to tell her family since she sets sail earlier. Telling them she was a slave could only deepen their pity for her and that is the last thing she wants from them. But, without telling them that part of her life, she couldn’t justify Daenerys coming home with her. Arya decides that it’s best to lay it all out.

So, the young woman takes a deep breath before speaking again. “When Sansa and I came across the Kingsroad attack, we were separated from Father and Bran and we tried to find them among the
chaos. And when we did find Father, he was already losing his fight and then Sansa…” Arya pauses, as she swallowed a lump painfully. The horrid images are dancing at the back of her mind. Jon’s hands tighten around hers in comfort. She chanced a glanced at her brother only to find his kind eyes looking at her. His unspoken reluctant to let her continue the painful tale only strengthens her will to do so.

“It all happened so fast… The next thing I realized I was running away from that place. All I can think of is I have to go back to Winterfell. Thinking that Bran must have done the same only speeds up my pace. I only rest when it gets too dark to see. I couldn’t remember how long I’ve walked and ran along the trees and the cold air. I hate to admit it but I don’t think I was heading to Winterfell at all. I was lost… And by the third day of wandering in the wilderness, a group of men– they were snatchers, found me. I was too tired to fight them and they caught me to be sold along with other children as slaves. I don’t think they knew who I was then.”

Jon’s hold on hers tightens further at the last words, that it was becoming rather painful for her hands. Arya breaks away then only to hold his hands against hers again, forcing a slight smile in assurance. Jon works his jaw back and forth as he tries to calm himself down, albeit with much difficulty. But, when he finally succeeds, Arya continues her story.

“A man named Qazlas zo Yunzak bought me. He brought me across the narrow sea, to Slaver’s Bay and put me into his fighting pit. I spend all my years there, fighting to survive.” She paused again. Jon was looking ahead at the fireplace now, but Arya knows he was listening, rather intently as his dark grey eyes are busy absorbing it all.

“I was doing well in the pit, you know considering my lack of experience in it all… I was even the crowd’s favorite. And I reckon I was the breadwinner there too.” She tries to jape, but Jon clearly didn’t find it amusing, given the deep frown he has.

“And then, one day I had a visitor who goes by the name Daenerys Targaryen. She was caught by Qazlas men when her dragon landed her on his territory. Qazlas put her into my cell the same day I planned to break out from that place. So, it was only fitting that I brought her along through my escapade. However, I didn’t manage to break free but Daenerys did. She came back with her dragon and breaks me out of the fighting pit along with the other slaves too… And now I’m here.” She finished.

Jon turns his head to his sister then, waiting for her to continue. But, clearly she was done as her grey eyes looks back at him expectantly. Carefully, he pulls his hands away from her hold and stands up from his seat. His mind is reeling about what his sister had just said.

Arya waits patiently for Jon to gather his thoughts. After all there are a lot to take in from what she has revealed.

“This man, Qazlas…where is he now?” Jon suddenly said, turning around to Arya. His face contorted in rage as he spat her former master’s name.

“He’s dead.” She answered. But, Jon looks down to her, waiting for more. So, she continues. “He was dragged by a horse along the desert and dropped dead halfway before he even reached Meereen for his trial.”

Jon seems satisfied by the fact that Qazlas did not die easy as he turns around again, giving his back to the young woman. He stays there motionless for a while before he faced her again. The fire on his features is gone now. Instead, in its place are the one of sympathy and sorrow.
“I’m sorry you had to go through all of that, Arya. You shouldn’t have to.” He said, moving closer to her. He can’t begin to imagine what his little sister had to go through all these years with being a slave fighter nonetheless.

“No, maybe I shouldn’t have. But, I did anyway. I can’t change that and no one can change that.” She answered, standing up as she moves away from him before he can console her further. This is the exact sentiment that the young woman doesn’t need from her family, least of all from Jon. She didn’t want to be comforted. Wanting it would mean she was affected by it and she refused to admit that. After all, there is no one to blame of her misfortune than herself since nobody forces her to make the choices she made.

A soft sigh escapes Jon as he stops his track, giving Arya her space. There are so much more that he wanted to ask about her time away across the narrow sea. But, seeing her reaction now, he reckons it was a sensitive topic and decides to store it away for another time. Another beat passes before Jon decides to ask another question instead that is of equal importance.

“And this Daenerys Targaryen…did she knows who you were when she saved you from the fighting pit?” his voice resonates through the room again.

Arya looks up to him then from across the room, after regaining herself. His wary tone doesn’t go unnoticed by the young woman.

“Queen Daenerys doesn’t know who I was when she saved us. She could have left me to die in the fighting pit, Jon…but she didn’t. Even after knowing who I was, she could have mounted my head in a spike but she didn’t.” she defended, perhaps a little too enthusiastic to her liking. But, she was only stating facts after all.

Jon doesn’t seem to be excited by the notion though, judging by his mild scowl. “Perhaps she knew how valuable you were being alive than dead.” He commented sarcastically.

Arya moves forward again only to stop when she’s an arm apart from her brother. “I know what you’re thinking Jon.”

“Do you?”

“I do.” She really did, having to ponder the same doubt while she spent her time in the Great Pyramid of Meereen herself.

Jon sealed his lips in a straight line with a brow raised, waiting expectantly.

“She’s the mad King’s daughter, yes. But, she’s nothing like her Father. Queen Daenerys could have spared me the niceties she acquired me with since we made acquaintance, but it’s all she ever gave me. I’m fed and clothed and safe. And if being alive is all she needed of me, then she could put me in a cage, tortured me and still kept me alive. She could ransom me for the North’s submission yet she did not.” She stated as a matter of fact, holding her gaze evenly.

At the determined look of his sister, Jon let out a sigh. “Arya, she’s a _Targaryen._” He reasoned as if the simple word alone would justify his contempt.

“You don’t even know her, Jon. I thought you of all people know how it feels like to be condemned by a mere title and name alone?” she asked back, not bother to hide her disappointment.

Jon flinched at her reaction before he straightens himself again. “This is different. We have every right to be wary of her. She has thousands of armies and three grown dragons. What’s to stop her from attacking the North and taking over Winterfell?”
“You’re right… Nothing could stop her from doing all those things and yet here we are, unharmed.”

Both of them held their gaze to each other, not wanting to back away, trusting that their opinions are right in their own eyes. But, Arya knows her brother in front of her well enough. When she was just a child, it was always Jon who calmed her down after she had cried a bucket over a stupid argument with Sansa. He was the one that defends her against other girls who called her funny names. So, when she sees his dark grey eyes flicker with uncertainties at his own words, she decides to drop the elephant on his shoulder.

“I had pledge myself to Queen Daenerys and in return she will honour the North and not let any harm fall to us. Her war is not with us, Jon.”

Jon’s eyes gradually widens that it almost become comical if not for the seriousness of the topic. “You pledge yourself? But, you’re not even a knight.”

Arya knows he wasn’t mocking her with the last statement, merely confused.

“I know that…but, Queen Daenerys doesn’t seem to mind. I have counselled her many times since we set sail and she promised me that she will let us be if we don’t interfere with her claiming the Iron Throne.”

Jon opens his mouth looking about ready to argue but no words came out. He closes his mouth back with furrowed brows. His dark grey eyes are loud with unspoken words as he looks on to Arya’s undeterred ones. They could have been at it for an eternity for all Arya knows when Jon finally releases a defeated sigh.

He closes his eyes as he pinches the bridge of his nose before opening them again to look at the young woman. “I need to hear that from her. I need to see Daenerys Targaryen.”

Arya let out a grin at that. “I thought you’d never ask.”

******

The walk to the common hall is filled with silence as Arya lead the way with Jon trails close behind her. After asking for a servant girl to relay the messages to the Queen about them requesting for audience, Daenerys agreed to meet in the common hall and that is why they are heading there now. Arya looks over to her shoulder to find Jon staring ahead. Though his mouth is sealed in a straight line, she can see his dark grey eyes are busy calculating everything she had told him moments before. The young woman doesn’t know why but she had a positive feeling about this meeting. So, it was no surprise that there are additional bounce on her steps as she walks along the hallways or perhaps it was just the prospect of seeing Daenerys again that makes a smile forms on her lips.

“What’s gotten you so jolly?” Jon asked suddenly, breaking the young woman’s daydreaming about a certain silver-haired queen.

Arya wipes off the silly smile on her face. “Nothing.” She answered with a shrug.

Jon doesn’t believe it in the least but he let it slide as they are nearing the archway for the common hall.

The first person Arya sees when they enter the common hall is naturally the one that has been occupied in her mind. She schooled her face to indifference as her eyes captured the violet ones. When she notices that Daenerys is looking at her with a slight upturned of her mouth, Arya’s stoic face shattered. The young woman can’t help but to greet the older woman with the same notion, not bothering at all to hide her smile now.
“Lord Stark.” Someone suddenly said.

Arya reluctantly tear off her gaze from Daenerys and turns her head to the source, with the older woman doing the same. Tyrion is standing between the dragon queen and Jon at the right side with Arya conveniently at their left.


A moment passes as the two men eyed each other in silence. Arya had of course told her brother about Tyrion being the Hand of the Queen and Jon hadn’t commented much about it. Though, judging by his stiff demeanor now, anyone can tell that he’s uncomfortable.

“We hadn’t expected you and your entourage until tomorrow.” Tyrion said, with a forced smile. Arya had to give the dwarf some respect on how well he seems to act despite the bad blood that seems to flow from both great Houses.

“I rode hard… Being separated from a missing family member for six years can do that to you.” Jon answered, clenching his jaw hard. The young woman would have appreciated more of her brother’s devoting love for her if not for the tension that seems to rise every second.

Before Tyrion can come back with a reply, Arya clears her throat loudly. “Jon, I would like you to meet Daenerys Targaryen. The rightful Queen of Westeros.” She announced, glancing towards Jon and then Daenerys who matches her gaze with a pleased look once Arya had done the introduction.

Daenerys turns her attention to the young man who resembles a lot like the young woman she had a soft spot on. “Lord Stark, it’s a pleasure to finally meet you. I would like to formally thank you for your extended invitation for us to Winterfell. I hope your journey weren’t too rough.” She greets.

Jon gives another curt nod as he speaks. “The roads were kind, Your Grace.” He pauses before chancing a glance at Arya at his side who looks content at the civil conversation they seems to be having. He turns ahead again then. “It is I who should be thanking you, Your Grace... My sister said you saved her from enslavement and I can’t be more grateful for that. So, thank you.”

Daenerys let out a small smile in return. Her gaze flickers to Arya for a moment before she returns to Jon. “Actually, it’s the other way around.” She remarked.

The other two pair of eyes instantly turns towards her in question. The dragon queen ignores the scrutinizing gazes of her Hand and her favorite person. “Arya was the one that saved me from the fighting pit. If it weren’t for her, I would not be able to break out from there alive and return back to save the others.”

A beat passes as Jon absorbs the dragon queen’s confession before a chuckle left him. “I swear Arya had me convinced otherwise only a few hours or so.” He commented, glancing at the young woman at his side.

“Let’s just say we saved each other.” Arya interrupted then which Daenerys return with a small smile.

Jon shifts his attention towards the silver haired queen again. “My sister also said that you have no intention to attack the North?” He asked with a raised brow.

Daenerys clasps her hand together in front of her. “Arya speaks true… As long as the North doesn’t interfere in me claiming the Iron Throne from Robert then we have nothing to worry about each other.” She explains.
Jon looks pleased at the statement. His stance looks less tense than before as he assured her. “We won’t.”

The dragon queen mirrored his action, feeling more relaxed now. “I’m glad to hear that… And when can we expect to begin our journey to Winterfell?” she inquired.

“I would prefer to leave as soon as possible…but my men needed rest and a good night sleep, so we should leave at the first sunlight on the morrow.” Jon replied.

Daenerys gives a nod in understanding. “We’ll make the preparation for departure accordingly.”

Jon shifts his weight then as he regards the silver-haired queen carefully. “May I know how many men are you taking, Your Grace? I heard you have thousands of soldiers… surely you’re not going to march them all to Winterfell? I’m afraid if you do, it will send the wrong message to the other lords.”

Daenerys exchanged a look with Tyrion as if they’re having a silent conversation between them before she turns ahead again. “I understand your concern. You need not worry for I would only bring one hundred of my men with us… Though, I’m sure they wouldn’t even be needed, but I do have to keep up with my appearance.”

Jon blinks a few times as he ponders over the new information. His stance relaxes further as he seems to accept her reasons. “Of course… Winterfell can accommodate your men.” He assured in confidence.

Daenerys let out a smile then. “Wonderful… I’m sure you would want your much needed rest, my lord. So, please don’t let me kept you any longer.”

Jon gifted a small smile before nodding his head in return. “Your Grace.” He said, dismissing himself. He exchanged another look silently with Tyrion one last time before he turns and ready to leave the common hall.

Arya watched as Jon slowly walks away before she turns to Daenerys instead. The young woman can’t even begin to describe how relieved she feels the meeting had turn out. Truthfully, she had the tiniest doubt that the meeting would turn sour somehow. But, everyone seems to be taking it well. As well as any other Lannister, Stark and Targaryen involved that is. She gifted another honest smile at the older woman, trying to convey how much she appreciated her effort which only soon becomes her ogling unashamedly at the Targaryen Queen. Though Arya guess Daenerys doesn’t mind the attention, given that her purple eyes shine with unspoken tenderness.

“Arya, are you coming?” Jon called over his shoulder from the archway. His brows furrowed as he regards his little sister’s stationary state.

The said young woman blinks a few times before she registers that her brother is expecting her presence. “Oh, right.” Arya mumbles awkwardly. “I should go.” She said softly to the older woman, reluctant clearly showing on her features.

Daenerys smiles fondly at the adorable look. “You should.” She concurs.

Arya let out a sigh before nodding her head in agreement. As she finally closed in to her brother, she takes one last look over her shoulder to find that Daenerys is still watching her closely and the warmth in her chest only doubled.

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It takes Arya a walk back to her room with Jon that she remembered they will be leaving for Winterfell on the morrow at first sunlight. When her brother continues to tell her how he and the others were living in Winterfell for the past six years was like, Arya listened wholeheartedly but sometimes she can’t help but to think about the limited time she had left until they leave. It was much later when her brother are fast asleep on her bed – which she took a few times convincing for him to finally lay on – that she sneaks out of her room and decides to try fulfilling her promises.

The now dark sky were lit with stars and of the full moon as the young woman strides along the dark alleyway, trying to recreate the path that The Waif might have taken. She hopes that she can find anything of Missandei before they left for good. But, judging by the lack of discovery she had for the past hours, her hopes are only thinning out.

The former assassin let out a sigh as she rounds up the corner of the emptied local tavern down at White Harbor. This was useless, she thought grudgingly for the second time. The Waif would never venture out so far in the villages to be rid of a body as it would only take a lot of hassle. Arya remembered her own experienced in the Frey’s residence another lifetime ago. After killing both Walder Frey’s sons, she simply cut them into tiny bits before making a pie out of them. That way the evidence of the bodies conveniently perished. It was only fitting that she should consider that alternative as well for this particular incident. But, the thought of Missandei being treated more or less the same only makes her stomach knots.

Another sigh escapes her then. Her legs are starting to hurt from the fruitless rounds she made in every part of the villages and harbour. Deciding that she will never find what she’s looking for, Arya trailed her way back to the castle, trying her luck there instead.

She walks pass the hallway that leads to a certain dragon queen with much difficulty. Her sore limbs are calling for rest and the queen’s chamber is naturally calling for her. Arya wonders if the older woman is already asleep or is she still awake, waiting for her presence. The thoughts of Daenerys warm body around her own as they lay together last time almost made her took a detour to the room. Almost.

The young woman keeps to her intended course and enters the hallway that leads to Missandei’s room instead. She stops abruptly when she notices that there are Unsullied guards stationed outside the Naathi’s former room. Wondering what the purpose of them guarding an empty room, Arya carefully advance towards them. The two guards glance to her direction after noticing her presence and simply give her a curt nod in greetings. Arya returns the favor and proceed to enter the room then.

The back of a woman enters her vision as soon as she let herself in. When a pair of shining violet eyes caught her gaze, Arya instantly knows why the guards are outside. Both women only stare at each other silently before Daenerys let out a small smile.

“Shouldn’t you be sleeping?” the dragon queen greets. Arya slowly walks further inside the room and closer towards Daenerys then.

“I could ask you the same thing.” The young woman replied.

They didn’t need an answer though as they know exactly the reason why they’re here in the once occupied room.

Daenerys looks away as she reaches for an abandon handkerchief on the bedside table. Her purple eyes are glaze over with regrets as she stares at the small clothes around her hand. Arya wonders if it once belongs to Missandei. “I told Grey Worm to stop the search.” Daenerys speaks up suddenly. “I need him and the Unsullied to march South and be ready when we join them after the visit to
Winterfell.” She explains looking forlorn.

The young woman contemplates on what to say at that. She wants to console and wrap her arms around Daenerys tightly if it can release the older woman out of her misery. Arya only manages a step closer.

“You should’ve seen his face… He looks devastated when I gave the order. And as always, worthy of his Commander title, he complies with my wishes without argument… I wished he didn’t though. I wished he asked for more time to find Missandei, because I would– I could at least give him that.” Daenerys said as she moves to sit down on the edge of the bed. Her head down as she stares at her tightly clasped hands on her lap.

Again Arya wanted to say something comforting and soothing to the older woman. She wanted to be like any normal person would when their loved ones are grieving and mourning, but unconsciously only her feet move closer.

Daenerys looks up then having notice Arya’s advance. “We’re not going to find Missandei either way, are we?”

The young woman froze as she looks upon Daenerys pleading eyes. The older woman is practically begging for Arya to say otherwise and Arya wants to at least do that if it means it can ease Daenerys hurting. But, she doesn’t want to give the older woman a false hope.

“No. I’m sorry… We’re not.” Arya said softly.

A mirthless chuckle escapes Daenerys then as she looks away. “Couldn’t you at least lie to me?” A single tear roll down her cheek as she asked.

Arya clenched her jaw as she stares at the offended tear. She had never seen the dragon queen openly cried before. She decides she hated it. Her own hand seems to have a mind of its own as it gently grab the older woman’s chin, guiding her to look up at grey eyes again. “I would never lie to you. Not about this.” Arya declares as her fingers efficiently wipe away the tears that managed to escape the violet eyes.

Daenerys closes her eyes as she leans further at the touch. A small smile pulls at her lips as she sighed tiredly. “I know.”

But the smile is gone as fast as it arrives when the dragon queen went silent. Her features turn to one of pain and Arya panicked at the sudden change. She pulls away almost immediately, afraid that she had overstepped her boundaries but Daenerys is faster as she leans forward instead. She rests her head onto Arya’s middle, after pulling the young woman close and grabbing at her attire in a tight hold, efficiently stopping her from moving away.

Arya’s body immediately goes rigid at the intimate action. She looks down to find only the crown of Daenerys head that is visible as the older woman buries her face onto her middle. If not for the slight shaking of Daenerys shoulders, Arya wouldn’t know that the dragon queen is actually crying. Even her sob sounded like she’s holding back. The young woman can only guess how much this means to Daenerys for her to let her emotion on display.

It was awkward at least for Arya as the older woman seems to be so still while crying her hearts out. Arya’s hands slowly reached upward to hold onto the back of Daenerys head. Gently, she caresses the silver-haired lock and massaging her scalp in attempt to ease the older woman’s tension. A soft sob escapes instead and Arya continues her caress, not stopping once even though her hands are gradually starting to ache from the awkward angle. As the sobs are getting more pronounced by the
minute, Arya wonders if Daenerys at least feels better at having properly mourned the deaths of her loved ones. Arya can’t help but to wonder if the reason she felt so terrible is because she has not.

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True to his words, Jon and his group were ready for departure at the first sunlight the next day. They were currently preparing for the last minute once-over before the group is ready to finally depart. Jon passes the rein of one of the horses to Arya as he gifted her a small smile before he moves on to Lord Wyman, officially saying his goodbye.

Arya turns her attention to her horse then. It was a beautiful male stallion with brown chestnut as its coat and long light grey mane that almost looks white if you look from a distance. As she strokes its neck in a rhythmic manner, her eyes unconsciously stray around the busy courtyard to find Daenerys.

Her mind wanders off to last night as they spend the night together in Missandei’s appointed room. They had gathered all Missandei’s belonging later that night and decided to throw a small ceremony for the Naathi early at dawn. Arya doesn’t know why Daenerys even bother to do that. Missandei is still gone whether they had a proper service or not. There is nothing that can change that horrendous fact. But, the young woman kept her silence as they moves towards the shore, armed with things that once were of used to a certain Naathi. Grey Worm, Jorah and Tyrion and a few others that knew the older woman were there as they gave the last farewell to their friend, companion and lover.

As Arya chance a glance to her side, Daenerys was staring ahead at the ocean where the small boat that carried Missandei’s belonging drifted further away from them. The violet eyes looks upon the vast sea with strong and firm gaze that Arya almost doesn’t remember that they were once broken and dejected only a few hours ago. It was only then that the young woman realized this funeral was more for the sake of the living than the dead.

“Ready, little sister?” Jon’s voice brought her back to the present. She turns her head to her brother then.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.” she replies with a small smile.

“Are you sure you don’t need help getting up?” he asked with a smirk.

Arya narrowed her eyes as she regards Jon who is unusually being chirpy this early morning. “Have you perhaps forgotten who beats your ass constantly in horse races when we were younger?” She asked with a smirk of her own.

“Of course not… but, with those years away, you might be the one that forgets how to ride one.” He answered with a shrug.

Arya let out a huff then, clearly not impressed. She made a move to the horse side and inspects the saddle that is on it. Finding it perfectly attached to the back of the horse, she lifts one of her feet to secure the stirrup and grab a hold of the reins and its mane with her left hand and her right hand on the saddle at the same time. She springs herself upward with her other leg and gently settle into the saddle. She looks down to Jon then. “Does that satisfy your curiosity of my competency, Jon?” she asked mockingly with a grin.

Jon let out a chuckle as he shakes his head. “Show off.” He mumbles under his breath.

“Apologize dear brother, but I cannot hear you from this high up… perhaps you could speaks louder?” Arya asked again, looking down as her grin grows.
Jon rolls his eyes at that before he decides to ignore his sister and move on to his own horse. Arya watches silently as her brother gave the last orders to his men before he mounts his own horse. With the added advantage of heights, the young woman takes the chance to properly take a look around the courtyard to find her favorite person.

A few moments later, she notices a flash of silver hair from the back of the group. Daenerys is walking with her head held high as she regards her soldiers that consists both the Unsullied and Dothrakis. Jorah and Tyrion are by her side respectively with Yara Greyjoy at her back. A dozen Ironborn is trailing close behind their Captain.

When the royal group is finally at the front of the one hundred groups of soldiers, Jorah passes the rein that he got from a stable boy to Daenerys then, and the dragon queen wastes no time in mounting her horse gracefully. The moment she did, the purple eyes instantly caught grey ones. Arya studies the Targaryen Queen dutifully as she looks her over trying to find any discomfort. Daenerys seems to know Arya’s intention even from a distance as she let out a smile in assurance. Satisfied, the young woman returns the smile before she turns around and trots towards Jon at the fore front. The thoughts of Jorah, Yara and one hundreds of soldiers guarding Daenerys ease her mind as she rides her horse at Jon’s side. Her brother glanced towards her one last time before he guides them out of New Castle’s gate.

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It was early dusk later that day when they finally decide to settle and raise up tents. Though, Jon seems reluctant by the idea, wanting to arrive to Winterfell as fast as he can, he gives in once he looks over his shoulder and saw how tired the soldiers who are on foot were, having to travel all the way without a means of transport. Arya was glad that they have the night off. That means she can ease her thoughts of seeing her remaining family again. She doesn’t know why every time they get closer to Winterfell, her gut keeps churning and doing somersaults. If Jon accepts her with open heart, surely Robb, Mother and Rickon will do the same, won’t they?

That same doubts and concern keeps lingering inside her mind along the journey. It doesn’t help when she can’t even ride beside Daenerys, having to maintain their distance. The young woman doesn’t know if the action of being close to the Targaryen Queen is something that she should do or could do. She doesn’t know if Daenerys would mind being seen together with her openly, with Jon and all these men close by.

Hell, Arya doesn’t know what they even are at the moment.

Sure, they kissed and share the same bed and even share their feelings for each other. But, what does that even mean? The young woman hadn’t had a clue at all.

Arya absent-mindlessly pet her horse as it eats away the hay that she brought. The familiar sound of people doing about their business buzz around her ears as they move along to their respective task. A sudden familiar laughter snaps her attention then. She looks over her shoulder and found a group of three men are hurdling around the building fire at the clearing. As Arya narrows her eyes to see better, she recognized the pale blond hair of Tyrion and then Jon who is sitting on a makeshift chair from a bark of tree.

The young woman blinks as she takes the strange sightings of Jon laughing, joining Tyrion. She decides to investigate and walks away from her horse then. Nearing them, only then she realizes the third man is actually Jorah who is sitting beside Tyrion across from Jon. When the Lannister dwarf passed around a bottle which could hold suspicious content, not before pouring onto his own cup, Arya let out a chuckle.
Of course only Tyrion would manage to put aside their differences with a glass of alcohol. Arya remembered her own time with the dwarf in the Great Pyramid of Meereen as he used the same method to lose their tension then. She was about to leave them be when a flash of silver caught her eyes.

Daenerys was pouring the wine to her own cup after she had taken it from Jon who sits beside her. The older woman is listening intently to what Jon has to say now. Arya’s brows furrowed on its own as she takes in the sight.

_Since when are they friends now?_ She thoughts bitterly.

Her feet move on its own accord and before she knows it, she was there with them. Daenerys notices the young woman first followed by Jon and the others.

“Ah, Princess Arya…care to join us?” It was Tyrion who speaks but Arya doesn’t even glance at him, having her gazes fully locked on violet ones.

“And got drunk? No, thank you, Lord Tyrion.” She said, perhaps a little too cold to her liking. She blamed the cold Northern air for that.

Daenerys raised a brow with a slight upturned of her mouth as she regards the young woman in question.

“Take a sit Arya, we’re only having a cup. I purchased this fine gold arbor a few moons ago… and only get the chance to share it today.” A new voice sounded then. Arya tear her gaze away to find Yara is also there, sitting beside the dragon queen with a smirk.

The young woman blinks hard as she registered another presence beside Daenerys. Arya clears her throat forcefully trying to regain her control. Silently, she moves to take a sit beside Tyrion then. The dwarf happily pours the wine to another empty cup before giving it to her. She thanked him and takes the first sip, ignoring the questioning gaze from Jon and the knowing look from Daenerys.

“We were just talking about you.” Tyrion speaks up again. Arya looks to her side to find mismatch orbs looking at her.

“I beg your pardon.”

“We were talking about your assassination…the one that my sister and brother planned?” Tyrion asked casually as if he’s asking about her favorite dish.

Arya swallows the bitter taste of the wine. She had a feeling that this will lead to uncomfortable memories. “What about it?” she asked back.

“Your lord brother here keeps denying that he had anything to do with how well you were handling yourself with a sword as a child.” Tyrion explains.

Arya looks over to Jon then as he speaks. “It’s true… The only thing I remembered teaching Arya is how to swing a wooden sword properly. We hadn’t had much time to actually train. Her Lady Mother was constantly on my neck and hers every day. And even when we did find a way to escape, I only trained her basics of swordplay.” Jon answered then.

Tyrion takes a sip before he said. “Which is why, I find it odd when I had the chance to inspect the dead assassin.” He changed his gaze to the young woman then. “His body were filled with holes and slashes from a smaller knife which I assume were yours… The cut was precise and deliberate as if he’s against a professional killer. It was peculiar and till this day, the thoughts keep bugging my
head.” He explains.

Silence envelops them all as Tyrion’s last words hung heavy in the air. Arya tries her hardest to remain stoic as she stares at every face present. She lingers at violet eyes for a moment as the older woman’s eyes seem to spark with something akin to recognition.

Arya instantly looks away then. “I got lucky.” She shrugs, sipping her drink as she finds Jon’s eyes. “Besides, Jon is being modest. You were a great teacher regardless how lack our training were.” The young woman continues, finding mismatched orbs then. “And, when someone tried to kill you, you’ll be surprised to find how capable you truly are with your life hanging by the thread.”

Tyrion only hummed in response, not looking quite convinced himself. “My head was nearly cut in half if you hadn’t stepped in at the right moment. As I remembered quite clearly, I wasn’t able to defend myself at all…shitting myself, surely.” He chuckled earning a few snickers from the group.

Arya proceeds to sip her drink then, trying to hide her discomfort. She looks up to find Daenerys looks pass her in a frown. But, after a moment, the violet orbs instantly locks into grey ones again, having notice the attention. Arya doesn’t know why she felt exposed at the gesture, but she did.

The conversation seems to move pass the topic of her assassination and onto one of dead men shitting themselves. Arya decides to tune out the rest of the conversation as she emptied her cup and excused herself to tend to her horse. Without waiting for a reply, she was up and away from the group and the warmth of fire. She takes a detour to the woods, walking slowly as she hears a different step behind her. The person didn’t even bother to hide their following as their boots noisily crunch against the twigs and dried leaves.

“You put your horse deep in the woods?” the familiar voice sounded then. Arya stops her track and turns around to find Daenerys not far from her.

“What?”

“You said you wanted to tend to your horse?” the older woman asked again with a raised brow.

Arya shrugs then. “I’ll do it later.” She answered nonchalantly, trying to hide her nervousness.

But, it doesn’t seem to do well with the older woman as her gaze keep studied Arya inside and out. The young woman turns around then and proceeds to walk away, deciding to further the distance between the questioning gaze.

“Can we talk?” Daenerys shouts from behind as she followed the young woman, trying hard to keep up the pace.

“I’m actually quite busy…perhaps we can find another time to have that talk.” Arya called back over her shoulder, speeding up in return.

Daenerys let out a huff of annoyance - knowing fully well that the young woman was far from being busy - as she sprints forward instead. Her hand managed to grab Arya’s arm and in an instant, she turns the said woman around, putting a stop to her escaping. “Arya, we need to talk.” Daenerys said more firmly, holding her gaze until the young woman squirms uncomfortably.

Arya let out a defeated sigh then. “Fine…what is it?” she asked calmly, though her insides are the exact opposites and she had a feeling of what the dragon queen wanted to talk about. Her thoughts are proved right when Daenerys released her hold and speaks again.

“You’ve never told me about the attempt assassination on you when you're just a child.” She
inquired, waiting for the young woman to continue.

“You never asked.” Arya answered, which only earned her a glare from the older woman before Daenerys continues.

“What Tyrion said about the killer—"

“Tyrion doesn’t know what he’s saying.” Arya interrupts then, feeling a little irritated.

Silence engulfs them both at the sudden outburst. Daenerys held her gaze unperturbed by the growing irritation from the young woman. Seconds turn to minutes as they stand there without words coming out from neither one.

Arya released a tired sigh then as she looks away. “Can we not talk about this?” she doesn’t want to experience another fall out after having to explain the actual reason of how she managed to kill her assassin. The first time she tried to explain about the time travel, the dragon queen doesn’t believe her and Arya only ended up shattering her own hope. The last thing she wants is for that to happen the second time. She looks towards Daenerys again. “I miss you.” She said honestly instead, trying for a change of topic.

Daenerys eyes instantly soften at the remark. She moves closer towards the young woman then. “I’m here.”

“I know… and I still miss you, awfully.” Arya said back, almost whining.

Daenerys let out a smile as she proceeds to close in further. They’re only separated by inches apart now. “Even if I’m here?” she asked with a raised brow.

Arya only hummed in response. “It still isn’t enough, I’m afraid.”

Daenerys lifts her arms upward then, wrapping them around Arya’s neck as their noses touch each other. “How about this then?” she inquired with a teasing smile.

Arya let out a grin as she inhaled the sweet smell of lavender. “Not quite…but I’ll settle for this.” She answered unashamedly.

“Good…this way we can continue our talk then.” Daenerys said back earning her a groan from the young woman.

“There’s nothing to talk about, Daenerys... Let it go.” Arya pleads, wanting to move away, but the older woman’s hold on her neck only tightens. Great, now she truly can’t get away.

“You shouldn’t say that... It’ll only make me want to do the exact opposite.” Daenerys answered as she pulls away from Arya’s face, though her arms are still securely in place.

The umpteenth sigh escapes Arya for that day as she closes her eyes, relishing the warmth of their bodies press together. She could at least enjoy this.

“Arya, I know the last time you tried telling me about your story, it went horribly…” Daenerys trails and Arya opens her eyes. “But, I promised I’ll listen this time. Can you tell me about your...time travelling again?” she hesitates the last words, feeling slightly disbelief at the meaning it holds.

The young woman searched the violet eyes that are inches apart from her own and found nothing but earnest in them. Perhaps the second time is a charm. Unconsciously, her own hands move upward to Daenerys hips before she finally relents and nods her consent.
“Thank you.” The older woman breathes out. “So, previously back on the ship, you said you were a Faceless Man in another lifetime before you come back to live in this one... Is that how you managed to best your assassin even though you’re only but a child? You knew he was coming after you?” she inquired.

Ever since Daenerys heard what Tyrion had to say about Arya’s attempt assassination, she can’t help but to think about what the young woman had said to her a while ago. As her Hand said, not just anyone can defeat a full grown assassin, let alone a child. That is why as Daenerys tries to find a justification to solve the riddle, she only came up with one; that Arya somehow got lucky – as the young woman claimed herself. But, then Daenerys recalled the first time she met the young woman in Qazlas Pit and how well the girl fights and managed to survive against the other bigger and stronger fighters all those time being locked away. *Luck* is certainly not the answer. This is why she had come to this implausible reason instead.

Arya managed a nod then. “Yes. It is as you said. I led two different life in two different timelines. The first was with me being a Faceless and the second, with being a slave fighter... And yes, I sort of knew what was going to happen and was ready for the assassin then.” She finished and waits for the inevitable.

“You knew what was going to happen...” Daenerys mumbles quietly more to herself than to the young woman. Disbelief coloring her features. ”But, how does that even possible? How do you even manage to travel back into the past?”

“I stopped asking that question a long time ago.”

A beat passes before Daenerys let out a mirthless chuckle. “This is insane... Absolutely maddening.”

“It is.” Arya concurs as she watched the older woman’s eyes busy taking all the information. She waits patiently for the dragon queen to say something else. The silence lasted a definite while longer before violet eyes finally shifts their attention onto grey ones again.

“Does this mean you’re older than me, then?” Daenerys asked suddenly, frowning.

Arya blinks hard as she let the question sinks. She certainly had not expected the older woman to accept this so easily, least of all that kind of question from her. Arya can’t help but to let out a laugh then. “I have the knowledge of the past and the possible future and yet my age is of importance to you?” she asked incredulously.

“Well, this is as significant as everything else, mind you. I have the right to know if I’ve been snogging with an elderly woman.” Daenerys defends herself.

Arya snorts at that. All the tension melts away as she wraps her hands firmer around the older woman’s hips. “The only thing that aged is my mind and my experience... I’m proud to say that all the other parts of my body remain to be in its prime state of a young woman.” She said in defiance.

“Oh, do they now?” Daenerys trails with a building smirk. “Perhaps you could let me see then? Just to fulfill my curious heart.” she said, looking back with a seductive gaze.

Arya was about to answer when she finally registered the words from the dragon queen. She swallows a lump nervously as her mouth suddenly dried up. “Um...well, I don’t—I don’t know if that...we should—we should probably head back. It’s getting late.” She stutters and curses herself inwardly at how stupid it sounds. She can feel her face heats up by the second. The playful stare from the Targaryen Queen only makes it worse.
Daenerys hummed in response. “Yes... We probably should.” She agrees but not actually showing any signs to move.

They end up staying in each other’s arms for a little while longer. The silence accompanies them as the two use the moment to take in each other’s features. Arya decides she doesn't mind if she’s lost and drowned by the violet depths in front of her even for eternity. Something must have shown up in her face because the dragon queen suddenly flashed a gentle smile.

“What?” Arya wondered.

Daenerys gives a light shake then. “Nothing... I'm just marveling at how beautiful the young woman in front of me is.” She said still plastered with a smile.

Not expected to hear that reason, Arya felt her face heat up further at the sudden compliment. Beautiful is the last word she would use to describe herself. But, clearly Daenerys doesn’t have the same opinion. She looks away then, trying to regain a bit of her dignity.

“I’m sorry I didn’t believe you before.” the dragon queen speaks again and Arya looks to the older woman then. Her smile gone now replaced by a thin line instead. Her eyes convey of one that is regret.

Arya smiles in assurance. “It’s fine… I had a hard time of believing it myself, sometimes.”

A light chuckle left Daenerys as she leans forward, resting her forehead against the young woman. It was only for a while before the dragon queen finally removes her arms around Arya’s neck and steps away. The young woman tries not to show how unhappy she was at the sudden separation, and kept her silence. When Daenerys takes her right hand into hers, intertwining their fingers together, Arya feels slightly better. She let the older woman guides her through the now darkening forest as they head back to camp.

They were only at a few steps before something caught Arya’s ears. The sound of light clatter of hooves and crunching leaves and twigs are closing towards them in growing speed. In an instant, her feet stop moving as she tries to listen better.

Daenerys ends up stopping too at the sudden halt. She looks over her shoulder to find the young woman is looking pass her with a frown.

“Something the matter?” the dragon queen asked as she moves closer. But Arya only stares ahead, unresponsive. Daenerys tugs lightly their intertwining hands then, trying to gauge a reaction making the young woman snaps her attention towards her again.

Arya was about to say something when a sudden growl rendered her from doing so. Both of them snap their heads at the direction to find a figure slowly coming out from the shadows of trees. The flash of its long canine teeth is the first thing that Arya sees before she takes in its form as it stops advancing and regards them with a threatening growl. Unconsciously, Arya steps forward, bridging herself between the predator and the dragon queen.

It was unmistakably a wolf that is standing in front of them. Her fist tightens as she works silently inside her head on how to get away from the wild creature. But, her thoughts sway when another wolf decides to emerge not far from her left side then. And then another from her right. And then another from behind her. Before Arya can barely take a breath, they were surrounded by a pack of wolves. She curses inwardly as she doesn’t even have a weapon on her person at this moment. She can feel Daenerys stiffen up from behind her as the beasts circled them with hungry eyes and ready to pounce at moment notice.
Arya thought nothing could get worse than this but when Daenerys let out a gasp, the young woman turns around to find they are face to face with a giant wolf that is exceptionally massive than the others that she had to tilt her head up to really look at it. Even its snouts and canine teeth are larger and deadlier. But, Arya was so entranced by its shimmering dark golden eyes to actually take notice of its feral behavior. She can’t help the building smile of disbelief as she regards the beast, no, the direwolf.

“Nymeria?”
*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Arya can’t believe what her eyes are seeing right now. It has been six long years since she last saw Nymeria in this lifetime. The direwolf had only been as big as a fully grown hound then but now, she was exceptionally larger, perhaps even larger than Ghost. Arya moves forward without hesitation, marvelling at how impressive Nymeria looked. A grin plastered on the young Stark’s face and if anyone was to look at her, they would probably think she was crazy, advancing to the beast without the care in the world with a stupid smile pulling on her lips. Fortunately for Arya, someone else was indeed there with her at the moment. She felt her left arm being secured in a tight grip as the person yanked her backwards away from the feral animal, keeping a safe distance.

“Arya, what are you doing?” Daenerys practically hissed the words at the young woman’s ear. The dragon queen keeps her gaze locked at the direwolf as her body tense further.

Arya turns around then getting back to her senses. “It’s alright Daenerys… This is Nymeria.” She explains, unable to wipe off the grin.

The dragon queen looks at Arya like she made no sense. Frowning, she shakes her head lightly waiting for the young woman to explain further.

“This is Nymeria.” Arya said again. “She’s my direwolf.”

At the last words, Nymeria let out another vicious growl before she jumps over the boulder she was previously on, landing gracefully on the ground – despite her big frame – in front of the two women. Arya and Daenerys instantly stumble backwards at the sudden advance and proximity.
“Why do I have a feeling that Nymeria doesn’t like you calling her yours?” Daenerys asked not really expecting an answer.

Arya’s smile fell completely at the remark. Unease starts to creep inside her as she takes a really good look at the direwolf. Nymeria still bared its long and sharp teeth at them, her stance is one of that is ready to pounce and end her prey. And Arya realized that is exactly what the direwolf regards them as. Her prey. When Nymeria’s dark golden eyes change its direction towards the dragon queen, her paws moves forward as if to take her down, making Daenerys backed away instinctively.

Arya doesn’t let the direwolf have the chance to attack though, as she shields Daenerys with her own body then. She clenched her jaw tight as she regards her long lost companion. “Nymeria, stop.” She called, holding her gaze.

Nymeria’s growl only grew louder, and Arya is sure she could sense the irritation coming off from the direwolf. As if on cue, the wolves’ pack moves closer towards them, making their circle smaller and entrapping them further.

The young Stark swallowed a lump forcefully as she regards the direwolf again. “Nymeria, it’s me… Arya.” she tries for the second time, holding her palms up in the air seeking an understanding.

Mentioning her own name must have done something because Nymeria’s golden eyes flicker to her grey ones then and Arya waits a few tense moments as they studied each other silently. When the growl lowered and was completely gone, the young woman starts to move forward in attempt to sooth the direwolf completely.

But, before the young Stark can do that, the Targaryen Queen quickly interrupts. “Arya, no.” she called out desperately breaking the calmness as she yanked the girl backwards again.

That does it for Nymeria as she shifts her attention to the dragon queen with a snarl, followed by the wolves pack starting to growl again.

Arya snaps her head behind her, addressing the older woman. “Just stay still, Daenerys… Don’t worry, Nymeria won’t hurt me.” She assured.

Daenerys opens her mouth to argue but decided against it when the grey eyes in front of her send a pleading and quite convincing look that makes her mouth snaps shut in acceptance. Frowning, she gives the young woman a curt nod and decides to let Arya be. Her concerns for the well-being of the young Stark only deteriorate from this point on and Daenerys wished that she could be the one that protects the girl for a change.

Finding the consent of the dragon queen and believing that Daenerys will not try to engage herself in the exchange that Arya was about to do, she turns ahead to Nymeria again. The direwolf is still snarling at the silver haired queen and the only thing that is stopping the creature from advancing and ripped the older woman apart is herself, as she is practically blocking its path.

Calmly, Arya takes a step towards her long lost companion then. “Nymeria.” She calls carefully again. When the said beast snaps its head at her, she continues. “Come now girl, it’s only me… Arya.” She pauses and Nymeria’s growl ebbs away as her golden eyes find greys again. “I’m going home to Winterfell. Do you want to come home with me?” she finished and waited expectantly.

They could have been at it for hours as Arya’s gaze softens and Nymeria returns with one of her timid look that the young woman remembered watching and adoring when she was a child and Nymeria a pup. A smile is beginning to form at her lips as she felt the familiar change in the direwolf. “Come home with me, Nym.” She said, pleading now.
But, before Nymeria can formulate any kind of answer, a loud shriek interrupts their moments. Arya turns around so fast that it was a miracle she didn’t pull a muscle as her breath caught in her throat. She mutters a few obscenities when a large black-red winged beast makes an appearance. Another louder shriek came out from Drogon as he lands himself exceptionally close than Arya would have liked on the ground. He doesn’t care that he didn’t have any clearing around the area and the trees end up being the victim as it breaks in awkward angle at the weight the dragon inflicted.

Arya shifts her attention to the older woman then. “Daenerys, why is Drogon here? Did you call him?” she asked desperately.

The dragon queen is still looking up at her dragon with a surprised look for a moment before she turns to seek grey ones. “No, I did not.” She replied.

Drogon immediately let out a snarl as he regards the wolf pack that has retreated behind Nymeria. The direwolf doesn’t let the action intimidating her as she let out her threatening growl instead. That seems to spark the other wolves as they imitate their leader. The tension was so thick in the air that Arya could slice it with a knife. But, unfortunately for her, she doesn’t own a knife, a dagger or any kind of weapon at the moment to protect Daenerys and herself from the possible clash of the beasts.

Arya looks to the older woman again, restraining not to move that much, afraid that the slightest action will trigger a fight to break out. “Daenerys, tell Drogon to leave. He’s only making it worse.”

Daenerys looks at her with a frown. “He’s only trying to protect me, Arya.” she reasoned, sounding bitter.

Arya let out a huff of annoyance then. “I have the situation under control before your dragon came flew in without warning.”

Daenerys narrows her eyes, not impress. “Well, Drogon must have sensed my discomfort when your direwolf intends to maim me just a moment ago.”

“I stopped that from happening, did I not? Nymeria won’t hurt you… Now, please tell Drogon to leave.”

Daenerys was about to speak up again when another vicious growl comes out from Nymeria then. Both women can only stared wide eyes as the direwolf moves its paw out, advancing. Arya immediately stands in its way, spreading her arms wide apart. “Nymeria, no.” her voice sounded loud to her ears even though Drogon was snarling back, as if to challenge the direwolf. The young Stark suddenly feels warm and can feel the beginning of sweat at the back of her neck.

“Drogon, iōragon ilagon.” Daenerys shouts firmly, making Arya turns her head to the direction.

When her grey eyes caught sight of the glowing fire from the dragon’s mouth that soon subsides after the dragon queen shouting, Arya cusses under her breath. If she let it go on any longer, Nymeria would start to attack without a care if its opponent is a breathing-fire dragon. And, it doesn’t need a wise mind to figure out which one will end up in pile of ashes.

At the exact moment, Nymeria bristles further after that and the young woman reckon the direwolf had interpret that act from the dragon as the first offense when she suddenly starts advancing again. It happens so fast that Arya doesn’t even realize her body had move. When Nymeria dashes forward with its jaw open, ready to rip Drogon apart, Arya bolts towards the direwolf, not really thinking what she was doing.

Later, when she jumps onto Nymeria and they end up topple down the ground and Arya finds the
sudden pain that course through her right arm, only did she realized what had happened. She heard Daenerys shouting as her body rolls over the ground with the additional weight. A whimper escapes her when she come to a stop, sending another wave of pain on her right arm as she ends up kneeling on the ground with her arms securely held around the direwolf, successfully stopping its advance.

