And Stars Uncounted

by Sassaphrass

Summary

Jon Snow just wants to be a Jedi. Unfortunately, the Force has other plans.

In which the Stark family may be the unluckiest in the galaxy but most of them can move stuff with their minds, so it kind of evens out.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Prologue

Jon Snow was a bastard on a planet with an unstable orbit. There was not a single thing in his life that was not coloured or controled by uncertainty.

He came from a long line of kings, and the ones that weren't kings were Jedi. But both were always Starks, and Jon was not a Stark. But, he was a Snow, and that meant he wasn't quite not a Stark either. He was not a citizen and he was not a royal and he was only half-brother to his siblings.

Sometimes he thought that was the only thing in the world he could hold on to.

North was a strategically important but relatively impoverished system. The Starks who had ruled for several thousand years in one capacity or another lived in a beautiful compound that paled in comparison to most houses closer to the Core.

All things considered, Jon's life was much better than those of the majority of sentient beings in the galaxy. A not quite member of one of the most Elite families in what was left of the Senate was still several cuts above most lives.

Quality of life had improved across the galaxy since the Empire fell nearly a decade ago but rebuilding after the Civil War is slow going. It's impossible to undo 300 years of repression and dictatorship in less than a generation.

Not that Jon is particularly aware of any of this. He's ten years old, and spends most of his time playing at Jedi knights with his half-brother Robb, when he should be at his lessons. Jon discovered some time ago that if Robb goes to class and Jon does not no one tends to make much of a fuss over it. So Robb sits through mind numbingly dull classes on politics, economics, mathematics and history and Jon plays with his little sister Arya who's only six but is brilliant at everything.

Jon isn't stupid, he does still attend his classes, but only for the important things: mathematics, reading, writing and languages, weapons training, and tech classes.

Jon pretends he isn't afraid the world will change. That Lady Catelyn will finally get her way and send him off somewhere. He pretends he doesn't know that she would leave him to die if she could.

Robb tries to reassure him. They're brothers first, just like Father said. Except Jon knows they're not,
and he also knows that the Jedi have been coming to talk to Father a lot.

When Uncle Benjen arrives to visit, Benjen whose a half-way famous Jedi knight himself, and Jon's favourite relative, Jon sees what's going to happen even though he hopes he's wrong.

Benjen, for his part, had always known that one of his nephews would one day join him in the Jedi, and he's long suspected that nephew would be Jon Snow.

It's just a matter of practical realities. While Jon Snow would be joining later than the preferred age, his is nonetheless the obvious choice. It solves a number of problems for Ned and for Catelyn. Jon is an extraneous piece in the puzzle of their lives, something that doesn't quite get in the way but certainly doesn't fit, and he's strong in the Force.

Sending him to the Jedi is the simple solution. It solves the tangle of the inheritance of Senatorial votes and property rights. It removes the object of Catelyn's resentment and jealousy, and it upholds the Stark tradition of sending a son to the Jedi.

What surprises Benjen is how long it takes Ned to finally man up and send the boy along. It's something that confuses him, after all he's not doing anyone any favours by keeping the boy in the family any longer than necessary.

The longer Jon lives an ordinary life of ordinary attachments the harder it will be for him to let them go when he enters the Jedi, and the more painful it will be for both Jon and the family when they are parted.

Benjen knows all this, but Benjen is a Jedi, so he holds his tongue, no matter his own opinion on the matter, and only observes. There's no point in arguing anyway. Ned is a solid unmoveable mountain of a man, who does everything in his own time and at his own discretion.

Occasionally Benjen thinks about his own long abandoned attachments and considers sitting the man down and just explaining it to him. Because, if anyone understands a little bit what it's like to be Jon Snow it's Benjen, the unplanned fourth child who didn't belong among the Starks before they were called to meet with the old Emperor and certainly didn't belong in the life of his battle hardened brother who was the only one that came back years later.

Benjen had been 10 when he joined the order, the oldest accepted age. In truth he'd probably been too old and those early years had been an agony of trying to catch up with the other Initiates, but
despite that, life with the Jedi had been a relief. For the first time Benjen had found where he belonged, where he was accepted and wanted and valued for more than just his family name.

He had understood his place and he loved the Jedi and believed in their principles and their code as he believed in nothing else in all the galaxy. Not even his big brother.

But, all the same he held his tongue, kept an eye out and did his duty.

He understands how it seems to his staunch unbending, unyielding people that he found his place among the Jedi. He is the only one of the First Men among them, after all his ancient people have their own understanding of the Force, and are a stubborn unchanging lot that only made contact with the Jedi some 300 years ago, which is nothing more than an eyeblink when you consider the planet of Winterfell, the beating heart of the culture of the First Men was settled some eight thousand years ago and has been continuously inhabited ever since, despite it's unstable orbit causing some of the most extreme weather on a human inhabited world.

Yes, stubbornness thy name is Stark.

Which is why the Jedi rely on having a Stark Jedi in the ranks, if only because so far the only proven method of dealing with First Men or Starks is to have a Stark of your own to fight on your side.

Benjen does not mind being the Stark in the Jedi, though he can't help but think the position does hamper his ability to release attachment, certainly he sees his birth family far more frequently than any other Jedi Knight he knows, with the possible exception of young Loras Tyrell, but most of the Jedi agree he doesn't quite count.

Jon, if he came to the Temple, wouldn't even be a Stark, he'd be a Snow, but to a First Man, blood is blood and a Snow was as good as a Stark in a pinch.

Elsewhere in the