“Arya!” Daenerys voice sounded again, more desperately this time.

The young woman forces her eyes to open then. The first thing she sees is the grey fur of the direwolf as her face is practically buried under the soft and warm furs. When Arya pulls her face away, she founds that one of her arm is around Nymeria’s neck and another is between its jaws. She swallows a lump as she finally realized where the pain was coming from. The young woman didn’t have time to examine her injury when the older woman calls her name again, distrest clearly sounded in her tone.

Arya tilts her head to find the silver haired queen then and found that the older woman is still where she last stand. Drogon’s massive form loomed behind her. “I’m fine.” She croaked. “Daenerys, I’m fine. Tell Drogon to leave, now…before something worse happened.” She said again, pleased that her voice came out strong the second time.

The silence is deafening to the young Stark’s ears as she waits patiently for the dragon queen to act.

“A drogon.” Daenerys starts, swallowing down bile at the image of the young woman injured form. She held her chin up to the dragon. “Ziry iksos syz. Kesan daar sagon ödrikagon. Henujagon.” She commands, displaying all her confidence she could muster.

The black-red dragon regards Daenerys with a tilt of its head for a moment before it let out a huff of air and spreads out its wings and finally flew off as per instructed. The dragon queen let out a breath as she watched Drogon’s form grew smaller in the darkening sky. She turns ahead to the kneeling girl again, finding her much in the same state, with the direwolf’s sharp teeth sunk onto her flesh. “Arya.” she calls hesitantly at her frozen state. Even the direwolf is perfectly still.

“I’m alright Daenerys. Don’t come near me yet… I don’t want to scare off Nymeria.” Arya said back, calmly.

Daenerys can’t help as mirthless chuckle escapes her, disbelief at the young woman’s choice of words. “You don’t want to scare off Nymeria?” she echoes back incredulously. Before she can retort with another remark about the girl and her now bleeding arm, the said girl interrupts.

“Daenerys, please… I need you to trust me.”

The silver haired queen bite the inside of her own cheek, reluctantly agrees at the request as she held her advance towards them.

Hearing no other argument from Daenerys, Arya focuses her attention towards Nymeria again. The direwolf was unbelievably silent as her golden eyes finally found her grey ones. Arya tries to move her arm then from its long canine teeth that have sunk deep into her flesh, but she ends up seeing black spots at the movement, sending sharp cold pain over her body. A quiet whimper escapes her in response which Nymeria ends up mirroring. Arya felt worse at that sound.

“Hush now, girl… It’s alright.” She coos, landing her face on Nymeria’s soft furs, suddenly feeling exhausted. She let out a chuckle as the silence grows. “This is not how I dream of meeting you…” she trails. “And I’ve dream of you many times before since I lost you. I’ve missed you, Nymeria.” She admits with a sigh.
A beat passes as Nymeria relaxes – as relax as she can be with an arm between her mouths – though, only slightly. Deciding that the direwolf is less distressed now, Arya clenches her jaw and straighten her shoulder as she tries to move her right arm again. Nymeria seems to understand the notion and opens her jaws moderately, making space. The young woman takes the chance to carefully take out her arm then. She stifles a scream as her flesh slides away from the sharp teeth, letting out a grunt instead.

The wound from the now open flesh bleeds out as there is nothing that stops them. Instinctively, Arya cradles her bleeding arm to her chest, as she stumbles backward and ends up sitting on the ground. She tries to even her breathing as she stares at the large bite mark over her torn sleeves. The crimson blood is trailing down to her cloths and is beginning to soil the ground. With the adrenaline now gone, she can feel every stab of the open wounds and how much it truly hurts.

“Arya!” another familiar voice sounded then. She looks over her shoulder to find Jon and his men running towards her and Daenerys.

Speaking of Daenerys, the young woman almost forgot about the silver haired queen. She glanced towards the older woman then and was greeted by the sight of Daenerys horror looks as she sprints forward. Arya wanted to ask the dragon queen what else could possibly horrified her but her head is heavy and is already plummeting to the ground as her body soon follows. At the corner of her eyes, she sees Nymeria fled along with her pack and then Ghost running after her before the violet eyes replaced them.

Daenerys mouth is moving, Arya noted. But, strangely she can’t make out what the older woman was saying. She focuses onto Daenerys purple eyes instead that seem too distraught and worried for some reason. The violet eyes are still quite exceptional despite it all and Arya wished she could stay lost in her favourite colour for a little while longer, but the black spots she keeps seeing only intensifies and soon it overthrows everything else.

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It was considerably warmer than Arya remembered she was last being as she slowly regains her bearing. She could feel her sore limbs and aching muscle are less agonizing than before as she settles comfortably on the bed that she’s lying. She could even ignore the murmurs that are floating around her as she tries to find a more comfortable position to further settle in the strange calmness. But, the tranquility shatters when she tries to shift her body at an angle, sending a sharp piercing pain through her right arm, making her groan pathetically. She didn’t even care that she sounded pitiful as the excruciating pain overwhelms her and tries to swallow her whole. The murmurs floating around grow more prominent and Arya swears she could hear her favourite voice among them calling her name. She wanted to answer back and opens her eyes but the discomfort over her right arm strikes again and she only managed another grunt.

“She’s in pain. Do something!” a desperate voice which sounded a lot like Jon resonates clearly then.

“M’lord, I’ve stitch her up the best I can. Perhaps the milk of poppy could do the rest?” another foreign voice answered.

A beat of silence passes before Arya heard the rustle of movement and then it was replaced by someone reaching for her neck. She let out another grunt, more of an annoyance for being manhandled than anything. When something was pressed against her closed lips, she musters up her energy into pushing it away with her good hand.

“I don’t want that.” She croaked with her eyes still shut.
Somehow, it seems to do the trick when the person who attempted to mouth feed her puts her back down.

“Are you awake, little sister?” Jon asked. His voice sounded on edge and so close to her ears. Even though Arya can’t see him, she could imagine the worried look of his face.

Arya groan in response before trying to utter the words again. “I don’t need the milk of poppy.” She said with finality. She had gone through a lot worse than this and although a direwolf’s bite is among the top injuries she had adorned, the young Stark was sure she could handle the pain on her own like the rest. Besides, she could not afford to lose consciousness again, especially with Nymeria still out there. The direwolf must have felt bad for what happened and Arya wanted to find her companion to let her know she was alright.

“You’re in pain… It’ll ease your suffering through the night.” Jon reasoned with a stern voice that leaves no argument.

The young woman decides that the only thing that can convince her half-brother is to show him that she doesn’t need it. She wills her eyes to open then and blinks a few times to adjust the current low lighting she was at. The ceiling of a tent is the first thing she sees before she takes her surroundings. There were a few candles that lights up the corners of the tent and it conveniently spreads through the space inside. When she tilts her head to her right, Jon is there by the bed. “You look terrible, Jon. Did someone die?” she japed, trying to light up the mood. Her voice came out weaker that she’d expected.

Jon’s answer was the grim look of his face, clearly not amused. “No, but someone was in a great potential of losing an arm only a few moments ago.” He said instead.

Arya let out a tired sigh as she gingerly props herself up. After successfully sitting up, she leans against the stacked pillows behind her back. “Oh, come now brother…that’s a bit of exaggeration. Nymeria wouldn’t hurt me.” She replied but when Jon shot her an incredulous look while glaring down to her bandaged arm, she continues. “This is my own doing… I simply got in her way.”

Jon let out a resigned sigh as he closed his eyes, gathering his thoughts. Arya takes the opportunity to examine the entire tent then. She was not surprised to find they weren’t alone as her gaze locked with violet ones across the tent. Daenerys was standing at a corner silently with Tyrion, Jorah and another man who Arya assumed was the healer that tended to her a while ago. Naturally, she shifts her attention towards the dragon queen again and noticed that the older woman is sporting a stony expression on her face though her purple eyes are telling another story as she returns her gaze. Arya swears she could see a spark of fire there if only she could study them a bit longer. Unlucky – or was it lucky – for her, Jon’s voice brought her attention towards her half-brother again.

“It’s true when they say old habit never dies…your scaring me to death with one of your stunts is a proof of that.” He reprimand with a slight shake of his head. His dark grey eyes shine with unspoken tenderness even though his tone is one of scolding.

Arya let out a slight grin at that before shrugging it off.

Another sigh escapes Jon resignedly. “Please don’t get into trouble again, little sister… Robb will have my head if anything were to happen to you before we get to Winterfell.”

Arya let out a small smile then. “I can’t promise that, but I promise I’ll try.”

Jon was about to open his mouth to reciprocate when a Northern soldier, wearing a Stark’s direwolf breast plate burst through the tent unannounced. All heads naturally snaps towards the man then.
The soldier halts midway when he realized all eyes are on him. He clears his throat awkwardly before he speaks up. “M’lord…your presence is needed outside.” His gaze fixed on Jon as he waits patiently for a reply.

Jon’s response was only the scrutinizing gaze directed at the man, clearly annoyed at being interrupted. The soldier shifts his weight uncomfortably to one side at that reaction.

Before Jon can let out his lecture, Arya decides to interrupt and save the man then. “Go on Jon… I’ll be alright here.” She assured.

Jon turns to her. “Are you sure?” he asked though his features clearly show reluctant to do so. Arya nods, gifting a small smile.

A defeated sigh escapes Jon. He rises from his seat by the bed and leans down to the young woman, taking her head with both his hands before landing a kiss on her forehead. “Call me if you need anything, you hear?” he asked, waiting for a reply.

Arya managed another nod firmly before her brother finally let go of his hold on her, but not before ruffling her hair like he always did once. The young woman glared in return as Jon takes his leave with a small smile pulling at his lips. He was about to step out when Arya suddenly called him again. He stops abruptly and turns back around with an expectant gaze, waiting for her to continue.

“Do you know where Nymeria is?” she asked.

“No.” he answered short. Arya looks down to her hand on her lap expressionless, but Jon knows she was worried. “I think Ghost is with her. I have a feeling they’re having a joy out there in the wilderness without us… well, I know Ghost at least will.” he continues making the young woman brighten a little than before.

“Good night Jon.” Arya wished then. Her worry ebbs away at the information. Knowing Nymeria has Ghost by her side as she did with Jon makes her feel a little less distraught at her lost companion.

“Rest well, little sister.” Jon echoes back before he finally steps out of the tent, the soldier and the healer followed close behind him.

Silence wraps the inside space and fills the tent almost instantly after that. Arya let her gaze strays onto the dragon queen then. But, Daenerys only stared back with no intention to speak. As she studies the violet eyes, the smouldering beneath them came back and Arya can’t help but to feel slightly on edge, as if she’s waiting for the dragon queen to breathe fire or combust in flames.

Tyrion suddenly clears his throat loudly, breaking the silence. “I’m truly delighted that you’re not badly hurt, Arya.” he said with a genuine smile. “I’m sure you need a good rest so we’ll leave you to it.” He tilts his head, dismissing himself and turns around rather hurriedly before parting the tent’s flap. When he realizes Jorah is still beside the silver haired queen unmoving, he motions for the older man to join him. Jorah in his confusing state follows along without a word and then the two were gone leaving Arya and Daenerys alone in the tent.

Any other time, the young woman would be pleased to be by the company of the Targaryen Queen, but right now, she wished she didn’t usher Jon away and hope for Tyrion to stay, even Jorah.

The silence stretch on and was becoming rather stressful, at least for Arya, because Daenerys seems to be perfectly calm emanating her silent rage. Of what, Arya haven’t had a clue but she guesses she’ll finds out soon enough what’s been making the dragon queen in a bad temper.

“Are you alright?” the young woman starts.
A slight frown graces Daenerys features. “You’re asking me that?” she asked back, speaking for the first time that night.

“Yes. Are you hurt?”

That seems to annoy the dragon queen further as she takes a step forward. “Do you care so little of yourself?”

Arya blinks a few times at the unexpected question. “What?” she asked dumbly.

“Do you. Care so little. Of yourself?” Daenerys echoes again with pauses for effects.

“I heard what you said, Daenerys.” The young woman replied, a little irritated at the older woman’s tone. She pushes her body upward with a soft grunt, leaving the comfort of the bed to stand levelly with the dragon queen. “But, I don’t get why you’re asking that. Where is this coming from?”

“Well, allow me to help you understand then.” The older woman chided. “This is coming from the fact that a few hours ago, you recklessly wrestled with a direwolf and almost got your arm ripped off.” She said as she takes a step forward towards Arya. Seeing the young Stark bewildered look only makes her furious. “This is also coming from the fact that your alarmingly courageous behaviour had caused you yet another injury on yourself… So, I’m asking you this, Arya. Do you care so little of yourself?” Daenerys finished, exasperated. She didn’t realize her body is shaking as she utters the words. The only thing on her mind was the last image of the young woman unconscious and bleeding on the ground. She believed that horrified image will lasted forever inside her head now.

Arya released a defeated sigh. Her eyes soften at the older woman’s state, knowing that she was responsible for it. She wants to hold Daenerys close and whispers soothing words to her ears but she stood her ground, unwilling to breach the older woman’s personal space. “Daenerys, I–”

“Do you know how afraid I was when you lay there on the ground, unconscious? With all that blood pooling underneath you, do you know what I was thinking?” Daenerys interrupts, pausing only for a moment before she continues. “I was thinking that you were dead. You look as pale as death and I was terrified that I would lose you there and then.” Her chest heaves with laboured breaths as if she’s run a mile. Daenerys didn’t care that her voice came out louder than she intended.

Arya only stared back, not knowing if she should response or not.

Daenerys closes her eyes then, taking a deep breath to calm down. When she opens her eyes again, she finds grey ones and said more softly. “I thought you were dead, Arya.”

“I’m not.” Arya answered back, stepping forward only to halt midway, still hesitant if she should touch the older woman. “Daenerys, I’m here and I’m not dead.” She assured again. They stare at each other silently as Daenerys ingests the words Arya spoke at her.

The dragon queen’s shoulder gradually relaxes as she takes in the perfectly able young woman in front of her, who is very much alive and safe and sound as she, herself had said. Her violet eyes soften into vivid grey ones then before she starts advancing towards the younger woman without a word. Daenerys doesn’t stop until her hands get a hold on each side of Arya’s head and pulls the young woman close towards her until their lips found each other.

As soon as they’re connected, the dragon queen finally feels like she can breathe again. She moves her lips fervently and felt the familiar sweet and addictive taste of Arya’s lips as she inhales her favourite earthly smells and of pine. She pulls away only for a breather before she leans into the
young woman’s lips again, kissing her senseless.

It was nothing like their first proper kiss, Arya noted. Where their first one was tentative and calculating, this one was desperate and needling and she hardly had any time to respond to it as the older woman seems to have taken her own lead to where this is going, not that Arya complained. The young woman grabs the dragon queen’s waist with her good arm in response, pulling Daenerys closer, unintentionally deepening their kiss. A soft moan escapes her lips uninvited which send shivers through her body despite the older woman’s warm body moulding against her.

Time was moving as they both enthranced in trading kisses with each other, but Arya had a hard time imagined just how long, when her mind is being swept away through seven heavens and back, of which was Daenerys soft sinful lips on hers. Her knees almost gave out when Daenerys suddenly decides to bite her lower lip. Not enough to draw blood but just enough to let her feel the stinging pain, knowing it was there, before the older woman nurse it back with a swipe of her tongue. When the dragon queen pulls away, the violet eyes caught her grey ones and she can see her reflection on Daenerys eyes which had turned to almost black now as her pupils dilated.

Arya doesn’t have time to ponder over that as the older woman slides her hands away only to wrap her arms around her neck before moving in to capture her lips again for another round. The younger woman is more than happy to oblige as Daenerys tongue ends up swiping over her lips again, teasing her cruelly. She opens her mouth then, accepting the older woman’s access. Their tongues meet in a clash of dominance, fighting and tasting each other at every turns. Arya heard another moan of pleasure coming from her or was it from Daenerys, she couldn’t tell for sure as they seem to become one and the same.

As much as Arya loved to stay forever in that moment, eventually Daenerys pulls away with laboured breaths, trying to fill the air inside her lungs again. The young woman managed to hold back her protest at the dragon queen’s sudden separation as she needs to properly breathe again too. She leans her forehead onto the older woman’s tiredly as their hot breath warming up each other’s faces.

The dragon queen closes her eyes as her chest starts to rise and fall in orderly manner, gaining her normal breathing again. For a moment, only their breaths were to be heard as they wrapped comfortably in one another.

“Don’t you dare put yourself in harms way again, Stark.” Daenerys suddenly said, still with her eyes closed. The warning is clear in her tone despite her soft voice.

Arya can’t help the slight upturned of her mouth. “Well, if this is what I get after wrestling with a direwolf, I might jump onto the flames next.”

Daenerys instantly opens her eyes to fixed a glare. “I’m being serious.”

So did Arya, but she knows better than to express that particular thought. So, she managed a curt nod instead.

Satisfied, Daenerys moves in slowly before gifting another kiss on the young woman’s lips. It was much slower and softer and Arya enjoyed it much the same as the last one.

Daenerys pulls away again then as she regards the girl in front of her. “You know, for a person that said she can travel through time and have extended knowledge of the past and future…” she trails as she tucks in the loose strand of Arya’s hair at the back of her ear. “One would think to use that to their advantage. You could’ve avoided hurting yourself. After all, you knew what was coming, did you not?”
“It didn’t actually work like that.” Arya said back softly, tracing small circle with her fingers at the older woman’s spine. Daenerys quirked an eyebrow in question. “I do know much…but I do not know all.” Arya explains briefly as the haunted images of her past flashed at the back of her mind. If only she could go back again, she might have done things differently than she did in this timeline.

Daenerys wanted to ask more of it, but decided against it when the grey eyes in front of her turns sad. The change was subtle and perhaps if the older woman wasn’t as close to the young Stark’s face at the moment, she wouldn’t have notice, but she was and so she did. She tucks in another loose strand of the brown locks to its place before moving in to seal another kiss, hoping that she could take away whatever pain Arya had left.

The young woman welcomes the notion with an open mouth, already missing the taste of the dragon queen. It was scaring and appeasing at the same time how the older woman managed to clear away her horrifying thoughts with only but a mere kiss. And for a moment, Arya ponders what this could possibly mean. She decides to let her question free and pulls away slowly, trying hard to stop the older woman’s advance at the moment.

“Arya–”

The young Stark only succeed calling out her name before Daenerys moves in to shut her mouth again with hers. Trying another tactics, Arya begrudgingly unwrap her arm around the dragon queen, leaving the comfort of Daenerys curves as she pulls off the arms around her neck next. The silver haired queen finally put a stop to her action as she held her questioning gaze at the young woman.

“What are we doing?” Arya asked quietly.

Daenerys tilts her head as her eyes glazed over with mirth. “I believed most people called it kissing or snogging or even smooching.”

Arya glared good-naturedly. “I meant this… Us.” She replied, gesturing at the older woman and herself. “What is this between us?”

Daenerys let out a slight frown as she slowly distanced herself, but not as much when Arya still had a hold on her arms. A beat passes as she thought the question over. The expectant look on the young woman didn’t help as Daenerys tries to find an answer. “I don’t know…” she trails.

Arya’s face fell at that words, clearly not expecting such negative answer but before she can delves into her disappointment, Daenerys continues.

“What do I know, is this. I care for you a lot, Arya… and everything that you do, I adore it. I’ve had husbands and lovers, people that admired me and loved me even, but all of that seems trivial now that you’re here.” She finished softly. Her hand reaches for the young woman’s and they interlock as she held her gaze.

Arya looks down to their joining hand as she let the words sink into her. “As do I, Daenerys.” She confessed, looking up to find purple eyes again. “Well, I haven’t had husbands, lovers and those things but, I feel the same way as you.” She continues with a slight upturned of her mouth. Daenerys mirrored Arya’s smile.

“Even in your previous life?” the dragon queen teased.

“I’m afraid not… I was busy dedicating my life to the Many Faced Gods then and tried not to get killed most of the time.” The young Stark answered with an innocent shrug.
"Am I the first person that you’ve ever had feelings for, then?"

Arya smiled softly. “You’re my first.”

At the confirmation, Daenerys closed in further as her free hand trace Arya’s lips lightly with the tip of her fingers. Wanting and needing those lips on hers again. “You're going to be the death of me, Stark.” She murmurs as she moves in to continue where they’ve left off.

Chapter End Notes

You know what's coming next, right? What, you don't? ( ʃ °何度° )

Translation:
"Drogon, iōragon ilagon" – Drogon, stand down.
*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

Winterfell is anything but a mere old castle. It’s the place where rulers of the North reside. It’s the seat of power of the entire Northern region. It’s where the Northerners would seek to find their problems solved and ultimately their peace. And House Stark has been entitled to that honor and responsibilities since over eight thousand years, claiming a line of descent as it is no doubt one of the oldest lines of Westerosi nobility by far.

Those facts were what the last Warden of the North had told every one of his children. And Arya remembered it clearly as if it was only yesterday when her Father decides to call her in to his study one morning, reciting the history of House Stark. She had always wondered of their origins and those facts had only make her proud of her lineage and of her blood.

Those were the same facts that Arya had told Daenerys when the older woman had asked her about Winterfell in one of their counsel a while ago. She still remembered the subtle excitement the Queen had shown through, while she was telling her the stories and Arya can never comprehend why. Though, she can never truly understand the older woman in general anyway. Like her devotion and caring for example. Arya still doesn’t know how Daenerys could stand being with her every day and personally taking care of her injuries since the incident with Nymeria. Not that she complained at all.

The same enthusiasm and eagerness can be seen from the silver haired queen at this very moment – albeit more pronounced this time – as Arya glances to her right from atop of her horse. She looks ahead again, taking the sight of the mighty castle of Winterfell from the hills for a moment, before guiding her mount to trot along the paths again where the others start doing the same.

The young woman had invited the dragon queen to ride alongside her after the second day of their journey and Daenerys had only smile fondly before concurring. The young woman was happy that she had asked and when Jon didn’t object to the suggestion, it only makes her happier.
"You look troubled. Does your wound bothering you again?"

The young woman snaps her head to her left where Jon was. He waited expectantly as he guides his mount, trotting along the paths.

Arya looks ahead then. "It’s nothing, I’m fine." She mutters as she grips the rein tighter. She can feel the scrutinizing gaze of her brother and the additional from the dragon queen’s now. She decides to ignore them both and force her horse to trot a few paces ahead leaving Daenerys and Jon behind.

It lasted only for about ten seconds before they caught on, trotting at her right and left sides respectively.

"We should make a short stop to dress your wound again." Daenerys speaks up.

Arya subtly sighs before she turns and locks with concern violet gaze. "I’d rather not slow us down...we’re only a few hours away from Winterfell and I’m sure I’ll get the proper treatment there anyway."

Daenerys only stares back, contemplating before nodding her agreement. Arya can see the curious look from the older woman, clearly wanting to say or ask more of it. She silently thanked the Gods that Daenerys doesn’t go through with her questions, probably because of the many sets of eyes and ears among them.

"Then, stop looking like that." Jon interrupts then, breaking her train of thoughts.

Arya tilts her head to the left, narrowing her eyes. "Oh, do you have problem with my face, dear brother? Should I wear another to your liking?" she asked annoyed.

Jon merely laughs away at her ridiculous words. "I only meant that you should stop your frowning. People would think that you’re in pain or something." He said back, still with a smile on his face.

Arya scowl then as her mood worsen. She let out a grunt before focusing ahead again, ignoring her surroundings and trying to not think of how close she is getting to Winterfell and who’ll be waiting behind those castle walls.

"This reminds me of the time when we were children, sneaking into the brothels. You wore that very same face when Father caught us red handed." Jon said happily, chuckling as he reminisce the past.

Arya frowns further. "I am not." She objects.

Jon held his gaze, unperturbed. "Yes, you do." He concurs making his sister chuckle with disbelief.

"No, it is not. You’re the one who wanted me to tag along because Robb and Theon left you out.” Arya counters back. Jon had the nerve to laugh at that. If only they weren’t atop their horses right
now and if only he isn’t her dear brother, Arya would have smacked the living shit out of him.

Daenerys silently watched the banter between the two siblings with a smile pulling on her lips. Watching the young woman exasperated and imagining ‘little Arya’ get into all kinds of trouble only magnifies the warmth inside her chest.

“That’s not how I remembered it, little sister.” Jon said back after regaining his composure. He focuses on the dragon queen then, completely ignoring his little sister irritated face. “As I was saying, Your Grace…when Arya decides that she wanted to visit the brothels, investigating what the fuss was all about, I couldn’t stop her. I’m sure, you know how strong willed Arya can be?” he asked.

Daenerys steals a glance to the woman in question with a smile still on her lips. “I do, my lord. In fact, I have been the receiving end of her headstrong qualities a while back.” She answered. Arya snaps her head to the dragon queen with disbelief which Daenerys happily took no notice of.

“Let me be the one to apologize for whatever grief she caused you, Your Grace.” Jon replied bowing his head slightly.

Daenerys waves a hand to dismiss him. “It’s quite alright, Lord Stark. I’m used to it anyway.”

Arya can only chuckle with disbelief at the ridiculous turns of event. The last thing she expects from Daenerys and Jon would be them joining hands, conspiring against her. She wished she never invited the dragon queen to ride alongside them in the first place. At least then, she would have some dignity left. “I’m right here in case you’ve forgotten.” She said annoyed.

“Of course we know that, little sister… We aren’t blind.” Jon answered a little too cheerful for Arya’s liking. Before she can reciprocate, her brother already speaks up again, focusing to the dragon queen. “So, when we finally arrived at the brothel, we sneaked through the back door to avoid causing scene. Once we’re inside, we literally have to duck and crawl all the way to get to where the action was.” He tells vibrantly.

“I assume you two had a lovely day then?” Daenerys asked, contemplating whether she should feel humored or soured by Arya’s success rendezvous.

“Oh, not at all as you imagined, Your Grace. We merely watched the others get to it. And then, later, a kind lass spotted us crouching behind the tables and instead of throwing us out, she put together a meal. So, we stayed a little longer than we should have. That’s when Father came, reeling as he found us.” Jon finished with a grin.

Daenerys mirrored Jon’s smile. “That explains a lot.” She mutters. Jon raised a brow in question. “When we were sailing to Westeros a while ago, I’ve had proposition from the Princess about the best brothels in town that I must visit. I would never assume that she was talking from her experience. Now, it's a must to see them for myself.” She explained trying hard to keep a straight face.

Arya had lost the ability to speak a little while ago, so she only managed a breathless laugh, even though there’s nothing amusing at all – well, at least for her – as she recalls the event Daenerys decides to share with. The young woman only had herself to blame for that.

“I could show you around Winter Town once we’re settled, if you want.” Jon offered.

Daenerys was about to answer when another already beats her to it.

“You would do no such thing.” Arya quickly interrupts, snapping her head to his brother who looked startled at her sudden outburst.
An awkward silence befalls them after that, making the young woman squirm uncomfortably on her saddle. She clears her throat loudly before fixing a glare at the older woman. Daenerys only stares back innocently with no intention to speak, and Arya believes that if she hadn’t interrupted just now, the dragon queen would have agreed to Jon’s invitation. There’s no way in hells that she would let that happened. Perhaps, she’s overreacting but Arya doesn’t actually care.

“It’s not safe to travel around so carelessly…let alone a visit to the brothel.” She continues, satisfied that her voice came out calmer and more composed this time.

When Jon is about to open his mouth no doubt wanting to retaliate, Arya shot him the deadliest glare she could manage. Jon shuts his mouth tight at the hostile look. He’s pretty sure that his little sister just growled too.

Daenerys stifled a laugh at the overly protective display from the little wolf. She wipes out the affectionate smile before addressing Jon. “I believed Arya might be right in this one. Perhaps some other time, my lord?”

“Of course, Your Grace… A sight-seeing around the town is what I merely suggest. A brothel is no place for a Queen.” He answered back, giving a look to his sister as to prove a point.

Arya rolls her eyes at that. She tries her very best not to stick out her tongue to her brother, knowing that childish display would win her no favor, especially to the older woman.

They continue their journey as they traded conversation every once and then which mostly happens between Jon and Daenerys. Arya was too busy sulking and feeling way too irritated to join them. And when she did, she would be left feeling annoyed all over again. The young woman doesn’t really know why she was feeling grumpier than usual. But, seeing how comfortable and delighted Daenerys looks as she converse with Jon only gets under her skin.

She was too busy at being displeased of becoming a human bridge among the two that she didn’t even realize how long the time has passed. A deafening silence ensues then as the group come to a stop, forcing Arya to do the same as she pulls the rein, halting her horse. She swallows a lump forcefully as she looks ahead, finding that they’re near the main gate of Winterfell. All the anxiety from before suddenly comes back and hit her hard like the cold wind. Even though the weather was freezing, she could feel the beginning of sweat forming at the back of her neck. She grips the reins tighter and clenched her jaw, trying to get a hold of herself.

A hand suddenly caught hers and she look to her right to find Daenerys smiles gently. The older woman runs her thumb in circle in a soothing manner as Arya breathes out slowly, feeling the calmness spread through her. Believing that the young woman is less distressed now, Daenerys gives one last firmer hold before pulling back her hand.

Arya forced a smile, grateful for the older woman’s presence. She glances to her left where Jon is looking at her with a taut smile before he speaks.

“Welcome home, little sister.”

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The bell from the monitor tower rang loudly in Arya’s ears as they neared the Winterfell gates, announcing the arrival of the much awaited entourage. Jon was at the head of the group, leading them inside and the younger Stark tried not to panic when they finally entered through the archway of the opening castle walls.
Almost instantly as she trots in, she can feel more than see the many pairs of eyes trained on her or perhaps she was just being paranoid. Either way, she decides to focus on Jon’s back and the presence of the dragon queen who rides beside her as she carefully guides her mount forward. They must have finally reached where they needed to be, because Jon halted his horse and gets down from it next.

Swallowing a lump forcefully, Arya mirrored her half-brother’s action and landed successfully with her two feet on the cold ground. She was grateful that her knees didn’t wobble thus successfully avoiding the embarrassment of landing on her face in front of the whole crowd. Slowly, she takes the surrounding of the courtyard. The first thing she notices is the many people gathering in line against the castle walls, which was hard to miss. And sure enough their eyes and lips are busy taking the new guests that just arrived.

When she focuses ahead again, Jon was hugging another man with short curly dark auburn hair. She only managed to see half of his face with Jon being in front of him, but that was enough for Arya because she knew instantly who that man was. His blue Tully eyes shine bright like a clear sky and when they caught hers, Arya froze. The gory images of her brother’s impale body riding a horse with Greywind’s severed head decides that it’s the best time to make an appearance then.

Fortunately for her, it didn’t last that long as she heard a gasp from not far, successfully grabbing her attention towards it. Arya changed her gaze to the left to find an older woman with watery eyes looking back at her as if she was in pain. Perhaps she was because she stifled another gasp then with one of her hand covering her mouth. The older woman’s subtle weeping was becoming rather prominent by the seconds and it didn’t help much when the courtyard suddenly rendered to silence except for the current obvious source of sound.

The young Stark knew she should do something about it. She knew she should comfort the older woman with soothing words and wiped away the tears that come out, but Arya realizes that even as she gets older, she will always cause her lady mother grievance. This occurring event is the living proof of that. With the heavy gaze from across her, Arya can’t help but to feel self-conscious of how she looked. Absentmindedly, she tucked in a loose strand of the many unruly locks behind her ears, failing completely to tame her hair.

She left the mess of her hair and squared her jaw instead and moves forward then, presenting herself further. Her grey orbs stay locked with wet blue ones all the way through the courtyard until they were only arms apart. Being this close, Arya can’t help but to examine the older woman, taking notice of her sickly pale skin and how thin she looked. The woman in front of her look nothing like the proud, confident and charismatic Catelyn Tully-Stark she called her Mother. The heaviness in Arya’s chest only doubled at that as she could guess the rough years her mother must have gone through.

The older woman let out another heart wrenching sob then, before calling out suddenly. “My child.” She breathed, finally moving forward to cradle Arya’s cheeks with both her hands.

Arya smiled, letting a content sigh with the warm hands on her face “Mother.” She called back as the words come naturally out of her mouth despite its lack of used.

Slow desolate tears run from Catelyn’s unblinking eyes as she studies the young woman in front of her. She finally smiles wide, uncaring of the tears that still rolled out from her eyes as she caresses the young woman’s cheeks. “Let me see you.” She said as she gently tilts her daughter’s head, trying to find any distress that could cause her.

And Arya let her. She enjoyed the feeling of being taking care of and for once in her life she craves it. When the sad blue orbs focus onto her grey ones again, seemingly satisfied, Arya didn’t wait for
another moment before she wrapped her arms tightly around the older woman’s waist. She closed her eyes, gratified when her mother returns the gesture and strengthens her hold while planting kisses at the side of her head. When a single tear finally breaks and wet her cheek, Arya nestled further into the crook of her mother’s neck, inhaling the familiar scent and the comfort it brings. In that embrace, she was cocooned well than any butterfly-to-be. She felt safe and her troubles disappeared.

“Are you really my sister?”

A voice sounded then, interrupting them. Begrudgingly, Arya slowly pulls away from Catelyn’s embrace to find the person in question and her eyes caught a young boy standing beside her mother. He has unruly dark brown hair and the distinctive clear blue eyes similar to of her other siblings. As she takes in the sight of her little brother, another smile threatens to break free, but the young woman held it back and spoke instead. “That depends… Do you favour carrots or candied plum?”

Rickon give her a bewildered look before his face turns one of excitement. “Nothing beats carrots, of course.” He declared, straightening his shoulder as he said so.

Arya still remembered a much shorter and younger Rickon running around with those orange-coloured vegetables in his hand, snacking on them. You would expect children to hate those kinds of food, and taking a like to sweet things instead, but Rickon wasn’t like any other children. “Then, to answer your question…yes, I am. I’m your sister.”

Rickon stares back silently for a moment, as he really takes the sight of the person in front of him. Without another words, he moves forward, closing their distance further as he pulls the young woman into a hug. “I’m sorry I couldn’t recognize you sooner.” He whispered as he tightens his embrace.

Arya’s lips pull up into a smile as she hugs him back. “How did you get so tall?” she asked instead, dismissing his apology. She pulls away to face her little brother again.

The youngest Stark shrugs innocently. “I ate a lot.”


Rickon snickered. “Yes, that too.”

The young woman only chuckle at that. The sound of heavy boots against the cold ground, clearly of someone approaching draws their attention then. Arya looks over her shoulder and saw her older brother slowly nearing them.

Robb stops right in front of her then. “Arya.” he calls out, trying to smile but failed miserably. The young woman didn’t mind it that much because she didn’t know how much she would miss her brother’s trademark grimace until she saw it at this very moment.

“Robb.” She calls back with a small smile. His face softens at that and he looked more relaxed as seconds pass by. The young woman was grateful that the horrid images of the non-existent past didn’t make their way inside her head as she finally able to appreciate her brother’s presence in front of her.

Robb looks almost unrecognizable with his stubbles and his stocky build. Though, his blue eyes and thick red-brown hair was still familiar. But, what stood out to her the most was the crown that he adorned atop his head. The iron spikes that surmounted around the bronze open circlet are hard to miss. And if she looks harder, there are some kinds of runes incised on them.

Her gaze finds his blue orbs again then, noticing how Robb shifts his weight uncomfortably as he...
regards her and the young woman can see the calculated stare from him as if he was waiting for her to make the first move. It was almost like Robb didn’t know what to make of her presence there. Arya would have taken that offensively if not for the uncertainties that radiates through him at the same time. It was subtle and perhaps if she didn’t learn the art of faces at the House of Black and White another lifetime ago, she wouldn’t have notice. But, the furrowed lines of his brows and the clenching of his jaw betrayed his emotion and they only strengthens her guessing of how tense and doubtful he is. She cannot help but to notice how familiar that feeling was because she knows she felt the same way as her brother, before.

Arya remembered how afraid she was at seeing her family again. She feared that they would blame her for what happened, for Father’s and Sansa’s death and for seeing the things that she should have never seen back at the broken tower if not for her nosiness. But, what she didn’t understand is how Robb looked almost as frightened as she was. His stance goes rigid again as the seconds went by and his eyes turn sad, as if he was hurting.

The young woman realized then that she didn’t want her brother to feel that way towards her. After all, he has nothing to be shameful of. Her feet seem to agree and without wasting any more time, she all but strides towards her brother, not stopping until her arms is tight around him. The tension from Robb disappears as he finally puts his arms around her too. A soft sigh enters her ears then followed by him tightening his hold on her. When they finally parted, the young woman felt his absence as the cold wind swept by to take their rightful place again.

“I want you to meet my son, Eddard… your nephew.” Robb speaks up, a genuine smile pulling on his lips. The young woman returns it evenly as he turns, reaching for a boy behind him that stood among the lines of people.

The young boy looks up to her with curious gaze. Arya steps closer then, before she goes down on one knee to stand levelly with the small boy. His dark brown eyes sparkle under the sunlight and his straight auburn hair was messy, like he was just crossing a storm. Naturally, her smile widens. “Hello there, big guy… It’s a pleasure to meet you.” She speaks, putting her hand forward.

The young Eddard reached out without hesitation and shakes their hands gently then. He stares at her without a word but his gaze speaks enough as the dark brown orbs regard hers with sturdy and innocence of a child’s.

“You must forgive little Ned, Lady Arya… he’s a bit reserved with people.” A voice suddenly interrupts them and Arya looks up to find a beautiful woman smiling down at her while she caressed the young boy’s hair affectionately.

Arya stands up then, as she takes in the new presence in front of her. The woman has thick, softly curling brown hair and large brown eyes. A sweet smile was still plastering on her smooth and unblemished pale features. And because of that, her beauty shines through further. The young woman had a guess of who the older woman was, given her uncanny resemblance of the young boy. But, before she can address her, Robb already did.

“This is Queen Margaery. Little Ned’s mother and my wife.” He introduced.

Her grey orbs can’t help but to glance atop her head where Margaery is wearing a much smaller crown. It was similar in design of her brother’s but the silver roses added around the circlet gave off a feminine touch for the wearer. The young woman curtsies then. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Your Grace.”

“Oh please, my lady, there’s no need for such formality. We’re family now.” Margaery speaks up then still with a sweet smile.
Before the young woman can speak up her mind, Margaery closes their distance and wraps her in an embrace. Arya was not expecting such intimate gesture from The Queen in the North for their first meeting so it was no surprised that she didn’t return the gesture. Margaery doesn’t seem to mind that as she pulls away and still regards her happily.

Arya shifts her weight uncomfortably as she stared back, dumbfounded by the older woman friendly demeanour. She glances to Robb where a grin is plastered on his face, no doubt amused at her awkwardness, as he takes his stands beside his wife.

The silence stretch for a bit longer before Jon decides to save his little sister from further embarrassment. “You’re bleeding again.” He interrupts, reaching for the young woman’s arm.

Arya looks down to her bandaged arm then, where the white garment around it is slowly seeping with her blood, making it stained with red spots. She was about to retaliate when another hand suddenly reach for it too, dismissing the hold Jon has on her.

“Let’s head inside now. The Maesters will take good care of your wound.” Catelyn speaks up, as she examines the bandaged arm with concern.

Gently, Arya brushes off the older woman’s hold on her. “It’s fine mother… I’m in no pain or whatsoever.” She assured with a smile. Besides, she can’t leave just yet when there is clearly an introduction that she needed to do.

The young woman glances towards the silver haired queen then, where she was fixed at the same spot, in the middle of the courtyard. Tyrion, Jorah and Yara are standing faithfully at each of the Targaryen Queen’s side, with the foreign army behind them. The violet orbs find her grey ones naturally and she moves forward then, bringing the other three with her. Arya mirrored Daenerys action then, where Jon followed her and then Robb too. They stop when they’re close enough within hearing range.

Despite the usual cold air of the North, Arya would say that the weather today was the best she’s seen. The air is sweet, the sun shines brightly with no clouds covering it and there are birds in the sky. Though, all those things don’t seem to affect the air around the courtyard. There was a deafening silence as everyone eyed each other warily.

The young woman can’t help but to feel unsettle about this. She decides that it’s best to get this over with anyway. Straightening her stands, she looks to Robb then. “Robb, this is –“


“It’s actually Queen Daenerys Stormborn, of House Targaryen, Your Grace.” Tyrion suddenly cuts in, correcting him. Robb’s gaze landed on the Lannister dwarf who stands beside the dragon queen, as he fixed him a cold stare.

Daenerys stood her ground. “And you must be Robb Stark, The King in the North and Arya’s brother.” She trails before continuing. “It’s a pleasure to finally meet you in person.”

“Is it?” Robb asked then.

“I beg your pardon?” the dragon queen asked, confused.

Robb’s gaze returns to the silver haired queen again then. “Is it really a pleasure meeting me?”

Another silence stretch on after Robb’s last spoken words. Arya shifts her weight uncomfortably as
she regards Daenerys and her brother in turn, trying to find a way that this won’t go sour than it already is.

The silence lasted a while longer than Arya would’ve like as Daenerys remain stoic. But, Arya knows the older woman enough to notice the tension lines from her features.

“I assure you, had I not felt that way, I wouldn’t be here now.” The Targaryen Queen finally said back.

“People always act differently than what they spoke of.” Robb responded.

“And are you one of those people?” she asked back, not backing down.

“I know of one who was. When he promised justice to be served, he ended up burning and murdering those who seek it instead.”

A beat passes in silence as the Wolf King and the Dragon Queen stared unblinking at yet for another moment, weighing each other out. Arya wanted to cut in and start defending the older woman, but she knows Daenerys will gain nothing out of it. So, reluctantly she stays in silence and hoping for the Targaryen Queen to stand her ground. The violet orbs then flicker to find hers at that moment and almost instantly Daenerys eyes softens as she locks gaze with her.

“Though I know it’s late…” The dragon queen trails, her eyes linger at the grey orbs a little while longer before she settles onto blue ones again. “But, on behalf of House Targaryen, I sincerely apologize.” She paused, making sure that Robb heard her loud and clear before continuing. “I truly am sorry about what my father did to your family, and everything that your family had to endure because of it.”

Robb was rendered to silence as soon as the words left the dragon queen, clearly not expecting such humbleness from her.

“Children should not bear their parent's sin and a daughter certainly should not bear her father’s sin.” Catelyn suddenly said breaking the silence as she slowly moves closer to where they are. She strides pass Robb and stops right in front of the Targaryen Queen then. “I heard that you saved my child.” She inquired with a small smile.

Daenerys gathered herself again at the sudden change of topic. Her gaze naturally flickers towards her favourite person as she remembered their first encounters. “Arya saves herself… I only happened to be there.” The dragon queen answered truthfully. She can almost feel the disapproval coming off from the young woman at her choice of words, but Daenerys is not going to lie just to win a favour.

Catelyn chuckles softly at that as she reaches down for Daenerys hands. “A ‘thank you’ won’t be enough for bringing my child back to me…but it’s all I have.” The older woman said quietly as she holds the silver haired queen’s hands firmer. “You’ll have my gratitude as long as I shall live.” She finished with a smile.

Daenerys mirrored the action. “That is more than enough, lady Catelyn.”

Catelyn gives one last stroke on the dragon queen’s hand before she releases them. “I’m sure the journey must be tiring, Your Grace. We’ve prepared quarters for you and everyone else at Guest House.” She turns to Robb then, waiting for him to say the next words.

Robb held his mother’s eyes on him as he regards her in silence. Finding only the resolute look from the older woman, he sighs softly then before looking passes her shoulder to lock gaze with the dragon queen again. “We can continue our talk once you’ve settled in... Anything you require, you
need only ask and the maids will attend to them.” He said.

Margaery decides to step in as she walks closer towards the group then. “Allow me to walk you to your room, Queen Daenerys.” she offered with a gentle smile.

The dragon queen tilts her head in return before she follows the North Queen’s lead. She glanced towards Arya one last time where the young woman assured her with a nod.

As Margaery and Daenerys disappears at the corner of the castle walls with her advisors in tow, the other maids started to tend to the foreign army then, guiding them towards their respective quarters. Little by little, the courtyard emptied of its occupant.

“Let’s get you inside now.” Catelyn orders softly, patting Arya’s cheek with such fondness in her eyes.

Arya’s gaze flickers towards Robb who is speaking in a hush tone with Jon not far from them. “I’ll head inside in a short while. I wanted to visit the crypts first.”

Catelyn follows her daughter’s line of sight and decided. “I’ll bring your meal to your room then. You still remembered where your room is, I assume?”

Arya nods her head. “I’ll see you there, mother.”

Catelyn smiles approvingly as she placed a kiss gently onto her daughter’s forehead, and heads inside. The young woman walks closer to her two brothers then. Jon notices her advance and stops talking as he smiles warmly at her. Robb turns around, regarding her similarly. His stance looks less stiff than before.

“Jon said you made me a tomb?” she asked Robb with a grin.

Both men let out a chuckle. “Aye, I did… Would you like to see it?” Robb asked.

When Arya accepted the invitation, Jon decides to retreat to his room and get some well-deserved rest, leaving her to Robb’s care as the two proceed their way to the crypts. As she follows her brother’s lead, a familiar face caught her attention along the way. She saw the Ironborn Captain talking with a man at the corner of the courtyard, away from the others. The man is sporting a smug smile as if something was amusing him, while he talks to Yara. The gestures triggered the memory at the back of the young woman’s mind as she finally recognized who he is. His lean stature and handsome appearance was always a trademark he adorned ever since he was young and she’s certain that man is Theon.

The two siblings are still talking animatedly with each other, not caring with their surroundings and Arya felt a twinge of relief at seeing Yara’s bright features, happy that she’s not the only one that get to reunite with their long lost family. The young woman decides to leave the Greyjoy siblings on their own as she hastens her footsteps to match Robb, following him to the Crypts of Winterfell.

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“My nose isn’t that big, is it?” Arya asked indignantly. Her gaze stays rooted at her tomb since her eyes first lay upon it in the crypts.

Robb seems to seriously think about her question for a moment. “It definitely doesn’t match you accurately since you’ve grown quite a bit now.” He finally said with the faintest of grin at his own comment.
“That’s not a no.” she observed.

Robb only shrugs as his grin grew wider, agreeing which she responds with narrowed eyes. The silence stretched for a while as both of them share the comfortable moment.

“I’ll get some men to take it down.” Robb speaks up breaking the silence. Arya looks to her side to find blue orbs on hers. “After all, you’re still very much alive.”

The young woman looks ahead again at her much younger statue as she mulls over her brother’s statement. A strange feeling she can’t quite pinpoint wash over her as she looks at the stone carvings making the hair at the back of her neck stands at ends. “Perhaps you should not…at one point, we’re all going to end up in here anyway.” she could feel her brother’s gaze heavily on her.

There was a definite silence before Robb speaks again. “If that is what you wish.”

Arya moves deeper to the crypts then, as she comes upon Bran’s tomb. Similar to hers, Bran’s statue is of a younger version of himself. She can’t help but to recall her strange dreams of him a while back. Of course, in her dreams, he looked much older from the stone in front of her. She wonders how she could perfectly capture Bran’s older self in them. The thought strangely convinced her that perhaps he was indeed alive in this timeline.

Sansa’s tomb stands next to Bran’s and she wills her feet to go closer. As her sister’s stone eyes look back at her, she did her best to brush off the images of Sansa’s lifeless blue orbs that replaced them. Clenching her jaw, she forces herself to pull away from the stone eyes and moves pass it, finally arriving at her father’s tomb last.

Her father stands tall with the family heirloom, Ice in his grips. The stones captured every part of him perfectly. From his hair to the boots he wears. “It looked exactly like him.” She commented with a faint smile.

“I had the best stone carver made it.”

The young woman tears her gaze away from her father’s tomb to look at Robb. The corner of his lips pull up though his eyes stay rooted at their father, wearing a longing expression on his face. She turns ahead again to escape the guilt that was beginning to claw its way back. But, to her horror it was replaced by the image of her father’s lifeless body falling down the ground, his blood pooling under him, soiling the ground. She could even smell the sharp coppery of the blood and the noise of metals against metals, assaulting her ears. Her chest tightens, finding herself harder to breath as she was transported back into that day of the Lannister’s raid. Her knuckles turn white from gripping too hard and her jaw clenched so hard to the point that it was starting to hurt. She heard her name being called but she was too immersed by her father’s lifeless eyes scrutinizing her.

She feels the tight grips on her shoulders next and then the flashes of her nightmares vanishes as fast as they came. She was greeted instead by her brother’s stricken face. His blue orbs search hers frantically as his hands firmly on her shoulders.

“Arya, what’s wrong?” he asked, shaking her slightly.

She closes her eyes, trying to get a hold of herself again. A force smile comes out as she locks with her brother’s concern gaze. “Nothing’s wrong. I’m just tired is all.” She assured and pulls his hold away from her shoulder.

Robb doesn’t look the least bit convinced of her reason but he takes it regardless as they decided to end the visit in the crypts. Arya is grateful that her brother doesn’t ask anything further of what
actually happened back there. She tries her best not to dwell over her seeming-out-of-nowhere flashback as they walk to her room side by side.

“I heard you found Nymeria.” Robb’s voice brought her out of her reverie.

“I did… but, she ran away.” She told him with a pause, thinking of the last time she saw the direwolf. “I don’t think she’s coming back to me. She’s got a whole pack of wolves behind her now… Her own family.” Despite her bitter words, she finds herself smiling anyway.

“I’ve had multiple complains of an unprecedented number of wolves prowling the Trident… I never knew that their leader is Nymeria.” He commented.

“Complains?”

“Yes… Mostly from the lords that thought they possessed threats to the people.” He trails, finding curious gaze from his sister. “But, they never attacked the common people, only bandits that cross the borders and The Neck. So, I leave them be.”

“Thank you for not hunting them down.”

A soft chuckle left him. “You’re welcome. How was she?”

“The wilderness treats her good it seems. She’s enormous and she’s so beautiful… She’s even bigger than Ghost and I think she’s probably bigger than Greywind too, once I see him.” She flashed a proud smile but it was gone when she sees the switch on Robb’s face.

His clenched jaw and his furrowed brows look like he was in pain or trying to withstand them all at the same time. There was a definite silence as her last words echo in the hallways. Arya waits for her brother to speak but it doesn’t look like he’s going to do it anytime soon as his eyes seem to be far away instead, engrossed in whatever memories his mind decides to.

“Robb, what happened to Greywind?”

The question lingers as Robb continues his walk silently. For a moment, Arya thought he didn’t hear her but the subtle flinch from him when she said the direwolf’s name proves her otherwise. So, she decides to let him speak at his own will.

“Greywind died protecting me.” Robb suddenly said, slicing the heavy silence. Their steps instantly halt in the middle of the hallways.

“Did it happen during the war with the Lannister?” Arya asked quietly as she studied his profile.

“No. It was after the war… I was on a hunting trip with a few of my men when we came upon a group of outlaw. We were outnumbered and I would’ve died if not for Greywind ripping apart my attacker, but he took a sword in exchange for that.” He explained in a flat, expressionless tone.

Arya felt the stab in her heart. Their direwolves are always apart of them and she can only imagine what that must felt like for Robb to lose his companion. Even in this new timeline, she can’t seem to save Greywind’s life. “I’m sorry.” She offered.

He looks to her then. “As do I.”

They continue striding along the hallways in silence after that, occupied by their own thoughts. Until Robb suddenly stops his track in front of a wooden door which Arya is highly familiar of.
“Mother has been keeping your room as it is since you left.” He told her, as he opens the door wide. Carefully, Arya steps inside her room. Her eyes are automatically drawn to her bed where her lady mother is. The older woman was tucking the bed sheets before she notices another presence inside the room.

“You’re here… I was beginning to worry you might have lost your way.” Catelyn reprimands with a slight smile. When Arya doesn’t say anything else, she leaves the perfectly made bed to stand in front of her daughter. “I’ve changed your sheets into a new one. It should be comfortable enough but if it’s not, let me know, you hear? And I’m sure you’re starving…when have you last eaten? You looked underfed and undernourished. The food is being prepared in the kitchen. I had the cooks made all your favourite dishes. You still loved kidney pies, yes? The Maesters should be on his way and we can take a look at your wound. You can clean up after, I’ll ask the maid to draw you a bath.”

The young woman blinks a few times bewildered and overwhelmed by her mother’s attention as she tries to absorb everything in her room all at once. She’s not sure what to answer back, so she only manage a “Yes, mother.”

Nonetheless, Catelyn looks satisfied by that, so Arya released a silent breath she didn’t know she held. The older woman excused herself then to check on the food in the kitchen, leaving her two children behind.

Robb flashes an amused smile as soon as Catelyn disappears from sight. “It’s been a while since she’s been so lively.” He murmured.

“Well, I’m having a dilemma on what I should do first. Eat, get stitched up, or a bath?” Arya asked with a frown.

A laugh escapes Robb at her remark which she ends up mimicking. A beat of silence pass by as she studies her brother’s relaxed demeanour. He looks a lot like her older brother she once remembered. “Robb, we should talk.” she starts. He brushes off the last remnant of his smile as he lock gaze with his sister, waiting. “About Queen Daenerys and why I come home with her.”

Robb’s face hardens in an instant and the young woman feels slightly dejected at his reaction. “We should…but for now, you should rest. I’m sure you’re exhausted. We’ll catch up later once you’ve settled.” he said back instead. Decided not to push him further, Arya nods lightly, concurring.

Robb pulls her into his embrace then. “It’s good to have you back home, sister.” He declared with a lingering smile, before turning around and left the room.

As the door closes, the young woman walks towards her bed then, finding the steel helm she placed at the bedside table six years ago is still left untouched. Looking around now, she couldn’t find any changes at all. It was as if it was only yesterday she had left Winterfell. There was some sort of serenity because of it and she lets the tranquillity envelops her as she lies on the bed. Her lids grew heavy and she decides to give in, making a mental note to find Daenerys soon after.

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When Arya awoke some time later, she found herself still on the bed, in the same position as the last time she shuts her eyes. Her gaze strays towards the ray of sunlight that shines through the open window as she slowly regains her bearing. She brushes the last remnant of her sleep before she realize there is another presence beside herself in the room. She turns her head towards her side then.

“Mother?” she called hesitantly, wondering if she was dreaming.
Catelyn looks up, finding grey eyes on hers. She smiles widely in return. “Good morning, sweetling. Did you have a good sleep?” she moves to stand up from the chair she sat. Resting the knitting tools she’s been working on earlier on the chair, she strides towards the bed then.

A frown automatically forms on the young woman’s face as she heard the greeting. “How long did I sleep?”

“You slept through the whole day.” Catelyn informed landing herself on the side of the bed. “I found you sleeping soundly when I return with the food yesterday.” She smiled warmly.

Arya brushes her eyes with the back of her hand, getting rid of the evidence of how well she slept. In doing so, she notices her wounded arm is all bandaged up with new and clean strap of cloths. She feels less pain around them too.

“The Maester stitched you up last night… I suppose you were too tired to notice his working on your arm.” Catelyn speaks up, answering her daughter’s silent inquiry.

“Oh… I guess so.” Arya trails before continue. “I was hoping to see Maester Luwin. I suppose I’ll have to find him later and thanked him.”

Catelyn stiffened before she controls her face again but Arya didn’t let that go unnoticed. “Mother?” she addressed.

“Unfortunately, Maester Luwin is no longer around, child.”

“Where did he go?”

A beat of silence pass between them, before Catelyn smiled sadly. “He passed away, just a year after the Kingsroad attack.”

“Oh.” The young woman doesn’t know what else to say at the unexpected news. She felt the familiar pain in her chest but she expertly ignored it like she always did. She finds her mother’s gaze again who is waiting expectantly.

“How would you like a bath?” the older woman asked, trying for a change of subject.

Arya gladly took it. “Yes, please.”

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The young Stark walks slowly along the hallways to the Great Hall as she savours every crook and cranny of the walls of her home. She had just finished her bath a while ago which she took quite a handful from her lady mother when the older woman insisted on bathing her. Arya had rejected the offer immediately, knowing full well the scars all over her body will not go unnoticed. The least she wanted was to explain where the scarred mark came from. Though Arya was sure she couldn’t escape from telling her family about her slavery, she decides to stall them as long as she can. Disappointment was written all over her mother’s face as she finally concurred, placing a set of new clothes on the bed and left the room without another words.

Arya swallowed away the guilt and decided to get on with it. She got inside the tub and sighed contently as the warm water touched her skin. She scraped every part of her body that she could reach, cleaning away all the grime and dirt. When she got to her hair, her hands stopped. The last memory of a certain Naathi braiding her hair came pouring in uninvited. Arya clenched her jaw hard as she willed her fingers to untie the braid one by one before washing them clean. She couldn’t afford to think about Missandei now. Because once she did, she’s afraid that she would not stop.
And so, she dismissed the older woman from her mind and locked her away.

The young Stark finished her routine in record time and moved on to get dressed. She silently thanked her mother when she found shirts and trousers in the bundle along with a muted brown and blue leather jacket. The three-headed dragon brooch was pinned above her right chest where it belonged soon after. She let her hair down and pulled half of her hair back securely, wearing it like she always did before.

A set of steps echoes through the stone walls then, bringing her mind back to the present time and to the hallways she’s walking through. She stops her track and looks over her shoulder to find a man not far from her. Having been noticed, the man walks over to join her. A small smile is playing on his lips as he did so.

Arya turns around fully then, recognizing the tall and lean man coming her way. “Theon.” She acknowledged.

Theon grins wider at that. “I thought you wouldn’t recognize me, Arya.” he greets as he joins her.

“You don’t change much.”

A smirk graces his features then. “I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Arya resists the urge to roll her eyes. “You can take it however you wish.” She turns around and continues walking to where she intended to.

Theon hastens his steps, matching hers. “So, how you’ve been?” he starts.

“Good. And you?”

“Great… I heard you lived across the narrow sea all these years?”

“I did.”

An awkward silence befalls them after when neither said anything more. She takes a glance to his profile and looks away again when he decides to do the same.

“Come now, are you not going to share more of it?” he inquired.

“No.”

A mirthless laugh left his mouth. “I don’t remember you being so reserved when you were a child.”

“I believed it’s called growing up. You should practice it.”

“Ouch Arya, you don’t have to be so mean.” He pouts as he puts his hands atop his chest dramatically.

The young woman lets out a silent sigh as she tries her best to ignore the person beside her.

“The Targaryen Queen is really something isn’t she?” his voice resonates again, finding something else to talk about.

Since the topic is something of her interest, Arya looks to her side then, finding black orbs on hers. She waits expectantly for him to elaborate.

“The tales and songs people sang about her do her no justice… She’s much prettier in person.” He
commented, sniggering. Arya choose not to respond to any of it, so she stares back ahead, quickening her steps as she tries to get to the Great Hall faster and away from Theon sooner. This is all are becoming rather tiring.

“You two seems quite close…Does she confides her secrets with you at night when no one’s around?”

Arya immediately halts as she turns to face him fully. Her gaze bore to the black ones in front of her, sending warning that he should not take this further.

But, Theon doesn’t seem to understand or perhaps he just doesn’t care. “Don’t get me wrong, Arya…I’m merely impressed at how wrapped up you got the dragon bitch around your finger. Is she any good in bed?” He continues still with that smirk of his.

As soon as the words left his mouth, her body moves into her own accord as she closes in on him – so close in fact that she can feel his breathing on her face. The black eyes in front of her blinks uncharacteristically fast as he still tries to process the abrupt action.

Arya clenched her jaw tight and fixed him a stare that could have frozen the entire castle. She snarled more than spoke. “If you ever call her by that name again, I’m going to cut your tongue and force it down your throat.”

“Wha- What?”

“You heard me.”

Theon opens his mouth as if he was about to say something but he closes it back and swallowed down the lump in his throat instead. The young woman turns away then and left him to his own, knowing that if she doesn’t, someone will truly lose a tongue. She takes few deep breaths to calm down as she ponders about what he just said.

Was she too obvious in her admiration of the Targaryen Queen that even Theon could take a guess of their close relationship? And how dare he even speak that way about Daenerys. That thought alone brings back the cold fire igniting within her.

When she finally arrives at the last turn of the hallways, she takes another deep breath and settle to her usual calm demeanour. Stepping inside the Great Hall, she finds her family already seated at the rectangular table. Jon notices her presence first. He calls her with a smile, making every heads turn her way. Rickon sat at Jon’s left and Robb was seated at the head of the table where father used to be.

The young woman let out a small smile, already forgetting what happened in the hallways as she strides towards them. “Good morning.” She greets them, taking a seat beside her mother. Catelyn returns the smile and Arya feels a little bit better.

“How are you feeling, Lady Arya?” the voice came from beside her mother. She turns her head to find Margaery waiting expectantly with a small smile.

“I feel much better and cleaner.” She finally answered.

A chuckle left Margaery. “I’m glad.”

Theon comes in then, taking a seat next to Jon, opposite her. She could feel Theon’s heavy gaze on her but decides to ignore it.
“Well, let’s eat.” Robb speaks up then, motioning for the maids to serve them.

Catelyn wastes no time in putting quite amount of food on Arya’s plate as soon as it reached the table. “You must be starving. You haven’t eaten in a day.” The older woman mumbled as she placed another serving of some kind of stew among her already full plates.

Arya lets it slide as she takes the first spoon of the broth. It was rabbit stew. She loves them very much, so she takes another spoonful relishing her hunger. As the young woman enjoyed the delicious taste, she wonders if Daenerys would have liked them too. At that thought, she pauses and puts her utensil back down.

“Where’s Queen Daenerys? Is she not breaking her fast with us?” she asked to Jon. She can’t believe that she has forgotten about the older woman.

Jon looks up from his plate then, finding his sister’s gaze on him. She waits patiently as he chews and swallows the last bit of his food. He looks as if he was thinking of his answer all the while but then he turns his head to Robb instead which she follows.

“She’s in her room I suppose. I have the food brought to her.” Robb finally answered, casually taking a spoonful of the soup to his mouth.

“Why is she not here? We have plenty of space left at the table.” Arya inquired.

The table goes silent then. Everyone stops their eating as they regard the two– except for little Ned who is still ripping apart his bread, caught in his own world. Arya can feel the tension shifted in the air though she cannot understand why.

Robb looks displeased by her question as he swallows down his food. “Because, this is only for family.” he states as a matter of fact.

The young woman frowns. “But, she’s our guest.”

“And I’ve provided her and her army the best service Winterfell can offer; walls protecting her from the cold, feather bed to rest, and food should she’s hungry.”

“But, she cannot join at our table?”

“No.”

The silence was deafening to her ears as Arya tries to make sense of the situation. This can’t be right. She must have heard it wrongly but Robb's harden gaze tells her otherwise. She looks to Jon for help, but he looks away, clearly having no intention to voice anything. She brushes off the disappointment as she regards her older brother again but Robb already has his attention to his plate and soon everyone else follows.

They were eating their meal as if nothing had happened or nothing is of importance. She looks to her mother – where the older woman only gifted a force smile, and then her brothers, and her sister-in-law to gauge their reaction but to no avail. Bewildered by their reaction, she looks to her plate again absent-mindedly and can’t help but to catch the glimpse of pleased look Theon has on his face.

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As soon as the breakfast was over, everyone disperse to their respecting duty for the day. Jon left for Winter’s Town as he has a meeting with the merchants there which he brought Rickon along. Queen Margaery took little Ned to his early revision with the Maesters as she always did the other mornings.
Theon left for whatever reason that Arya could not care less. And her lady mother wanted to spend some time with her but Arya politely declined as she needs to speak with Robb privately, more so after what had happened during breakfast.

“Are you going to Father’s study?” she asked, as she joins Robb along the hallways, walking by his side.

Robb turns his head to her then. “I am. I’m using it now… I have it for private meetings with the other lords, or when I just wanted some time alone.”

“Is it a convenient time now for us to speak?” Arya inquired.

He stares at her for a moment before nodding his consent. They continue striding along the hallways then until another familiar wooden door greets them. Robb unlocks the door before stepping inside and inviting Arya to do the same.

The inside of the room hasn’t changed much. The big desk and chairs are still at their place by the windows which Robb had them opened immediately to light up the room better.

“How do you find Winterfell so far now that you’re back?” his voice resonates then bringing Arya’s focus back at him. He takes a sit at his chair, waiting.

The young woman strides forward as she sits opposite him, the wide desk separating them. “Everything seems to stay the same as I last remembered it.” She starts, locking with blue orbs. “But also some things do not.”

“Things are bound to be changed, one way or another… It’s what we do; people change every day. We change our mind, our duties, and our beliefs.” He said it with a grim look on his face as if he’s the only one that truly understands the implications of it.

“What was your question again?” she asked lightly, quirking her brows.

Robb gaze soften then as he let out a soft chuckle. A beat of silence passes comfortably before he speaks again. “No matter what changes, this is still your home, Arya, and we’re still your family.”

She smiles softly. “I know that.”

“I can hear the ‘but’ that is about to come.”

“There’s no ‘but’. Only that.”

They exchanged gaze as they weigh each other in silence. Seeing the resolute look on the young woman’s face, Robb nods his acceptance then.

“Jon told me about your time away across the narrow sea.” He starts again, looking at her guardedly like he wasn’t sure he could talk about it without offending her. But, Arya is actually a bit relieved that she doesn’t have to tell her story twice.

“How much did he tell you?”

“He told me about your escape from the Kingsroad attack and how you ended up in the fighting pit later.” He paused before clenching his jaw tight, remembering how hard it was to hear from Jon what happened to his sister. “I’m sorry I couldn’t find you sooner.”

The young woman smiles reassuringly. “It’s all in the past now. Let us not dwell on it further.”
Robb loosens up at that, concurring. He gets up then, striding towards the corner of the room where the refreshments are. After offering a glass of wine to the young woman, he takes a sip himself before leaning beside the table. “So tell me, what do you see in Daenerys Targaryen?”

Arya puts down the goblet on the table as she looks up to her brother. She guesses the wine really is needed by the direction of where this is going. “What do you mean?” she raised her brow slightly.

“I tried to put myself in your shoes, Arya but I still could not comprehend why you would come home with her.”

“She saved me, Robb”

“According to her, you saved yourself…or was she telling lies now?”

A soft sigh escapes the young woman. She had expected that Robb would be so much harder to convince than Jon, if the breakfast incident is of any indication. “Truth be told, brother…even if I did saved myself from that fighting pit, I was nowhere near the state of good health. The day I escaped was after I fought with the Manslayer—that’s what they called him in the arena. We all had our infamous nicknames and mine was Accalia, which means she-wolf…isn’t that ironic?” she asked with bitter smile. “I won against him but I was badly injured myself; broken ribs, bruised body to name a few and the cloths they gave me were so thin that it barely protects me from the scorching sun and the cold wind at night.”

Robb flinched at that, but Arya still continues. “So, even if I got out there alive, Robb, I’m convinced that I would die somewhere in the middle of the desert due to exhaustion or something worse… If it wasn’t for Queen Daenerys that brought me to the Great Pyramid and have the healers there nursed me back to health, I don’t think I’ll make it.”

Robb looks down to the goblet in his hands. “I didn’t know you had it so rough.” he said softly.

“Well, what do you expect? That they would care for the slaves they bought? That they would perhaps treat us as if we’re their children?” she paused as the haunted image of the many horrendous ways her former master treated her back in the fighting pit flashed through her mind. She can still feel the phantom pain he inflicted all over her body. Her fists tighten at that until she can feel her nails digging through her skin. “They don’t even treat us like a human being.” She finished through gritted teeth.

Something must have flashed across her face because Robb suddenly looked alarm as he slowly advance towards her, leaving his goblet aside. When he’s finally near her, he carefully cradles her face with both his hands. “I’m sorry sister… I truly am.”

Only then did Arya realize how her body is shaking as her breath comes in short spurts. She stares into the concern blue orbs as she slowly composes herself again and her breathing finally turns to normal. When Robb finds his sister seems to be herself again, he lets go of his hold. She takes the opportunity to turn away from the concern gaze then, and reaches for her goblet before gulping down the content, quenching her sudden thirst.

“Are you alright?” his voice sounded behind her.

“I’m fine.”

“Are you sure? I could get the Maesters for you.”

The young woman turns to face him then. “Robb, I’m fine. I just got carried away, that’s all.” She said with finality.
Robb doesn’t seem to agree with her conclusion but his sister already dismissed him as she takes back her seat. He pours another fill of wine into both their cups before he decides to the same and sits down. Seeing Arya is a lot calmer now, he tucks away his concern as his gaze finds the three-headed dragon brooch she wears. “So, you’ve declared for House Targaryen now?”

Arya follows his line of vision, understanding what he meant. “I swore my fealty to her.”

Robb let out a tired sigh. He had hope that she would deny it. “Why would you do that, Arya? Do you not think about the consequences what your action may lead?”

“It was with that thought that I did what I had. Queen Daenerys gave me her words that she won’t harm us as long as we don’t interfere with her claiming the Iron Throne.” She argued calmly.

“And what happened after she won? Do you think she will leave us alone? Do you think she will let there be another King and Queen in the North – in her nation, under her rule?”

“It has been done before and still is… You let King Robert ruled his side of the country. So, surely the idea of her doing the same will not be as far-fetched.” She retaliates.

A mirthless chuckle left him as he looks away. “She already got her claws deep in you.” He mumbled under his breath but it was loud enough for her to hear it.

“What does that supposed to mean?” she asks with a frown, feeling a little irritated by his insinuation.

“It meant that your opinion is biased, Arya…so forgive me if I still had doubts with everything that you said about Daenerys Targaryen.” He turns to lock gaze to the now rigid grey ones.

“Biased? Which part was I being biased about? I merely asked you to put some faith in her… To put some faith in me.”

“Was it? It sounded like you were kissing her ass and bragging to me about it.”

A disbelief chuckle left her throat as Arya stared at her brother unblinking. “Did you really just say that?” she asked still unbelieving. That was the last thing she expected to hear from Robb.

“I know she spent every night with you in your tent, during your travel back home. Now, tell me why she would do that if she has nothing to gain out of it?” he reasoned.

The irritation is completely gone now; instead Arya felt the rising anger course through her veins. “Did Jon tell you about that too?”

“Jon didn’t have to tell me anything. I have eyes and ears everywhere… Do you think I will let the Dragon Queen and her army roam free in my land without knowing what she did and planned?”

Another mirthless chuckle left her uninvited. Suddenly, she understood why Theon had behaved like that back in the hallways.

Robb leans his body forward then. “Arya, the last thing I want is you getting hurt.” He continues much softer this time. “Why can’t you see that she’s just using your gratitude to her advantage? Whatever she said, whatever she promised were all part of her plan. You know her history; how many men has she married just so that she can be Queen and control a country? What makes you think that you’re any different?”

That was the last stretch that she could handle as her body shot upwards. “You don’t even know her.” she growled down to him.
“I don’t need to know her well to know that.” He answered unperturbed by the outburst. “Somewhere deep inside you, you know that I’m right, Arya…because if I’m not, you wouldn’t have reacted this way and be so bothered by it now, would you?”

The young woman clenches her jaw tight as she tries to control the fury within her. “I reacted this way, Robb because you’re being such a cunt…that’s why.”

Robb’s face shifted at that and Arya decides that this conversation they’re having can never return civil again after this. So, she pushes her chair away, making a loud screech in the process. Without another word, she walks out the room but not before slamming the door close harder than she was supposed to.

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The chilly breeze that slams Arya’s face did nothing to ease her burnt up anger even after some time has passed since her heated discussion with Robb. She had taken refuge at the Godswood wanting some time alone and was hoping that no one would come here to find her. As of now, no one has yet to find her and she relished in the limited time she has before someone finally did.

As she stares at the God’s crying face planted on the heart tree, she can’t help but to replay her brother’s words at the back of her mind. Even if she had denied him earlier, there is still the tiniest doubt that is starting to crawl its way inside as she sat here in solitude. Truthfully, she could understand where her brother was coming from. She would have never believed it herself that Daenerys would come to care for her if the older woman had not initiated kissing her in the first place. After all, she has so many flaws than strength that could appeal to the older woman. And there’s no reason that could benefited Daenerys other than her connection to the North.

The young woman was brought out of her reverie when her ears caught sudden movement behind her. She stands abruptly before turning around to face the rattling bush across her. She waits with baited breath, ready to attack whatever that is going to come out of there. But, relief washes over her when a white direwolf comes out of it instead. Ghost glances at her briefly, acknowledging her there before he walks away to the other direction where Arya had come from. A soft chuckle left her freely as her stance relaxes further. It seems that this is not the first time the direwolf had used this way to get inside the castle. She wonders if she should be worried that there’s an unsupervised opening somewhere in the Godswood.

But, the thought got cut off when another direwolf emerges from where Ghost came out from. Her lips quirked up on its own volition then. “Nymeria.” She calls softly, unbelieving and relived at the same time.

Nymeria studies her intently from a far. Arya swears she sees the direwolf gaze shifted towards her bandaged arm. “I’m fine, Nymeria… You didn’t hurt me that much.” She assured, moving her right arm around to prove a point.

Nymeria moves its paws forward then until she’s closed enough to sniff Arya’s wounded arm. “I’m fine, Nymeria… You didn’t hurt me that much.” She assured, moving her right arm around to prove a point.

Nymeria moves its paws forward then until she’s closed enough to sniff Arya’s wounded arm. Before the young Stark could response to any of it, Nymeria licks the back of her hand as the sound of silent whimper comes out from the direwolf.

Arya stares levelly at the golden orbs in front of her. “It’s alright, girl.” She pets her softly before wrapping her arms around the direwolf and sighing contently. “I’m just glad you survived after all this time.”

Nymeria pulls away and decides to lick her face clean then. The young woman can’t help the widening grin adorning her face and the chuckle that comes out as she returns the favour of brushing
and petting the direwolf at her favourite spots affectionately. It goes on for a little while longer until a foreign movement caught both their ears, interrupting their moment. She looks over her shoulder to find familiar violet eyes are staring back from not far. The dragon queen made no action to move as she looks at them both with mixed reactions. Arya doesn’t blame her since their last encounter with the direwolf was disastrous.

Nymeria nudges her nozzle softly to Arya then, taking her attention again. The young woman strokes her companion softly. "Are you going to your family?" she asked with a strained smile. Nymeria moves to lick Arya's cheek again in confirmation. "Alright, I'll see you around, Nym." she bids her goodbye and stroke Nymeria one last time before the direwolf turns and retreats to the same path that she came from.

“Nymeria hates me, doesn’t she?” Daenerys’ voice sounded then.

The older woman is now standing close to Arya’s side taking the direwolf’s place just a while ago. Daenerys looks a lot cleaner now with her fresh set of cloths. It’s the same black attire she always wear; the only difference is the grey sash on her shoulder instead of red. “Hate is a strong word. She doesn’t hate you.”

“Of course... she only despised me then.”

Arya laughs softly at that, not sure whether it’s because of the way the older woman slightly pout as she spoke or at her sarcastic reply. “Don’t worry, she’ll come around eventually... like I did.” She assured. Daenerys seems to be satisfied by that as she gifted the young woman a small smile.

“How did you know that I was here?” Arya asked, changing the subject.

Daenerys moves to the horizontal large trunk that Arya sat on a while ago. “I saw Ghost coming out from here, so I got curious and decided to investigate... I’m glad I did.” She turns to the young woman behind her with a grin.

Arya joins the older woman and sits down beside her then.

“So this is the Godswood?” Daenerys shifts her gaze to the Heart Tree’s carvings.

“It is.”

The silver haired queen stares at it for a while longer. “It certainly is fascinating. I’ve always read about it and saw how it looked only in the books.” She confessed.

Arya doesn’t say anything to that as she is too absorbed by Daenerys profile. And now that the subject of her troubled mind is actually right in front of her eyes, her mind can’t seem to shut up about what Robb had said and as each moment goes by, her doubts only ends up doubling in size.

Daenerys turns her head to the side, finding grey orbs already on her. “How do you feel now that you’re home?” she asked lightly, expecting for Arya’s favoured answer.

But, the young woman gives no indication that she was delighted at all, instead she spoke. “I don’t think Robb will give you any aid in claiming the Iron Throne.”

A heavy silence envelops them then as they stare, searching one another before Daenerys breaks their gaze and looks ahead. “I can’t say that I’m surprised by that... I can sense our disagreement from the first time we met at the courtyard.” She said calmly.

“Are you not angry?”
“Angry of what? That things didn’t work out the way I wanted?”

“Of me.” Arya simply said.

Daenerys frowns, clearly not expecting that kind of answer. “Why would I be angry at you?”

Arya was ready to reply but decided against it and looks away instead. She sighs softly. “Forget it.”

Daenerys reaches down to take Arya’s hand in hers. “Did something happen?” she asked worriedly.

The young woman glances to their joined hands. Despite the cold air, Daenerys skin is always warm to touch. “It doesn’t matter even if it did.” She was too frightened to explain what had happened, in fear that the older woman will actually agree to what Robb had claimed.

“Oh of course it mattered.” The dragon queen argued.

“Why?”

“Because whatever it is, it happened to you…and you mattered to me.”

The violet orbs are begging Arya to see their worth, to see how earnest and truthful she meant in every word. And the young woman had the urge to slap herself hard for doubting the older woman even for a second. Robb doesn’t know what he’s saying. The concern and obvious care from the older woman in front of her is the living proof of that. “I’m sorry…I just– I had a rough day is all.” she assured.

Though Daenerys wanted to ask more of it, she decides to store it away for later as her gaze softens instead, wanting to see the woman beside her smile again. “Perhaps it was because you missed my awful lullaby last night. You know how it always helps you get through the next day.” She japed lightly.

Arya’s lips quirked up slightly then. “I do miss torturing myself to sleep with it.”

“Well then, you’ll find it harder to miss once we’re back on the road. I’ll sing to you every night until you grew tired of it.”

The young Stark can’t help the building grin. “You’re not going to tell me to stay here in Winterfell?”

“I’m taking you wherever I go, Stark.” the dragon queen said with finality.

It was hard to control her face, but Arya tries her hardest. “Don’t I have a say in this? After all, I’m the one that has to withstand that terrible voice of yours every night.”

Daenerys shrugs slightly. “You might find this surprising but, I’m not always an absolute angel. I’m a selfish person and letting you stay here, while I’m hundred leagues away will only make me miserable… Besides, I love you too much to let you out of my sight.”

Arya stares back unblinking, as she was too stunned by the sudden confession. The air around them seems to take a stand still as Daenerys last words linger in the deafening silence. Arya wonders if she perhaps had heard it wrong. Though, Daenerys seems to hear her silent inquiry for she held her gaze and spoke more clearly with a brilliant smile on her face. “I love you.”
Epiphany

Chapter Summary

In which Arya realizes what her past action has leads her to.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! Look what I have for you in this lovely new year >v< I hope you guys stay on and being awesome for more chapters to come~

On that note, this chapter is for Joan_Of_Arc (I hope you're still here as a silent reader, since i haven't heard from you in a long time) who asked the important question regarding the trial by combat from chapter 7. So, I hope this answered your question, although it's sixteen chapters late. Sorry bout that >,<

Without further ado, dived in folks!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

You know the feeling when you have just woken up from a good night sleep? That one fleeting moment of blissfulness when you open your eyes willingly to greet the beginning of a new day in the early morning, instead of being awoke by ominous dreams that you can’t escape in the middle of the night? Arya was not familiar of that peaceful moment ever since she made that first fateful trip to Kings Landing. But, if she had to describe how she feels right at this moment as the violet eyes faithfully gazed into hers, she would say that that’s exactly how she felt. And she noted that this is the second time she had felt this way. The first one being; when she wakes up from a soundless sleep with the older girl around her arms.

Daenerys still had a smile on her face, and a slight quirk of her eyebrow. Her expression is tender as she lets the peaceful silence wraps them further. But, there is no silence in Arya’s mind since the word that Daenerys spoke seconds ago keeps replaying inside her head. She doesn’t have the slightest clue on what to say in this moment.

Should Arya say it back? Is that not the right thing to say when one proclaimed their love? That we love them too? When Father and Mother said it, she usually reciprocates without missing a heartbeat. But, that was different. Those are her parents, and this is Daenerys, the last living Targaryen, the mother of dragons, and the rightful Queen of Westeros.

The last thought slowly brings the younger girl to the reality where moments ago, she just told the dragon queen that the North won’t support her in reclaiming the Iron Throne. And yet, none of that seems to matter to the Targaryen Queen.

“The North won’t aid your cause in claiming the Iron Throne.” Arya finally blurts out, breaking the silence.
Daenerys’ eyebrows rose more prominently, confused and amused at the same time. “Aren’t we passed that already?”

The young Stark blinks once before answered. “Yes.” she said quietly and looks away as the violet eyes are becoming too distracting.

So engross with her thoughts on what to say next, Arya doesn’t even realize that Daenerys had move quietly into her personal space. Only when the older girl’s warm hand caressed her cheek gently before she tucked a loose strand of brown lock behind her ear did she notice. Her stomach did a flip as the mesmerizing and torturing violet orbs are only a few inches away from her now.

“Do you not hear what I just said, Arya?”

The young woman swallowed a lump then. “Yes.” She answered short, though her tone more like a question than a statement. She believed she had heard everything that the dragon queen said but perhaps she missed something else entirely?

The questioning tone didn’t go unnoticed by Daenerys. Her hand smoothed the length of the young girl’s hair as she gazed into doubtful grey eyes. “I don’t care if you cannot convince your brother to assist me in taking the Iron Throne. Three grown dragons and thousands of Unsullied and Dothrakis armies will fill that gap. I’m confident that we can win this war and then the Iron Throne… Do you understand that?”

“Yes.” Arya nods softly, relishing in the ‘we’ that Daenerys insinuated.

Satisfied, Daenerys continues. “And most importantly, I love you, Arya Stark.” She says, still meeting Arya’s eyes. “Not because of your connection to The North and I don’t care that you’re a Stark and the bad blood our families have for years… I refuse to let that come into my conscience because at the other end, you’re there and that’s all that really matters. It took me awhile to get here, but I did eventually and I want you to know that.”

A beat of silence pass as Daenerys last words echo through Arya’s ears and filling her mind again.

“Do you understand what I’m trying to say?”

“Yes.” She answered, more clearly this time. She really did and though she still can’t believe it, the older woman earnest declaration washed away all the previous doubts she has.

As seconds passed by, Arya finally realized what this could really mean. Now that Daenerys’ words have engraved into her mind, the violet gaze in front of her suddenly becomes too much. She can feel her face heats up and her heart beats so fast that she’s surprised it doesn’t jump out from her chest yet. She decides to look at everything but the dragon queen to try and calm herself.

Daenerys on the other hand can’t help the tugging of her mouth at the young girl’s redden face and how she squirms adorably under her gaze. “Do you truly understand?” she asked again for confirmation.

“Yes.” Arya said quickly as if it’s her second nature.

Daenerys quirked an eyebrow. “Is there anything else you can say other than ‘yes’?”

“Yes.”

Daenerys laughs softly at the reply and instantly Arya relaxes as she basked in the beautiful sound and at how ridiculous her answer was. She takes a moment appreciating the lovely yet queer feelings
she experienced that seems to only happen when she was with the older woman. “Daenerys, I—” she starts but stops short as she tries to find the right things to say.

The dragon queen reaches for the young girl’s hand, squeezing it a fraction. “You don’t have to say it, Arya… You don’t have to say anything at all.” she assured. When the other girl only looks back still doubtful, she continues. “I didn’t say it for you to say it back. I said it because I want you to know how I truly feel. I want you to understand how much you mean to me.”

Arya’s gaze softens at that. She squeezes her hand in return, smiling genuinely at the older woman. Daenerys seems to be satisfied by her small gesture judging by how bright her face lit up. And Arya can’t help but to selfishly pray to the Old Gods and the New that she had long left behind to let her stay by this woman’s side each day for the rest of her life.

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They had spent a bit more time alone in the Godswood, enjoying each other’s company before Tyrion and Jorah found them, delivering news that the King in the North has requested a meeting with the dragon queen. Daenerys concurred as she had expected they will need to address the situation at hand sooner or later.

So, Arya decides to become the good host that she was supposed to by leading Daenerys to her Father’s study – which is Robb’s now. She willed her mind to stay clear from the conversation she had with Robb earlier that day, not wanting those thoughts to cloud her action and how it could only makes it worse for the older girl. She peered over her shoulder to find Daenerys five steps away at the back, walking alongside Jorah. The violet eyes captured hers naturally as the dragon queen gifted a small smile before she focus onto Jorah again and continuing whatever conversation they’re having. Finding no possible threats around Daenerys – which was the reason why she steals glances of the older girl in the first place. Not because she wanted to see her face or her smile, of course – she looks ahead again and proceeds her way along the hallways.

“So, I have a feeling that your kingly brother is harder to convince of our cause than the bastard one.” A voice interrupts the silence then.

Arya looks down to her left where Tyrion was, falling in steps with her. “Jon is not a bastard.” She glared back.

Tyrion looks up then. “Oh? Well, I’m not a dwarf and you’re not a princess.”

The young Stark rolled her eyes at that. “What gives it away?” she asked back, remembering his earlier comment.

“It’s hard to just pick one reason when there are quite plenty to choose from.” He paused, throwing a fake smile her way. “There’s the way how he acted when we first got here…I’m sure you notice since you’re there with us. And then there’s the matter of the living quarters, where he coincidentally assigned me to the coldest room in the entire hundreds of rooms available in this castle. Not to mention that your king of a brother failed to mention that we’re prohibited to wander outside of our room after curfew, this was before midnight, mind you. And of course there’s the infamous meal that tasted not like I last remembered it. Perhaps mine was already spat on? I couldn’t tell for sure.” He said with a shrug.

Arya’s frown deepens as each word hits her eardrum. To say that she was surprised was an understatement. She wonders of the possibilities that Robb really was behind the poor treatment and if Daenerys had received more or less the same. Though, the older girl failed to mention anything regarding how bad of a host Robb is earlier at the Godswood. The young Stark shifts her attention
towards the dwarf then. “I apologize for your discomfort. I’ll find you another room and a fresh meal from the kitchen once we’re done with the meeting.” She offered.

Tyrion smiles genuinely this time as he raised his hand in a dismissal. “Thank you. But, it’s quite alright. The cold room kind of grew on me now and I still have my share of the leftover bread from before, and the wine makes up for it.” Arya only gives him a disapproval look before he continues. “Besides, we’re leaving on the morrow anyway. So, I can’t say that I’m going to miss this place… though, I certainly will miss your presence.”

Arya choose not to look at Tyrion as she keeps her gaze ahead. She doesn’t know whether to be bothered by the fact that Daenerys didn’t tell her they were leaving so soon or the fact that Tyrion seems to assume she will stay behind in Winterfell. She chose to address the latter. “Then, I’m sure you’ll be delighted to know that you won’t be missing anything.”

The Lannister dwarf looks at her, surprised evident on his face as she held her gaze, waiting.

“I thought you wanted to go home? And now that you have, there is no reason left for you to come with us.” He said pointedly.

“I don’t know about you but where I come from, when you swore an oath you have to keep it. And as I recall, I swore to Daenerys my fealty and I’m going to keep it as long as I shall live.” She said calmly, before climbing a set of stairs that leads to another hallway.

Tyrion catches up with her, walking beside her again. “But, you don’t have to actually be by her side all the time. If you stayed here, you can convince your brother in time to bend the knee. It certainly will be beneficial for Daenerys then.”

“I can’t protect her from the Faceless Man if I’m stuck here, playing politics.”

“She has thousands of armies and three dragons behind her back, I’m sure she will have enough protection as it is.”

Arya halts her steps in the middle of the path, before she turns to face Tyrion, irritated. “And yet, we still lose Missandei to them.” She said through clenched jaw. The air between them turns heavy as soon as the name is mentioned. Tyrion looks away with a pained expression on his face.

The young Stark takes a deep breath to collect herself again before she addressed the real question. “Why does it bother you so much that I come along?” she asked.

He looks to her again with a sigh. “Because we’re in a war and you’re a distraction to her.” he said quietly but it was loud to Arya’s ears.

A mirthless chuckle left her mouth in return. “You’re a funny man… First, you tell me that I’m the only one that is good enough to protect her and now you’re telling me I’m a distraction to her?”

Tyrion flinched at that, but he keeps his ground. “That was before I realize how close the two of you have become.”

“If you’re talking about the day you walk in on us at New Castle, nothing happened. We slept together and that is all to it…we just sleep on the same bed.” She explained.

Tyrion raises a sceptical brow. “And those other nights in your tent, when we’re travelling to Winterfell?”

Arya only gave him a pointed look, concluding that nothing happened as he imagined. Tyrion looks
at her with a frown for a moment before he chuckles in disbelief. “Well, that’s worse.” He concludes which she gave him a frown in return. He steps closer to her then, wearing a serious expression on his face. “I see the way she looks at you…the tender and longing in her eyes whenever you’re in the same room with her. She’s not as subtle as she thinks she is. And now, this only confirms that it’s certainly more than just physical attraction.”

The irritation from before comes rushing in waves as Arya takes a step towards him too. “I’m starting to regret saving your life back on the ship.”

The mismatch orbs in front of her don’t waver at that comment. “She has feelings for you.” He said instead, not backing down. “And you know why feelings are much more dangerous? Because with it, you’re weak; your thoughts get clouded with it and suddenly all that really matters is that person and it makes you a coward because now you have a weakness that everyone else gets to use. It can get you killed faster than any assassin and poison combined.”

Arya clenched her fist so hard that she can feel her nails digging through the skin. “Is that a threat?”

“No, it’s not… That’s a fact.” He said softly, almost saddened as his mismatch orbs glazed with unspoken understanding.

“Is everything alright?” Daenerys suddenly interrupts the two who are silently eyeing each other, unaware that the dragon queen and Jorah have closed in on them.

The young Stark doesn’t have it in her to look at the older woman’s face since what Tyrion said still hovered inside her head. “We’re almost there.” she said instead, dismissing herself and continues down the path in a hurry. She doesn’t check behind her to see if the others followed, merely hoping that they did. A few more turns later, she finally arrived in front of the same door she faced earlier that day. She turns to see Daenerys, Jorah and Tyrion are only a few steps away and waits until they’re close within hearing range before she spoke. “This is it.”

Daenery moves closer to the young Stark then, away from the other two ears. “Are you alright?” she asked, studying the girl in concern.

The young Stark schooled her face to indifference. “Of course, why wouldn’t I be?” Daenerys searched her face for any discomfort but she can’t find any, so, she decides to let it go for now. Arya continues then. “Are you ready?” The Targaryen Queen only nods in return.

Facing the door again, Arya raises her hand before knocking twice. Robb’s voice telling them to enter soon follows and she opens the door wide, letting herself in and the other people behind her to do the same. Her gaze immediately caught Robb standing behind his desk. His blue eyes stay with hers for a moment as if he’s trying to makes sense of her presence there. But, his attention soon shifted to the other three people behind her. And in an instance, his gaze hardens and his jaw set.

At the same time, Arya can’t help but to mirror her brother’s action. Only on her part, her attention has been seized away completely by the two new figures that are on Robb’s left and right side respectively instead. The first one is the tallest in the room, huge and heavily-muscled man bearing a horrible facial scarring on his right side. He still wears his armor on like he used to, but there’s an addition of a Stark direwolf on his breastplate. A single longsword was to his left hip, where a belt secured it in place. The next one was the opposite. He’s a medium man of slender build with sharp features, a small pointed beard on his chin, and dark hair with threads of grey running through it. And over his top chest, there’s a mockingbird pin attached to his jacket.

Her throat seems to constrict on itself and her head spins as the memories connected to the person with the burning scar and another with a sly grin assaulted her mind.
Their travel together through the cold in foot and later in horseback. Through day and night, in hunger and in pain they kept going until she finally left him to die. And then, it was replaced with him swinging his longsword to Robb, towering over him, before she released the arrow to Cersei Lannister.

Then;

Her horrible stay at Harrenhal, watching men tortured and being tortured for information they not know of; how she was saved by Tywin Lannister needing a cupbearer and then she overheard that cunning man planning with Tywin how they can defeat her brother and his army.

“Why is he here?” Arya asked, not caring how her voice slightly wavered as she looks to them both before she decides to stay at the tall man where his dark eyes return her gaze evenly.

Robb looks at his sister before he shifts his attention to the person she referred to. “Ser Sandor Clegane is the Commander of my Kingsguard.” He explains and then he gestured to his right side next. “And this is lord Petyr Baelish, Hand of the King.”

There was a buzz in her ears as Robb finished speaking. Arya seeks the blue orbs then, waiting for him to say that it was some kind of a mistake. But, Robb only stares back with his usual calm expression, confirming what he just said.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Princess Arya.” Petyr speaks up, smiling as he bows his head slightly in greetings. He shifts his gaze to the person behind her then. “Your Grace.” He greets similarly.

Daenerys only nods in return, stealing some glances to the other girl who was silently looking ahead as if she was somewhere else entirely.

“Ah, what a peculiar sight.” Tyrion joins in then, successfully bringing all the attention towards him. “The last time I saw the both of you, you were with another King… Grew tired of Robert already?” he asked curiously, eyeing the two men but lands on Petyr last.

Petyr still adorned a smile. “King Robert no longer needed my service seeing as he decides to take the matter of managing the kingdom’s account by himself.”

Tyrion hummed in response. “I must say that I’m impressed… From Master of Coins to the Hand of the King, that’s quite a big jump.”

“But, surely it’s not as big as a runaway with a bounty on his head to come back home as Hand of the Dragon Queen.” Petyr retaliates. “I see someone almost succeed bringing only your head back home.” His tones light, mocking as he eyed the dwarf’s scar across his face.

“Yes, almost… He had the worse aim when Princess Arya stuck a sword through his throat.” Tyrion shrugs.

Everyone glance to the young girl in question though Arya paid them no heed as her attention seems to stick solely at The Hound. Tyrion and Littlefinger eyed each other warily, even though there were still smiles plastering on both faces.

Daenerys decides to step in then. “I assume your request for a meeting was not to exchange pleasantries?” she asked to Robb, as she takes the only seat that was available in the room. Tyrion and Jorah moves to stand at each side of her respectively and at the corner of her eye, she can see that Arya has not moved since she came in.

Robb sits down too then, Petyr and Sandor at his right and left with the wooden desk separates him
and the dragon queen. “You assumed true… I wanted to make myself clear on where the North stands.” He speaks, fixing a stern gaze.

Daenerys gives a slight smile. “And where would that be?” she asked even though she can already guess the answer.

“Here– the North stands here, in our land. We have no interest participating in a war that has nothing to do with us.”

“Then, does that mean you won’t assist Robert in any way?”

“My loyalty lay with my people not with him.”

The silence stretch on for a while as the King and Queen weighed each other out. “Of course, I respect that.” Daenerys finally answered short.

Robb frowns. “That’s it? You’re not going to convince me otherwise?”

“Will you change your mind if I did?” she asked, raising her eyebrow in question.

“No. I won’t”

“Well then, let us not waste anymore of our precious time. I’m sure you have other far more important matter to tend to… And I believe my men and I have some preparation to do for departure on the morrow.”

A chuckle suddenly left Robb. “You’re confident that you can win the war.” He said pointedly, almost accusingly.

Daenerys narrowed her eyes, not liking the tone. “Yes, I am. Tell me, why I shouldn’t be, when I have enough forces – that I’m sure you’re aware of, behind me to take back the throne from Robert.”

“Sure your numbers are far superior but that alone won’t guarantee victories in war.”

“I disagree.”

Cold blue eyes against determined violet ones as the heavy silence wrapped the inside of the room again. It lasted a moment longer before Robb suddenly breaks into a small smile, though it was more of a force one than anything. “I wish you good luck then.” he said.

Daenerys returns the taut smile. “Thank you…but I don’t need it.” She moves to stand up and make her leave but Robb mirrored her action, catching her gaze again.

“We’re having a feast on the morrow in my sister’s honour, to officially welcome her back home. Join us before you leave. It’s the least I could do to thank you for bringing Arya back to Winterfell.”” he explained.

The dragon queen automatically shifts her attention to the young girl where she finally seems to react with her name being mentioned. The grey eyes moves away from the scarred man to her brother before it lands on the violet ones. Daenerys eyed her curiously, noticing the strange in her demeanour ever since she asked why Sandor Clegane was here. Even as the grey orbs find hers, it doesn’t seem like Arya was present at the moment as she looks straight pass her instead.

Daenerys decides to return to Robb since his invitation is left unanswered for a while now. “Of course… We’ll depart in a full belly then.” she accepts. Robb nods then, satisfied.
With one last glance to Arya who was still silently rooted to her spot, Daenerys turns and walks out of the room, leaving her behind as she has a feeling that the girl has unfinished business left in that room.

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When the thud of the door sounded, Arya’s muddle mind cleared and she looks around the room she was in, noticing that Daenerys is nowhere to be seen and so does her advisors, Tyrion and Jorah. The only ones left were Robb, Littlefinger and The Hound.

Since she saw Sandor Clegane and Petyr Baelish, her mind had been in a daze. There were moments in her head, flashes of images at the back of her eyes that she can’t stop picturing. She barely paid any attention on what Daenerys and Robb were talking about until her name was called. Even then, she can’t grasp the content of their talk. And it was all because these men that she had encountered in the past, in both her timelines.

Robb seems to sense something is amiss with his sister as he dismissed his Commander and his Hand next. When the door closed again, leaving the Starks siblings all alone, Arya waits for nothing else. “Why is Sandor Clegane here, Robb?” she questioned, choosing to address The Hound where she can actually make her point, even though Littlefinger is as untrusted as The Hound at this time.

Robb lets out a sigh as he walks to the open window. The silence grew as Arya waits patiently. “I know this is a lot to take in.” he finally said with his back against her.

A mirthless chuckle left her throat. “Oh, you think so?” she mocked. “The last time I saw him, he tried to kill you…and now he’s the commander of the Kingsguard?” she asked bewildered. Her anger with Robb from before subsides as the thought of The Hound and Littlefinger anywhere near him overtook everything else.

Robb turns around then. “We were on a trial by combat, Arya… We were both trying to kill each other.”

“Yes, I remembered, Robb. You were fighting for me and guess who was he fighting for?” she paused for effects before continuing. “Cersei fucking Lannister.”

Robb quirked his eyebrow slightly. “I didn’t know you hated the Lannister that much, seeing how you easily befriended the Lannister dwarf, whom – in case it might slipped your notice, his brother had murdered our Father and Sansa.” He chided.

But, Arya was having none of it. “Tyrion is not the one who slits Father’s throat and thrust the knife to Sansa’s heart. He’s not the one who hired the assassin to kill me; Cersei and Jamie did… And now, you have The Hound who worked for Cersei and Littlefinger who possibly have worked with Jamie in the past back in Kings Landing, roaming freely in our home, are you an idiot?”

“You’re overreacting, sister.”

Another chuckle left her out of frustration. She closed her eyes and pinched the bridge of her nose tiredly as she can feel the beginning of a throb at the back of her head.

Robb strides closer then and stops when he’s within arm’s reach. “You don’t have to worry, truly.” He said, reaching for both her shoulders in assurance and confidence.

She opened her eyes to look at him with a frown. It was as if he knows something that she doesn’t. Before she can ask about it, his blue orbs soften and then he spoke. “Clegane doesn’t work for Cersei, he worked for Robert and now he works for me.” He starts.
Arya was about to open her mouth to argue but Robb silenced her as he guides her to a chair instead, making her sits. He leans against the desk, looking down to his sister. “The day of the trial, Father and Robert had actually convinced Clegane to work against Cersei.”

Her frown only deepens. “But, you fought with him. And he almost succeeded in defeating you when he toppled you down the ground.”

Robb looks at her curiously. “How did you know that? Were you there?”

Arya cussed silently at the slipup. After all, she was supposed to be in her room when the trial happened. “I was there.” she confirmed which Robb huffed in disbelief. “I couldn’t just sit by and do nothing while you put your life on the line for me.” She retaliates before shifting to the main reason they’re having this conversation in the first place. “But, we’re not talking about my non-compliance, was it? You were saying Father and Robert had convinced Clegane working against Cersei and yet I remembered him doing otherwise.” She argued.

He sighed softly, letting go of Arya’s confession of being there on the day of the trial. “Clegane was only acting apparently… Robert wanted it to be believable enough for everyone else so that he could punish Cersei without anyone intervenes.”

Arya’s mind was on a whirlwind as his words replayed in her mind. She shakes her head in disbelief. “Clegane couldn’t possibly agree to it… Are you saying he’s willing to die just so Robert could punish Cersei?”

“No one was to die… I was supposed to only injure him just enough so that Robert will stop the trial and declared me as a winner.” He trails, taking a breather before continue. “Robert wasn’t going to play by the rules when he agreed the trial… It was clear that Cersei cheated on him and he wasn’t going to let anything stands in between her punishment.”

Her throat thickens as she swallowed a lump. “Then why do the trial at all?”

“It was for me, or for my image as Robert said… To strengthen my claim as Warden of the North when the time comes, and with Father heading South, that time became sooner rather than later.”

Silence engulfs the two Starks as both seem too lost in their own thoughts.

“How do you know this?” Arya asked, softly.

“Father told me before he left for Kings Landing.” He replied before crossing his arms on his chest. “I know how impossible these all sounds… I can’t believe it myself when Father explained it. But, I guess I can understand where they’re going with. It wasn’t the best of plan, yes, but it had the potential to succeed if it wasn’t for that assassin that intervened and killed Cersei before her due.”

Her heart stopped at the last sentences. She looks up to him slowly. “What do you mean?”

“The war with the Lannisters happened because Cersei was declared murdered instead of being executed fairly… Don’t get me wrong, I’m more than happy that she died, but the people were torn when news of the Queen was killed spread like wildfire through Westeros. Houses that are loyal to the Lannisters blamed us of her unjust death. By then, they didn’t care if she was unfaithful or her children are bastard, those were seen only as excuses.” He explained before moving to the corner of the room for a glass of wine, unaware how still the other girl has become.

“Anyway, you can rest assure sister that Sandor Clegane is not a concern. He’s a good lad and the best of the Kingsguard.” Robb offered, sipping his wine to quench his thirst. A beat of silence passed before he moves to stand in front of her again then. “Arya, can we talk about what happened earlier
in the morning?” he inquired, softly.

But, there was no answer as his question lingers in the air. Robb searched his sister for a reaction, but the girl only stares ahead at an invisible point, unmoved. “Arya?”

Before he can say anything else, Arya stands abruptly, making the chair screech loudly against the floor. She ignores the confused and bewildered blue eyes in front of her as she dismissed herself in a hurry and out of the room. Her brain is screaming to go back and force Robb to take back his story but her feet keep going forwards, quickening the pace to an almost-run down the hallways.

She tried to convince herself that Robb was telling lies because if he’s not, then he’s telling the truth. And if he’s actually telling the truth, then everything that happened was all because of her. She didn’t have to kill Cersei after all because Father and Robert were going to do it eventually and properly by the law. Not only did she fuck up their plan, she’s the reason that they go into war in the first place.

Arya broke into a run.

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Everything hurts.

She can’t breathe. Her throat all choked up. Her heart feels empty yet it weighs heavily inside. She falls down to her knees, the stinging pain from the small stones that scraps against her kneecap felt insignificance against the shadows that unfolds, strangling her veins.

Arya looks up to her father. His stone eyes look hard and lifeless. But, of course they are, he’s dead.

She chided to herself. You killed him. Another voice sounded.

I killed him. I killed Sansa too… I killed them.

“I’m sorry.” She whimpered. Her voice echoes loudly along the empty tunnels of the crypt.

Her head falls, hanging weakly by her shoulders. Calling herself an idiot would be an understatement. She was a fool, an arrogant fool who thinks that she can change the future by playing Gods herself. Whatever the reasons did she thinks that she can do good to people that she cared about? All she ever does is messed everything up. Hell, everyone around her only seems to drop dead because of her, if not soon, then sooner or later. But eventually, they all did in the end.

Father, Sansa and those other innocent people that were victimised because of the war she started when she tried to take matter into her own hands, releasing that arrow through Cersei’s heart.

How can that one small action lead to all of this chaos? It was amusing in a twisted sort of way and she can’t help the sound that decided to come out from her throat. It starts with a tiny huff before it breaks into a chuckle and after that, Arya can’t stop the full laugh that comes soon after. She was terrified by the foreign sound because laughing is the last thing she wanted to do right now, but her body doesn’t seems to agree. So, she lets it all go and closed her eyes tight since her sight was already blinded by the tears.

She didn’t know how long she was in the crypts, kneeling in front of her Father’s and Sansa’s tombs, asking for forgiveness that they can never give. She doesn’t even know when she decided to leave as she recognizes the hallways she’s currently walking through. She didn’t know where she’s heading and thinking about it seems trivial with everything that happened. But, a little while later, she found herself standing in front of her room. Gingerly, she opens the door and walks inside. She closed the window, to keep out the sunshine and turns back to her door to locked it. Then, in the dark and quiet of her room, she sat down and wept.
The daze in her mind seems to be a part of her now. Arya remembered her mother knocking against her door, calling for her frantically asking what’s wrong. Arya wanted to yell her reply; *everything*. But, she kept it to herself and chooses to bar the door with a chair for good measure instead. It was silence again soon after and Arya wondered if perhaps she had imagined it all.

Even right now as she stands in the corner of another room silently, watching the person she cared more than her life is sleeping soundly, she doesn’t remember when she got here. But, that is the least of her concern because the older girl’s calm expression seems to almost succeed pulling off the heavy weight inside her heart. Though Arya knows it was impossible, it doesn’t hurt to imagine it.

The older girl stirs then and her eyes open slightly before she opens them wide, noticing another presence beside herself in the room.

“Arya?” Daenerys called hesitantly as she pushed herself into a sitting position. The younger girl only stared back silently but as each seconds passed, Daenerys doesn’t need any more confirmation. She blinks her sleep away, looking up again. “How did you get inside?” she asked, remembering she had locked her door before going to bed.

“Your windows are open.” Arya said after a while.

Daenerys frowns at how distant and cold the girl sounded. But, she lets it go as she swings her feet over the bed and walks to the opened window. It was a long way down as she peered over it. “Did you climb your way up here?” she asked unbelieving.

When Arya doesn’t respond, Daenerys crossed her arms against her chest, tucking her nightgown around her tighter, trying to gather her thoughts as she waits the haze from the sleep to gradually lift. “Do you know what time it is?” she asked, slightly annoyed before she sighed at how wrong it came out. “I waited for you the whole day.” There. That was better, Daenerys thought. After the meeting with Robb, she did wait for the girl to come see her so that she can explain about her plan properly. But, Arya never came.

Daenerys takes a step closer then. “Are you upset that I didn’t tell you we’re going to leave so soon?” When Arya still doesn’t respond, she lets out another sigh. “I apologize that I fail to mention about it earlier, I was afraid that you would change your mind… I know you only just come home and now—“

Daenerys stops short as her feet halt just a few steps away from the young girl. Her violet eyes seek the grey ones in concern as she finally able to see Arya’s face clearly in the dim light. The younger girl’s eyes are swollen, her face red and her body is trembling in small tremors. “Arya, is something the matter?”

But as before, the girl still doesn’t answer as her eyes only stared back vacantly. Daenerys closed their distance in an instant before she reached for the girl’s face, cupping it with both her hands delicately. “What’s wrong?” she asked again more sternly.

Arya flinched at the contact but welcomes it all the same. Her grey eyes wavered then. “Everything…” she starts softly. “*Everything’s* wrong, Daenerys.”

“What happened?”

“I’m so tired… It hurts and I just want it to end.”

Daenerys frowns worriedly, not quite understand what Arya meant. “Where– Where does it hurt?
Tell me.”

Arya raised her hand to her chest. “Here.” She croaked, her voice wet and weary. “It’s suffocating and I can’t hold on anymore. Please, make it stop aching… Please, make it stop.” She begs, and starts hitting her chest repeatedly as if that action will make it less hurting.

Daenerys called the younger girl desperately, trying to stop her action. When that didn’t work out, she reached for Arya’s hand that was violently thrashing her own chest before she wrapped her arms around the girl’s frame, stopping her from damaging herself for good.

Arya was clinging to Daenerys as she lets the older woman hold her, rocking her. Her leaden brown hair fell in strands in front of her face, forming a veil. Hiding her face. If only she can hide all of her existence too. “Everything’s my fault.” Her voice came out hoarse.

Daenerys doesn’t know what could possibly lead Arya to break down like this. The girl was always so calm, collected and appeared strong even in distressed situation. But now, she was broken, shattered and devastated. “Hey…” she touches her hair, voice barely audible. “Arya?”

Arya blinks her vision clear as she locks eyes with Daenerys who are faithfully watching her. Her violet eyes are glimmering in the dark, comforting and supporting. But, she doesn’t deserve the solace. “I killed them, Daenerys… It’s my fault. I was so stupid. How can I be so fucking stupid?” her breath hitches sharply before she leans in, nestling at the crook of the older girl’s neck.

Daenerys wrapped the girl tightly, her hand gingerly swimming between brown strands as she held the girl in silence. The noisy sobs echoed through the darkened room for another while longer as they stay in each other’s arms.

Not only until Arya’s sobs quieten down to a sniffle at a time that Daenerys guides the girl to her bed. She tucks the girl in before she joins her and wrapped her frame against her again.

Arya had her eyes closed as she instinctively snuggle closer for both warmth and comfort. The older girl’s beating heart was loud against her ears and she let the sound soothes her further. It seems like forever that she stays wrapped up in the blanket of warmth and peace of Daenerys form.

“I once had a list of names of people that I’m going to kill.” The young Stark starts, her voice comes out barely a whisper. But, when Daenerys stops caressing her hair, Arya knew she heard her, so she continues.

“Most of the people that were on my list had a hand with my family’s death. I would recite them every night before I go to sleep. It’s my own prayer, the one that I’m going to fulfil myself. Cersei Lannister was among the last names on the list and I succeeded…I killed her. But, everyone was still gone. I had no one else left in this world, so I pray to the Gods. I promised them that I would do anything they want of me, if only they bring back my family. And when I woke up the next day, there they were… Father, Mother, Robb, Jon, Sansa, Bran and Rickon… everyone was there.” she chuckles, remembering how happy she was at that time.

Slowly Daenerys pulled away to look at the girl in her arms. “Is that how you went back in time?”

Arya only nods. “I was one and two again, a child…and everything else was perfect. Until I realized it’s not. Because the threat was still there, and everything will happen the same way not unless I changed it.” She paused, letting out a pained smile as she remembers how she saved Bran from being a cripple for the rest of his life, to knowing that his accident wasn’t actually an accident and from there, everything went south.
“I took matter into my own hands… I thought I was doing the right thing, but I was not.” She closed her eyes tight willing her faults to pass. A warm hand strokes gently on her cheek making her eyes open again to find the older girl full of concern. Arya enjoyed the light caress of Daenerys fingers which only makes her want to lay it all out. To expose to the other girl how damaged she truly is.

“I killed Cersei Lannister.” She confessed.

Daenerys stopped. “Do you mean in the past? You killed her in your previous life?”

“No. I mean in this timeline… I killed her again during her trial. One arrow to her heart.”

A beat of silence pass after that as both of them stare, searching one another.

“Jamie Lannister seeks revenge soon after and then he killed my father and Sansa and then the war happened… I cause that.” Arya explained further at the girl’s unresponsive state.

“Arya…” Daenerys called finally.

But, the young Stark interrupts almost immediately when she can guess what will come out from the girl’s mouth. She doesn’t need to hear sugar-coated words so she can feel a little bit better for herself. “Daenerys, do you not understand? I killed Cersei, I killed my father and my sister and I killed all those innocent people in the war. It was all me!” she hissed through gritted teeth.

The grey eyes are begging for her to agree with those claims and suddenly everything clicks in place for Daenerys. She reached for the girl’s neck, holding her in place so that she can see her and only her. “Listen to me, Arya. You didn’t know what would happen.”

“But, I did–“

“No, listen to me… You didn’t know what would happen when you killed Cersei. You didn’t know what it would cause. You were only trying to protect your family.”

The grey eyes glistened again, brimming with tears so Daenerys tightens her hold. “You are not responsible for every little thing that people decides to do, Arya.”

“But, if I hadn’t kill her–”

“Then perhaps she would still live and there would be no war or perhaps she’s going to die sooner or later and the war is still going to happen either way. We will never know for sure... Whatever it is it doesn’t matter because it already happened and it’s done. You can’t keep dwelling on the past, wondering what would happen if you do it differently, because that’s how one goes insane.”

The young Stark opens her mouth to argue but gave up when none comes to mind. The creases on her brows increased instead as she stared back in silence defiance. And Daenerys takes that as a small victory. “You can’t go back and change things again, Arya. The only thing left to do is start living in this moment, knowing that in your heart you had done the best you could to save your father and sister.”

“How do you do that? How do you keep going?” Arya asked timidly.

“You can start by forgiving yourself.”

“I don’t– I don’t think I can.” the young Stark said, her voice wavering.

And Daenerys heart crumpled at that. She leans forwards, their forehead making contact. “Then do it
for the sake of your father and Sansa and for everyone else that perished in the war. You owe them that… Can you do that?”

There was a moment of silence and Daenerys thought she would never hear an answer but then, Arya gave a slight nod. “I will.”

Chapter End Notes

(◕‿◕✿)
The Winter's Feast

Chapter Summary

In which the past has finally caught up with our little wolf and everyone around her.

Chapter Notes

Hello there my lovelies! Before you delve into this one, I hope you will still love me...
Because I don't think you will after this one (as if that's new, lol) >, <

Anyways, do know that I had this idea crawling inside my head at the very beginning since I draft this story (I even put some foreshadowing between chapters) so despite what you may think, I'm not a sadistic little writer who gets off by people's pain and suffering, mind you. I have a plan (sort of).

With that said, I really really wants to know what you think of this chapter regardless. So, have at it, yeah?

PS: I'm not joking when I told you that I really really really wants to know what you guys think. Okay then. *gulps*

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) - New Future*

It was before the crack of dawn that Arya decides to leave the warm bed and the circle comfort of the dragon queen who is still peacefully sleeping. She left a note thanking the older girl about last night and as she walks through the empty hallway, she soon regretted it. Leaving a note after what happened seems discreditable because Daenerys did more than Arya could ever thank her for. But, alas she didn’t think she could face the dragon queen so soon after her little breakdown. She needed to gather herself before she could face anyone really.

Though, as strange as it may sound, she actually feels better than the last time she remembered and that alone was saying something. It was a good thing that her subconscious seeks Daenerys in the middle of the chaos of her mind. Though, the guilt is still creeping underneath her skin, crawling to her heart, she pushes it away subsequently because she promised Daenerys that she will try to forgive herself. And Arya Stark is a woman of her words.

Her shoulders sag tiredly as she neared her room, imagining her soft bed that she wishes to rest on for a few minutes before she faced the day. She pushed the door before stepping inside her room unaware of another presence already inside.

“Well, I’m glad you used the door this time.” A disembodied voice sounded. Arya looks up to find Jon in the middle of the room, his dark grey orbs scrutinizing her.

His comment made her remembered the last time he caught her sneaking out after the assassin’s attack six years ago and she almost pulled a smile at the memory. “Do you often enter ladies room
uninvited, Jon?” she retorts half-heartedly, closing the door behind her.

Jon noticed her lack of enthusiasm as he slowly strides closer. “What’s wrong with your face, Arya?” he asked in surprised and concern.

She rolled her eyes at that, annoyed. “Seven Hells, Jon… You really do know how to win a girl’s heart, don’t you?”

He grimaced guiltily before trying again. “I’m sorry… What I meant was your face looks awful.”

“That is so much better, brother.” She quipped as she lands herself on the edge of the bed.

Jon lets out a defeated sigh before joining at her side. He forced her to look at him as he silently asks for forgiveness and she can’t help but to do just that. “Were you crying?” he asked carefully after a while.

Arya looks ahead, away from his concern gaze. She must have been a sight after last night. She can’t remember when the last time she ever cried her hearts out was and the aftermath must have shown now. She can even feel her swollen and puffy eyes as she wipes her face with her hand in false effort. She didn’t say anything and her silence only confirming his question.

“You know you can confide to me about anything, little sister… I’m here.” He offered.

She tilts her head at him with a small smile. “Thank you, Jon. But I’m alright now.”

He doesn’t seem to believe her so she fixed her gaze onto him more sternly. “I’m fine, truly… It’s passed now.” she assured, convincing herself in the process.

Deciding not to push her further, Jon reached for something at his side instead. “Well then, perhaps this could lighten your mood further?” he grinned as he presented a long and thin bundle of cloth to her arms.

Arya looks down blinking at the familiar weight and wrapping. Without waiting for his approval, she untied the bundle hurriedly and stops short when a thin, sharp blade comes into view. A wider smile was on her face now as she holds the hilt and points the skinny sword upwards. Needle feels and looks the same as she last remembered. Still light and pointed and still elegant. “I thought I’d lost it. Where did you find it?” She asked excitedly.

“I found it…” he trails looking unsure. But at Arya’s questioning gaze, he finally continues. “At the crossroad Inn, where the attack happened.”

“Oh.”

Silence engulfs them as Arya were taken back to that horrid day. She recalled losing Needle right after Father had a sword slashed through his throat and then a blade through Sansa’s heart soon after. Her grip around the hilt tightens as she wills the images and guilt to go away. Daenerys makes it sound so easy last night, but even as Arya tries her damn best right now, she couldn’t scrap them away completely.

“I’m heading to The Wall.” Jon suddenly said.

That makes Arya snaps from her train of thoughts almost instantly. “What?”

“There are some trouble concerning the Wildlings and Robb needs me there to sort things out. I’m leaving in a while actually… That’s why I wanted to give you Needle before I go. I’m sorry I can’t
attend your welcoming feast.” He explained with a sad smile.

Arya frowns, trying to absorb the new information. She was bothered by the fact that Robb was the one that sends Jon away and that she has not a clue about her own welcoming feast. Was she truly out of her wit yesterday? She decides to address the more important matter. “Why does it have to be you? Robb could ask for someone else, couldn’t he? If it is my welcoming feast, then he must know that I want you to be there… Is he trying to be rid of you?” she asked accusingly. The warning bell chimes loudly inside her head as she recalled visiting Jon’s grave at The Wall another lifetime ago.

“Don’t be silly… Robb isn’t the one at fault here. The Nights Watch needed my assistance and it is my duty as the Master of Law to oversee it. It’s only a coincidence that it occurs on the same day as the feast.”

Arya placed Needle at her side before standing up, looking away from her brother. She didn’t like that Jon has to go to that same place where he loses his life once. But, she can’t seem to hold him from his duty either.

“Come now, little sister… I’ll only be away for less than a fortnight. We’ll see each other soon enough. Besides this isn’t my first visit there so you needn’t worry at all.” He stands behind her and when she doesn’t respond, he retorts to ruffle her hair messily.

At that, Arya reluctantly turns around then as she remembered that they may not see each other for a lot longer than a fortnight since she will be going away with the dragon queen later in the evening. She looks to him, contemplating whether she should tell him about her leaving too but moves to wrap her arms around him instead. “I’m going to miss you terribly, Jon.” She sighed, resting at the crook of his neck. She decides to store the news of her leaving Winterfell in fear that it will only lead to him worrying leagues away at The Wall and she can’t afford that. The others can tell him of her departure once he got back from his duty and away from the Wildlings danger. Perhaps she can leave him a letter too. She tightens her hold around him then.

“Robb will find you plenty of things to do here to keep you occupied and I’m going to be the last thing on your mind.” He pulled away, looking at her with a grin.

Arya can’t match the smile since she will be leagues away from here by then. But, Jon mistook her unresponsive by something else as he spoke. “I know Robb is a bit harsh concerning Queen Daenerys, but he has the people to think of and he always does what’s best for us… And furthermore, he’s our brother.” He gripped her shoulder in assurance.

Arya doesn’t have anything to comment on that so she only managed a nod, though it seems to satisfy Jon nevertheless. She offered to walk him to the courtyard where his horse is already waiting and they walked in silence until the familiar cold wind greets them.

There are a small group of men in five ready by their horses, chatting with each other to pass the time. Jon stops not far from them, turning around to face his sister with a sad smile. Arya pulls him into another hug then. “Be safe, Jon.”

“I will.” he rubs circle at her small back in a soothing manner before breaking his hold. He was about to walk away but stopped when another presence neared them.

Robb strides towards them before he pulls Jon into a hug too. “I’ll see you soon, brother.”

Jon only nods and with one last glance to Arya, he joins the waiting men. Before she can comprehend of the thought of him leaving for Castle Black, his horse is already leaving the main gate and soon enough, leaving her and Robb alone at the courtyard.
“Are you unwell, sister?”

Arya looks to her right to find Robb’s concern gaze, studying her. “No, I’m fine… I had trouble sleeping last night is all.” she dismissed.

“Your welcoming feast only starts by midday, so I suppose you can have a bit of shut eye before then.” He offered.

“Before I do that, I need to talk to you.” She turns to him, facing him which he mirrored. Now that Robb was here, she decides to tell him what she didn’t tell Jon earlier. A moment passed as she gathered her thoughts on how to breach the subject of her departure and she reckon telling him straight to the point is the best choice. “I’m leaving with Queen Daenerys.” She finally said.

The blue eyes in front of her are searching the weight of her words and when he finds that she wasn’t messing around, his gaze hardens. “You choose the Targaryen Queen over your own family?” he asked, his tone lace with disappointment.

She sighed softly, sensing this conversation will only magnifies their disagreement further. “I’m not choosing anyone, Robb. Don’t make it sound like I’m choosing sides.”

“How can I not when that is exactly what you’re doing… You just come back home to us, and now you’re going away again? Do you know how long Mother has been waiting and hoping for you and Bran to somehow miraculously comes home? And now that you did, you want to leave again... With her of all people, fighting a war that you have no part in.” he argued.

“But, I do have a part in this.” she said, calmly and when Robb looks on with questioning gaze, she continues. “When Robert decided to hire a cult of assassins to kill Daenerys and then murdered my friend, Missandei, that makes me a part of this a whole lot more than I have ever asked for… Those people aren’t going to stop until they succeeded by any means necessary and I vow that I will keep the queen safe and I can’t do that if I stayed here.”

Robb still had his gaze on her, but he was frowning now. “Were you there when it happened? When the assassination took place?”

“Yes, I was there. I stopped them before they can do any harm to the queen.” She explained hoping that it would make Robb see how skilful she was and thus being able to take care of herself.

But, Robb face shifted to something she can’t describe. Was it anger or irritation she couldn’t tell because it disappeared as fast as it came. He looks away with a sigh then, suddenly defeated. “It seems to me, you’re not asking for my permission.”

Arya said nothing to that, confirming his statement. He doesn’t even try to cover his displeasure and she suddenly had the urge to explain herself further, seeking for his understanding. “I want to do this, Robb… I’ve never wanted anything more than to be by her side and for once in my life I wished to do the things that could bring me my own happiness.”

He chuckled mirthlessly. “You know, sister…not everyone have the luxury to do what they truly want especially one of your status. You’re not just any lady in Westeros. You’re the Princess of the North and whatever you choose to do will have its consequences on all of us. Your wishes are irrelevant because your duty to your family and the people should come first and foremost.”

Her jaw clenched tight as she tried to calm her nerves. “And what would be the duty of the princess here? Have your wife or Mother teach me on how to be a proper lady again? And then find me a suitor, and marry me off to some lord?”
“Does that sound that horrible to you?” he asked not even trying to disagree with her propositions.

“You know that’s not who I am.”

“You’re not a child anymore, Arya. Someday you’re going to have to marry and have children of your own.”

“Perhaps someday I will… But, whenever that happened, it’ll be on my own terms.”

The tension was palpable as seconds went by and when she thought that Robb has come up with another argument, he looks away instead, and she noticed how hard he clenched his fists.

“Clearly, nothing I say will change your mind.” He starts, locking eyes with her again. “So, you do what you have to do, sister and I’ll do the same.” He finished, devoid of emotion.

There was a strange feeling that passed as he said those words but she shakes it off as his anger at her defiance. Without as much as another glance, he turns around and walks away.

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Despite how tired she felt and how much she wanted to be in bed, Arya founds herself wandering around Winterfell instead, trying to memorize every crook and cranny of the place one last time before she left. Eventually, she comes to a stop at the crypt’s gates but stays rooted outside for a long while, not able to bring herself to visit her Father’s and Sansa’s tombs. Deciding that she can’t go down there without somehow breaking down again, she said her goodbyes at the other side of the gates before turning and walks away.

The Godswoods became her last checkpoint as she climbed up the familiar tree she used to climb with Bran and settles with her back against the bark and her feet spread in front along the wide branch as she basked in the peace and solitude. The air was sharp as she breathes in and the wind was colder since the sun has just only begun to make its appearance. Closing her eyes, she waits for the warmth to spread further. Seconds passed and then minutes. Yet, the air only seems colder somehow.

Arya opened her eyes to find grey clouds marching above, covering the sun though not completely, since its light was already spreading vast indicating morning has arrived. But then of a sudden, the clouds broke into a deluge of whirling snow. It came in intricate patterns of ice floated weightlessly downward from the sky above, each flake swirling and dancing, as an icy wind carried it towards the branch she sits.

The young girl blinked thoughtfully as the frost patiently kissed her face. This is the first time she sees a snowfall since she came back home and a smile naturally forms on her face. Feeling enlighten suddenly, she jumped down the ground gracefully and heads out towards the glass gardens of Winterfell with a new set of purpose.

It was not much later as she finds herself striding towards Guest Tower. Her steps light as she walks down the hallway. When she saw an Unsullied soldier stands posted at the end of the hall, she hastens her steps and greets the guard with a nod before knocking twice on the door. She didn’t wait to be told to come in as she opens it wide and invites herself in and soon regret it when she founds two set of eyes on her instead of only one.

Arya settles at Daenerys who looks just as surprised as she is when she saw the dragon queen is with her knight, discussing what it may look like an urgent matter. Before she can apologize for the intrusion, Daenerys beats her to it.
“I think that will be all. I trust you can do the rest?” the dragon queen asked though it sounded more like an order than a question.

Jorah hesitates for a second before he nods curtly. “I’ll take care of it, Khaleesi.”

He walks passed Arya, exchanging an accusing glare that she somehow has interrupted his moment. The young woman doesn’t have time to ponder over it when her favourite voice sounded again.

“Will you please close the door?”

Arya does as she was told before striding to the middle of the room where Daenerys is. The violet eyes are silently seeking hers and the girl finds herself loss of words to say. After all, the last time she was with the dragon queen, she was balling her eyes out. She was embarrassed of what happened and afraid of what the older girl might think of her now.

“Good morning.” She starts lamely. Daenerys quirked her eyebrow slightly, practically asking if she just said that.

And suddenly, all of Arya’s worry escapes into thin air only to be replaced by another set of anxiety. She wonders if she did anything wrong before she left the bed and the older girl. She even left the note.

Arya cleared her throat then. “Did you get my note?”

“You mean the one that says  *Thank you for the night*? Yes, I did.” Daenerys replied, crossing her arms against her chest.

The young Stark cussed silently, only noticing how wrong when the older girl put it that way. “I’m sorry… I didn’t mean it to offend you.”

Daenerys sighed softly then. “I was worried, Arya. After last night…” she trails unable to continue any further as she eyed the girl in concern.

“I know... I should have told you when I was leaving but I needed a moment alone.”

The dragon queen only nods in understanding. “Are you feeling better now?” she asked.

“I wanted to say that I am.”

“Wanting it is the first step to achieve it.” Daenerys encouraged with a small smile. Arya cannot help but to mirror it.

The silence soon after accompanies them comfortably before Arya recalled the reason she came back to the silver haired queen in the first place. She walks closer to the older girl, fishing her treasure she kept hidden inside her robe’s pocket at the same time. “This is for you.” She offered.

Daenerys eyebrow quirked slightly, confused though at the same time her smile grew wider as she accepts the blue rose from the young Stark. “This is beautiful.” She breathed out and it truly is. The flower was a pale blue, the colour of frost. “I’ve encountered different types of roses before but none of them were in this colour.” She said amazed, before putting the petals over her nose and hummed. “And it smells wonderful too.”

Arya’s shoulders straighten, pleased with herself. “It’s a winter rose. It’s snowing outside and I couldn’t help but to think of you and strangely, the flower too. I thought you might like it since it’s rare and can only be grown in the glass gardens of Winterfell… I can show you the place. We have
plenty more of where that came from.” She explained.

Daenerys can’t help but to fix a smile at the lengthy explanation. “That sounds rather inviting…” she trails before noticing what else the girl said. “But, did you just say it’s snowing outside?”

At Arya’s grinning and later nodding her answer, the silver haired queen looks over her shoulder at the opened window and was greeted by a rare sighting. Her feet moves to peer over the window sill as she felt the smile she wore grew. It was snowing as Arya claimed and her excitement bubbling at the pit of her stomach, eager to get out in the open and bask in the falling snow. She turns to the other girl instantly. “Well, come on then.”

Arya doesn’t have time to react when the older woman caught her hand and drag her out of the room. Daenerys barked some kind of order to the lone Unsullied guard to remain there as she and the young Stark walk pass him without a second glance. As Arya peered over her shoulder, the guard only gape openly at the dragon queen’s retreating form and back at the empty room he was supposed to guard, clearly contemplating on whether he should follow them or remain as per instructed. She stifled a giggle when Daenerys tugs her hand harder making them break into an almost-run down the hallways, the guard forgotten.

Their feet pounded against the stone floors creating echoes throughout the path they take. Arya quickens her steps to outrun the dragon queen. Their hands still tangled together making the young girl leading the way now. She looks over her shoulder with a building smirk. “Come now, Your Grace… move those adorable feet of yours a bit faster if you want to catch the snow.”

Daenerys only glared at that though it lacks the heat of it judging by the slight tugging at the corner of her mouth is any indication. She quickens her steps as were told, catching up as both of them end up running side by side now. When the cold wind greets their face, and their boots start making scrunching noises, they finally stop running.

The dragon queen moved ahead leaving Arya behind as she looks up to the open sky, still panting from the run moments ago. But the sight before her swallowed everything else, almost calming which only ease up her breathing to a normal rate again. She takes that time to properly admire the first snowfall she ever encountered in her life. The glittering snowflakes fell soundlessly from the sky above, taking their time before they reached their destined places of rest, enveloping everything in a calm, silent coldness that was comforting in its own special way.

Arya on the other hand is so entranced by the sight of the silver haired queen among the snowfall that befell around her – making her look almost like an other-worldly being that descend from the sky itself – that she didn’t notice the said girl is watching her back with amused curiosity. Only when her name is being called that Arya finds violet orbs again.

“Yes?” she wondered.

Daenerys tilts her head slightly. “There’s something on your face.”

Innocently, Arya reaches for her face, wiping her cheek and then her forehead, searching for any foreign substance that got on. When she finds nothing, she looks ahead to violet eyes again only to find a snowball comes into her view instead. It was a split second decision and she was a second too late to avoid the snowball hitting her squarely on the face. She can hear the light giggles from the older girl as she wipes her face off the bursting frozen flakes. “Well, that was rude.” She commented.

The dragon queen grins wider. “I told you there was something on your face.”

Arya scowled half-heartedly, which only had the opposite effect when Daenerys laughs softly
instead though she didn’t mind it that much since the sound fills her heart. Silently, the younger girl marched towards the silver haired queen with purpose. The violet orbs in turn are faithfully onto hers as they studied her closing in. When Arya was finally close enough, she grabbed the older girl’s arm – the one that she sure was the culprit of her frozen face, and tugged it towards her, making Daenerys body jerked against hers. And Arya takes the chance of proximity to capture the older girl’s lips then.

But, Daenerys pulled away with a flinch. “Your lips are frozen cold.”

“I wonder whose fault is that.” Arya replied with a slight quirk of her brow. The dragon queen smiles sheepishly at that before pressing her lips onto the girl again, this time not pulling away.

The warmth of Daenerys lips spread through Arya’s almost instantly as she kissed her back, gently and carefully.

“There, better?” Daenerys asked when Arya pulled back and looked at her.

“Much.”

“I should throw snowballs at your face more frequently. That way I can warm it using this method again.” the dragon queen’s trail as she leans in, her lips against Arya’s cheek, brushing it lightly, before she finally lands a kiss. Then, her mouth brushed against the girl’s ear, biting it, teasing.

Shivers ran through Arya’s whole body, making her tremble that had nothing to do with the cold. She was sure Daenerys was fully aware on what caused it because then the older girl moved on to trace the line of her jawbone with more light kisses. Arya swallowed a lump dryly as her face heats up more than she intended to be. “Or you can just ask.” She offered.

The older girl pulls away then. “I could… But, where’s the fun in that?” she smirked.

“Catching that snowball with my face while I looked like a fool is fun for you?” Arya asked, pretending to be hurt.

Daenerys sneaked a hand around the girl’s neck with a repressed smile before leaning close to the girl’s ear, their cheeks almost brushing. “I promise I’ll make it up to you after.” She breathed out, and then pulling away though not that far as their warm breaths mingled.

Arya closed her eyes, trying to hold herself together. She opens them again to find Daenerys looking back with glimmer in her eyes, enjoying the silent torture she had to endure at their body being pressed so close together. “Shut up, Daenerys.”

The dragon queen quirk her eyebrow, amused more than anything. “How rude.”

“I learn it from my Queen.” Arya quipped.

Daenerys hummed in approval. “What else did you learn?”

The young Stark decides that coming up with more words would be just a waste of time. So, she reached up and pulled Daenerys mouth to hers instead. The older girl kissed her back with gentleness but that isn’t what Arya wanted. She knotted her fists in the older girl’s robe, and pulled her closer, deepening their kiss. Daenerys groaned softly, low in her throat, and then her arms circled her, gathering Arya against her as snows continue to fall around them.

The small possibility of someone finding them in this compromising position vanished as soon as it occurred to the young Stark. All that existed was Daenerys and only her. And when the older girl
pulls away for a breather before leaning in again to capture her mouth for another round, Arya knew, Daenerys thought so too.

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Music filled the air inside the Great Hall of Winterfell as Arya was seated at the main table. Just a while ago, Robb had made a toast, officially welcoming her back home though his voice lacks the enthusiasm of it. She didn’t blame him for that. Not when she was about to leave as soon as the feast is over. But, nonetheless, the lords across the room didn’t seem to be affected as they shouted a salute to her name in return. Arya forced a smile at the many faces that she can’t put a name to before downing her ale, and soon after the feast begin.

She looks down to her table that are laden with delicacies of roasted meat, savoury fruit and nuts, countless cheeses, bread and sweets to name a few. Robb certainly had put effort in the menu, she noted. She glances over to the other tables where the men were busy filling their plates and are starting to eat. Even the foreign armies of Unsullied and the Dothrakis that were seated among the Northern lords were loosening up and talking among themselves animatedly.

Naturally, her gaze shifted to the violet orbs of the dragon queen who was seated just across her table. Her loyal advisors are close with her among the rows of tables, enjoying the feast too. Daenerys looks ahead to catch grey eyes and raised her cup in salute to her, smiling as she did so. Arya chuckles softly at that, before she raised her own cup too.

“Here, have some of these, my child.” A voice interrupts, forcing the girl to pay attention to the person on her right where her mother is seated.

“You must eat to your heart’s content. It is your welcoming feast after all.” Catelyn mumbled as she continues filling up the girl’s plate even when it was close to overfill.

Arya had to stop her mother. “Thank you, mother. I will.” She said with a smile and hurriedly pulled her plate away from the older woman.

But, Catelyn eyed the young girl with a raised brow, waiting for her to take a bite. Arya repressed another smile as she slowly cut the roasted meat into sizeable pieces and finally put it into her mouth. The older woman breaks into a satisfied smile then before she turns her attention to her youngest son, doing more or less the same she did with her daughter.

As the young Stark takes another bite, her heart swells with emotion at her mother’s affection which only makes it harder to tell the older woman of her leaving Winterfell again. Though, she was supposed to mention about her departure already, she didn’t have it in her to break the news, knowing how devastated her mother would feel. And Arya wanted to at least keeps her mother’s smile a little longer.

She focused onto her plate again, making sure that she didn’t waste any food. Even though she enjoyed the meal, it doesn’t feel as much satisfying as watching the silver-haired queen across who seems to be enjoying herself as much as everyone else.

It was surprising that Arya was able to successfully empty her plate. She downs her ale last, sighing contently after. Looking ahead again, she finds her favourite violet orbs already on hers, watching with a slight quirk of her brow as if something was amusing. Arya decides that she can’t restraint her craving to be close with the older girl as she finally gets up and strides purposely to Daenerys.

She was already half of the way when she was stopped by a man. A slight frown adorned her features as she tries to move to the side and out of the man’s way only for him to block her path.
again. She fixed him a glare then.

“Princess Arya, it’s an honour to finally meet you... The North is overjoyed by your return.” The man said, bowing his head slightly.

The young Stark didn’t add anything to that, merely studying the man in front of her. He has a plain face, beardless and ordinary though his eyes are noticeably a pale colour, strange like two white moons. She had the most uncomfortable feeling as those eyes look back at her.

“Who are you?” she asked curtly, not bothering with how discourteous she sounded.

The man smiles then. “I’m Roose Bolton, my lady. Lord of the Dreadfort and the head of House Bolton.”

Arya can’t help but to stiffen at the declaration. She remembered in her past timeline that the Bolton’s had sacked Winterfell and that her family was overthrown by them.

Someone shouted his name from across the room then, successfully breaking their eye staring. “If you’ll excuse me, my lady... I hope you enjoy the feast.” He dismissed himself, turning around and strides out of her view.

Walking to her intended path again – now that no one is in her way, Arya finds herself still thinking of the peculiar meeting with Roose Bolton. But, it soon melted into the background when Daenerys face comes into view. She plops herself down next to the dragon queen then.

“Enjoying yourself, Your Grace?” she smiles at the older girl.

Daenerys returns the gesture. “I am, now that you’re finally here.” She trails before continue. “I can even ignore these sounds that you called music.”

As if on cue, the drums pounded again and again, trying to stay in tune with the rest of the instruments as it echoes through the stone walls. “They’re not very good.” Arya agreed with an apologetic smile.

“Well, perhaps we can do ourselves a favour and be rid of these horrible music and drunken men and heads to the glass garden instead.” The dragon queen suggested, leaning in suggestively.

The young Stark felt her throat dried up at the close proximity. She did promised the older girl that she would take her to the glass garden to show the winter rose earlier that day. But, obviously they were busy with far important matter that their time was well spent in the falling snow. Without conscious, she glanced down to Daenerys lips, remembering how soft, sweet and addictive it feels on hers. Arya swallowed a lump then, trying to gather herself.

“Perhaps later? I have to tell my mother about me leaving.” She finally said.

Daenerys leans back, her smile gone. “You haven’t told your family?”

“Robb knew.”

“That justified his glaring then.”

Arya glanced to her brother at the main table, where he was indeed glaring at them before he fixed his attention to the man talking in front of him again. She looks away with a soft sigh, feeling defeated at Robb’s action. A warm hand suddenly caught hers under the table then. She tightens her hold, intertwining their fingers as she looks up to Daenerys.
“Arya, I’ve never asked you this…but, do you really want to do this?” the dragon queen asked in all seriousness. When the girl only looks back in question, she continues. “I don’t want to force you into anything you don’t want to do. I understand if you want to stay with your family.” She finished.

The young Stark can see the determination written on the violet orbs in front of her. She believed that Daenerys will truly let her stay if she wishes so. But, that isn’t what she wants. “My place is with you, Daenerys.” She tightens her hold, assuring the girl. When Daenerys finds that Arya meant what she said, her posture relaxed almost instantly.

“There you are, Princess Arya!” someone shouted before he collides with the table, revealing Tyrion with a leg of lamb in his hand and a cup in another. “Have you tasted the roasted meat? They were exceptional! I’ve never tasted such delicacies in my life.” He stated, overjoyed.

The young Stark and the dragon queen shared the same amused look as they regard the dwarf.

“Are you drunk, Tyrion?” Daenerys asked, accusingly.

“Drunk? Ha! That word is not in my dictionary, Your Grace.” The Lannister replied confidently, taking a mouthful of meat in his hand.

Jorah and Yara show up too then, taking their seats. Arya enjoyed their company as she lets the conversations flow around her. All the while, her hand still holds on to Daenerys.

It was not much later when she glanced to the main table and realized that her mother and Rickon were nowhere to be seen. Even Margaery and little Ned weren’t anywhere inside the Great Hall. Only Robb was left at the corner of the hall with a few of his men. She decides to find her mother then, wanting to break the news and end her distraught once and for all.

“I’m going to find my mother.” She said softly to Daenerys where only the girl could hear her.

“I’ll see you soon, then.” The dragon queen assured with a small smile.

It takes everything in Arya not to lean in and capture the older girl’s lips again as she stands up and excused herself instead. She takes one last glance over her shoulder as the violet eyes still faithfully on hers until she was out of sight.

With the chatters and drums pounding slowly ebbs away, Arya takes a deep breath to gather herself, thinking on what she should said to her mother. Her thoughts were interrupted though when she heard multiple sets of footsteps behind her. She stops then, before she turns around slowly.

“Ah, there she is… The Princess Arya Stark.” Theon shouts his greeting from across the hallway as he closed in. There are two men joining him at his sides respectively.

“What do you want, Theon?” she asked, coldly. She has no time to listen to his nonsense.

“Where were you heading?” he asked instead, stopping when he’s five steps away.

“A place called ‘it’s none of your business’.”

Theon barks a laugh, as his companions join him. Arya narrowed her eyes at the scene. The hairs at the back of her neck stand at ends as their laugh fills the hallways.

“Well, Arya, I’m afraid you have to cancel your visit to this place because we’re taking you to your room.” Theon was wearing his trademark smug smile as his hand reach for the pommel of his sword, silently daring her to say otherwise.
Grey eyes followed his movement and only then she realized that the two men were armed too. She looks up to Theon again. “And why would you do that?” she asked, calmly.

“Because the King orders me to.” He simply said.

Arya clenched her jaw tight. “Robb did?” she asked for confirmation which Theon nods. “So his plan is to lock me up and let Queen Daenerys leave without me?” her brow raised, unimpressed.

Theon seems to be holding his smile as he exchange looks between the two men before he finally looks to her again. “I don’t think your brother’s planning on letting the dragon bitch leave, little princess.” He smirks.

Her face fell at the statements. “What do you mean by that?” She takes a step forward, demanding answer.

But he ignores the girl as he fixed his attention to the men instead. “Take her.”

Instinctively, Arya steps back as the two armed men closed in to her. Her mind is on a whirlwind as she can’t help but to think of the worst. Robb couldn’t possibly have planned to hurt Daenerys. She wanted to deny it because her brother would never act against his honour. But, everything that Theon just said seems to indicate otherwise.

Her fists clenched so tight that she can feel the nails digging through her skin. “If you even touch a single hair of her, I swear I will kill you with my bare hands.” she threatened, looking straight at Theon.

The men stop then as Theon walks passed them. He chuckled mirthlessly as he locks eyes with steel grey ones. “I promised you, little princess…we’re going to do a lot more than touch her hair. It would be a miracle if you can recognize the dragon bitch after we’re done with her.”

At his words, the calm within her snaps. She didn’t care that she doesn’t have any weapons on her person. Though she regretted not taking Needle with her, but that didn’t stop her advance on Theon. He doesn’t even have the time to unsheathe his sword as she speeds up, her fist swings fast, punching his throat. He choked a breath as he stumbles backwards, moaning with pain.

The two men however do have enough time to ready their sword. They point their blades ahead, marching at her. Arya used the narrow hallways to her advantage as she grabbed the still moaning Theon by his collar and lands a kick at his chest, successfully making him crashed against the armed men.

The only way back to the Great Hall is through the path she comes out from and she doesn’t think twice when she walks passed the men that are a hurdling mess on the floor. The only thing on her mind was Daenerys and that she needed to get to the girl fast. Her thoughts were interrupted suddenly as she feels her body jerked backwards and then her face slammed into the wall next. She grunts at the uneven stone wall that grates on her skin forcefully.

“Don’t make this hard on yourself, Arya. Just go to your room.” Theon hissed at her ear, twisting her arm behind her back for good measure.

Arya swallowed the pain expertly, gritting her teeth. With all the strength she could muster, she directed her head backwards to find something to hit it by. A satisfying crack was heard soon after and then the hold on her arm was released.

“You broke my nose!” Theon shouts indignantly, staggering away. The blood seeps through his fingers as he reached for his nose.
The other men were unaffected by that as they closed in on her and Arya takes the abandoned sword on the floor, ready for them.

“We don’t want to hurt you, m’lady.” One of the man stated, his own sword pointing at her while the other one was behind him, clutching a dagger in his grip.

She tightens her hold on the hilt as she looks to them darkly. “I do.”

Despite his words, the man lunged first, bringing his sword towards her. Arya takes a large step back to avoid the attack which he mirrored before he swipes across again. She lifts the blade then, effectively blocking his attack. The steels sing against the hallways as their swords clash one another. When the man attacks again with the same manoeuvre, she blocks it before sliding her sword away from his in one swift motion and launched her counter attack. He gasps in pain as her sword cut through his leg like knife cut through butter.

With the man down on the floor, clutching his bleeding leg in whimper, Arya moves pass him and onto the other man with the dagger. She didn’t wait for nothing else as she lunged at him with a growl. He was ready then, as he swings his attacking arm back at her. But, it was a pathetic effort as the knife clumsily cuts through air as she easily sidesteps them. And as soon as she finds an opening, the young girl wasted no more time as she stabs her blade through his thigh. His dagger clatters noisily onto the ground as he fell down with it. She didn’t even bother to pull her sword back as she lets it stuck in his flesh. Instead, she takes the knife before moving forward to take care of the last person.

Theon backed away, widening their gap as he finally unsheathes his sword in a safe distance. The blood from his nose is already trailing down to his shirt now. With his hands both on the hilt, he stops and speeds up to her then. His eyes with determination.

Arya on the other hand, were already walking towards him and she doesn’t stop even though their distances are becoming closer by the second. She flips the dagger instead so she was grasping the tip and bends her wrist back towards her forearm and throws it with all her might. The knife propelled through the air in quick turns. Though it can’t be said the same with Theon when he’s not quick enough to stay out of the blade’s way. He screamed in pain as the knife lands above his knee. Taking that as her cue, Arya sprints forward, sliding across the floor as she grasps the dagger on him, pulling it out only to plunge it again to his other leg. He fell down to his knees as another scream echoes through the hallways.

“You’re mental!” Theon shouts between pained breaths. “I’ll kill you for this, Arya!”

She doesn’t look back to him and the other men – knowing that they cannot do anything to stop her now – as she runs towards her intended path. Her mind clouded with worry of the dragon queen and what Robb was planning to do. She silently prayed to whoever is listening for Daenerys to be safe because Arya doesn’t know if she could ever live with herself if the older girl is harmed in any way.

Her steps slowed when she heard the unmistakably sound of shouting and of steels clashing instead of the usual pounding of the music and the chatters of people. Arya willed her feet to move forward to the opening of the Great Hall, expecting the feast to be as she last left it, only to find it was anything but.

The first thing she sees is the men who was supposed to be the musician are holding crossbows in their hands instead of their drums or flutes and other instruments they should be playing. And then the quarrel flew through the air and landed at one Unsullied soldier who was defending himself against the attack on him. He fell down almost instantly as the arrow hits his chest. Arya then saw a second bolt pierce through another Dothraki man across the room. And another quarrel went in his
open mouth and came out the back of his neck. He crashed forward, knocking the table off its trestles and sending cups, platters and wine bouncing, spilling and sliding across the floor. She saw Jorah swings his sword at the Northmen, clearly outnumbered. But, a crossbow bolt drove him to his knees before the other men effectively cut him down.

“Stop!” Arya cried, but the shouting and the clash of steel smothered her plea. By then men were pouring in the other doors as well, mailed men in shaggy fur cloaks with steel in their hands. She took them for rescue for half a heartbeat, until one of them struck a Dothraki man’s head off with two huge blows of his axe. Hope blew out like a candle in a storm.

In the midst of slaughter, there sit her brother at the main table, watching silently.

“Robb!” she shouted. “ROBB! STOP THIS MADNESS!”

The chaos inside the hall remains even though her voice loomed over it. Robb looks at her, finally noticing her presence. He stands up slowly. “You shouldn’t be here, Arya.” his voice cold.

“These men are your guests! Enough! Stop this!”

Robb only stared back at her. But then, a movement caught his eyes and he shifted his gaze to the room which Arya mirrored. Her heart stops when she saw the familiar silver haired queen struggled to her knees. She had an arrow in her side and a second in her leg. Robb raised a hand, and the chaos stopped. “The rightful Queen of Westeros arises… It seems your numbers didn't matter after all, Your Grace. Your dragons are not here… Your armies are not here to save you… You already lost the war before it even started.” He chuckled mirthlessly.

“No, Daenerys…” Arya calls but it was chocked between her breaths. She looks to her brother again. “Robb, stop…please stop this.” she begs.

Robb looks at her with a changed expression, one of anger. “This is all your fault, sister. You shouldn’t have come home with her. You shouldn’t interfered when the assassins tried to do their job because then I wouldn’t have to do this. I sacrificed so much and it’s all for nothing.”

“You-” Her breath hitched. "Wh- What are you…saying?’

“It was me who hired the Faceless Man.”

The words hit Arya like a slap on her cheek and it hurts her more than she imagined it to be. She can’t help but to think of Missandei. Of sweet Missandei that was wrongly murdered by the assassin that Robb paid.

‘This is all your fault, sister.’ My fault.

She glanced to her side, where Daenerys is leaning at the edge of the table, trying to force herself to remain standing. There are Northmen surrounding her, waiting for the order to end it all. Arya looks to Robb again with a new determination.

“Robb, please let her go.” She started, ignoring the tears streaming down her face. “I promise you I’ll do what you say… We will forget what happened here and I’ll stay as you wish. Let Daenerys go. Let her go and I swear I will do as you say… I’ll marry any lord you want. I swear it… I swear it by the old gods and the new.”

“No,” Daenerys’ voice was whisper faint. “Arya, no…”

“Yes, Daenerys, get up. Get up and walk out, please, please. Save yourself.”
Robb huffed suddenly. “And why would I let her do that?” He glared. "Do you take me a fool, sister that you'd think I'll let the enemy free after everything that I've sacrificed?"

Her fists tightened, the nails digging so hard she can almost feel the blood drawing from her skin. “Let her go, Robb! Or I swear to God…” she growled.

There was no emotion whatsoever on Robb's face at the threat. Instead, he looks away casually before nudging his head as if signalling to someone. She followed his line of vision to find a familiar man she encountered before. Roose Bolton, she remembered. His shirt spotted with blood of the others. He stepped up to Daenerys silently before thrusting his dagger through the dragon queen’s heart, and twisted.

“NO!” Arya was running before she even realised what she was doing. But, before she can get to Daenerys, something heavy struck at the back of her head and her face ends up slapping against the cold floor soon after.

“Take my sister to her room.” the voice sounded muffled to her ears as the throbbing at the back of her head increased.

She feels her body being lifts up and carried away. She tried to call Daenerys but nothing came out. Every effort she tried deems fruitless. Her limbs were leaden and the taste of blood was in her mouth. She tried to at least open her eyes, and faintly saw she was floating away from the Great Hall before it goes black again.

The cold wind struck her without warning then, forcing her to open her eyes again. She vaguely sees the still falling snow. The image of Daenerys surrounding by the snow earlier that day filled her mind and her eyes clouded with unshed tears.

There was a faint growl coming towards her, but Arya paid it no heed as she falls to the comfort of unconsciousness again. But, it was short-lived when her body slammed hard against the cold ground. She groans in pain at the inflicted force at the back of her head. The growling was becoming louder and more vicious accompanying by someone shouting and struggling before it goes eerily quiet.

Arya felt a soft nudging at her face and then a silent whimper as something wet licked her face. Reluctantly she opens her eyes to find golden orbs and snouts in front of her. “Nymeria?”

The direwolf licks her face in return, purring softly at her mistress. The young Stark looks behind Nymeria to find a man lying silently on the snow, blood pooling underneath him. Slowly, she gets up and crawls close enough to see the man. His dark eyes lock on hers as she recognized the burning scars on his face. The Hound was holding his bleeding neck as his life gradually seeps away from his eyes.

Arya turns away slowly as she looks ahead at nothing and does nothing. She could have been at it for hours before Nymeria nudges her softly, taking her attention again.

"Take me away from here, Nym." She heard herself said.

Nymeria fixed her a look before she offered her back. Absentmindedly, Arya forced herself up and mounts the direwolf. Her hands are secured around Nymeria’s neck as she lowered herself on its soft furs. Before she can comprehend that she was riding a direwolf, Nymeria dashed forward. The cold wind struck her face heavily now as they splits through air.

And when Nymeria finally stops, arriving at her destination, Arya couldn’t hold on anymore as she gets off and lands unceremoniously on the ground. Her face up and her arms at her sides. She stays
like that for a while, as there’s nothing left for her to do. The winds blow through the leaves then, making a familiar inhuman shrill sounds. She looks up and the Gods face comes into her view. Nymeria had taken her to Godswood it seems.

And her gaze stay rooted at the God's face until a loud shriek caught her attention. Slowly she pushed herself into a sitting position and turns her head to the sound. Drogon was flying up in the sky, shrieking loudly as if he’s in pain. Perhaps he was. His mother is gone after all. Daenerys is dead.

Arya’s breath stuck in her throat. Daenerys is dead. Daenerys is never going to look at her with those gentle and tender eyes again. Her chest ache the kind of pain she doesn’t know even existed. It tears her apart from the inside as her mind filled with the images of the silver haired woman, particularly the memory of the said girl declaring her love to her.

Truth be told, Arya doesn’t know what she feels at that time. When she’s with Daenerys, she felt comfort. She felt assured. She felt safe and she felt liberating. How was she to know that all those feelings she felt was in fact something more? Something special? But now that she does know, it was already too late. Daenerys wouldn’t be able to hear what she really feels anymore.

Drogon shrieks louder at the same time, as if he knows what’s gnawing on her mind and soul. She looks up to the sky then, where the dragon is flying downwards towards Winterfell and towards the Godswoods where she's at. His massive wings glides through the air as his mouth opened, the beginning of a flame at the back of his throat, and then the fire makes its way towards her and touch her skin. The last thing on Arya’s mind before the flames and the scorching heat engulfed her whole was how much she loves Daenerys too.

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*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - Old Past*

Arya wakes up with a loud gasp. Her eyes shot open widely. Her breath stuck in her throat as she can feel the dragon's fire still burning inside her lungs. Only when she feels lightheaded due to the lack of air did she breathe, taking a large gulp of air through her mouth. And when she did, the nausea hits her, taking turn. It clawed at her throat, and she tried to force down the bile but it was too late. Instinctively, she turns her body to the other side and heaves. She didn’t even register that she had fallen down to the floor, sinking to her knees with a loud thud. Her stomach keeps contracting violently and forcing everything up and out. She heaved even though there was nothing left to go.

The hard stone floor was against her cheek as Arya tried to regain her bearing. Her face was white and dripping with sweat and tears. Her eyes open weakly to find the steel helm on top her bedside table. She concludes then that she was in her room though it makes no sense how she got here in the first place.

The last time she remembered, she was in the Godswood with Nymeria, running away from–

She swallowed another bile, pushing those horrible images that are starting to come out, down into the furthest place of her mind. To say that she was in a daze was an understatement as she staggered and out of the room. She pushed her body forward, effectively using the wall as guidance, and when she finds an opening, she looks up to see that she had arrived at the Great Hall.
Her breath comes in short spurt as her recollection of the slaughters that happened here just a while ago force its way to her mind. The pain inside her chest rakes her as she remembered seeing Daenerys for the last time in here as well.

“Are you trying to get to the kidney pie, Arya?”

She snaps her head at the direction and there he was. Robb was smiling at her like all is well in the world as he shoves a crump of bread into his mouth.

Arya would have notice that her brother looks a lot younger than she last saw him and that there are other people seating around him too. But, as such, her rage overthrows everything else and all she can see was him and what he had done. A hot burning anger rippled through her body and she can’t even register her physical sufferings from before anymore.

“YOU FUCKING CUNT!” She growled and all but run to him, jumping at the table, kicking the platters that’s on her way before throwing herself at Robb.

His blue eyes are wide in shock before he collapsed backwards, with Arya on him. They fell hard on the ground with a loud thud. Before he can defend himself, the young girl slams her fist into his face.

Arya ignored the pain that blazed up her arm as her fist connected with his jaw. “YOU KILLED HER!”

Her blood hummed in her veins as determination and anger controlled her, landing another punch to his face again and again and again. Until her fist caught nothing but air and her body was hauled away from him. She screamed like a madman, demanding to be put down all the while throwing curses at Robb.

Something hits her face then making her head snaps at the force. Her shouting stops almost instantly as the stinging pain from it swallowed everything else. Slowly, she looks ahead, eyes watering as she clutched her face.

“Arya, my child.” Her father was looking at her with a pained expression.

But, that can’t be right. He’s dead. He should not be here. She glanced across the table and finds another ghost. Sansa was there too, tears brimming in her eyes as she looks at her in horror. Arya staggered backwards, the hold around her middle no more and ends up slamming her back against Jon. She flinched away from him as she distanced herself from all of them. Her father tried to reach for her then.

“N-No! Get away!” she shouted, her voice wavered and her body is trembling as she did so.

She walks pass her mother that is looking at her with unspoken fear. Arya can’t really blame her since she was afraid of herself too as she looks down to her bloodied hand that Robb was a fallen victim to and his limp form on the floor. The silence was deafening to her ears as she unsteadily move away from everyone, trying to make sense of what's happening.

“M'lord, we heard commotion from outside. Is something the matter?” A new voice echoes inside the Great Hall then.

Arya’s frown deepens as she finds Theon walking towards them from the other door, no injuries on his legs that she had maimed from before. And another person that should be dead is walking beside him, looking very much alive.

“M'lord?” Maester Luwin asked again, addressing her father.
The young girl decides to ignore them all as she wobbled towards the door where they just came from. She heard the distinct calling of her name from behind but instead of stopping, she quickens her steps. The sun greets her not long after. There was no snow falling from the sky and the air was not as cold as she last remembered it. She looks around the courtyard and found nothing amiss. It was as if nothing happened. There were no bodies, no men with steel and no ruins from Drogon’s flame.

Her head is pounding with confusion and she felt her body burning up as if her skin is being engulfed by the dragon’s flame yet again. Her inside recoiled at that notion and something warm trailed down her nose then. She reached up to find that her fingers were tainted with red. The nausea from before crept from her abdomen to her head and before she can comprehend what was happening, the world went black.
Predestination

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf gets to know that some things are just meant to happen

Chapter Notes

Hello my lovelies~ How ya doing?

So most of you didn't expect the reset on the last chapter and was concern as well... I understand all of that, I really do. But, the plot will go pretty fast after this chapter, believe me (well, at least in my head it does) and rest assured, Danarya is still endgame.

See, even the update is faster now. Don't get used to it though (´_ゝ`)

PS: We're in the third timeline now, ICYMI. (The first being the original timeline and second being the slave, fighting pit timeline)
So this is the old past again...

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) - Old Past*

It was the sound that caught her ears first. The sound of wind was passing by. It was subtle like a breeze. Almost calming even. But then it was replaced with another, much gentler sound. Arya knows that song all too well that resonates through her ears, further calming her from the inside and out. The familiar melody hummed with every parts of her as it was calling her.

It was the lullaby that Daenerys always sings to her in those nights, Arya was sure of it. The melody swims through her body like a wakeful dream, the tones relaxing, enabling the song to call to her entire being. Daenerys voice has always had this effect on her and each time the older girl sang the lullaby Arya had never felt any better than she was at the moment.

Now, the familiar divine feelings are washing over her as Arya settles in further in the comfort. She wills her eyes to open and slowly they did. The calming sound sounded louder and clearer somehow as her eyes adjusted to see what, or rather who’s in front of her. She feels a smile beginning to form at the corner of her mouth as her gaze finds her favourite violet eyes staring back at her. Daenerys is adorning her beautiful smile that never fails to amaze Arya as the older girl continued humming the melody.

Arya closed her eyes again in content, basking in the wonderful moment. But, then in an abrupt moment, the wind blew harder as if a storm was about to commence. Daenerys voice flew away with it and when Arya opens her eyes again, the older girl was nowhere to be seen.

The young girl sits up with a start. Looking left and right, she founds not a single trace of the dragon queen anywhere. She wakes up from the bed she had lie in then, walking towards the opened door at the end of the room. The wind is still whistling behind her strangely as if it was guiding her
When she steps outside, a figure was already waiting there for her. Her father looks at her with a rare smile that he always wore for her, before he turns and walks down the hallway. She follows without thinking twice, his back in front of her. He looks over his shoulder for a moment, checking if she was there before he takes a right turn along the path.

As Arya calmly goes after him, she expects to find her father waits on the other side only to find her dear brother, Jon in his stead instead. Jon stares at her with those familiar glints in his eyes that Arya usually finds him whenever he’s interacting with her. Before she can say anything to address him, he walks further away along the hallways as he intentionally brings her along too.

He enters an archway that leads to another space and then like her father, disappeared into thin air. Arya doesn’t have time to ponder over it as Sansa waits at the other end with a pleased expression on her features. She tilts her head slightly at a side as she gestured for Arya to follow her.

Silently, the young girl does as she was instructed and finds herself walking out a door and into an open field. The wind grows more prominent now that she was outside. Though, she doesn’t feel the slightest cold that it should have cause. Even the sun shines bright up in the blue sky and oddly she didn’t feel its heat either. In fact, she didn’t feel anything at all.

Sansa was nowhere to be seen as the young girl looks around the vast fields of greenery. But, as she walks further, she founds her mother waiting at the end of the pathway, a small smile playing on her lips. She wanted to call out, but her mother already had her back against her, as she walks ahead instead. Arya had nothing left to do but to pursue her mother from behind.

She comes to a stop at a meadow where there are tall grasses and flowers, rustling gently in the breeze. Her mother was long gone now as she steps in through the meadow. Slowly, Arya walks along it and then she felt another presence beside her. She looks to her side to find Robb walking alongside her. He grinned at her, before taking the lead and walks ahead.

He proceeds to take her further until they come out of the meadow. The young girl had anticipated Robb out in the open vast again. Yet, it was Rickon now that is waiting for her and surrounding them are the tallest of pine trees. The young boy looked up at her and smiled from ear to ear as he gestured for Arya to follow him. He turns around without another glance and dash forward with bounce along his steps.

Arya follows her little brother without second thoughts. It brought her to another clearing though this time there is no open field, meadow or pine trees. There is only one small river across her and at the river bank there sit her brother, Bran. She walks closer to where he is and lands herself at his side, her feet dipping the flowing stream of water as it runs through her toes. She closed her eyes as she felt the coolness of the water and the sound of it running along the rocks and stream as they bring her close to serenity.

“Is this what it feels like to be dead?” She wondered aloud, still closing her eyes.

“No, it’s not.”

She pries her eyes open then, tilting her head to the side to find her brother. “How do you know? You’re not dead.”

Bran shot her an amused look. “So do you.”

“How do you know that I’m not dead?” she asked accusingly.
“I just do.”

Silence wraps them further as Arya decides to let the topic go. She kicks her feet against the running stream absentmindedly making small splashes around her. “Is this real?” she asked.

“No.” Bran answered short.

Arya stops. “Am I real?”

“Yes.”

She looks at her brother again. “Are you real?”

“Yes.”

“What does that mean, Bran?”

The young man turns his attention to the girl then. “What do you remember?” he asked instead.

Arya looks ahead then, a crease on her brows adorning her features as she tries to recall the last thing on her mind. “I don’t know.”

“Think Arya… Think hard. It’s important that you do or else I can do nothing about it.”

The frown on her face deepens as she stared back at him in silence, doing as she was told. “I remembered how I feel.” She offered finally. Bran encouraged her further with a nod. “I was happy and then I was not…and now I just am.”

His blue eyes shifted with sadness at the words and Arya doesn’t understand why. “I’m sorry, Arya.” He suddenly said. She can almost feel his regret in his words.

“What for?” she asked, curiously.

Bran looks away as he gathers his thought. A moment passed before he spoke again. “For the horrible things that happened to you, to us…to everyone.” He finished with a faraway look as if there is something else that gnawed in his mind.

The cool wind breeze through them at the exact moment and Arya can’t help but to feel lost in the tranquility. She stares ahead as she let herself further lost in the calmness. But it was short-lived, and she was brought out of her reverie when Bran speaks up again.

“You have to go now.” He said.

Arya looks back at him. “Where would I go?”

“Home…for now.”

She doesn’t have anything to say to that and so, she only nods in acceptance. Little by little her brother’s face disappears and then his body before everything else around her did the same. Before she can barely blink, she finds herself in another whole of darkness again.

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Someone was with her. She can feel the warm hand caressing her forehead. Arya wills her eyes to open then and her father’s face greets her in return. His ashen dark orbs are staring back at her, finally noticing that she was awake.
“Father.” She called. Her voice came out barely as a whisper.

But Ned heard it regardless. He bends down, settling further by the bed she lay in.

“My sweet child.” He whispered back, smiling softly as he continues caressing her. Arya can’t help but to lean in to his touch. “I’ve been looking everywhere for you… You can’t go and wander off on your own again, not in your condition right now… Do you understand?” he asked, waiting expectantly.

The young girl blinks a few times as she lets the words sink in and notice how worried her father looked. She glanced around the bed she lay in and then around the room. This is not her room, she noted tiredly. Nonetheless, it was still familiar since she had been in here before. She glanced to the opened window across the room where she remembered seeing the silver haired queen stood by it just a while ago or was it a long time ago? She wasn’t sure.

“I’m waiting for her to come, Father… She’ll be here soon, I think.” She finally said, hesitating at the last part. Daenerys will come. She must.

A soft sigh escaped Ned. He looks around contemplating on what to do. A moment passed before he finally made his mind. The young girl already had her eyes closed again. He puts his hand on her forehead only to find it was still burning up, worse even. “I’m taking you to your room, alright?” he said, gently.

Arya tried to protest but she only managed a whimper coming out. Before she can form any coherent words, her father had lifted her into his arms, carrying her away from the room and the Guest Tower. She was too tired to say anything and the comforting warmth around her body had cocooned her into oblivion well before she was aware of it.

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When Arya awoke for the second time, the worn-out-ness instantly washed over her. She felt tired both physically and mentally. Though she wanted her body to move around, to do something other than just lying in bed and breathing yet her mind would not agree to it. And so, she gives in to restless sleep yet again.

Though it was short-lived as she felt someone faintly calling to her and then her cheeks are touched by something warm. Absentmindedly, she pried her eyes open. The lights around her were in dim setting, which she was thankful for as her eyes quickly able to adjust to her surroundings.

The face of Maester Luwin comes into her view first. He looks down at her expectantly. “How do you feel, little lady?” he asked.

A slight frown automatically graced her features as she heard the name. “I’m not little.”

The old maester repressed a smile at that as he turned to his side where both her father and mother are. “It seems the worse of it has passed m’lord… m’lady. She should be in her best condition within a couple of days or so.”

Ned sighed with relief at the same time Catelyn spoke. “Thank the Gods.”

Arya closed her eyes, trying to gather her thoughts. But, everything seems to be muddled inside her mind. “Are you real?” she asked, and immediately regrets asking as everyone look down to her with a changed expression.

Ned moves to take a seat by her side then. “Of course we are, Arya. Why would you think
“Otherwise?” his fingers lightly caress her cheek.

The young girl was silent for a while as she tried to push the horrendous happenings further down her mind. She closed her eyes tight willing them to go away before addressing her father. “There are these horrible images inside my head… and I don’t know– I don’t know if it’s real or not.” She explained, opening her eyes again.

His dark grey orbs soften considerably. “Everything will be alright, my child. Rest now… I’ll be here when you wake up.” He leans in and kissed the top of her forehead.

Arya decides to believe in his words and does as she was told. Before long, the darkness greets her like an old friend.

******

True to his words, her father was there when Arya awoke some time later. He greets her with that familiar rare smile he always reserved for her. She can’t help but to return it back, trying to embed the wonderful image in her memory forever at the same time.

“How do you feel, my child?” he bends towards her, reaching for her forehead. It didn’t burn up but it doesn’t hurt to make sure.

“Hungry.” Arya finds herself said. Her stomach rumbles softly in agreement.

Ned chuckles lightly. “I’ll get you something to eat.” He planted a kiss on the girl’s forehead in assurance before making his leave.

Arya sighed in content at the warmth of the furs wrapping her body as she watched her father steps outside the room. She decides to give in to the comfortable refugee for a little while longer and drift off. It must have been for quite some time as she flutters her eyes open only to find her mother was at her bedside instead of her father.

Catelyn looks up from her knitting when she heard a rustle of movement. Smiling, she strides closer to the girl in bed, reaching for her forehead as a force of habit for these past few days. It was as the Maester said. The worse of the fever is gone now.

“I heard that you’re hungry?” Catelyn asked then.

Gingerly, Arya pushed herself to a sitting position as she regards her mother. “Where’s Father?”

“Your Father has some matters to tend to… He’ll be back in a while.” The older woman assured. “I brought some of your favorite foods. But, if you have no appetite, have the porridge at least.” She moves for the tray located at the bedside table and placed it in front of the girl. “Will you eat now?”

Arya swallowed a lump dryly as her stomach rumbled at the small feast before her, announcing its hunger. “Thank you, mother.” She smiled and without another word began eating.

For a moment only the clatter of utensils against the plate occupies the room. Her mother seems content on watching her eat and tending to her needs silently, offering a cup of water when she almost chocked on a dry piece of bread. Arya was surprised that the older woman didn’t even chided her for the lack of manner. She shrugs the thought away as she takes the last spoonful of the porridge and down her water dry. Wiping her mouth clean with a napkin, she leans backward with a full belly and sighed in content. Her eyes almost instantly become heavy lidded.

_Gods, why am I so tired?_ She thought strangely.
“Lay back... You’ll get better with more rest.” Catelyn suggested, taking away the tray with empty plates before tucking in the girl.

“I just ate, Mother... I can’t sleep right after a meal, you always told me that.” Arya protest though she makes no move to tuck herself out from the comfort of the furs.

Catelyn repressed a smile at the comment. “I’m finally giving you a leeway to go against my word and yet you tried to challenge that as well.” She chided good-naturedly, mostly to herself.

Arya can’t help the tugging at the corner of her mouth as she closed her eyes, settling further into the warm quilt. She felt her mother’s kiss on her forehead whispering soothing words before the sleep took over her yet again.

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It was the sound of birds chirping that woke Arya up. The weariness that she felt is almost gone now and overall, she felt better than the last time she remembered. Swinging her feet over the bed, she stands up bare feet on the floor and strides across her room to open the windows wide. The sun’s light poured inside the room almost instantly. For a while she just stood there and breathes in the outside air. No thoughts inside her head clouding her whatsoever.

Her moment was interrupted however when a creak echoes through the room. She looks over her shoulder to find the door being opened and then a young man enters.

“Feeling better now, little sister?” Jon asked with a soft smile.

Arya felt her body tense as she tries to make sense of his presence. She blinks away the confusion as she gathers herself. “I– I think so...yes.”

Jon doesn’t seem to take notice of her stuttering as anything else when he comes in further to where she was. There was something in his hands and before Arya realized what it was, he already spoke.

“Look what I have for you…” his smile grew as he presented a direwolf pup to her. “We found this little pup on our way back home a few days ago. There were six of them. All of your siblings got one... I got one too.” He explained and waits expectantly for Arya to take the pup.

But, the young girl only stared down at the direwolf with furrowed brows, trying to make sense of what’s happening. “Nymeria.” She breathed out.

“So, is that what you want to call her?” he asked lightly.

The walls inside her head slowly crumble and the clouds in her mind seeps back in like a thunderstorm. She shakes her head in denial. “No...no... This– This cannot be happening... No-”

“Arya, what’s wrong?” Jon moves closer to the young girl then, concern plastered on his features.

But, Arya paid no attention to it as she staggers backward, keeping her distance. The images that she wanted to keep secured away tumbling apart to the front of her mind now. Those horrible images that happened to her Father, her Mother, her brothers, Jon, Robb, Bran and Rickon and her sister, Sansa. And then, there’s a silver haired woman that assault her mind too. Daenerys. She remembered all of them now.

Her hands reached for her head as if it was about to explode. She whimpered in silent prayer for whatever the hell it is to stop. But, it seems that it had fallen into deaf ears as her head keeps throbbing with the same intensity if not more.
Jon grabs her shoulders then, making her look at him. “Are you hurting again?”

The young girl shakes her head. “No…no… You’re supposed to be at The Wall.” She blurts out instead. He was, wasn’t he? She remembered saying goodbye to him at the courtyard.

He released his hold then, looking forlorn suddenly. “How do you know that? I was going to tell you once Father approved of it.”

“No, listen to me, Jon… *This* is not supposed to happen. We’ve been through this before… Nymeria is supposed to be a fully grown direwolf by now not a pup.” She desperately said, glancing at the little direwolf that Jon had put on her bed.

Jon opens his mouth to say something but stops short as he stared back at her with a frown. “What?”

Arya closed her eyes in frustration. She cursed loudly under her breath and ignored the reprimand from her brother as she moves to the corner of her room to find a mirror inside her drawers. Finally took hold of the mirror, she braced herself and put it in front of her face.

Her world stops spinning and she feels lightheaded due to the lack of air as her breath stopped at the reflection of her younger self staring back at her instead of her older one. Slowly, she puts away the mirror and looks down to her hands. They were indeed smaller, fitting of her younger self. Absentmindedly, she unties the lace of her front shirt in search of the scarring above her chest. But, there was nothing there. No hideous scarring of the letter ‘Q’ of her former master. Only skin.

She heard Jon calling for her, demanding to know what’s going on. But, how can she tell him when she has not a slightest clue on what’s happening herself. Perhaps she has finally gone mad this time. Really, truly insane. Perhaps everything that happened was all in her minds. A dream or a nightmare. She always has them both.

But, Daenerys can’t possibly be someone that Arya made up. She clearly remembered the warm touch of the older girl each time they were together and that feeling and that memory was not a dream. And her family’s deaths were certainly not something that she would ever make up.

A shake from Jon snaps her from her reverie. She looks up at the much younger Jon standing in front of her. “I need to see Father. Where is he?”

Jon stared back at her silently, contemplating on what to say. And Arya lose her patience then.

“Where is he, Jon?!” she shouts, her voice bounce around the room making the young man flinched. “In his study? I think…” he finally said.

Without waiting for another second, she grabs her fur robe and wears it over her sleepwear. Jon was muttering something from behind her as she walks out the room. But, Arya paid it no heed. Her steps long and hurried as her mind tumbled over the information that she should tell her father, not even caring that she had no shoes on.

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The throbbing inside her head didn’t go away as she walks along the hallways. It did however worsen but she ignores it and force the pain away. There are far important matters that need to be addressed here and she will not let a mere headache gets in her way. Arya didn’t even bother to knock as she opens the door and let herself inside her father’s study, panting.

Ned looks up from his reading as soon as the door was opened none too quietly. “Arya, what are you doing up and about?” he asked with a frown, closing the book as he regards the girl in question.
“I have to talk to you.”

He looks over her shoulder as Jon enters the room too, exchanging a look that he can’t quite pinpoint. Standing up, he moves to the young girl then. “You still need plenty of rest, Arya. You can talk to me once you’re better.” He offered.

“No, Father. I need to talk to you now.” She stressed at the last part.

Sighing, her father nods, albeit reluctantly. Arya swallowed a lump dryly as she contemplates on what to say and where to start.

She balled her fist, gathering her courage only to deflate at the last minute. “I– I don’t know how to explain this.” She blurs out in frustration. Where the fuck should she starts with.

Her father’s future execution? Her family’s future deaths? Her time travel? Even in her own mind she sounded bonkers. So, how can she possibly convince them; convince her father what was going to happen? She didn’t realize that the silence had stretch on for a while now, having the heated debate inside her mind.

Ned and Jon exchange a look silently between them before the older man gave a nod to dismiss Jon. Reluctantly, the younger man turns around and walks out of the room, closing the door behind him and leaving the two behind.

Ned guides the girl to take a seat as he did the same in front of her. He noticed the lack of footwear on her person, but decides to let it go as he addressed the more important matter. “Now, you said you have something to tell me?” He encouraged, holding both her small hands into his in assurance.

The young girl takes a deep breath to calm down as she finally decides on what to tell him. She looks into his eyes, unwavering. “What I’m about to say will sound unbelievable, absurd and far-fetched… but I need you to trust me, Father because it will happen exactly as it is.” She starts.

Ned’s frown only deepen, but he nods nonetheless urging her to continue.

“When King Robert comes to Winterfell, he will ask you to be his Hand… You have to decline the position or you will die.” She continues.

“How did you know about the King coming to Winterfell? Jon told you that?” he asked instead.

“No, Jon didn’t tell me anything… Didn’t you hear what I just said? You will die if you accept the King’s offer, Father. You cannot be his Hand.” She explains desperately.

“And how do you know this?” he asked trying to understand.

She clenched her jaw tight. “I– I just do, alright? You have to trust me. Please, Father.” She pleads eagerly. Telling him about the time travel would make her seems even less credible, so Arya keeps it shut, for now.

His ashen grey orbs staring back to hers, searching and studying. But, then he looks away, gathering his thought in silence. A moment passed before he lets out another sigh and addressed his youngest daughter again. “Let’s say what you said is true… the King is already on his way to Winterfell as we speak and you’re asking me to dismiss a royal decree? What do you think the King will say if I decline the position he offered after he had personally traveled here for a month? And without a good enough reason at that.”

“I don’t care if he traveled a year to Winterfell. You cannot be his Hand. And your death is not a
good enough reason for you?” Her voice grew louder as she feels her body heats up. She ignores the
drowsiness that seeps slowly into her being as she regards the man in front of her in agitation.

“You’re putting me in a hard spot, my child… You wake up one day and start throwing punches out
of the blue to your brother, Robb, leaving him bloodied… And then you wandered off to the Guest
Tower in the middle of the night. I had men searching your whereabouts up until Winter Town… Do
you know how worried I was? Thinking all the worse that could have happen to you. And now this–
What do you want me to make out of this?” he finished tiredly. The fight already left his body.

“I’m not crazy.” Her lips tremble as the words left. Her eyes clouded with unshed tears, frustrated at
what’s happening.

Ned reached forward, caressing her cheeks with both his hands. “I’m not saying that you are, Arya.”

“But, you’re thinking of it.”

He hesitates at that and that is all it takes for her heart to shatter into millions of pieces at the silent
confirmation.

“You’re unwell… You need a lot of rest and I promise you’ll feel better soon enough.” He finally
said.

She pulls his hands off of her face and stands up, making the chair screech loudly. “What I need is
for you to trust me. You will die if you go to King’s Landing! You cannot go there!”

Her chest heaves as if she’s run a mile. Her skin feels clammy and her father seated in front of her
has suddenly becomes doubled. Arya winced in pain at the sudden ache between her temples and
tried to ease the pain by grabbing a part of her hair. But, it was to no success as whatever it is, is still
picking apart her brain from the inside. She doesn’t even realize her legs had given out and is now
kneeling on the floor. Her hands still on her head before it too touches the ground.

The tears spilled at the side of her face as she closed her eyes tight, willing the pain to go away. Her
father was calling to her desperately but she was too preoccupied by her silent torture to offer an
answer. Faintly, she feels her body being lifts up and taken away before the pain overwhelms her
completely.

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The headache would come and go after that. Maester Luwin and her father had been constantly in
and out of her room, taking note on her well-being. Her Father never spoke of what happened in his
study and Arya was too tired to breach the topic again. She can’t think of what her next course of
action should be with the pounding inside her head announcing its presence every now and then,
demanding her attention.

And when the rare occurrence that her mind would be cleared, it was always during the dead of the
night where no one was around and she was left to her solitude in her room. Though, there was no
peace in the shadows and the dark corners. She knew that. Because now, the ghost of her past— no,
the future? She can’t even describe her phantom without biting her own tongue in frustration.

But, above all, one thing she does know is that she had gone back to the very beginning. Her family
was still alive and well and so does a certain silver haired woman. Daenerys is still safe somewhere
across the narrow sea. The dragon queen is not dead yet as of this moment. And Arya can actually
do something to prevent that horrible feast from happening. She will make sure of it, one way or
another. It was with that thought that she was able to lie back in bed and take her rest for a couple
more hours before the sun greets the world again. Promising to herself that she will make it better this time around for everyone. She has to.

It was later that morning, when her Mother comes in and dressed her for the day. The older woman would sit and watch Arya break her fast and then leaves the girl to rest soon after. By midday, Maester Luwin and her Father would come and inquired of her health. It has becoming their routine as much as hers now. And each time, she asked the Maester why her head was hurting, he always said the same;

“I found no physical cause that could explain why your head hurts as such, m’lady... Perhaps, with more rest it will all go away soon. I’m sorry I couldn’t be of much help.”

Despite that the information was not much use to her, Arya appreciate the honesty regardless. She didn’t venture out to the outside world, keeping herself lock inside her room most of the days. None of her siblings came to visit her during those days. She doesn’t know whether to be bothered by that or not.

Perhaps her Father had instructed them not to disturb her for her own good. Or perhaps they are just afraid of her now. She knows Robb probably would be after getting beaten up without warning. Arya wanted to apologize for leaving bruises on his face but she doesn’t know if she can confront him without snapping at him for the things that he had done another lifetime ago.

The only one who constantly visits her each day was Jon. He would bring Nymeria and Ghost to her room and while the direwolves are playing with themselves, he would talk to her how his days would go and how everyone was faring. She was grateful for the distraction and for a while she could imagine that all is well in the world.

But when one day, Jon told her that King Robert will be arriving probably on the next day, her body went stiff as a board. And then the pounding inside her head starts to double. Something must have shown on her face because Jon immediately took notice of her trouble. She can’t even stop him when he all but ran out of the room, no doubt getting Father and Maester Luwin.

She curled herself on the bed, her knees touching her head as she fights the pain away. But, then someone was there by her side, urging her to drink from a vial and the excruciating ache was gone as soon as it appeared and so does her consciousness.

Feeling tired and annoyed was becoming a part of her now, the cause of having to wake up from the drowsiness and the disoriented after she had an episode. It was always the same when her headache becomes too much for her to bear. They would give her some kind of concoction and it would knocked her out cold. Not that she was ungrateful, but the aftermath left her wanting to rip apart the next living thing that comes upon her.

When the day that King Robert and his entourage finally arrived, naturally her father had decided not to include her at the courtyard as they welcome the royal escort. The buzz of the crowds sounded loud as the wind carries it through her opened windows. She couldn’t see them now, but as she stared at the blank wall of her room, there they were. Clear as day.


All the cunts that really matter are here again in her home. Perhaps she should kill all of them at once, this time. One stab to the heart is all it takes. She can sneak into their room while they’re sleeping.

No. They’re still Father’s guest...and I should honour guest’s right as Father would have.
Alright fine, she’s not going to kill them. And besides, she had learned from the last timeline that another reckless action would definitely do her and everyone else no good. The last thing she wants is to start another war and cause hundreds of lives to be taken away. She will not have those bloods on her hands again.

The same thoughts occupying her mind for the remaining days. She still doesn’t know how to stop her father’s leaving for King’s Landing and the time was definitely not on her side. She doesn’t know how much longer she has left and all those thinking don’t seem to do her good.

Truth be told, she was tempted to just leave things as it was. They would travel as planned and when the threat finally comes, she can save her Father herself. And Sansa too. She knows she can. She wasn’t a child anymore even though her appearance stated otherwise. It was the best plan that she could come up with for the time being.

A loud creak interrupts her train of thoughts then. She looks up from her bed to find Jon smiling as he walks in with Nymeria and Ghost by his sides.

“I can hear your thoughts out in the hallways, little sister.” He greets as he takes his usual seat by the bed. “What are you planning now?” he asked with his brow raised.

“I was planning on how to save our family from extinction… I got a whole lot of time in my sleeves apparently. Or maybe not? I’m not quite sure on that part yet.” She said back with a straight face.

Jon’s face was a sight to see as he regards her with a frown and his mouth opens and closes a few times like a fish as he tries to form a reply. At his struggling, Arya can’t help the tugging at the corner of her lips to break free. He glared at her good-naturedly before finally let out a smile too.

“Everyone thinks I’ve gone bonkers now, haven’t they?” she suddenly asked. The smile on her face gone.

He regards her in all seriousness then. “No one thinks that.” he trails, reaching for her hands. His dark grey eyes stared intently on hers. “You’re not crazy… Stubborn, hot-headed, and wild, yes… but you’re definitely not crazy, little sister.”

Arya rolled her eyes at that. “Great to know then.”

Jon only grinned, unperturbed. “How do you feel of going out today? The King has gone out for a hunt. Father and Robb went along and so do most of the King’s men. You can take a walk outside without interruption.” He offered.

Her body stiffed at his words. “What did you just said?” she asked even though she heard him perfectly.

“I said that the King has gone out— What are you doing, Arya?” he asked when the girl is already up and fetching her shoes and robe.

“I have to go to Bran.” She mumbles under her breath, grunting as she pulls the shoes on her feet. How can she miss the most important detail of all? She completely forgot about Bran and his fall. If she didn’t stop it from happening, she could never forgive herself. “I’ll see you around, Jon.” she dismissed him and all but ran out of her room.

Nymeria was at her side almost instantly, running with her too. She quickens her steps, praying that she wasn’t too late to save her brother from being a crippled. Turning to a corner, she finally arrived at the Broken Tower. She ignored the sweat forming on her forehead and the laboured breaths from all the running. Looking up, she sees Bran already halfway to the opened window of the single room...
at the top. She cursed under her breath at what will be waiting for him there.

“Bran! Stop!” she shouts through her lungs.

It caught his attention as the young boy stops and looks down. He blinks a few times at her sudden appearance but then shrugs it off. “Hey Arya… You feeling better now?” he asked back from the top. His grips strong on the crooked wall.

Arya ignored the question. “Bran, I need you to come down.”

Bran frowns. “Alright… I’ll meet you at the other side then.”

“No!”

He stops moving at the desperate shout.

“No Bran! Come down now! I need you to come down now!”

His frowns deepen as he looks down to his sister’s desperate face and across the open windows. He just needs to pass the wooden ledge of the stone and then a few more steps to get to his next conquest. He decides then. “It’ll be just a while, Arya. I’ll see you at the other side.”

“No, Bran!!” But, Bran doesn’t seem to hear her as he moves and continue his climbing.

Without thinking she jumps onto the ledge at the bottom of the tower and pushed herself upward before latching to the walls and begins climbing after him. All the while, she cursed Bran and her dress and the tower and the two people that are inside it at the moment. All of these wouldn’t have happen if the two could find someplace else to fuck.

Using all of her four limbs to her advantage and her experience from the past years, she was climbing at a faster rate than Bran was. “Brandon Stark!! Stop right there, or I’ll fucking kill you myself… I swear to Gods!”

He stops immediately and looks over his shoulder. “What in seven hells, Arya? I told you I’ll meet you at the other side.” He chastised. Surprised evident on his face at her appearance.

Arya used the opportunity to close their gap then. She stops when they’re finally within arm’s reach of each other. The window was still far as she looks over his shoulder. But, she doesn’t want to wait any longer. The occupants inside could have peered out to investigate the commotion at any moment. “We need to climb down now.” she ordered firmly.

When Bran only looks at her silently contemplating what to do, she hissed the words. “Now, Bran”

He gave her a glare, annoyed at being told what to do before finally relented. “Fine.”

The young girl released a breath she doesn’t know she held as her brother started climbing down the other way as she did the same. Bran was about to reach for another crooked stone for his grip but his foot suddenly lost its footing and he gasps as he lost control of his body. It all happened so fast and on instinct Arya reached for him, pushing him onto the wall again as he secured another grip, successfully – that she didn’t even realized that her own balance has been compromised.

Bran tried to reach for her then, but his fingers end up only grazing hers until they were completely gone. Her body was falling away from him and his shocked face becomes further and further away. She was aware of what’s happening as she went downward at a speed that constricted her throat, she could hardly draw breath. But, strangely, time seems to slow down at the same time as the world
rushed by in a blur. In the seconds it took her to reach the ground, Arya knew it was going to hurt.
Crippled and Broken Things

Chapter Summary

In which hard choices have to be made one way or another

Chapter Notes

[UPDATE] Well, hello there... Look, it's 1st of April. Remember last year's April Fool guys? It was fun, right? ;D
Despite what day it is today though, I solemnly swear that I have no tricks up my sleeve this time around. You don't believe me? Ok, that kinda hurts... I'm not THAT evil, guys...seriously. This chapter is now complete. Please enjoy yourself of this non-trickster chapter! Much love and angst~ Just the way you like it...

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) – New Past*

Arya was on the ground with her face up and her arms at her sides. Her back was against something cool and it didn’t bother her that much as she thought it would. In fact the ground was soft and almost comforting. When she moves her fingers, they graze at the soft grass she was lying on. The sky was blue and clear and when the wind blew the leaves flew out into wherever the wind decides to take them.

She moves her head to a tilt and her gaze landed on a tree where the leaves were falling off from. Slowly, she pushes herself up, first with her elbows and then her legs, all the while her eyes never leaving the huge peculiar lonesome tree. As she walks toward it, she didn’t bother to check her surrounding since there was nothing else around her aside from an open field, more or less the same. The bark of the tree felt warm as her palm lay on it. She stared down at it for a while as she has the strange feeling of something else was supposed to be there instead. The thought didn’t go far as her feet moves to walk around it, deciding to investigate where this place could be. The young woman stops short as she finds a small river across and there was someone sitting by the river bank. Whoever it was, his back was facing her as he sits there in silence. Oddly, Arya feels like she knew who it was even though she can’t see his face yet. She strides to him then and joins him at his side.

“Bran.” She called.

Her brother turns his head. “Hello, Arya.” A small smile at the corner of his lips, though it didn’t quite reach his eyes.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

Instead of answering, Bran turns back ahead with a faraway look. Not really bothered by the lack of response, Arya decides to do the same and got lost in the calming surroundings. The water was streaming along the small rocks down the river creating a rush of sound that almost swallowed everything else. “What is this place?” she asked again after a while. But, Bran was still silent. “Do
you know where we are, Bran?” Her last question came a little pressed and Bran must have noticed because he finally answered.

“It’s the only way I’m able to reach you.” He was still looking ahead.

A slight frown graced her features as she looks at him. “Reach me?”

He turns to her then. His blue orbs lock into her grey ones in a way that Arya cannot break away even if she wants to.

“Do you remember what happened?” he replied with another question.

His inquiry goes unanswered as she takes the time to properly study the person in front of her. Her gaze stays rooted into the blue orbs for a while, remembering the last time she saw them; they were frightened instead of calm. And then she moves to the line of his face. His jaw is more pronounced and his face is that of a young man instead of a boy that she had last seen.

Speaking of that boy, Arya remembered the last thing that she saw was the younger Bran. As he looked down to her, his pale and horrid face grew further and further away. She remembered the wind that viciously slapped her back until another sickening thud caught her. She remembered then.

“I fell down the Broken Tower.” She whispered but it was loud enough for Bran as his eyes light up at her words.

“You saved me.” He concurred, waiting for the grey eyes to focus back at him.

Arya blinks once before she did. “You were about to fall off but then I pushed you back up the wall.” Yes. She remembered now.

“Why did you do it?”

A beat of silence fell upon them as the young woman’s confusion grew at the question.

“Why did you save me, Arya?” Bran asked again, a little impatience this time.

“You’re my brother.” She finally said as she holds her gaze firmly to challenge him. “And you’re welcome.” She quipped.

Bran’s gaze softens at that. He let out a sigh barely audible for Arya to notice if not for the close proximity they shared and the lack of other distractions around them. “I wouldn’t wish it even on my worst enemy.” He paused looking forlorn before continues. “When I realized that I can’t walk… that I have lost the use of my lower body completely, that I can’t ever climbed on anything ever again, it was probably the worst day of my life. But, I’ve come to realize that that’s not the worst part of it… No. The worst part is that from that day onwards, every day I wake up, I have to depend on other people… Everything I wore, and ate, I had to sit and wait for it to be given to me. I can’t even have the satisfaction to relieve myself without someone assisting.”

“You don’t have to experience that now, Bran… I saved you, so everything will be alright now.” Arya quickly intercepts. Her heart ache for what her brother had to go through.

“You’re right, I don’t… But, now you have to.”

Arya opens her mouth to retaliate but she didn’t go far when the blue eyes in front of her stared back with such intensity and softness both at the same time. She recalls his last words, as she tries to understand.
“I’m dead, am I not? Is that not why I’m here?”

Bran keeps his mouth shut but he didn’t have to say anything for Arya to guess what his answer to her question would be.

“There is no way that I survived that fall, Bran.” She said again, trying to convince the both of them.

“I survived it before.” He offered.

The rushing sound of water streaming down the river becomes louder as seconds go by when Arya said nothing in return. Slowly, she breaks away from his gaze and looks down to her feet. Her bare feet are soaked into the river as the water flow around her toes. She wiggles them slightly and the water ripples at the force. “So, I’m a crippled.” It wasn’t much of a question. She knew she was one, if what Bran said is any truth and if she had survived the fall, there is probably going to be a repercussion. Perhaps it’s why she was stuck in this strange place with Bran acting as her subconscious in the first place. She must be in a comatose state after the fall.

“You shouldn’t have saved me, Arya… You shouldn’t do anything at all.” Bran speaks up again.

Arya can’t help the mirthless chuckle escaping her. Of course her subconscious would blame herself for everything that had happened. Even in her comatose state, she can’t escape the reprimand.

“Yes, I should have just let things as it is. I should let my brother be a crippled for the rest of his life. I should do nothing to save Father and Sansa from their horrible and unjust deaths. I should just let Robb and Mother be slaughtered and their bodies maimed. And then, I should let Theon burn you and Rickon to crisp. And I should let Jon walks to his death at Castle Black. Even though for some unknown reason, I’ve been thrown back in time and I have the chance to change things for the better… I should have done nothing and just let it play out as it was supposed to be. I should let everyone die and then let myself die too.” She finished cynically.

Bran closed his eyes as another sigh escaped him tiredly. “Those things— those horrible things that happened to our family are supposed to happen. There is not a single way to undo them and erase them.” He opens his eyes then. “You can’t change things without affecting everything else; without affecting every other people and eventually affecting the order of the world.”

Arya stared back silently. It was strange to say the least what Bran – or her subconscious – was saying. “The order of the world?” she begins softly, confused more than anything. “What does that even mean?” She can’t help the snorts that came out soon after. It seems her dream is becoming more ridiculous as time goes by.

Bran let it slide. “When you put a stop to a certain event playing out, you’re not stopping it completely from happening… it merely diverge into a different direction until it eventually play out again.” he tries again in all seriousness.

“Uh huh… alright, if you say so.” She blurts out looking ahead instead. Even in her dreams, she sounded bonkers. Perhaps she already is and everything that happened is in fact one crazy, insane dreams.

“Daenerys isn’t supposed to die but you let that happened.”

Arya stiffened. Her throat constricts on itself at the name being mentioned and there was a burning at the back of her eyes as the memories of the older woman assaulted her mind. Slowly, she turns to Bran again. “What did you just said?” she asked through gritted teeth.

His gaze softens then but not by much as he regards her carefully now that he has her attention.
“When you killed Cersei in her trial, you managed to save Robb and Mother but you didn’t stop the Red Wedding completely from happening, Arya… Not really. It merely diverges into separate course until it finally happened again, but this time under different circumstances albeit it was more of the same.”

She shakes her head slightly. “What the hell are you saying, Bran?” There is a thumping at the back of her head now. His words jugged along her mind as she tries to shake off the guilt that threatened to swallow her whole.

“You cannot change things, Arya.” Bran insists. “You cannot change things or someone else is going to die because of it…someone who is not supposed to.”

And that someone is Daenerys.

He didn’t say the last sentence but somehow Arya managed to hear it all the same. Her breaths quickens as her guilt doubled. Even in her comatose state she can’t have peace. Perhaps it’s because she didn’t deserve one.

Why should I? I screwed everything up. Everyone’s gone and now Daenerys is gone too.

Her fingers curl into fists as she closes her eyes tight willing the image of Daenerys eyes filled with agony as the knife pierce her heart to go away. But, the action only makes the experience clearer as there are no other things but the imminent dark to interrupt her.

“Listen to me, Arya. You can’t change things.” Bran’s voice gets through. But then so do the others.

‘The rightful Queen of Westeros arises… It seems your numbers didn’t matter after all, Your Grace. Your dragons are not here… Your armies are not here to save you… You already lost the war before it even started.’

No. Stop!

‘You should know that my voice, as terrible as it may sound…comes with a high price. I’m afraid you would have to pay more than just a simple thank you, my little wolf.’

Please, just stop…

‘Arya, my child, you will never lose me as long as you keep me inside your heart… The day your horrible dream comes true will be the day that when pigs are able to fly, do you hear?’

Stop…

‘And most importantly, I love you, Arya Stark.’

Gods… Please.

“–do you understand, Arya?”

“Shut up!” Her body trembled as her voice finally comes out. “Just shut up, please.” She whimpered.

And for a moment everything was silence. The voices inside her head were no more and the surrounding around her was nothing but quiet except for her shaky breathing. Arya lets herself drifts further into the dark abyss. She didn’t know for how long the silence lasted but as she pried her eyes open, the river in front of her was nowhere in sight and when she looks at her side, Bran is not there anymore.
Little by little, the surrounding around her disappeared then as the dark swallowed them until she was left alone with nothing but the familiar and pitch dark. Her breathing comes in short spurts as she turns and turns in search for something other than the blackness engulfing her whole. She stops moving then and closes her eyes tight. Her hands at the sides of her head as she tries to calm her breathing.

“It’s alright, Arya…” a disembodied voice sounded but she recognized it almost instantly. Bran was standing not far from her. She tried to call him but her voice wouldn’t come out.

“Remember what I said.” he said again and then of a sudden, there was a heavy wind slapping her back and she was slipping further and further away from the young man until the darkness decides to swallow him too.

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Arya wakes up with a start. Her breathing heavy as if she had run a mile even though she found herself lying still on her bed. She blinks the daze away as she slowly calm her breathing to normal again. Slowly, her surrounding comes into focus. There was a crackling sound of something burning and as she tilts at the direction, she found the hearth’s fire is at an ember.

She stared at the dying fire a bit more as she tries to gather her thoughts. Before she can do that however, a loud caw breaks her concentration. Almost instantly, her head snapped at where the sound was coming from and a pair of black eyes stared back. The black raven caw again making her flinch at the loud sound before it fly away from the opened window and into the blue sky leaving her alone.

A slight frown adorned her features as she tries to make sense of what’s happening. The last thing she remembered was–

Bran.

She swallowed a lump dryly then. That’s right. She remembered Bran in her dreams.

Or was it real?

Something was moving at the end of her bed then, interrupting her thoughts once again and before she decides to investigate the cause of it, a large snout enters her vision instead. And then a pair of golden orbs bore into hers not a moment after. She felt herself stiffen though it lasted only for a second as she instantly recognized who they belong to.

“Nymeria.” Her voice came out hoarse as she swallowed another lump down her dry throat. Nonetheless, the golden eyes in front of her shine with eagerness at her name being called.

Nymeria moves forward then, softly nudging Arya’s head a couple of times as the girl tries to prop herself up. A small smile crept at the corner of the young girl’s lips as she reaches for the direwolf then, stroking her side in return, content with the direwolf’s warmth and contact over her body. The direwolf has grown quite a bit since Arya last saw her and as she settled on top of her, Arya can’t wipe away the strange feeling creeping inside as she couldn’t feel Nymeria’s weight, particularly her lower body which the direwolf had mostly occupied.

Gingerly, she sits up straighter and beckoning Nymeria away. The direwolf followed through and immediately moved away. Arya took the chance to remove the blanket with shaky hand, revealing her legs. There were there, still attached to her body but as she tries to move them, they stay the same, unmoving. Sweat was beginning to trail down her forehead as she concentrates to at least
wiggle her toes. But, as before, her efforts deem fruitless.

There was a pause in the air as the young girl merely stared down at her unresponsive limbs, confused as to what was happening. Seconds turn to minutes and all the while, her legs still remain in the same state as the first time she saw them. Something akin to rage and disbelief course through her veins as she decides to step away from her bed, one way or another. She ignored how leaden her legs feel as she carried them over the bed. She also ignored the fact that her feet didn’t feel the smooth stone floor under them. All she cared about is to get out of the bed. So, with a huff, she pushed herself forward.

Almost as fast as her body straighten in the air, her feet buckle underneath her, sending her to the ground with a loud thud. Arya curses under her breath as her face greets the hard floor. Nymeria was instantly at her side nudging her softly again.

The young girl only grits her teeth with frustration as she stays down on all four, ignoring the direwolf distress call. Even when a creak sounded not much later, she paid it no heed as she was too preoccupied by her own swirling of emotions at the moment.

“Seven Hells, Arya!” A voice caught her attention then. She looks up and saw her brother, Robb looking down at her with wide eyes.

He puts away the tray he’s been holding on her bed. The contents spilling onto the sheets as he practically toss it away and run to her side.

“Are you alright?” He asked frantically as he crouched down and pulled her up from the ground.

But, Arya doesn’t need it. She doesn’t need help to get up from the floor. “Stay away!” she snapped, pushing him aside.

Robb stilled at that. He looks back at her silently with soft eyes and Arya hated them.

“Arya…” he called, slowly approaching her again.

“Stay the fuck away, Robb! I can get up myself.” She growled back.

At the same time, the door creak open again and someone comes in. The young girl doesn’t even acknowledge the new addition as her gaze stay rooted to her brother, challenging him to come close.

“M’lord?” someone called hesitantly then.

Robb doesn’t tear away his gaze from her either. “Leave us.” He ordered firmly.

Whoever it was, they don’t need to be told twice as the door close back with a thud. Robb was kneeling now in front of her – within an arm’s reach, watching her silently as if no one had interrupted them.

Arya straightens her back then, trying to appear taller than him despite her awkward position. “I can get up myself.” She said again, with more conviction this time.

A beat passes as his eyes bore into hers, examining her silently. “Alright.” He said, nodding softly.

Without waiting, Arya pushes herself up, using her hands to somehow move her legs, but nothing happened. With a frustrated groan she tried again and again and again, to no avail. Her breath turns laboured then as she looks down to her unmoving feet. The back of her eyes are starting to burn.
“Why can’t I move them?” she grunts to herself. “Why can’t I–“

She brought one of her leg to stand only for it to fall down again. She was still breathing heavily even though she did nothing but stay on the floor.

Arya looks up to her brother then. “Robb… I– I can’t… I can’t move my legs.”

His blue orbs were staring back at her with that gentleness again.

“I can’t move my legs, Robb.” She said again as if things will go differently. Her hands were reaching for him and almost instantly he took them and held them tight in his grasp.

“I can’t move my legs.” Her voice grew more desperate. Her knuckles turn white from gripping his arms too tight.

But, Robb doesn’t flinch at the pressure even though her nails are digging through his sleeves. “Arya…” he called softly.

Her grey eyes focus onto blue ones then. Hoping that her brother will tell her that this is all one big horrible dream and when she wakes up, she can move around freely and able to stand on her own two feet again.

Robb didn’t do any of that. Instead, he leans forward to wipe away the tears that spilled at the side of her face before wrapping his arms around her and whispered. “I’m sorry, sister.”

*******

Everything was numb.

She doesn’t feel anything, inside and out. Yet her body drained all the same if not more as days pass by. It was pretty ironic to say the least, considering that all she ever done in the past few days were lying in bed and staring at the blank wall – sometimes at the clear sky from her opened window – the whole day, practically doing nothing.

She can’t get out of the bed now without assistance. She can’t wander outside all alone. She can’t run and feel the wind slapping her face anymore. She can’t spar. She can’t go riding again. And she can’t even make conversation with people without biting their heads off in the process. She hated that look they always wore when they spoke to her. That pity. They only add to the reminder that she was a crippled now. A disabled person.

There are a lot of things that she couldn’t do now, apparently.

Arya wonders if this is what Bran once felt like when he was a crippled another lifetime ago. The thought of her brother, make her recalled the dream she had. Truth be told, she doesn’t know what to make out of it. She remembered it all vividly. What the older Bran was telling her to do – or in this case not to do. Though in her state now, what else can she do now to stop the horrible fate that will catch up to all of her family? What with the limitation of her body and all.

Yes. She was useless now. Of that she was certain.

When Maester Luwin had come by to her room – right after Robb had calmed her down and carrying her back to bed the other day– he gave her a once over on her condition, providing her what she needed to know and what had caused her lower body paralysis. Not that Arya needed it. She remembered it clearly what she chose to do that day when she ran to the Broken Tower.
And then after, he told her why Robb and Rickon were the only ones left in Winterfell.

Her Father had gone to King’s Landing, accepting the King’s offer to become his Hand, bringing Sansa and Bran along with him. Her Mother had stayed by her bedside since the day Arya was found under the Broken Tower. But, the older woman had some important matter to tend to and left home a week before she had woken up. Arya noticed how there was a slight pause as Maester Luwin mentioned her Mother before he continued but she ignored it.

And Jon was gone too as he had finally decided to go to The Wall, swearing in to the Night’s Watch. She felt another burning but this time from inside her chest at the last information. To know that Jon didn’t wait for her to wake up before he left, disheartened her. But, the feeling was gone as fast as it came, drowning her in that numbness again.

Arya can only listen as Maester Luwin spoke. Robb was watching her carefully from the other side of her bed, no doubt sporting that tenderness in his eyes again. She ignored him, more for her sake rather than his as she mulls the information silently inside her head.

Time must have gone by because Maester Luwin was looking back at her, waiting expectantly. Waiting for what? She didn’t know. Arya heard him clearly yet she couldn’t make a reasonable response for it all. She took them as it is and store it away at the furthest place of her mind. She wasn’t sure she was ready to face them yet. All she knows is that everything seems to fall back into how things should be. The only difference now was the fact that she had swapped places with her brother, Bran.

When they finally left her to her own solitude again, Arya lay down dutifully as instructed. Nymeria had come back up to her bed and settles comfortably by her side then. The direwolf’s presence brings about an ease. A familiarity. But, despite it all her eyes remain open, opting to stare at the blank ceiling on top of her head.

When eventually her eyes sting and clouded before something wet touch her temples, she blames it on the fact that she hadn’t close her eyes for hours.

******

It was yet another day as she wakes up and hopes that everything that ever happened was a dream. But, as Nymeria greets her with a lick to her face and her feet remained unmoving, she lets that hope simmer down until it completely gone.

She was doing about her daily routines which consist of staring out into space before someone comes in and tend to her needs when a creak of her door sounded. It was still rather early for anyone to disturb her which is why Arya finds herself looking up to see who it was that had disrupted her schedule for the day.

Theon comes in then, pausing as his gaze bore into her. “You have a visitor.” He finally said.

Arya looks away then, staring back into the open window. She heard a sigh escaped him and decides to ignore it too.

“Come on, Arya… Robb wants you in the Great Hall.” His voice sounded closer.

A moment passed in silence as she gave no response in return. Theon finally surrendered. “Fine, have it your way… Its better you don’t see the imp Lannister anyway.” he mumbled the last part but Arya heard it loud and clear.

She snapped her head back at him. “Wait.”
Theon halts then as he turns around slowly in surprise. He cocked his eyebrow in question.

“I’ll go.” She finally accepted.

If the young man was curious as to why the girl suddenly changed her mind, he didn’t show it. Instead, he nodded and moves towards her. Reaching under her legs and her lower back, he carried her into his arms before walking out, Nymeria trailing close beside them.

As the walls of the hall passed through, all Arya can think about is the person waiting for her in the Great Hall. She has questions swarming inside her head now.

*Why was Tyrion here? Will he somehow remember me? And did he come here alone?*

The last one lingers the most inside her head for the rest of the way as Theon carried her to the Great Hall. Her train of thoughts got interrupted when murmurs reached her ears instead. And sure enough, seconds later, Theon enters the archway that leads to the Great Hall.

The moment she entered, the voices inside the hall completely seized. She caught Robb’s blue orbs first. His familiar concern gaze directed at her. Maester Luwin was sitting beside him. Nymeria was already settling comfortably by Greywind across the room.

“So, it is true then…you’re awake.” a familiar voice sounded then.

Arya looks down then to find Tyrion standing in front of her. A slight smile at the corner of his lips. “Hello, Arya.”

The moment her eyes lay upon the Lannister dwarf, she felt a smile building. “Hello, Tyrion.” She greets back. But, as she glance around the hall, a certain silver haired girl was nowhere in sight. Her smile dies instantly as she buried the ridiculous hope.

*Of course Daenerys isn’t here. Why would she be when the older girl didn’t even know of Arya’s existence yet in this timeline?*

Tyrion blinks once, in daze at how the girl casually said his name. He shrugs it off as he spoke again. “How do you feel?”

Arya focused back at the mismatch orbs. “I feel terrible and depressed… Thank you for asking.” She answered with a straight face.

There was an awkward silence after her honest outburst. Robb decides to join in then.

“Save the small talk, Lannister. My sister has just woken up only a few days ago and she needs to rest. If you have a point, then I suggest you get on with it.” He demands with an authority in his voice.

Arya felt both delighted at her brother’s obvious care and afflicted by his perception that she was fragile.

“Unlike others, Lord Stark… I have what people called, manners.” Tyrion quipped. Robb only glared silently at that.

The Lannister dwarf focuses back to the young girl then. “Do you mind telling your charming companion to put you down? My neck is beginning to sore from looking up at you.”

She heard Theon grumble under his breath, clearly annoyed at being told what to do by the smaller
man. Without her saying anything, Theon moves to put her down on one of the bench anyway.

Tyrion moves closer to her then. “I have a gift for you.” He offered her a rolled of parchment.

Arya took it and untied the binding. There was a painting of a chair or some sort. Only it has wheels on both sides and its look are strange and peculiar. Before she can voice out her question, the dwarf speaks up again.

“I imagined that it would be uncomfortable and improper for a coming of age lady like you to be carried around in men’s arms...so I made this. I planned out the structure for this chair to be specifically tied to your needs. You can move around freely with it... Well, maybe not as freely as before but at least you don’t need anyone to carry you around anymore.” He explained.

Her grey orbs looks at him and back at the drawing in silence. There was a spark that is starting to bubble inside her chest. “I get to control the chair?” she asked with disbelief.

Tyrion smiles gently. “It has wheels you see, so yes... You get to move around in it and control it however you wish.”

“Thank you.” She finds herself smiling genuinely for the first time since she wakes up from her fall. Tyrion nods then, mirroring her action. Arya straightens herself as she regards the dwarf with more conviction. “You don’t happen to have another plan lay out where I can ride too, do you?” she tried.

Tyrion cocked his eyebrow, surprised. “You like riding?”

“I love to ride.” She paused. “Well, I did... I used to.” Her smile is gone now as she brushed off the last remnant of hope.

“Had I known that you do, I would have given you this, first.” He said suddenly, taking out another roll of parchment from his pocket’s robe. Arya took it and untied it hurriedly. She looks down to the opened parchment in bewilderment. There was another painting of some kind of special saddle that ran down until the end of the wearer’s foot.

“I had that plan drawn first before I realized that you might not like to ride...” Tyrion trails. Seeing the light in those grey orbs again though, he continues. “Give that to your saddler, he’ll provide the rest... You must shape the horse to the rider. Teach it to respond to the reins and to your voice.”

“Is this really possible? I can ride again?” she asked quietly.

“You will. On horseback you’ll be as tall as any of them.”

They shared a smile as grey eyes locked into mismatch green and black ones.

“Is this some kind of trick?” Robb’s voice breaks the moment then. “Why would you want to help her?”

Arya noticed the dwarf was holding an eye roll at the comment but he turns to face her brother instead.

“I have a tender spot in my heart for crippled, bastard and broken things.” The dwarf retorts.

She can’t help the chuckle that escaped her. Tyrion glanced back to her wearing the same amused expression.

“Will you stay for the day? You must be tired from your journey.” Arya offered. In truth she wanted
to spend time with the dwarf a little bit more. She doesn’t know why but, she felt an odd feeling of comfort with the man – like meeting with an old friend after a long separation.

“At least someone have the courtesy to be a proper host.” He stated a matter-of-fact, all the while giving Robb a side eye.

She chanced a glance to Robb in question, but her brother was busy shooting daggers through his eyes at the Lannister dwarf.

*What had happened here?* She thought curiously at the animosity between the two.

“But, I’m afraid I have to decline…” Tyrion continues where he left off, forcing Arya to focus on him again. “There are brothels outside your walls. There, I’ll find a bed and both your brother and I can sleep easier.”

Even though she was saddened by that, she managed a nod nonetheless, accepting his decision.

“Oh, and before I forgot.” Tyrion suddenly said, pulling out another tied parchment from her pocket’s robe.

Arya raised an eyebrow. “How many scrolls exactly did you hide in there?”

“This is the last one you’ll see.” He grinned before offering it to the girl. “This one is a letter from your half-brother, Jon.”

Her body stiffen. “You met Jon?”

“I was travelling with him to The Wall. Where he swore in as one of the man for the Night’s Watch, I was pissing at the edge of the world... It was fun times.” He trailed in reminiscent. When the girl only stared back silently, waiting, he cleared his throat. “Well, Jon asked me to tell you that he misses you and he would visit you if he could.”

She gripped the scroll tighter in her hand, pushing that burning in her chest down until the numb takes over. She nods curtly, informing that she heard him loud and clear.

Tyrion decides to excuse himself then seeing that he had no business left there. He was about to leave when Arya stops him. He looked back expectantly at the girl, waiting.

Arya takes the time to really see him then. At his youthful unscarred face and his light gaze. She can’t help but to compare the man standing in front of her now with the man she knew from before. The shadows of his eyes are still yet to exist at this moment. And she wonders briefly if they will ever meet again after this. “Thank you, Tyrion.” She finally said and she meant every word.

Tyrion shot her a curious look for a moment before he smiles. “You’re welcome. I’m disappointed that we haven’t had the chance to talk before this... I like you.”

“I’m afraid I can’t say the same about that.”

His grin widens. “Ha! And you’re hilarious too.” He bids her goodbye not a moment after that and as he walks out of the Great Hall, her smile disappeared with him.

*Year 304 After Conquest (AC) – Old Future ‘2nd timeline’*
“I’m fine, Daenerys.”

The violet orbs in front gave her a pointed look. “You have an odd definition of ‘fine’, Stark.” Daenerys retaliates. “You do notice the stitches on your arm from your direwolf’s bite, do you not? Or do I have to point it out to you?” she asked and before Arya can answer to that, the older girl dabs the ointment onto the wound with more force than necessary.

Arya flinched at that. “Ow! Are you trying to murder me, woman?” she cradled her injured arm against her chest, away from the perpetrator.

“I thought you said you were fine.” The silver haired girl quipped.

“Not when you try to make another hole in my arm, I’m not.”

They shared a look, neither wanted to back down from it. But then, the violet gaze softens and Arya can’t help but to mirror them too.

“I’m sorry… that was inconsiderate of me.” Daenerys finally said. There was sadness in her voice and Arya felt herself in dismay that she may have been the one that caused it.

“No, it’s alright.” The young Stark answered. “You’re right, Daenerys… I’m not fine. I’m tired and in great pain. But, I don’t want to worry you with it. I’ll get through them as I always do. So, you need not concern yourself with it at all.”

Daenerys smiles at that, although it still held a certain glumness in it before reaching for the girl’s injured arm again. She continues dabbing the ointment gentler this time as they fell in comfortable silence.

At the close proximity, Arya can’t help but to drink the older girl’s beautiful features. From her calm and gentle eyes, her long eyelashes to her little nose. And those plump and soft lips are just ridiculous. She desperately needs them on hers again.

“Having fun ogling, Stark?” Daenerys looks up then, cocking her eyebrow with a smirk.

Arya blinks a few times to regain her bearing at being caught red handed. “It’s not my fault that you bewitched me so.” She huffs.

“Did you just call me a witch?”

The younger girl looks aghast. “Wha– What? No. Of course not. I meant that as a compliment… You captivate me, enchant…fascinate me and enrapture me is all.” She babbled.

Daenerys smiles fully then before leaning in to capture Arya’s lips to effectively shuts her up. The young Stark relaxes almost instantly as the plump and soft lips that she had been unashamedly ogled at were now on hers. She kisses back slowly, savouring every bit of it. It ended too fast to Arya’s liking as Daenerys pulls away, still with a smile on her face.

“You bewitched me too.” Daenerys admits and Arya feels her heart swell.

As the silver haired queen finish the last touch of dressing the girl’s wound, Arya found herself not wanting their time together to end just yet, so she spoke her mind. “Will you sleep with me?” she flinched at how wrong the words came out.

Daenerys was setting aside the medicine tray on the small table at the centre of the tent when she stops and turn around with that trademark smirk of hers, which only makes her none the less
“Damn her. Arya thought.

“Well, that certainly is the first time someone ever asked me that question.” Daenerys replied as she strides to the bed again.

Arya felt her face heats up. “That’s not what I meant. I don’t want to sleep with you like that—“

Daenerys quirked her eyebrow.

“I mean not now…someday perhaps…when I don’t have holes in my arm—“

The silver haired queen moves to settle herself beside the still talking girl on the bed then, guiding her to lie down before she did the same.

“And when you want it… only if you want it, I can— I mean, we can sleep together, someday perhaps.” Arya finally stopped, blinking hard at how close the violet orbs were. She swallowed a lump dryly as she finally noticed Daenerys was already on the bed.

When did this happen? Arya wondered in daze as her cheeks redden further.

“Do you know how adorable you look right now?” Daenerys asked softly.

Arya closed her eyes, sighing dejectedly. “You mean what a blabbering mess I was?” Daenerys seems to have that effect on her.

The older girl chuckled then. “An adorable blabbering mess… but adorable nonetheless.”

The young Stark scowled half-heartedly at being called adorable as she relished in the beautiful sound of Daenerys laughs at the same time. She reached for the blanket then as they settled further in the provided warmth. Their faces are merely inches apart from another. And for a while neither said a word as they look into each others’ eyes. Grey against violet ones. Both were content at the others mere existence.

Daenerys had that sad smile again before she decides to break the comfortable silence. “My first husband, Drogo…died of a wound infection.” She starts, pausing a while before continues. “It was a small cut, barely a scratch, he would say… but he died because of it nevertheless. Of course the healer had a hand in that. He was poisoning the medicine so it would appear as if Drogo died of natural infections but I caught on to his plan...albeit too late. His infection was already settling in and Drogo died soon after and then I lost my child too.”

At that revelation, Arya finally understand why Daenerys was acting strangely after her little incident with Nymeria. The way the older girl’s irritation when Arya brushed off her help and then later at her faraway look when she tend to her wounds.

“I’m sorry about your husband and your child…” Arya trails. “And I’m sorry how reckless I was being the other day, jumping on to Nymeria like that.” She can’t even begin to imagine if Daenerys was the one on the verge of being in danger. “I’m sorry that I made you worry and that you had to go through all of that.”

Daenerys smiles again and this time it was serene and peaceful. “It’s almost funny how these awful things that happen made me realized what’s important and what’s not.” There was a thoughtful look as the violet orbs held her gaze.
“People tend to not see what’s in front of them, until they lost sight of it.” Arya adds on absentmindedly.

“People are such an idiot, aren’t they?” Daenerys asked, playfully.

Arya chuckled lightly. “Yes... They certainly are.”

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*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) – New Past*

That dream was the start of hell for the young Stark. Everywhere she goes, Daenerys will always be there.

She’s there in Arya’s room. In the halls. In the courtyard. In the Godswood. And when Arya’s asleep, the older girl will be in her dreams again.

It was almost impossible to escape from her presence even though Daenerys was physically nowhere close to her.

And then there was Bran’s warning echoing at the back of her mind where he keeps telling her not to do anything. At first Arya was skeptical about it all. She would brush it off as merely a weird dream she had in her comatose state. But, as days pass by, she can’t help the tugging at the back of her mind that manages to creep their way inside her heart. And that was it all it takes for Arya to start doubting and to start being afraid.

She’s afraid to do anything that would cause harm to Daenerys in any way. She’ll be damned, but she would never let the older girl died again because of her.

Even when the news of her Father had been imprisoned by Joffrey finally reach Winterfell, it takes every part of her to do nothing and the pain she carries in her chest is inexplicable.

It was later that night that she found herself lie awake on her bed. Her guilt and treacherous thoughts occupying her head when a creak of her door sounded. She instantly sits up to see who had come into her room in the dead of night.

Robb looks at her surprised to find her still awake. “Why aren’t you sleeping?” he asked curiously as he strides closer.

“I can’t sleep.” She answered as he sits by her bed.

There was a pause as they stared at each other in silence. Arya takes the chance to examine her brother then. She noticed that he has donned his full armour and robe. “You’re going away.” It wasn’t a question.

“Yes, I am.” He answered anyway. “I’m heading South to King’s Landing to free Father.”

There was that familiar pain inside her chest again as her throat constricts.

“While I’m away, Arya…you’re the Lady of Winterfell. Listen to Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrick. You must never leave the castle walls…and take care of our little brother.”

The pain inside her chest only seems to intensify then. She reached for his hand. “I don’t want you to go, Robb.” she whispered, barely holding it together. Perhaps there’s another way for everyone to be
safe. But, she was having a hard time to come up with a solution at this moment.

His blue orbs soften. “It’ll only be for a while, sister... I’ll come back home with Father and Mother and with Sansa and Bran. In the meantime, keep Winterfell organize, will you?” he tightens his hold on her as he gifted a small smile.

She stared at his clear blue eyes knowing that this will probably be the last time she’ll ever see them again. “I will—“ Her voice breaks before she gets a hold of herself again. “I will protect our home and Rickon with my life.” She finished with conviction.

He nods in approval and before he gets up to leave, Arya wraps her arms around his neck in a hug. Robb tightens his hold around her too as she silently ask for her brother’s forgiveness.

He gets up and was about ready to leave when he stops and turns back around. “If I don’t come home, even after a long time, Arya, don’t be afraid... You’ll be alright. I know you will.” He assured, gifting another smile.

Arya forced a smile too as she captured his brother’s beautiful image, looking at her with that care and peace in his eyes forever inside her memory. “Robb,” she called. He hummed in response, waiting. “I’m sorry.” She said but he was waiting for more. “For punching you in the face the other day.” She settled even though she was sorry for much more than that.

“I have to admit you do have a strong punch, sister... You do not hear this from me but my jaw makes this weird pop sound whenever I open my mouth too wide. I think you might have something to do with that.” He japed.

A chuckle escaped as her eyes shifted to the side, trying to hide the glassy layers in them. There was a beat of silence and for a moment, Arya thought that Robb has left but then he spoke again, softly. “I forgive you, Arya.”

Her head turns back at him where he gifted an easy smile. Without waiting, he bids her goodbye and walks out of her room leaving her all alone. She bit her lip tightly in attempt to hide the pain. They would have bleed if she had bitten them a moment longer but a sudden movement outside her door caught her attention instead.

“Rickon?” she called in daze.

Rickon steps out from the shadow then, revealing himself. His face is downcast and he looks almost dispirited. It shouldn’t be there in a six year old boy. “They all have gone away.” He said, almost whining.

“Yes, they have.”

There was a beat of silence after that as Rickon ponders over her words. “They’re never coming back, are they?” he suddenly asked.

Arya stiffen at that as she continues to mourn in silence. “No, they won’t.” she heard herself said.

His bright blue eyes turn clouded at that and for a moment, she hated herself for speaking the truth. “But, I’ll look after you, Rickon... No matter what happens, I promise that I’ll always be with you. I won’t leave you.”

At her declaration, his eyes cleared then and she finds them glowing instead. Without another words he strides further to her room and lie down beside her. She tucks her little brother under the furs then
as he wrapped his arms around her middle and settling his head on her chest.

With her little brother falling asleep in her arms, Arya keeps telling herself that this was the right thing to do. That this was supposed to happen. But then, why is it that her heart and mind are ripping apart in half? Why is it that every breath she takes, it hurts?
Lady

Chapter Summary

In which our little wolf tries to settle into her new life

*Year 298 After Conquest (AC) – New Past*

It takes Arya exactly two days for the pain in her heart to numb and then another day for that numbness to completely overtake her. Her continuous routine contributed for the most part of it. It was hard to think and feel considering she always has things to do. Be it the duties of Lady of Winterfell, getting used to her mobile chair to learning how to ride again. She welcomes the distraction with open arms even though by the end of the day, her body drained and her working muscles ached due to the exertion. At least by then, she would be too tired for her nightmares – or even a certain dream of a silver haired woman – to conjure up at night.

Tyrion’s wheelchair and saddle plans proved to be a success. Once they were assembled and readied, Arya didn’t waste any time and instantly made full use of them. Now, she is proud to say that she can move around the castle more freely than the first day she woke up from her fall. The same can be said of her riding where she had dedicated most of her time to train with her horse. The training has always been able to make her forget everything that was going to happen and how she chose to do nothing to stop them.

But, as she sat behind the table in the Great Hall – attending to one of the many duties as the Lady of Winterfell – listening to a man’s complain on how Robb had taken away all his able men to fight alongside the Northern army in releasing their Father, every little things that she locked inside her head comes bursting at the front of her mind. She gathers her fists tightly as she regards the still talking man across the room.

“–There’s no one left now, only the women that care for the household and they’re no good in nothing else. I might as well be left with nothing…all thanks to this petty war that’s going on.”

Arya couldn’t hold on anymore. “Are you suggesting, my lord…” she finally speaks up, effectively cutting the man’s next sentence. “That my brother should bend the knee to the Lannister’s bastard and beg for my father’s mercy then – your Warden…for the crime of telling the truth and save everyone else all of these troubles?” she questioned softly though her demeanor screams anything but and she relished in the gradually cowering face in front of her.

He swallowed a lump then, shifting his weight uncomfortably. “N–No, milady… That’s not what I meant at all.” he stuttered as the young girl continues fixing him a dark gaze.

She leans forward slowly. “Then, I suggest you choose your next word carefully, my lord. I wouldn’t want to misunderstand you again… Gods forbid that a man loses his tongue simply because he isn’t articulate enough.”

There was a definite silence as cold grey eyes pinned the distraught brown ones from across the room. The man was visibly shaken at the mild threat as he tries to form his next words but to no avail.
Luckily for him, Maester Luwin breaks the tense silence. “We can spare four masons for a week, my lord… Will that be sufficient?”

The man clears his throat then. “Y–Yes, I believe it will… Thank you.” He didn’t wait to be told as he dismissed himself in a hurry. Bowing to the two people behind the High Table minutely and makes himself scarce.

The young Stark watches him leave in silence. Not until his figure disappears through the archway did she turns to the old Maester beside her. “What?” she asked as he gave her a look. He doesn’t have to say anything though. Arya knew a scolding when she looks at one. “I didn’t like his insinuation… None of us asked for this war to happen.” she defends bitterly.

Maester Luwin sighed softly. “That is true… but, you can’t threaten every man that comes asking for help.”

“He should’ve asked nicely then.”

“Arya.” His voice hardens slightly and she turns to him, her mouth sets in a hard line. “You’re the Lady of Winterfell now… Your duty is for the people. They need their Lady Stark, now more than ever.”

“Am I to just sit here even when they insult my family?”

“We’re in a sensitive time. War is brewing and everyone is on edge, common people most of all.” He counters and Arya slumped slightly. She knows very well how wars affect the common people. After all she was there experiencing the horrid conclusions of the War of the Five Kings another lifetime ago. A flash of images enter her mind then; of barren, charred field, dead bodies and sickly air assaulting her senses, before there were replaced again with warm eyes studying her calmly. She looks away trying to wipe out her living nightmare and how her stomach recoils at the fact that she was about to let those horrible things to happen again this time around.

Maester Luwin misunderstood the young girl’s stricken face as something else as he leans closer. “I know how hard this must be, Arya… But, I’ll be here to help.” He paused waiting for grey eyes to focus on him again before continue, “And the first lesson I can teach you is this; One of your responsibilities as Lady of Winterfell is listening to people you’d rather not listen to. Sometimes, what they truly need is a lending ear... Someone to share their burdens with, and that is the least we could do.”

It takes Arya a moment before she shakes off her guilt from her heart leaving it hollow again. She straightened herself as she held Maester Luwin’s gaze. “I understand… I’ll listen and do better.”

Because it really is the only thing she could do now, isn't it.

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The next few days went by a blur. From the moment that Arya wakes up in the morning, she already had a schedule – and of course Maester Luwin – waiting for her. To meeting the lords and ladies and managing the other correspondence castles, hearing any visiting petitioners and mediate their disputes, and to overseeing the maintenance of Winterfell itself.

She should realize before this just how much care Winterfell needed seeing how huge the castle is. There is always repairing or building projects at some part of the castle that needed her approval. And while she was at it, she takes the liberties to instruct the staffs to install ramps wherever she needs them, making the journey with her wooden-wheeled chair throughout the castle less restricted.
With most of her waking time spent attending to governing and day-to-day operations of the castle, she had little to no time at all for her little brother, Rickon. Although they rarely spend the day together, Arya had not let her little brother unsupervised. She had arranged for him to his daily training with Ser Rodrik and then his education later in the day. Though, Rickon sometimes would make his own schedules and decides what he should do that deems worthy of his time.

There are also some days that the youngest Stark decides to do nothing at all but to follow his sister around, latching onto her lap – literally – as she did about her business. And during those rare days, Arya felt a little bit lighter. She envied his innocent and purity and wonder when did she ever grew up from them.

It was a late evening as Arya wheeled her way across the hallways, relishing in the rare time of being alone. She had just finished her last work for the day and after dismissing everyone, decides to direct herself to the kitchen quarters to pass the time before dinner arrives; or more accurately to please her sudden cravings.

The sound of people working and shouting can be heard as she neared the archway. And soon enough she encounters the source of the chatters and clatters as the maids and cooks set about their respective works. Their ease conversation carries through the room.

Arya pushes herself further into the room then. The on-going conversation effectively halted as the sound of her wheelchair comes barrel in none too quietly.

A middle aged woman immediately leaves the pot she’s watching over before she motions for a servant girl to take her place. “M’lady.” She acknowledged as she neared the young Stark. “Do you require anything?” Her eyes flicker down to the girl’s legs before finding grey eyes.

Though it was only for a brief moment, Arya noticed the gesture nonetheless. If it was another time ago, she would be offended by the attention and how people's demeanor seems to change around her as soon as they saw her disability. Now though, she has learnt to brush it off and even used it to her advantage. Like this moment, for example as she looks up to the older woman, offering a smile. “Greta.” She nodded at the Head cook of Winterfell. “Kidney pie would be lovely.”

The once soften features is now set again. “Dinner’s only about an hour, m’lady.”

Arya leans forward a bit. “An hour is too long, Greta… I don’t think I can hold on anymore.” She pleads and the face in front of her slowly softens again. “I even came all this way by myself.” She tacks unashamedly.

It was less than five seconds before Greta sighs in defeat. “As you wish, m’lady… but, it’ll be one small slice.” She decided, moving behind the young girl and pushing her further to a small table across the room. She called for another servant girl to bring the infamous kidney pies.

Despite the head cook’s words, the slice of pie she puts in the young Stark’s plate is far from being a small one. “Thank you.” Arya said honestly as her smile widens. She gets a small smile in return before the older woman left.

The young Stark wasted no time then, taking the first bite of her favorite dish. She closes her eyes in delight at the welcoming taste. The chatter inside the kitchen quarters began to stir again and Arya lets the wave of sounds carries her along with it. The organised chaos could almost drown her from her own chaotic mind and for a little while she can just be herself; Not the Lady of Winterfell, nor the youngest daughter of House Stark, not a faceless assassin, and most certainly not the person who was brought back to relive her horrible past.
She turns to study the many faces of the maids and cooks on duty and let herself sinks further into the familiar routines they were busying themselves with. The serenity breaks apart though when she encounters a foreign face amidst the people.

Swallowing down the remaining of her pies, she continues to study the curious woman behind the rim of her cup next. The woman looks to be in her late twenties, with shaggy dark hair and dark eyes, wearing only one piece of clothing that covers her from chest to ankle. It was not flattering or even comfortable just by looking at it. A sack perhaps would be much better than whatever the unknown woman is wearing.

She couldn’t hear the grunt from across the room but judging by the woman’s sour face and how unceremoniously she places the cleaned plate onto its stacks, Arya can imagined it nonetheless. Shoving the last piece of kidney pie into her mouth, she picks up her emptied plate and cup and stationed them on her lap before making her way to the grumpy looking woman across the room.

The sound of her wooden wheeled chair against the floor was loud enough to make a few of the servant girls that are close by to glance her way, offering their lady a polite smile and acknowledgement. But, the woman with the dishes duty seems unaffected by this. Even when Arya had place her used plate and cup into another tray of dirty dishes near her, the dark haired woman was still looking down, scrubbing a plate halfheartedly.

Arya decides to announce her presence then. “You missed a spot.”

At this, the woman finally looks up, realizing someone else was with her. Her dark eyes rake the younger girl from top to bottom, studying her.

Like everyone else, the woman lingers on Arya’s limp legs before she looks up to find grey eyes. Though, this time the woman’s gaze didn’t soften or the like. Quite the opposite actually and the young Stark finds the act refreshing despite its apparent hostility.

“What?” The woman finally replied. Her voice came out annoyed.

“You missed a spot.” Arya repeats, nudging her head slightly to the plate in the older girl’s hands.

The woman looked offended by the statement and she throws the still dirty plate back into the tray, making the shallow water to splash around the edge. “Oh, do I now? I suppose you can do better than me?” she challenged.

The young Stark raised an eyebrow at the blatant rudeness. “Despite what you may think, you don’t require much wisdom to clean a plate properly.”

The dark eyes were unwavering. “Says the little lady who lived in a castle, who had servant girls and boys doing her bidding and even tucking her back into bed… Did they sing you songs and kiss you goodnight too?”

The chatters and workings inside the kitchen quarters have long died now and Arya can feel everyone’s stare all around them. She didn’t let it bothered her as her gaze stays rooted onto the dark haired woman who had just casually belittled her. Though the young Stark was intrigued by the woman’s honest disregard of Arya’s disability, but her brusqueness towards the interim Lady of Winterfell was another matter entirely.

“Do you wish to lose your job or do you often terrorize your patron.” Arya retaliates.

The woman chuckles humorlessly. “You Southerners and your fancy words… A job?” she drawled, moving to stand up and as she did so, there was a rattling noise down her feet, revealing a metal
binding chain. “I may be a Wildling, little lady but we don’t tell lies to the people we captured… We tied them and we tell them straight to their faces if we’re going to kill them soon after. What we don’t do is chained them up and come up with fancy words about them being a slave to some crippled highborn lady who thinks she’s better than everyone else just because she's born in a castle.”

Arya frowns at the words sputtering out from the older woman, trying to put two and two together as she eyed the chains shackling both her ankles. Luckily for her, Greta – who is now at her side – offers an explanation. “Your brother, Robb found a group of Wildling while he was out hunting, m’lady. They tried to mug him and she’s the only one that survived.”

A beat passed as the young Stark let Greta’s explanation settles in. All the while, grey eyes never leaving the dark haired woman who seems to lose her fiery gaze as her own dark eyes dart to Greta and back to her only now realizing that she may have misunderstood the younger girl’s involvement in her predicament.

To say that Arya was bothered by the fact that Robb or anyone else had not told her there’s a Wildling living in the castle is an understatement. Though she understands how Robb might have forgotten about the woman’s existence with what’s going on with everything else before he left. Nonetheless, the woman could possess a threat to everyone inside Winterfell. What to stop her from infiltrating the main castle and to her room or even worse to Rickon’s.

Her jaw set hard and she focuses again into calculating dark eyes. As soon as Arya takes another look at the woman though, she notices the pale skin and dark shadows under her eyes and the protruding bone of her cheeks, wrists and ankles and in an instant grey eyes lose their judgment.

The young Stark wonders if the Wildling looks this terrible before or after she was caught. Did someone in this castle was treating her badly knowing that Arya isn’t aware of her existence? She remembered about the older woman lashing out about being a slave and the word alone makes her blood boils as flashes of her own enslavement another lifetime ago comes barreling in. She flinches slightly as the phantom pain decides to let their presence known across her body then.

“What’s your name?” Arya finally speaks up, clenching her jaw tight as she expertly disposed the imagination pain away.

The wildling woman blinks a few times, not expecting the question, before her features turns guarded again. “My name’s Osha.” She replied curtly.

“Osha.” Arya started. “Every person here in The North is a free man and woman… And every person who committed a crime will never go unpunished.” She stops, gauging the older woman’s reaction. Osha’s gaze looks resolute as if she knows or perhaps accepts what will be coming next. “I can’t let you walk free when you have attempted to cause harm to my brother and perhaps will continue to do so to other people outside this castle.”

Osha clenched her jaw tight. “Fine then, little lady… Do what you have to do and get this over with.”

Arya wavered only for a second as she weighs her options for the last time. She straightens her shoulders as she regards the older woman then. “Osha of the Free Folk, you were caught trying to steal and cause harm to the then Lord of House Stark, the Warden of the North, my brother…and because of that alone, your crimes are punishable by death… But, you’re not from around here and you have no knowledge of our ways and who the person you tried to rob might be and pressing the Northern’s laws to you would be unfair, therefore I won’t do that.”

Osha’s dark gaze cleared then, her mouth agape startled at the declaration.
Arya ignores it. “You will pay your crimes by serving me instead. You will care for my needs and whatever else I require of you from the sun rises till it sets.” She trails waiting for Osha to respond. But, the older woman couldn’t seem to form a word, so Arya continues. “And because you’re not a slave, you will be paid money for your services…and since you’re caring for a crippled noble lady, you will be paid twice the normal wage of carers. You will do this until your crime is compensate fully. Do you accept?”

The silence that came after was deafening to everyone’s present and Arya waited patiently for the older woman’s replied.

Osha swallowed a lump then. “Wh– What?”

“Do you accept?” Arya asked calmly, knowing that Osha heard the previous details of her offer.

Osha chance a glance at the Head Cook beside the younger girl then, who like everyone else in the room, is waiting silently for her response. She looks down to find calm grey eyes again, noting that there is nothing there but determination and fierceness. Deciding not to trust her voice, Osha nods her answer instead.

It was only a slight nod and if Arya haven’t been paying attention, she would miss it. She turns to Greta then. “Take the chain off her.”

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A loud thump blasted through Arya’s room and she startled herself awake from her fitful slumber. The arms that have been supporting her head shoot outwards, reaching for the thin slender knife she used to open some of her letters with. Her body straightens and tense, the blade pointed and ready to attack before her eyes even fully open.

When the blur of her vision finally cleared, she finds the familiar face of the Wildling woman she has spent her last few days with. Her body relaxes almost instantly before she places the small blade onto the table again.

After their first meeting it takes Arya and the older woman less than a day to get familiarize with themselves. The young Stark remembered doubting her decision in taking the Wildling woman into her care moments after the chains were off. After all, she was about to give the older woman so much access around the castle and of her own personal need. Not to mention Rickon’s and other occupants’ safety might be in jeopardy if the Wildling choose to snap and go on a murdering spree once freed.

But, truth be told, there was something in the split moment when Arya saw Osha’s reaction of her for the first time; How the older woman sees her with nothing similar to pity or careful politeness everyone else seems to wear when they’re around the young Stark, as if they’re walking on eggshells around her. And Arya was sure the older woman knew exactly who the crippled in a fancy dress in front of her was, which only makes Arya craves her honesty even more.

Though it was a risky and selfish decision to make, the young Stark makes sure to compensate it by having Nymeria testing the older girl’s character. Arya trusted her direwolf with her life and the beast had always been there for her in time of needs and when she’s in peril danger. So, when Nymeria gave Osha a once-over and a whole lot of sniff before walking away calmly, Arya decides the Wildling isn’t going to be a threat after all.

“Did I not tell you to knock first?” Arya asked groggily, getting back to the intruders in her room. She wipes the remnants of her sleep from her face and then rubbing at her sore neck, no doubt due to
the awkward position she fell asleep in.

Osha walks further into the room then, closing the door behind her with less hostility than earlier. “I already did, little lady.” She counters giving the younger girl behind the desk a look. “I guess you didn’t hear it.”

Arya looks up, giving a look of her own. “The point of knocking is to wait until you’ve given permission to enter the room. It beats the purpose if you come bursting in anyway without regards of the occupants.”

“Is it written in one of your books there?” The older woman points at the scattered letters and books on the table separating them. “Another teachings of ‘How to be a stuck up highborn’, perhaps.”

Arya closes her eyes, trying to hide her eye roll. “It’s called basic manners… You don’t need to be a highborn to know that. You just need to be a person.”

Osha looks less than bothered by the remark. She closes in towards the young girl instead, bending down. “Oh come now, little lady…no point in hiding away your true intention.” She trails; a slight tugging at the corner of her mouth.

“And what is my true intention?” The young Stark asked with a raised brow. Osha reaches for the mess of the table then, in attempt to organize some of it as she lets the question hung. She didn’t get to do anything though, before Arya snatches the books away. “Do not touch these…otherwise I can’t find what I’m looking for.”

“And you can find what you’re looking for under this mess?” Osha asked scandalized.

The young Stark carefully placed the books back to their original places along the scattered things. She had been spending all night, studying and revising Winterfell’s records, accounts and along with other things. “It’s an organized mess– I said stop touching it.”

Osha raises her arms in defeat, palms out and retreat a few steps away. “Fine… You don’t need to shout.”

“I’m not shouting.” Arya may have raised the tone of her voice a little but she’s definitely not shouting.

“Yes, you did… And you just did it again.” The older woman said pointedly. “You don’t even let me do my job. Next thing I know you’re going to cut off my pay and throw me back doing dishes.”

“Clean something else then.” Arya retorts back, annoyed.

“Have you taken a look at your room? There’s nothing to clean here… You don’t even use your bed. If you have slept there like other normal people who have a luxurious bed would do, I might have something to do now.”

“Perhaps you should master the art of knocking first…and then you can move on to the next big thing.”

Osha fakes a laugh. “I know you’re still bitter about that…” she trails still staring down at the young Stark. “You wanted me to knock first because you’re upset that I could walk in on you doing things, aren’t you.”

“What are you talking about now?”
“You know…that thing that you do when you’re alone?” the older woman said in a hush as she leans forward.

A frown etches on Arya’s face. “What thing? And why are you whispering?”

The older woman throws her head back in exasperation. “Oh don’t act like you’re innocent, little lady. It’s really nothing to be ashamed of… You’re a young woman now. Everyone does it once in a while.” At Arya’s still frowning face, she rolls her eyes. “Don’t tell me you never touch yourself, down there?” she blurs out.

It takes a moment for the last question to finally seep into her and Arya feels her face heats up by the second. “Wha– Why would I do that?” She knows why but Osha doesn’t need to know that.

“By the Old Gods, now I know why you’re so cranky all the time.” Osha exclaimed as if she had just solve a puzzle. “All that pent up energy inside you… You should let it all out, little lady. Do you want me to teach–“

“No, I don’t want or need you to teach me anything.” Arya cuts off effectively. Osha still looks down at her with a mixed of doubts and curiosity. “And most certainly not about any of that.” Arya puts a stop to it.

Osha shrugs then. “Suits yourself.”

Reaching down to the sides of her wheelchair, Arya pushes the wooden wheels to move away from the table and to the edge of her bed next. She turns to face the older woman. “I have riding first thing today, am I not?” she checks, effectively changing the topic.

“You do… I’ve brought your riding clothes.” She nudges to the bundle of clothes on top of the chest across the room that Arya only now realized. Besides them a basin of water which she guesses is for her washing was placed there.

Before she can do anything, Osha had silently gone behind her to push her chair forward. Arya thanked the older woman and proceeds to wash her face. She relished as the warm water comes in contact with her skin, refreshing her instantly and she feels a whole lot better. Osha’s listing of the breakfast menus from behind also contribute to a part of it.

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“Come on! Faster!” Rickon’s voice echoes through the stone walls of the hallways.

Having just finished breakfast moments ago, they’re now heading towards the courtyard for their riding lessons next. Rickon had claimed his spot over Arya’s lap and Osha has a work cut out for her with the extra addition of occupants she had to push along the way.

“If I go any faster, you and your sister will end up flying, little lord.” Osha replied, keeping a steady pace instead.

“I’d like to fly.” He said over his shoulder. Blue eyes glisten with excitement as they capture grey ones.

“Yes, flying would be great, wouldn’t it?” Arya breaks into a matching grin with Rickon before he looks up to Osha again.

“Make us fly, Osha.” He demanded.
Though Arya cannot see Osha’s face, she can sense the older woman’s exasperation radiating from behind her.

“I can’t really make you fly, little lord.” Osha speaks after a moment.

Rickon’s face fell at that. “You said you could if you go faster.”

“I didn’t mean it that way… It would be dangerous if I push this any faster. These wheels aren’t exactly made for speed, you see.” Osha explained in length.

“Then why didn’t you just say so in the beginning?”

Arya schools her face into indifference in return with Rickon’s now solemn one. “Yes, Osha… why didn’t you just said so in the beginning?”

“I’m sorry, little lord.” Osha finally said, sighing.

Rickon lets out a huff. “You’re no fun.” He jumps off from Arya’s lap soon after. And when his feet touches the ground, he sprints forward, almost making himself stumble at the sudden change before he successfully breaks into a run.

“Well, thank you for nothing.” Osha commented as Rickon’s figure finally vanished down the hallways leaving them behind.

“You should’ve told him straight away what you want him to do… He’s six. Simple word is all is needed.” Arya said back, a ghost of smile on her face.

A chuckle left the older woman. “I’ll put that under the lists of your many teachings, little lady.”

Osha speeds up as there is no extra carriage now. The sound of the wooden wheels hitting the stone floors envelops them both in comfortable silence. A few moments later takes them outside the courtyard. Rickon is already making himself comfortable as he plays with his direwolf, Shaggydog. Nymeria joins them as a third wheel but the direwolf lost interest as soon as she realizes her mistress arrival.

Arya felt a smile forms as Nymeria comes running towards her before the direwolf landed her muzzle none too softly on her middle, nudging her a few times in excitement. It’s a good thing Arya is already seated. “Good morning to you too.” She greets, rubbing the direwolf’s sides with the same affections.

Nymeria hasn’t got quite as big as Arya last saw her another lifetime ago in the woods and she wonders if the fact that she kept the direwolf indoor will make any difference. She tried to give as much space for the beast as possible, letting her roam around Winterfell in hope that Nymeria could grow to her true potential.

“My lady.” A voice interrupts her train of thoughts then.

Arya looks up to find Ser Rodrik hovering near, nodding in greeting. “Ser Rodrik.” She greets back.

As if in command, Nymeria gives one last nudge before she turns and walks away leaving Arya with the Master-at-arms.

“What do you wish to do today, my lady?” Rodrik asked. He had brought the usual horse the young girl always trained with.
“I wanted to teach Rickon how to ride... He’s been asking for it for a while now.” Arya remembered how much her little brother pestered her for training since he hasn’t had a chance to start properly.

“Of course... I can bring another horse for him.” Rodrik was about to do just that before the young Stark stops him.

“Lets use mine first... I can ride with him and guide him through.” She suggested. She had bonded with her horse in time and she’s confident that she can fully control it now. Besides, her horse is the gentlest breed among the others. This way, she hopes Rickon will slowly gains confidence to ride one all alone.

The older man looks down at her calculatingly. No doubts picturing the worst thing that could happen to the Stark’s children if something were to go wrong.

“You’ve seen me ride, Ser Rodrik... It’ll be fine.” She tacks on.

A beat passes before Ser Rodrik finally agrees. As he walks away to get the horse, Arya calls her little brother. Rickon comes running to her in an instant, ready. She chuckles softly at how disheveled he already is. There are a few smudges of dirt on his clothes, his hair messy and his face sweaty. She wipes his sweat off with the sleeve of her shirt as she explains what will happen. He listens intently, eyes wide and eager.

When Ser Rodrik comes back with a horse in tow, he passes the rein to a stable boy and moves to help the young girl next. He places her carefully onto the saddle then before fastening the many straps on her legs. Rickon joins her soon after that. His back against her front.

“Alright there, little brother?” Arya asked as he wiggles to find a comfortable position. He nods his head after getting the comfort that he seeks.

“Is your horse a ‘he’ or a ‘she’?” Rickon speaks then as he followed her hands from behind him, into gripping the reins with both his hands.

“A ‘he’.” Arya replied and whistled. At the sound, the horse starts to trot. Their body swayed by the motion created.

“Does he have a name?” Rickon sounded again.

Ser Rodrik is following them close by from behind and Osha has settled across the courtyard, watching them from a far. The other occupants of Winterfell are already tending to their daily chores.

“No, he doesn’t.” Arya never thought to give her horse one. Mastering the skill to ride was her sole reason. “What do you think we should name him?”

A moment passes as she lets Rickon to think of an answer. She pulls the rein to the right, making the horse turns and trots that way.

“I think we should call him Carrot.” He suddenly declared.

“What now?”

“Carrot... Because he has the same color as a carrot.”

A chuckle left her freely. The horse they’re riding has basic coats of chestnut with slightly reddish gold color. Though, his mane and tail are in lighter shade.
“Are you sure you’re not naming him Carrot because you like carrots so much?” Arya asked bemused.

“Of course not.” He sounded sure.

“Alright… If we name him Carrot, do you promise not to eat him?” she asked in all seriousness.

Rickon looks over his shoulder with a giggle. “That’s silly… I know he’s not a real carrot, so I promise I won’t eat him.”

“That’s good then… Carrot it is.” She agrees.

Carrot continues trotting along the courtyard at a slow pace as Arya guides him. They had two more rounds around the courtyard before Rickon starts to be restless and is asking to ride one by himself. He had the biggest grin when he finally hops on to another horse and successfully guides it to move on the first try. She praises his effort without missing a beat and he beams further. They go for another round then, this time side by side.

Today could not have started more perfectly than this, Arya thought. The clear sky, fresh morning air and Rickon’s smiling face. She could feel that familiar hollowness inside her chest filled almost to the brim.

But then, at the periphery of her vision, she caught the silhouette of Maester Luwin, walking towards them with purpose. Arya halts her horse which Rickon soon followed and waits for the maester to close in. She notices the open scroll in his hand first and when she looks up to his face, he looks subdued, defeated almost. And that glow inside her a while ago vanished and was replaced with dread instead.

Her grips on the rein tighten as Maester Luwin finally arrives. He doesn’t look any better up close. Grey eyes lock into brown ones in what Arya felt like the longest time before the maester finally speaks up.

“Arya, I have news…from King’s Landing.”

She wished he didn’t say anything. The tremor in her hands begins, then she realize she’s breathing heavily because she knows. She knows what that mean. The cheers of the people, Sansa’s screaming and then her Father’s kneeling. She couldn’t get to him then, and she still could not, even now. She blinks and the vision cleared, replacing Maester Luwin’s forlorn expression instead.

“It’s your Father… I’m sorry Arya.”

Arya would have thought that by now, none of it would affect her that much. After all, she has mourned for him, more than once. But, she was completely wrong. There was something horrible that creeps over her like an icy chill, numbing her senses. Yet, she feels the heat from every part of her body at the same time.

She needs to get whatever those are out because if she doesn’t, she might combust and freeze to death right there and then. Her body leans backward in a sudden motion and she notices late that she was the one pulling the reins so hard earning a loud whine from her horse before he starts to gallop at her instruction.

She ignores the frantic calling of her name from the many people she left behind as she rides away in increasing speed. The guards stationed at the main gate were shouting among themselves before they finally decide to open the gate wider for their lady to pass through. Outside, the cold wind slaps her face so hard that it hurts. Her eyes sting and she lets the tears down as she’s being carried away.
The day is as perfect as Arya thought before. The sun is shining bright and there are no grey clouds, only blue skies for as long as her eyes can see. Even the air is warmer than usual and her tears had long dried now. She didn’t know how far she has gone and how long the time has passed since she rides away from Winterfell. And honestly, she didn’t care about any of it.

Carrot has decided to stop at his own will when she gave up in guiding him moments ago. So now, here they are on one of the hills, watching the sun rises from the horizons. Nymeria has been with Arya ever since she steps out of her home and the direwolf is still there by her side, acting as a silent companion as the young Stark wallows in her grief.

Absentmindedly, Arya rubs Carrot’s neck, apologizing and soothing him for the sudden exertion she had placed on him earlier. He neighs softly at the contact. The quiet of the surrounding takes her mind to revisit what Bran in her dreams had advised. His words - more like a warning now that she really thought about it - had initially made her scared of what's to come, especially for a certain silver haired queen. But now, she felt nothing but rage and resentment towards him and herself. She wonders if he's happy now. This is what he wants after all.

The sudden movement of Nymeria breaks her train of thoughts then as the direwolf turns the other way and Arya can hear the multiple approaching hooves from behind. Carrot grew restless at the oncoming riders so she reached to pet her horse in a comforting manner where he relaxes at the touch.

The gallops are becoming louder and faster by the seconds before they finally stop not far. If Arya has to guess there are more than one rider behind her right now. She should probably turns and confirm if they are enemies or worse than that. But, she couldn’t find it in her to care or to even acknowledge any of them. She can even forget about their existence as they decide not to approach any further and let her be. But, after a moment though, a soft thud sounded and grew closer by the second before the lone rider appears on her right.

“Well, I don’t think you need any more training, little lady… You rode like the wind itself.” Osha's voice sounded then.

“Arya’s only response was the blink of her eye as she still looks ahead.

A soft sigh escapes the older woman at the lack of reaction. “I’m sorry about your Father, Arya.” She tried again, but the young Stark was still unresponsive so she decides to continue anyway. “I lost my husband not long ago… Bruni, his name was. He was killed by a man from my clan – stabbed from behind. I saw when it happened and when I confronted the man about it, he denied it and everyone else believed him... So, I sneaked into his home and put a spear through his eye.”

The young Stark turns her head at that. “Is that why you ran away? Are they looking for you?”

Osha shrugs. “Probably.” At the questioning gaze from the younger girl, she continues. “I left because I have no home anymore... Bruni was my home.”

Arya looks ahead again at that. Her Father was her home. And now she had lost him yet again. And soon she will be left with nothing.

“If you were send back in time to save the person you love then and the person you’ll come to love in the future, which one will you choose?”

The older woman frowns at the sudden question that seems to come out of nowhere. The younger
girl’s face looks vacant as she stares ahead at nothingness again. Osha decides to go along with it then, thinking the question over. “Why do I have to choose one? Can’t I have both?”

Grey eyes captured black ones. “No, you can’t.”

“Why?”

Bran’s words ring through her ears. “Because, one is supposed to die and one isn’t. And if both lived then innocent people will die instead.”

“That’s very specific.” Osha commented.

Arya gives no answer to that and let the silence envelops them instead. It lasted for a while and she almost didn’t think she would hear an answer but then Osha finally spoke. “When Bruni died, there was a big part of me that was lost as well and I can’t ever get that back… If I can go back and stop that from happening, then I will. Even if it means that I’ll be losing in one way or another. At least I know that I’ve done my best… Because what’s worse is doing nothing about it when you’ve given a second chance.”

The sun has gradually risen in the sky now, further warming the surrounding. Arya grips the reins tighter as the older woman’s words hit her every nerve. She turns her horse then, her mind set and her heart determined.

It’s time to go home.

******

As soon as she gets back, she searched for Rickon, finding him in his room. Shaggydog was with him as they sat comfortably on the bed, minding their own business.

“Hey, little brother.”

Rickon looks up from petting his direwolf to find Arya by the door. The young girl wheeled her way in then, Nymeria by her side which soon moves forward to meet Shaggydog.

“Hey.” He greets softly as he moves to sit by the bed. “Where did you go?” he asked. Blue eyes locked into grey ones.

“No where… I just had to get away for a while.”

“Was it because of what happened to Father?”

Arya grabs a fistful of the furs on her lap tightly. “Yes… Did Maester Luwin tell you what happened?”

He nodded and then. “Is our Father a criminal?”

A frown forms on her face. “What? No. He’s not.” She stated firmly but he looks unconvinced. She moves closer towards him then, taking his hands into her own. “Our Father told the truth about the false King Joffrey and he was punished for it… He is nothing short of a just and honorable man. Don’t ever let anyone else tell you differently.”

Rickon looks down to their tangled hands. “If he’s a good man, then why did he leave us? Why did he die?” he asked, looking up again with glistening eyes.

Her heart broke at that sight. She reached to cradle his face gently as she thinks of what to say. But,
she struggles to find a good enough answer so she choose to wrap her arms around him instead, hoping to shield him away from the cruelty of life even if it was for a moment. Rickon snuggles in closer to her, moving to wrap his arms around her in return.

It lasted for a while before he finally pulls away. Arya studies the young boy in front. His now determined gaze, his messy hair and his youthful features brought a pang of regret to her but also a new resolution. She grips his shoulders firmly then.

"I will be truthful with you Rickon, I don't know what will happen now... Things might get worse or it might get better. But whatever it is, I want you to be strong for our family and for yourself."

He straightens himself. "I can be strong... I even know how to ride now. It'll be useful."

She smiled. "Yes. It certainly will." And she's done being useless, as well.
Crown

Chapter Summary

In which Arya finally lays out her plan, properly this time and finds herself in a bit of quandary.

Chapter Notes

Look who finally decides to roll in with a 14,546 words of a chapter... (ﾉ。\)

*Year 299 After Conquest (AC) – New Past*

Mercenaries.

That is what Arya needs. She needs men – A lot of them if she wants to protect her home. With Robb taking almost every Northmen, marching them South, she didn’t have much left to work with here. It’s only a matter of time now that news of Robb crowned as King will come in one of the ravens that flew into Winterfell. And with that, The War of the Five Kings will finally commence and she will need to prepare not only herself but Rickon as well – and especially the people of the North with what’s to come. The people outside of Winterfell’s walls will need protection then more than ever.

This is the least that she could do now and she will. She decides to ignore the gnawing warning at the back of her mind – the one that comes from the ‘dream Bran’ as Arya would like to call him. His words are not loss on her as she can still vividly remembered what happened in her dream.

But, screw him and his warning. He’s not even here so he doesn’t get to decide.

She wasn’t going to let anyone else die on her watch this time around. The Gods must have a reason to send her back and give her a second chance to change things. Else, why would she still be here, stuck in the past yet again?

Regardless, she will do everything in her power to save everyone that she cares. Everyone that she loves.

“We need more money.” Arya started, focusing at the two people sitting across her, the table separating them in the middle. She had called Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik for a meeting to discuss further arrangement of The North.

The two men exchanged a look before they settle at the young Stark again.

Ser Rodrik decides to respond, clearing his throat. “Money, my lady?” he looks confused at the first opening of the meeting.

Maester Luwin decides to join in too then. “The North is not exactly known for its wealth,
“m’lady…” he trails, and when the grey eyes in front doesn’t waver, he continues. “But, we do have an abundance of natural resource such as timber, iron and silver. Not to mention, access to trees and game as well.”

“We can sell those, can we not? Or trade them? How much worth of Gold Dragons do you think it will provide us?” She asked eagerly.

The old maester takes a second to consider it before he answered. “Ten millions Gold Dragons at the very least.”

A small smile spread on Arya’s lips. “That’s very good then.” she turns to the Master-at-arms. “I want to hire mercenaries or sellswords with this money… Robb will not let the Lannisters have their way now that father is gone. And with most of the Northmen went away, we are defenseless here.”

The two men glance to each other subtly, noticing how calm the young girl speaks of her father since his death. Ser Rodrik fixed his gaze back at her, nodding in understanding. “I can find these contract men, my lady. There are some here in Westeros and more across the narrow sea.”

Before she can say anything to that, Maester Luwin interrupted. “I’m afraid the value of what I just said is only applicable if we manage to gather a handsome amount of labors.”

Arya’s shoulders slack as she realized how that can be a problem. “But, we don’t have enough manpower, don’t we?”

“No, we don’t.” Maester Luwin agreed softly. “And winter is coming, m’lady. It will poise to be difficult to work in such weather.”

“How about a loan from the Iron Bank?” Ser Rodrik suggested then. Her gaze finds the older man in a snap but her mind wanders to the City of Braavos instead as she relives the canals and streets she walked through another lifetime ago that eventually leads to the massive doors of black and white that had changed her infinitely.

“We could try.” Maester Luwin sounded then, successfully snapping Arya out of her thoughts.

She focuses back at the on-going meeting. “You sounded unsure.” She noticed.

“The Iron Bank is well known for putting a significant amount of interest to its borrowers… We could still be in debt for the next five decades.” He voiced out his concern.

Maester Luwin’s last words held the silence in the room. Arya doesn’t like the prospect of dealing with the Iron Bank either but, her choices are limited and Gods know they desperately need all the support to win this war. She decides to bury the unease in her gut at the fact that the House of Black and White are only a distance away. Surely, those two powerful organizations are not related in any way.

“At least we’ll live for the next fifty years, once we win this war…” Arya cuts the silence effectively. Her determined gaze finds both men. “I promised Robb that I will keep Winterfell and The North safe from any invasion. And this can only be done if we have enough resources.”

Perhaps it’s better to do nothing and wait, my lady? Robb may not have the experience, but your brother isn’t just a boy. He’s not as weak as the Southerners believe. He may surprise them yet and win the war.” Ser Rodrik voiced out.

A small smile spread as she recalls the victories Robb had when he goes to battle against the Lannisters another lifetime ago – how even Tywin Lannister himself grew stressful of Robb’s
continued success. But, then the red wedding happened and her smile disappears. “I have no doubt that he will. The people will sing songs about him in the taverns, praise him of his winning against the Southern armies in the streets.” She trails, looking at an invisible point as the memories assaulted her. “But, everything that is good will never last forever. And inevitably when that happens, we need to help him.” She finished, fixing her gaze back at the two men.

Maester Luwin looks at her with an unreadable expression. “You know something that we don’t.” he suddenly proclaimed.

Arya blinks, caught off guard. “What?”

The old maester leans forward slowly, all the while not breaking contact with the steel grey eyes. “Your father told me that you warned him – About being King Robert’s Hand and how dangerous it will be.” he started, making the young girl’s expression changed.

“I did.” Arya clenched her jaw tight to drown out the pain in her chest. She should’ve tried harder back then to convince her father to stay.

“How did you know?”

She wanted to say it all then. Really, she has nothing to lose now if she tells them the truth about her time traveling. The worst that could happen is that they don’t believe her and believe that she was crazy.

Nothing new there, she thought.

She caught the old maester’s gaze, determined. “Because I’ve lived through it before.” There, she had said it.

Both Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik frown with apprehension, trying to decipher what she could mean.

“What do you mean you’ve lived through it before?” Ser Rodrik inquired.

“I meant exactly as it sound.”

A beat and then, “Like a vision? You had visions of these things happening?” the old maester tried again for confirmation.

“It was real.” She counters but when the two men looks at her like she had gone bonkers, she decides to tone it down. “At least for me, it was… It felt real.”

Silence fills the room then, as both men seems to be lost in their own world, no doubt trying to imagine what she could’ve possibly seen.

“When do these visions happen?” The Master-at-arms asked again and quickly continues as he recalled something. “That time when you attacked Robb – does that have anything to do with it?”

Arya nods softly. “I was confused and disoriented at the time.”

“The fever and headaches afterward?” It was Maester Luwin now.

“I think it was the after-effects… I’m not sure on that.”

Another beat passes. Both set of eyes in front of her were loud despite the stillness in the room.
“What exactly did you see in these visions, my lady?” Curiosity lace Ser Rodrik features.

The young Stark blinks in daze, startled at the question. No one has ever asked her that since they always dismissed her claim as soon as she proclaimed what she had been going through. When Ser Rodrik is still meeting her eyes, she remembered his question that she left unanswered and at once, her heart clenched painfully.

“I’ve seen deaths…so many deaths. Everywhere I go, the air reeks of it.” And somehow she was back at King’s Landing, at the Twins, at the crossroads Inn and at Castle Black. “Everyone that I ever cared about ends up dying in front of me one way or another. Father, Mother, Sansa, Robb, Jon…and—” she swallowed bile that’s threatening to come out as the image of a silver haired girl with a bloodied knife in her chest invades her mind as well. “I couldn’t save them.”

The silence that comes after is so heavy that she almost lost the air to breathe. Or perhaps it was only her and the weight of the guilt that she’d lost her father again was the reason her chest constricted so painfully. “I keep failing…” she speaks so softly that if not for the silence it would be loss in their ears. “Back then, now – I keep failing, even now.”

“This isn’t your fault.”

She looks up to Maester Luwin, eyes hard. “Was it not? I have all these knowledge and yet I still can’t save him. Father should be here, governing as the Lord of Winterfell, not me.”

The eyes in front her soften. “You have an innocent heart, my child… but if you go on and keeps putting everything that everyone did on your shoulder, you’ll drown.”

Arya wanted to laugh at the absurdity. Her heart is far from being innocent. She had done her share of killing and taunting people who deserves to die and people who are not. If anything, her heart is a blasphemous. Her disapproval must have been obvious because the old maester harden his gaze as he decides to speak again.

“Your mother tried to stop him too, but your father was adamant in going to Kings Landing…” he trails. Seeing that he caught the young girl’s attention now, he explains further. “I believe he was going to stay in Winterfell, especially after your fall, but three days before he left, I received a scroll in the middle of the night. There was no addresser, only that it’s addressed to the then Lady and Lord Stark. I don’t know the content but whatever it was, the next morning your father gave order to ready the entourage to go South.”

The young girl takes a moment to process the information. She wonders who gave the letter to her parents and what was written on it. But, it seems that the only answer she can get is from her mother which she still hasn’t received any news from yet.

“He made his choice and you’re the last person to be blame, Arya.” Maester Luwin voiced out then, successfully breaking her train of thoughts.

She can feel the back of her eyes are starting to burn. It didn’t help when both Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik keep looking at her with such tenderness and care. Gripping her fists tightly, she finds a new wave of rage at the new information. “Whatever was written in that letter, it was enough for father to accept Robert’s offer… Father chose him over mother – over us, his family. I guess we meant nothing to him.” The words taste bitter in her mouth.

What she said seems to ruffle the two men as they look at her incredulously. It was Ser Rodrik who decides to speak. “You know that’s not true, my lady… Lord Eddard may be a stern and cold man, but everyone in this castle knows how much he loves his family – his children.”
Of course Arya knew that. Her shoulders sag as she looks away, ashamed. She didn’t really mean what she said before. “It doesn’t matter now… He’s gone.” She said, suddenly tired.

“I’ve been the maester of this castle since Ned was a young man.” Maester Luwin started. Only when the dejected grey eyes look back at him did he continues. “He will always put his family first in everything that he does back then… So, there is no reason to believe that he would ever stop.”

Arya’s heart sank at that. She remembered how her father had confessed to the crime he never committed at the Sept of Baelor, admitting to the claims that no doubt a man of his honor would’ve never said. Deep in her heart she knows who her father ultimately chose.

She always knew.

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After the meeting ended, Maester Luwin had agreed to send a raven to the Iron Bank in Braavos, officially requesting for a loan on behalf of the Lady of Winterfell, the Lady Paramount of the North. The young Stark hopes that the letter arrived well and a meeting will soon be arranged for both the Iron Bank representative and herself.

But that wouldn’t happen in a day.

And waiting Arya realized is a torture.

She had no choice but to go about her daily lives and that means going back into becoming the Lady of Winterfell. Though she was busy day and night, Ser Rodrik and Maester Luwin have been making it easier for her. She doesn’t know what had changed but after what she said of her visions, both men were more receptive of her decisions to govern the castle and its occupant. It was like they think she hold all the answers to every problems.

Which she doesn’t.

And she had told them as much. But, it doesn’t seem to affect them since they still treated her – albeit much less obvious now – as if she was a higher being.

Arya doesn’t know how to deal with this peculiar treatment. Especially, when the people inside the castle had also started to look at her with more or less the same expression – both with awe and wariness. Though it bothers her about the change, she decides it is way better than being pitied at.

It was late at night as she hunches over a large tome placed on her desk. She had tried lying down to sleep but again, her nightmares had woken her up. The Dream Bran is there again in her sleep. She doesn’t remember what he said this time but she remembered feeling scared and helpless. Perhaps he’s angry that she hadn’t listen to him or perhaps she was afraid of what’s to come with her trying to meddle in with things again.

When her mind seems to wander into a dangerous territory, she shakes off the thoughts of losing every person that she loves again as she focuses into the words written inside the pages, getting lost in the sea of sentences instead of sea of crimson and everything that is horrible.

A sudden creak sounded then, making her snaps her head up to her now open door. Osha stands there with a raised brow as she looks back silently.

Arya only leans back to her chair slowly, quirking her eyebrows in response.

The older woman rolls her eyes before she sighs, turns around and closes the door behind her.
Exactly three seconds pass before a knock – too loud than usual – can be heard. Arya leisurely waits for a moment before the older woman outside knocks again, frantically this time.

“Come in.” The young Stark finally said.

The door cracks open for the second time and Osha comes striding in. “Well, that only takes about an eternity.” She smiles softly, putting a wash basin and a few clothes down at the bedside table.

Arya glances to her open window where the skies that she last saw dark are already bright now. And suddenly she feels very tired imagining the long day ahead. She closes the tome with a thud, not even bothering to mark the last place she read, knowing that she will revisit everything again tonight.

“Those bags under your eyes are becoming more obvious by the day.” She heard Osha commented then.

Her hand that was rubbing her weary eyes stilled as she slowly looks up. “Spare me your nags, Osha… At least until I break my fast.”

“If you can’t stand my nagging, then you’ll have a harder time getting through this day.” The Wildling woman quipped as she moves to organize some of the scattered clothes the young lady left on her bed.

Arya decides to flutter her eyes close instead, trying to find some peace for a while. Even though her vision darkened, her ears still hears the swish of the other woman moving about to clean the chamber. She sighs. “Can I just stay in my room today?” she opens her eyes to capture the dark ones. “You can tell Maester Luwin that I’m sick or something.”

Osha moves closer. “You want me to lie to a Maester?” before Arya can reply, she continues. “And what happens when I said you’re sick? Who do you think will treat you then?”

“Alright...” she admonished. “Just forget I even asked.”

Arya can feel the heavy stares from the other woman but she busied herself with arranging the books and letters on her table instead. When the silence has stretched too long to her liking, she finally looks up. Osha was already standing opposite her, giving her famous stare that speaks volume.

“What now?” The young Stark sighs.

“You should ask the old man...he may have something for you so you can sleep easier.”

“I’m fine.” Arya said quickly. To think that she would likely have to face the Dream Bran again only makes her shudder.

The older woman clearly disagrees but Arya ignores it and continues to mindlessly arranging her desk. The fight eventually left Osha as she starts helping the younger girl too.

The silence lasted only for a while though when the older woman caught an unopened scroll. “Why haven’t you read this yet?”

Arya tensed as she recognizes which scroll that is. It was the one that Tyrion had given to her – The one from Jon. She instantly snatched it from Osha’s fingers. “Because I don’t intend to read it.”

“Why not?”

“Because it’s not important.”
“How would you know if you haven’t read it yet?”

The young Stark throws daggers through her eyes making Osha stops her quest in pursuing answers anymore. At that, the tension instantly leaves Arya’s body as sadness takes turn instead. Jon is the one thing that she can’t change in this timeline. He’s the man of the Night’s Watch now and not even the King of the seven kingdoms has any power to interfere with the institution.

And to think that she could have save Jon if he only waits for her to wake up from her fall only makes her riled up all over again. She felt betrayed, disappointed and above all helpless. She tightens the grip on the scroll before she puts it away among her other organized books.

“So, do you have any interesting news to share today?” Arya asked, slicing the heavy silence as she wheels her way to the bedside table. She really needs a wash now, at least to clear her face if not her mind.

“What, you think I’m one of those girls who gossips when their mistress is not around?” Osha instantly answered as if nothing had happened and that is why Arya always feel grateful of the other woman.

“No, of course not.” She looks over her shoulder with a small smile which Osha mirrored.

“They think if you look long enough into their eyes, you’ll know how and when they’re going to die.”

Arya snaps her head upwards, taking some of the water in the basin where she had dipped her face along with her. “What?” She frowns as heavy droplets trickle down her chin and onto her dress.

Osha repressed a smile as she moves closer. Taking one of the face cloth to wipe the young girl’s face dry, she hums. “Oh yes… According to the people inside this castle, apparently you can tell their deaths and secrets just by looking into their eyes now.”

Absentmindedly, Arya murmurs a quick thanks to the older girl as her mind revisit what has just been said.

“Where did they get that idea from?” She asked, curiously. That would explains why everyone’s been looking at her differently for the past few days. Some wouldn’t even look into her directly when they’re talking to her.

Osha just shrugs in reply as she moves down to clean the young girl’s feet. Arya has a guess as to who might be the one spreading the absurd rumors about her but even then she doubts they were responsible. Anyway, she will have to talk to Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik about it later.

“Well, this is great – as if I need more reason for people to stare at me.” Arya sighs softly.

“Don’t worry little lady, they got something else to talk about today.” Osha said, squeezing the warm water out of the cloth before wiping the girl’s other feet.

“And what could possibly be more exciting than a crippled witch?”

Osha chuckles at that. “A red comet appeared in the skies today… They say the red color represent the blood of Eddard Stark. Some seems divided on it being an omen of your brother’s victory or indicates a triumph for the forces of House Lannister.”

As Arya looks to the open window, she can’t see the sightings from where she was but she still remembers how it looked like from her previous life. “Perhaps they were right.”
“No… Stars don’t fall for men, little lady.” The Wildling woman stands up, having finished her task. Grey eyes looks up to find dark ones. “Then, who do they fall for if not for men?”

Osha smiles softly. “Dragons.”

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Arya really is not the kind of person that thinks everything revolves around her. But as she stared at the red comet up in the skies, the only thing that crosses her mind is Osha’s last words.

As if the young Stark needed any more reason to remember Daenerys Targaryen by.

She felt personally attacked by the Gods thinking that they are probably mocking, taunting, and torturing her all the same from up the clouds. And of course they would do it in the grandest way possible, smearing the reminder of her pain up in the skies.

Or perhaps she was just being a little dramatic of it all. But either way, the clench in her heart is still there and the red comet is doing everything but making it go away.

The day went by a blur that she didn’t even remember what happened. Her body seems to work and response on its own. She might have been doing nothing but wandering around the castle for all she knows with the image of a certain silver haired queen having occupied most of the space in her mind. But, she did remember having confronted both Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik about the rumors she learned from the Wildling woman.

“Have you told anyone about our discussion the other day?” Arya had asked. When the two men only look back confused, she clarified. “About my… visions?”

Understanding spread across their features.

“No, of course not, my lady.” Ser Rodrik quickly assured.

“How about among yourselves, then? Have you discussed about it outside my room?”

Maester Luwin shifted. “We did… But—“ he trails exchanging silent look with the Master-at-arms.

Arya sighs softly as she finally got her answer. “People think I have some kind of unnatural ability now. Words have spread and I guess we can do nothing about it any longer.”

Silence ensued as Arya looks away lost in thought. The two men clearly are uncomfortable by the thick stillness before the older man speaks up.

“I’m sorry, Arya… We should have been more careful.”

“We were just hoping to find a way to help you.” Ser Rodrik said in regret. “I should’ve been more aware of the surroundings before we discussed anything at all.”

Arya doesn’t really blame them. It was true that it bothers her so in the first place to have an entire occupant of Winterfell to have knowledge about her ‘visions’ – albeit a much different version. But, what’s done is done and the only thing to do is to let it go. As with everything else, people will find something else intriguing to talk about and eventually this will pass.

Besides, it wasn’t nearly as bad as everyone thinking that she has gone crazy. If anything, it was a step up from before. So, she assured both men exactly that. When they able to look her in the eyes again, she feels a little bit better too.
That occurs a few days ago and today is another brand new day. The red comet has long gone now and in its place is a clear sky as if it was never there.

Arya was at the Great Hall attending court for the people as they list their concerns. And Rickon sat beside her having nothing in his schedule for the day. He was strangely docile as he minds his own business, with Shaggydog and Nymeria lying comfortably down the steps in front of their master and mistress. Arya focuses into listening to the man still eagerly talking across her. Complaining about the lack of his harvest and therefore couldn’t afford to produce more for Winterfell.

The man’s speech however was interrupted when a sudden thump sounded, echoing loudly in the hall. He tried to continue talking his points over the still on-going noise, stuttering, until Arya decides to save him and turn to the youngest Stark who is drowning in his own world of destroying walnuts, a stone in his grip.

Where did he even get this from? Arya wondered.

“Rickon.” She starts, reaching for his arm nearest to her. Instantly, he stops and catches her gaze. “We have guest… Do you think it’s polite to make so much noise when he’s talking?”

His gaze flickers to the man standing across before he finds grey eyes again. “I’m bored.” He stated with a huff.

“What do you want to do then?”

He takes a moment to think of an answer before he finally spoke. “I want to play outside.”

His face lit up at his own suggestion and Arya can’t find it in herself to disagree, so she nods her approval and the boy shoots up from his chair and run towards the door, leaving the mess of cracked shell and nuts behind him. Shaggydog bolts after him not a moment after.

Arya looks over to her shoulder beckoning Osha to come close from where she was standing. “Can you make sure he doesn’t wander off outside the gates?”

The Wildling woman gives a short nod before she too was gone.

Now, that’s settled, the young Stark focuses back onto the man still awkwardly standing across her. “My apologies, my lord… For such a small man, my brother tends to leave quite a mess behind his wake.” She offered a smile.

The man relaxes as he chuckles softly. “That’s alright, milady… Boys their age will always be in a quest to explore everything. My two boys are already giving me headache to last a lifetime.”

Arya reached for a piece of paper then, dipping the feather in ink and starts writing. “I’m glad… Not of your headache, of course.” She trails, looking up from her paper to catch his eyes. “But of the nature of boys. I thought there’s something wrong with my brother… He always is quick on his feet, and I can’t seem to control him.”

“It’s best that you don’t milady – control him, that is… Let him makes mistake and then he’ll come running to you for answers.”

“Thank you for the advice… I’ll keep that in mind.”

Arya continues writing the letter, allowing a comfortable silence to envelop them. For a moment only the scratching sound of her feather can be heard as she diligently finished the last sentence of her letter. Signing her name, she looks up again. “You can take this letter to the Right Wing of the castle
and asks for a man named Ronas. Tell him that you require three good and able men from his group to work for you in your farm and one cart full of manure to be taken back as well.”

He shifted his weight uncomfortably at that. “But, milady…I don’t have enough money to buy a full cart of manure.”

“That’s fine. Your produce is much more important right now.” She assured. “We’re in a war and winter is coming… Besides, I don’t know why we impose for people to buy this. It’s rather stupid, don’t you think so? Buying shits with money?”

He repressed a smile, looking conflicted whether to answer the question or not. Arya saves him the trouble. “Anyway, we have a lot in abundance and I fear if we don’t get rid of it soon enough, the whole castle will reek… So if you need more, you need only ask.”

He moves closer then, taking the letter from her and bow low. “Thank you, milady… May the Old Gods protect you and your family and everyone in the North.”

With a last smile, he turns and walks out of the hall. Arya leans back to her chair relieved that that’s finally settled.

A sudden sensation of being watched registers then and she looks to her left where Maester Luwin is looking at her with unreadable expression. She almost forgot his existence as the old maester tend to only sits silently during most of her session with the villagers. She knows she has done nothing wrong in her previous decisions. If she was, Maester Luwin will no doubt intervene.

“Is something wrong?” She asked anyway, doubts still linger inside her.

“Nothing… Nothing at all.” he moves to assure, making the young Stark relaxes. “I’ve just realized now how much you’ve changed.” He said softly, almost saddened. “I still remembered you running around the castle, your dress smeared with mud and dirt, hairs tangled, looking for your father to give him your favorite winter rose that you plucked from the glass garden.”

A slight tugging spread at the corner of her mouth. “I remembered. And then after, mother would chase me down.” she chuckled, though it sounded more pained than joyed. “That felt like another lifetime ago... I’m not that girl anymore.”

Her last words hung heavy in the air as the older man seems to search for words to say. He doesn’t get the chance though when Nymeria suddenly moves from her resting place and whines loudly. A beginning of a commotion can be heard from outside before someone comes barreling in, interrupting their moment.

“Ser Rodrik?” Arya calls as the man moves closer to them.

The Master-at-arms takes a second to gather himself before he spoke. “Lady Stark, Torrhen Square is under siege.”

Before Arya can address about it, Maester Luwin jumps in. “Torrhen Square is barely forty leagues from here. How can the Lannister strikes so far North?”

“There are raiding parties led by sellswords… Perhaps by the order of Tywin Lannister.” The Master-at-arms supplied.

As Maester Luwin had said, it’s only forty leagues from Winterfell. Why would the Lannister decide to attack Torrhen Square and not Winterfell itself? Even if they did want the smaller castle, surely they’ll know Winterfell will send troops to retake it again. Either way, they have to help them.
“How many men do we have, Ser Rodrik?” Arya finally asked.

He looks pleased at the question. “Your brother has taken most of them, but, I can gather two hundred decent men.”

“And how many are the enemies?”

“Unsure, my lady. Conflicting reports said fifty or one hundred.”

A beat passes as Arya weighs on what to do. Should she send one hundred men or more? Will it be enough for Ser Rodrik and his men to outnumber the enemies? Or will she send them to their early deaths? But, she needs men to protect Winterfell as well, as this might only be a diversion. The sacking of Winterfell has yet to happen in this timeline and Arya will make sure that it will never happen, especially not under her watch.

She straightened her shoulders, finally deciding. “Leave fifty men to guard Winterfell and use the rest to retake Torrhen Square.”

“It won’t take long my lady… You know Southerners don’t do well here.” With one last smile, assuring the young girl, he turns to leave.

Arya can only hope that she had made the right decision.

******

It was early at dawn and outside, the silence was deafening. The devoid of everything, both animals and people are almost disturbing. But for the young Stark, the wariness inside her overpowers everything else at the moment.

She couldn’t let herself to fall asleep when Ser Rodrik alongside a hundred and fifty Stark men is still out there. Ser Rodrik should have long arrived at Torrhen Square by now since it usually takes less than a day of journey on horseback. And perhaps, they’re already succeeded in retaking the castle from the enemies and now are heading back to Winterfell to deliver the good news.

When she’s able to reassure herself that everything will be alright, for the hundreds times she tried reading again. But, a page or two will always be as long as she can get before her mind drifts off to the inevitable again. Sooner or later, the book finds itself unattended on her table as it remained in the now darkening room. There are little lights that pour from her opened window and the last candle she has, had long died hours ago. She will have to ask Maester Luwin for more.

A burst through her door snaps her from her reverie then. She looks up to find Osha standing there as usual. The chiding of the older woman’s lack of knocking is already at the tip of her tongue but it dies down when she finally notices how anxious the older woman is.

Before Arya can asked about it, Osha spoke. “You’re needed outside.”

Arya didn’t ask for what as she has a feeling of what it would be. Besides, someone will no doubt fill her in on what has happened and perhaps she should relishes the rare moment of not knowing, even for a little while.

Without another word, Osha moves behind her and starts pushing her wheeled chair. The Wildling woman stops at the middle of the room though, making a quick grab of the fur on the bed before she gingerly places it over Arya’s lap. “It’s cold outside.” She reasoned.

The young Stark murmurs her thanks and Osha continues to push her out of the room. They pass
through the same hallways that they use from their everyday usage. Only this time, the heavy silence and the thick tension are the ones that accompany them and not the usual banter.

Before Arya knows it, she is struck by the cold wind as the walls move pass her and openness greets her instead. Osha proceeds to take Arya further which the young girl guesses is to the main gate.

She heard the murmuring of voices first before she finds a small group of men up front, lights from the torches near the gate and walls envelops them and its surrounding. Maester Luwin was there too, talking something of importance. When the noise from her wheeled chair scrapping against the small stones is finally loud enough to made its appearance, the group fall in complete silence before they turns and waits for her to come.

“Lady Stark.” A man steps out from the line to address her.

“Ser Garrel.” Arya greets back. Ser Garrel Hardy is a young man, probably just a bit older from Robb. He’s one of the knights that had trained under Ser Rodrik and with the older man’s absence he had appointed Ser Garrel as the man in charge of the fifty men to protect Winterfell.

“I have put men watching over the south gate, the hunter’s gate and east gate as your command, m’lady… Ten men at each bridge and we have not encounter anything amiss.” Ser Garrel started.

Arya of course knows this. After Ser Rodrik had left, she ordered for Winterfell to close its normal operation. No one can go out or come inside the castle without her permission, to reduce the risk of possible unforeseen attacks against the castle.

“But, just a while ago, we have visitors from the main gate.” He continues then.

She was about to ask who it is before they were interrupted by a shout from the other side of the castle. It sounded muffle through the huge wooden door and the thick castle walls. But, nonetheless, it sounded less than friendly.

“Theon Greyjoy is outside, m’lady… He said King Robb ordered him to come to Winterfell to protect the castle from the Lannisters and he demands entry. He has thirty men with him.”

Arya chance a glance to Maester Luwin then. “They are all Ironborn men.” He provided.

“The last time I recall, House Greyjoy hasn’t declared for us… Am I wrong?” she asked, trying to stay calm.

“No, you’re not. But, your brother could have send Theon to make an alliance with Balon Greyjoy.”

A beat passes in silence but her mind is far from it. Million thoughts cross her mind of what could go wrong in this moment. “An alliance of only thirty men to protect Winterfell?” she voiced out.

No one can seem to answer her question.

“Ser Garrel.” She calls then. “Are your men all here?”

The young knight moves closer. “Yes, m’lady… I’ve called for them to gather since there are no more sightings from the other gates.”

Arya nods in gratitude. She will need every man to protect the castle.

“Send twenty archers up on the main gate and around it. Make sure they have a clear view of the ground… They should remain hidden but ready to fire until I gave the order. The others will stay
Ser Garrel doesn’t need to be told twice as he moves and shouts the commands. Arya can only watch silently as the men scatters in an organized manner in front of her. Letting the thudding of heavy boots pass by, she turns to Maester Luwin then. “Rickon?”

“In his room, sleeping.” he assured.

“Can you stay with him?”

The old maester looks conflicted at the request, no doubt wanting to stay. But, Arya needs him and Rickon safe if this thing turns south. The rest of the people will be protected within the inner castle. And with the still considered ungodly hours, they should still be in their respective quarters as their routines don’t start only after sunrise.

As Arya and Maester Luwin silently battle through their inner monologue, eventually he caves in when her pleading and resolute gaze wins out. “Look after her.” he said one last time to the person behind her before he walks away.

“Osha…” Arya starts.

“You heard the old man, little lady.” The older woman moves around to stand beside her mobile chair. “I’m not going anywhere.” She declared, catching grey eyes.

Arya felt a slight tugging at the corner of her mouth. “Good… I wasn’t going to ask you to leave.”

Osha rolls her eyes at that.

Now that the older woman is within her sight, Arya notices the long shaft she held against her frame. “And where did you get that from?”

“Oh this?” the wildling leisurely twirls the spear that she has with both her hands before she firmly grips it again with her right. “I reckon I should at least spend some of the money that you gave me.”

Anymore words that about to come out from them stops when Ser Garrel presented himself in front of the Lady Stark again. “M’lady, the men are ready.” He stated, his hand resting at the top of his pommel as his determined gaze catch hers.

Arya looks up the bridge and walls to find the archers but cannot find one that is visible. On the ground thirty men stand at each of her sides, splitting themselves equally. Osha is on her left and Ser Garrel is on her right. Satisfied, she ordered. “Open the gate.”

Two men move to pull the main door of the north gate. The creak was loud as inch by inch it opens wider revealing the outsiders. She notices Theon first who is at the center and front of his group. When it was big enough for them to enter, Theon marches in with his head held high. But, it lasted only for a moment because as he walks closer, his gaze shifted to the men on each of Arya’s side who are armed and present. His steps falter and eventually he stops twenty feet from her.

“Theon.” Arya calls. His gaze finally flickers to her. “Why are you here?”

He looks to the Stark men again and then some, as the Ironborn grew restless behind him. One of them leans and whispers something to Theon’s ear where his once uncertain and conflicted look now suddenly turns decided after that.

Theon squared his shoulders, catching her gaze again. “Balon Greyjoy, my father, has declared
himself King of the Iron Islands.” He starts. His voice was unnaturally loud. “King Balon Greyjoy, first of his name, claims the north by right of conquest.”

So, there is no alliance after all. She reckons Theon lied to get his men and himself inside. “Is that so?” Arya asked back, calmly.

He looked slightly – if not more – bothered by her composure at his declaration. “Surrender Winterfell and I’ll let your people live, Arya.”

She ignores him, saying instead, “Remember that one time, Theon? When I was ten and you trick me into going to the kennel before you lock me inside? I tried climbing my way through the small window and ended up with a split wrist… Gods, I hate you then.”

“I’m *Prince* Theon now.” He hissed, agitated as his hand moves at the pommel of his sword. “I’m taking Winterfell one way or another, and you should order your men down or else.” He commanded again.

“I was sure that I could not hate you more than that day…” She trails anyway, not giving him the satisfaction. “But, now here you are, proving me wrong again.”

Theon looks further annoyed at the remark if that was even possible. Instinctively, he steps a few feet forward. “This will be my last warning, Arya. Surrender—“

“My men and I will never surrender Winterfell.” She cuts in. “This is their home as much as it is mine, and as much as it was yours, once too.”

He huffs breathlessly. “This was never my home. I was a hostage!“

“My father raised you, fed you, and provides for you the same way as he did his other children. You grew up here in these walls. You trained and sparred here in the courtyard with Robb.”

“The Seven Kingdoms are at war.” He said through clenched jaw. “I cannot fight for both Robb and my father.”

When she didn’t provide any response for a long while, Theon takes that as a challenge. He slids his sword out of its sheath and soon every Ironborn follows. The Stark men however remained still, only moving their hands into gripping their hilts tighter, waiting patiently for the order.

She looks at Theon with a dark gaze. “Do you think you can conquer Winterfell with thirty men?”

“I can and I will.” he said without second thoughts. “One Ironborn fights with the strength worth of ten men. We will cut every one of your men down and then we’ll kill everyone else in this castle before burning it down!”

The Ironborn roars as they raise their swords in the air. That was the last strain that Arya had as she looked on the display. The once smoldering inside her chest now has burn with great intensity and it continues to grow into more by the second.

Theon smirks as he slowly creeps further, leaning slightly to match her eye level. “Now, for the very last time, Arya, surrender—“

“Archers!”

Arya’s voice carries through the court and up the walls and within seconds, men come out from their hidings and arrows rain down the center of the ground. The useless chatter from before is now
silenced by the whoosh of arrow splitting air and hitting flesh. One by one, the Ironborn falls down and the noise of gurgling and gasping takes it turn instead. Just after the third waves, she signals her archers to stop.

In front of her, most if not half of the Ironborn are now on the ground with arrows planting through their necks and unguarded faces and heads. Some have it in their legs. The blood from the fallen men seeps through the soil and moving onto the shadows that cast on the ground. The shadows have grown smaller now, even though the sun has yet to make its appearance. She finds Theon still standing where he last stood, baffled as he looks about his fallen men in daze.

“You have less than thirty men now, Prince Theon…” she drawled, and when he finally looks at her, continues. “And because my father raised you as his and you grew up with my brothers and sister, I will give you a chance to turn around and walk away. Leave now, and never set your foot here or anywhere else in The North for as long as you’re alive.”

Theon didn’t get to answer though as a tall and burly man from behind him staggers forward. His right leg limping as two arrows stuck on his calf and thigh. “You little cunt!” he screams before sprints with his raised sword.

For a split moment, the man that charged at her seems uncharacteristically slow. That is until a spear makes its way straight through his neck. All hell breaks then as the other still standing Ironborn storm with war cries and the Stark men meet them with the same eagerness. Osha quickly retrieves the spear from the dead body and stands in front of the young Stark in protective mode.

Arya on the other hand, has her eyes rooted on Theon who is helplessly watching the outbreak from the side-line. He looks so out of place with the chaos that surrounds him. But then, so does she.

One Stark man finds his way through and hacks his sword at the Greyjoy then, instantly releasing him from his daze. Their swords clash and tear at each other before Theon gets the best of his opponent and slashes his blade along the man’s neck.

Arya flinched at her fallen man. Theon looks around in frantic as he finally realized what is happening around him. His chest rises and falls in a ragged breathing and his face spotted with blood. But, his men are in much worse condition.

And then, his dark eyes flicker towards her and he stilled. And then he moves. Slowly at first but then it grows faster, his gaze never falters. Arya realized then that he is coming straight to her. She glances to where the Wildling woman was standing before but finding her now in the middle of the on-going battle among the few last Ironborn instead.

A knife or two could benefit her at the moment, Arya thought. But, she was unarmed and Theon is now five more steps to get her. His sword arm points forward and then a flash of grey so fast – that it came out as a blur – pass by her, taking the man in front as well.

She snaps her head towards where the moving thing might be and found Nymeria dragging the now screaming Theon by his right arm. His sword lay motionless a few feet from her wheeled chair. The direwolf growls louder as her head snaps sideways viciously, no doubt trying to tear the arm from the body while she’s at it.

As much as Theon deserves it, Arya needs him alive. “Nymeria.” She calls and the direwolf doesn’t let go until her name is called the second time. “Good girl…” she coos, caressing Nymeria’s head gently as she rests it over her lap.

“What should we do with this one, Lady Stark?” a voice sounded then, breaking their peaceful
moment.

Ser Garrel points his sword to Theon’s neck where the man is still moaning about his now bleeding and torn arm on the dirt. Across the yard, battered bodies – all thirty Ironborn – occupied the ground. At some point the archers have come down and provide assistance to their fellow men and Osha is standing tall with them.

But she realized with a pang of sadness that six Stark men are not treated to such liberty. Their lifeless bodies remained on the cold ground.

And Winterfell still stands.

******

A raven was sent out. Tied to its leg is a scroll of news that Torrhen Square has been retaken from the enemies and Theon Greyjoy is captured because of his betrayal in a failed attempt of conquering Winterfell. It also seeks guidance as to what the King of The North would see fit the punishment of the traitor.

And now Arya waits for the reply. She had put the Greyjoy in a cell after Maester Luwin patched his wounded arm. They had cleaned the yard and rid the enemies’ bodies. The people in Winterfell had woken up and resumed their duties as nothing had happened and she did the same, opening the castle to its usual operation again.

Even with the wreckage gone, the news still spread. Words bounce off around the castle of what had happened. People talked and the story somehow grew more ridiculous as days went by. Osha gladly provides the details of what the occupants of the castle believed had happened.

It ranges from her being the one killing the enemies with her witch powers to her riding at the back of her direwolf as they both ripped apart every single Ironborn in their way. To say that she was bothered by it was an understatement. But, Osha assured that, “You’re not an object of ridicule, little lady…on the contrary.”

Arya felt a bit better after that. And the rumors seems to further help when Ser Rodrik comes with good news saying that he’s able to gather a fair amount of sellswords as the men believed they’re on the winning side.

In the end they successfully hired two hundreds sellswords of all kinds. Some from the Riverlands, some from Dorne and others from everywhere else. Arya had met with them all, promising payment and much more should they succeed their mission.

She sent a hundred men down to Kings Landing, separating them into five groups, not wanting to draw that much attention. They were to infiltrate and rescue Sansa and Bran, bringing them back to Winterfell and Arya hopes that her sister and brother are still alive and well by the time the men got to them.

Though, sometimes she has the strangest feeling whenever she thought of Bran, as the one from her dreams always comes at the forefront of her mind instead. She shakes it off, convincing herself that the Bran that trapped in Kings Landing is her brother and needs saving. So, she hands out three thousand gold dragons to each of the hired men before they march out to do her bidding.

The young Stark sent another hundred men straight to The Twins. She knew Robb would be there regardless but she doesn’t know whether her men would be there in time. Nevertheless, their order was simple. Protect The King of The North and his closes entourage against the enemies. She tried
her very best to not sound like a crazy witch when she specifically asked them to not trust Boltons’
and Freys’ men and should any kind of event happening at The Twins is a red flag. She deemed her
effort as successful when her hired men voice out their understanding as they too march out.

And now she’s left waiting again.

******

Two weeks after her last letter, Arya had received a reply from Robb. He asked about her well-being
and praised her for keeping Winterfell safe and for the Greyjoy traitor to be punished as she sees fit
because he’s her prisoner and Robb believes in her.

That had made Arya smiled. At the bottom of the letter, another form of writing that of her mother
was written saying that she was sorry about leaving and that she will be coming home soon.

Her smiles only grew.

Days turn to months and the weather grew colder as everyone in Winterfell went about their
business. Merchants and traders come and go, trying to make a living even though outside the North,
the War of the Five Kings is still raging. Arya tries her very best guarding the Northern borders from
any enemies with what she has and provide for the people with basic needs as her duties should be.

But every day is a torture for the young Stark because as time passed, the inevitable event that befalls
her family is now closer than the last. She still hasn’t heard any news from both her groups of
sellswords.

One night, she had woken up from her fitful sleep. But this time, it was different than her usual
nightmare, because it wasn’t horrible at all. In her dream, her parents and her brother, Robb had
come home and she was running towards them giving each one of them a long and hard squeeze.
Their face was radiant with smiles as they look at her silently. And then she had woken up with tears
streaming down her face and sweat trickled down her forehead as she sobs quietly in her dark room.

She doesn’t know why but she had that sinking feeling of something bad had happened.

She was right.

The news came three days later when she’s in a meeting with Maester Luwin in the Great Hall. Ser
Rodrik interrupts them to inform that some of the sellswords have returned. And Arya instantly
directs herself outside hoping to see some of her family among them. Not only after she was outside
did Osha caught up and continued pushing her mobile chair.

They arrived at the courtyard in record time to find groups of men standing about. As she wheeled
closer, Arya noticed how ragged and worn out they look. Some of the men she recognized as the
men that she hired but some of the older men’s faces didn’t ring any bells.

They all turn to her when she’s in front of them.

“Lady Stark.” A man, probably slightly older than his father addressed her. Seeing the confusion on
her face, he continues. “I believe we never officially meet. I’m Brynden Tully, your great-uncle
Blackfish. I reckon you heard of me?” he offered a smile.

Of course Arya had heard about him. “Yes, I have… Welcome to Winterfell great-uncle.” She
forced a smile. Her gaze flickers to the other men behind him before she focuses onto him again. “Is
my mother and Robb with you?”
The cold air seems even colder as the silence envelops them. Even the murmurs from the other men had stopped.

“We were tricked… The Freys and the Boltons, they betrayed your brother. They betrayed The North.” Brynden trails. His eyes glazed over as he relived what had happened. “I was lucky. I went out to relieve myself and that’s when they started the killings.”

“My mother and Robb?” she questioned again.

He shifted uncomfortably. “I couldn’t save them… I’m sorry.”

And somehow Arya finds herself there, at The Twins where the massacre had happened. Greywind’s whimpering and the chanting of ‘The King in The North’ echo loudly in her ears. Their mutilated bodies sewn together and her mother’s open neck flash at the back of her eyes. “I see.” Her voice sounded so far away.

The others exchanged worried glances among themselves but the young Stark was too preoccupied to notice. After an awful lot of quietness, the grey eyes shifted to catch blue ones. “You may stay here as long as you like, great-uncle… the invitation extended to all of you as well.” She said, looking pass Bryden and at the bewildered men who thanked her in return. “I have to go now.”

Without waiting, Osha swiftly turns Arya around and takes the young girl as far away as possible.

Nothing.

Arya feels nothing at all as she stares vacantly at the open window in her room. She used to believe that nothing can be better or worse because nothing is just nothing.

But, she was wrong, because the feeling of nothingness is heavy inside her and it was suffocating. It covers everything in its path as there is no room for light or emotions. It eats away her flesh, tears it apart and then leaves her with only an empty shell. It was the worst thing that she had ever experienced.

“Arya.”

Someone calls her name and she turns to find Maester Luwin close, with Osha standing a few feet behind him.

“Maester Luwin, I’m sorry about leaving… Do you want to continue our meeting here?” she didn’t know why her voice sounded different, distant.

“Arya.” He calls again. His voice comes out impossibly softer than the last as his face changed. “We’ll do it some other time.” He finally said.

The young Stark nods, leaving the room void again.

“I should go and tell Rickon about mother and Robb.” she suddenly declared, ready to wheeled her way out before the old maester stops her.

“He can wait a little longer… I’ll tell him myself, later.” He assured, smiling sadly.

She reluctantly agrees. “How about the lords that survived? Have they settled in yet? Do they need anything?”
“They’re being well tended to… You don’t need to worry about it.”

She nods again before her gaze drifted to an invisible point, lost. Bereft of any wind from the opened window or even the movement of the people inside, the quietness is bare and visible even to her.

“What should I do now?” Arya slowly shifted her eyes to find the brown ones. Maester Luwin steps closer before occupied himself with a chair in front of her. “I don’t know.” He sighed, looking away to gather his thoughts. “We can hold a ceremony for them.” he suggested.

“We don’t have their bodies.”

“We’ll make do with what we have. The people need to grieve as well… We’ll hold a memorial to all that’s lost in the war. I’ll send ravens out to inform the lords and ladies of The North about it. They can pay their last respect to the fallen and we’ll open Winterfell for the common people as well.”

A beat of silence passes as he waits for the young girl.

“Will that be enough?” she finally asked.

“It will, for now.”

******

A week later the remaining lords and ladies of The North arrived at Winterfell for the memorial service that Maester Luwin had planned. As the Lady of Winterfell, it was Arya’s duty to receive and greet each and every one of them herself and provided the accommodation for them and their entourage.

Truth be told, she wasn’t sure anyone would be coming at all, especially with the war still raging. But, they had left their castles for the time being and present themselves at Winterfell making the Guest Tower filled with occupants. And even until the last day, she still has so many things to do that she didn’t have time for anything else.

Perhaps that’s a good thing.

When the day of the ceremony finally arrived, it was a cold one befitting of what Arya was feeling. By midday, all the preparations are readied and everyone gathered at the courtyard of Winterfell where a platform was raised earlier. On top of it, the lords and ladies that matters were seated in a line and Arya was there at the center with Rickon beside her.

The common people were standing at the bottom of the platform. There are bonfires lighted at every corner for warmth and banners of every Houses in The North rose against the castle walls. Ser Rodrik and his men are there too, guarding the people.

Maester Luwin opens the memorial service, praising the Old Gods and Arya stopped listening. She chooses to stare ahead at nothingness as the lords and ladies take their turn to speak of their loved ones.

“Little lady?” Osha whispered, breaking her from her reverie.

Time must have gone by because the bonfires are getting smaller than the last time Arya saw them. She looks ahead where Maester Luwin is waiting expectantly.

“Lady Stark, a few words if you will?” he asked softly.
Arya wheeled her way upfront then, dismissing the help that Osha offered. She stops at where the old maester is standing before he pats her shoulder, giving it an assuring squeeze and left her there. Nymeria provides a silent comfort as the direwolf sat by Arya’s feet.

As her grey eyes wander off into the faces of the old and the young below her. She finally noticed just how many were present. There are children younger than Rickon and men and women older than Maester Luwin among the sea of people. She recognized some of them but a lot of them she did not.

“I don’t know what to say.” She finally starts, studying the many faces in front of her. “Some of you probably knew my father longer than I have and you probably got to spend more time with him than I ever did.” Her eyes start to burn. Squaring herself, she continues. “He wasn’t Lord Stark or the Lord of Winterfell to me. He was just my father… And he acts like any other father would. He scolded me when I did something wrong, he smiled when I finally did something right and he praised me when I did something worthy.” She swallowed the thickness down.

“And my mother…” she smiled painfully. “She gets angry every time, and I don’t blame her. I gave her a hard time.” She stops then, remembering all the time that she covered herself with scratches and bruises and mud. “But, she’s gentle and kind and I will never be as good as a Lady as she was.”

She looks away from all the grieving faces. “And Robb…” she breathes out with a pained laugh. “He annoyed me constantly–” Everyone chuckle at that. “And I love him.”

She didn’t realize that the tears had escaped her eyes as she looks on to the many people, wearing more or less the same expression. It hits her then what this memorial could mean – That this will be permanent because she might not have any more chance to go back and save her father, mother or Robb again.

This is it. This is the end. She failed and this time it’s going to be marked and carved inside her heart forever.

She wipes the unintended tears angrily. “I made a promise.” She said, a little loud and cold making the people paid attention to the sudden changes. “I promised them that I will keep Winterfell and its people safe… They’re gone now but my promise still stands.”

The faces of the people present soon changed to match hers, of resolute and determined. “I know you have lost your loved ones too in this war – a father, brothers, or even uncles – and I cannot assured that everyone will be safe… But, The North is my home as it is yours, and your families and everyone else that lived here for as long as they can remember. I will not let anyone or anything jeopardize and harm my home and my people. This, is my vow.”

The silence for once doesn’t feel suffocating at all. Arya felt like a weight has been lift off her chest, because she meant everything she had said and somehow it felt liberating.

“Forgive me Lady Stark.” A voice suddenly cuts in. Brynden steps forward then, presenting himself. “But, I have with me your brother, King Robb Stark’s last will.” he said aloud for everyone to hear.

Arya glanced down to the unopened scroll in his hand and then at Maester Luwin, who the same as she, is confused as well.

“If you will allow me to, my lady, King Robb would want everyone to hear what his last testament is.”

How can Arya not allow that? She gives her consent.
Satisfied, he moves to her side then. “I’m Brynden Tully of Riverrun, uncle of Catelyn Tully-Stark, great-uncle of the Lady Stark… This is the last will and testament of King Robb who made me and a few other lords signed and sealed his testament.” He broke the seal then, opening the letter as he starts reading.

“I, Robb Stark, King of The North, First of my name, by the grace of the Old Gods, hereby declare this to be my last will and testament. I have committed the arbitration and my administration of my testament to the trust and to the legitimate of my faithful men whose names are written below.

Should I perish and no longer able to protect The North, I ask, that my youngest sister, Arya Stark, the acting Lady of Winterfell to be my heir. She is of my blood and I believe that she will continue my effort in protecting the people and The North from its enemies.

I ask, furthermore, that whoever shall give counsel and assistance to my next heir shall receive the grace and favor of the Old Gods.

May the Old Gods protect The North and its people.

Robb Stark, King of The North.”

The murmurs after that was deafening as Ser Brynden walks to the remaining lords and ladies to pass them the will. To say that Arya is bewildered was an understatement. She couldn’t believe what she just heard because it can’t be right, can it?

But the people’s chatters in front of her and the soft discussions from the lords and ladies behind her swallowed everything else and Arya can’t think pass the noises.

“King Robb’s last will is clear.” Someone suddenly spoke, cutting the murmuring down. Arya turns so that she’s now face to face with the lords seated.

At the end of the line, a young girl, Lyanna Mormont stood tall. “House Mormont has allied with House Stark for thousands of years and we will not break faith today. The North will win the war, together…I have not known any ruler in The North whose name isn’t Stark.” She fixed Arya a fiery gaze. “She is my Queen, from this day until her lasts.”

Arya opens her mouth to say something but it got cut short when another stood as well.

“The Freys and the Boltons already have my son killed.” Wyman Manderly voiced out. His voice booms around the courtyard. “They will not have my allegiance and The North too…” he trails as he slides his longsword out. “There, sit the only Queen that I will bend my knee to, The Queen in The North.” He finished, kneeling in front of her.

Another man stood. “My sword is yours.” Lord Mazin said, planting his sword on the ground before he too, kneels down. “In victory and in defeat, until my last breath.”

Robett Glover was next. “I never thought that I could find another King worth kneeling to after your brother…And I was right.” he steps closer, sheathing his sword, making Nymeria stands on its four leg, guarding her mistress. But, he doesn’t seem to be bothered by it, on the contrary. “You protected your people, you protected Winterfell all on your own.”

“I didn't do it on my own... I had help.” Arya blurts out the truth.

He chuckles. “There will be more fights to come; House Glover will stand behind House Stark. And I will stand behind Arya Stark, the she-wolf of Winterfell, the Queen in The North!”
That is all it takes for the chanting to start. The people from behind her shouts first before the remaining lords move to stand and point their swords up in the air. The words ‘The Queen in The North!’ comes out from their lips and it resonates and bounces off the stone walls.

Arya noticed late of the snow falling around them.

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It has been two days now and the snow still hasn’t stop. Arya had taken refuge in the Godswood, trying to find some form of peace. And strangely, the Gods’ face carving on the weirwood tree makes her calm. She wonders why the face carved was a crying one instead of smiling.

Is it one of the warnings from the Gods that life will not be easy? That people will cry and suffer? That blood will be spilled?

“Your Grace.” Someone calls her then, breaking her train of thoughts.

“I said stop calling me that.” Arya said back.

Osha moves to stand beside the younger girl then. “What else should I call you then? My Queen?”

The young Stark glares, making the older woman grin. “That’s worse.”

“Well, that’s what you are now.” Osha smiled softly.

Arya knows that well than anyone and the thought alone terrified her. “Just…call me by my name.” she offered.

Osha smiles wider. “Your coronation is about to start, you know.”

“Let them wait, perhaps they’ll change their mind and don’t want me as Queen anymore.”

The Wildling bends down, reaching for Arya’s cheek; she forces the younger girl to look her in the eyes. “You’ll be fine, Arya.”

Arya leans to the warmth, trying to believe it herself. “Thank you, Osha.” She smiles in gratitude.

“I’ll come and get you later.” Osha said then, leaving the younger girl to some solitude that she will probably not going to have much in the future.

When the silhouette of the Wildling woman is finally gone, Arya focuses her attention back at the Heart Tree. With the snow still falling down, it created a beautiful image and odd serenity of the place.

She takes in a deep breath, closing her eyes to savor the moment. When she opens her eyes, she feels the sudden change in the air first. Noticing that it has stilled and the once peaceful moment shifted to eeriness instead. Her eyes flicker to her surroundings, only now noticing that the snows were no longer falling from the sky, but stopped.

They stopped mid-air as if they were hanging by invisible threads and her hairs stand at ends. The Gods’ crying face is now looking at her and the breath left her lungs. Suddenly, she can’t breathe and the world spins around her before everything swallowed her with it.
Her eyes shot up, her heart and lungs expand, taking a mouthful of air before releasing it in a shudder.

A moment pass as Arya takes her surroundings. She was lying in a bed and her breathing still ragged as if she had run a mile. The weirwood trees were no more and in their stead are walls and more walls. She was in a room decorated with extravagant furniture and paintings, she noted.

Propping herself up, she tried to even her breathing but the nauseating feeling at the back of her throat comes in waves. Her right hand reaches methodically at the sides and before she knows it, she was gulping a generous amount of water, washing the bile down completely. She sighs softly in relief, putting back the now empty goblet down at the bedside table.

Now that her throat is cleared, she looks around her unfamiliar room trying to make sense of what was happening. She was supposed to be at her coronation ceremony, was she not? Or have the lords and ladies finally changed their mind about wanting a crippled queen as their monarch?

Her busy thoughts were interrupted by a sudden knock at the door. Not until the third knock sounded did she finally ordered, “Come in.”

A building smile makes its way onto her face as a familiar face comes inside then. “Osha.” She had never been happier to see the older woman.

“Sleep well?” Osha asked, mirroring the smile.

“Where are we?” Arya asked instead.

The older woman quirked her eyebrow at that as if there’s a trick to her question, but seeing the honestly curious displays from the younger girl she answered. “Kings Landing, of course.”

A chill courses through Arya’s body. The sensation of confusion and uncertainty felt awfully familiar. “Can I have a mirror, please?”

Osha moves across to the dresser and bring back a small mirror in her hand. The young Stark murmurs her thanks as she reached for it and put it in front of her. The air stilled as she sees the face that is looking back at her.

It was hers. There is no doubt about it. But, it wasn’t the face that Arya last saw as she prepared for her coronation. This one is much older and her hair longer. There is a small faint scar on her right forehead. A short, inverted ‘y’. She touches it and felt the bump of her uneven skin there.

“Are you alright, Arya?” Osha voice sounded concern.

And so does Arya as she realized she had gone forward in time again.

A mirthless chuckle left her softly. It seems that the Gods are a sure bunch of sadistic egomaniacs higher being – the whole lot of them. Perhaps they have discovered their enjoymens by fiddling and flicking her through space and time as they see fit. As if they heard her defiance, a short sharp pain stabs at the back of her head. She hisses in pain.
Osha is at her side within seconds. “I’m fine.” Arya dismissed. Her anger overpowers everything else.

“Are you sure?” Osha places her palm at the young Stark’s forehead, checking for a fever.

Arya relishes at the familiar warmth of the older woman and nods. “It’s just a headache.”

The older woman doesn’t look at all convinced but she was too preoccupied by the even weirder behavior from the younger girl since she came to the room, so she lets it slide. They fall into their routine in silence. The wildling stealing occasional looks to the younger Stark who was still frowning slightly as she readies her for the day.

“You’re scaring the servants, little lady. Lose your frown.”

Arya blinks a few times, finding herself wheeled away through unfamiliar hallways now. A few young lads walk in a hurry from the other way, bowing in respect before they scurry from the two women. She didn’t even realize that they were already outside.

“Where are we going?”

“To break fast... Are you sure you’re alright?”

No, Osha. Honestly, I’m not. I don’t know why I’m here in Kings Landing of all places. I have no recollection of my past years and everyone else is probably dead and my head feels like it’s about to explode. But, Arya only answered. “Yes.”

They continue along the hallways in silence before Osha makes a turn to enter another room with bigger doors. There was a huge dining table in the middle of the room. A few plates filled with fruits and assorted breads are already served on the table. And a young man is already there reaching for the grapes.

When he realizes someone else is there, he turns around, surprised as if he is being caught stealing. But, then his shoulders rest and a smile form on his face. “Hey, Arya.”

“Rickon.” Arya smiles wider, relieved. A big part of her worries completely gone now as she looks up to the now young man. He was taller than the last time she saw him another lifetime ago. His auburn hair is still tangled and messy but it was shorter hence it looks much more orderly. He pops a grape onto his mouth, walking closer to her.

“Here, look.” Rickon moves behind, taking the wheels from Osha. “They’ve got bread rolls with all kinds of fillings. Pumpkin, cheese, meat... Do you think we can make one with carrot fillings?” He explained animatedly, showing the range of bread on the table.

Arya couldn’t help but laugh. Her chest feels lighter as she looks up at her little brother. “Yes, I think we can.”

Rickon’s face brightens at the declaration.

“I see you find your way just fine.” A disembodied voice joins in then. Arya tilts her head to the source, finding another familiar man walking his way towards her. “Good morning.”

Her breath hitches. “J–Jon.”

The sight of him, alive and well caught her by surprise. A welcoming one. A sense of solace envelops her whole and she can even ignore the relentless thumping inside her head.
“Arya?” he raised a brow, noticing her slight distress earlier. He was always so perceptive of her.

And he’s alive and here.

“I think she’s coming with a fever.” Osha decides to join in, making the other two men look at her. “She’s acting strange.”

The younger girl could have rolled her eyes at that but, she’s afraid that it would make her headache worse. “I’m acting fine.” She retorted instead. Everyone is safe as they should be. Although the question of why they’re in Kings Landing still remained. “I’m just worried about Winterfell… Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik will no doubt take good care of it during our absence but, I’m still worried.” She tried, gauging from them the answer as to why they are here, so far South.

Instead of a reply, the three people in front of her only stared back, alarmed and the worry they wore before tripled. Rickon steps closer, kneeling in front of her. His hand reaches for her face where it settles on her forehead. “You’re a bit warm.” He stated.

“It’s because of the weather here…” she reasoned, effectively dismissing him. But, no one seems to be convinced. “Why are you all looking at me like that?” she asked irritated. Was there something wrong with what she said?

“Maester Luwin and Ser Rodrik is long gone, Arya.” Rickon finally answered. His blue eyes glaze with sadness and he suddenly looks much older than his age.

And she finally understands why they reacted the way they did a while ago. “Oh… I—I’m sorry… I was just…” her words died down in her throat as the memories of the old maester and the Master-at-arms are still fresh at the back of her mind. Everything seems like a dream. Because it was only yesterday Maester Luwin had work with her on the ceremony and Ser Rodrik reporting of their success in keeping the Northern borders safe from the enemies and now, she’s being told that they’re gone.

“I know that.” She still not. In her memories, they were still alive. But, she doesn't want them to worry. “There’s a lot in my mind… It just slipped, I guess.” she lied.

The concerns on everyone’s face at least simmer down at that. Rickon stands up then offering a smile. “Well, you should stop worrying or else your wrinkles will show sooner rather than later.” He quipped, trying to lighten the mood.

Osha takes the cue. “Aye… Though I think some lines might have shown itself over your eyes there.”

“You should lose your frowning.”

“That’s what I said.”

Jon moves closer too, smiling a little timidly at the friendly banter happening in front of the younger girl. “I’m sure Sansa will take good care of Winterfell.” He assured meeting grey eyes.

The last sentence made Arya’s world stop for the many times that day and it’s only in the morning still. She doesn’t have the luxury to revisit the fact that Sansa is alive and well in Winterfell when a flash of silver caught her eyes at the entrance. Everyone else noticed the new presence as well and they turn to accept the new addition.

“My apologies for being late…” Daenerys smiles, walking closer. “But, I was having a hard time choosing an attire that befits the attendance of the Queen in The North.” She japes lightly and bringing her in tow is a smiling Naathi that Arya had never thought she would meet again.
The breath completely leaves her lungs. She couldn’t believe her eyes. Daenerys is here. Missandei is here. Both are alive. She knows she should say something back because the violet eyes that Arya always dreamed about are looking back at her, waiting. But, Arya couldn’t form any coherent words. She couldn’t think. Not when the silver haired woman is in front of her, looking as beautiful as Arya last remembered her to be.

And Arya can only stares helplessly.

She studies the older woman, trying to find anything amiss. But, Arya couldn't find one. Daenerys is perfect. Her skin glows, her lips full and her violet eyes are still on hers despite that Arya had done nothing but stared unashamedly.

The silence must have stretch too long because Jon suddenly steps up. “I’m sure Arya approves of it… You look lovely even in a sack.” He japes back earning a smile from Daenerys.

There is a quiet apprehension beginning to build up inside her chest as she sees the changes of those violet eyes when they find the darker grey ones of Jon. She knows that look, because she used to see it when Daenerys looks at her another lifetime ago. When they lay in bed, side by side, their face so close, that there’s nothing else Arya could see but that tender violet gaze. Even when Daenerys is mad at her, the older woman still had that look. And when Daenerys said that she loves her, in the Godswoods, she was sporting it ever since Arya can remember.

And now, Daenerys wasn’t looking at her.

Her mind was in daze as the people around her continue to chatter. Their conversations float about her head and the throbbing at the back of her head has progress to the front now. But she held it back.

Absentmindedly, Arya notices that Rickon had placed her by the table where he takes a sit beside her. Jon and Daenerys sat across them and Osha and Missandei proceed to tend to each of their side respectively.

“Are you quite alright? You look a bit pale.” Daenerys suddenly said, meeting the expressive grey eyes that still hasn’t look away since she arrived.

Frowning – more because of the headache than anything – Arya finally breaks her gaze, looking down to her already filled plate as she still doesn't believe herself to be able to speak up.

Rickon replied instead. “I think it’s because of the warm weather. We Northerners are too used by the biting cold and the dry wind.”

Daenerys smiles softly, not looking quite convinced but taking it regardless. They continue eating and Arya looks up again naturally to find the silver haired girl, afraid that she would vanished. If this is a dream, then Arya should take Daenerys in as much as she can.

“I know it was a hard and long journey…” Daenerys trails, looking up to meet Arya’s eyes. Apparently she noticed that she was being watched again.

But, Arya doesn’t care. Not when she can see that enchanting violet orbs looking back at her. Not when she can get lost in the tranquility the depth of the violet provides her with.

“But, thank you for coming all the way regardless.” The older woman finished, gauging for another reaction.

Arya haven’t had a clue of what Daenerys was implying and she knows that she should say
something anyway because there is a tension thick in the air and everyone’s waiting.

“You’re divine.” She blurts out the first words that come into her mind when she first saw the silver haired queen. And you’re here.

Daenerys blinks a few times at the sudden and out-of-nowhere outburst. She cleared her throat softly then. “Thank you.” though her tone came out more like a question than anything as she held the now sad grey orbs.

The tension instantly dissipates and Rickon leans forward with a grin. “So, Jon, how do you feel now that you will become the King of the Six Kingdoms in less than a fortnight?”

Jon chuckles. “I’m scared to the bone… Dany has been a great help, though. I only wish that I can match her reputation.”

Dany? Arya snaps her head to Jon.

“You’ll be a great King.” Daenerys assured, her hand reaching out, taking his. Jon smiles, his fingers lacing with hers before he kisses the back of her hand.

Arya watches the display with a frown because of the apparent affection that the two unashamedly paraded and also more because of the now nasty throbbing of her head. She looks away, eyes squeeze shut, rubbing her temple to ease the pain to no avail. When she flutters her eyes open, the bread roll on her plate has two spots of red on top before another one makes a splash, marking the color more.

She groans softly as the pain only doubles. Perhaps her head is starting to burst and the blood was coming from her cracked head. Not a moment after, she feels her shoulders being pulled by someone. Too weak to even form a word, she only manages another grunt as the movement cause her head to spin.

Osha’s alarming face comes into view as Arya senses the older woman’s hands on her neck, keeping it upright or else she would have wilted away. There was a noise somewhere and movement too loud and too fast for her to acknowledge. With being the only sound she can hear is the impending thump inside her head.

Arya opens her eyes – she didn’t even realize she had close them – to find her favorite violet orbs looking down at her in fear. And she hated it because all she wants is for those lovely eyes to look happy again. Why does it seem that she will always be the person that causes Daenerys distress? She closes her eyes again without an answer.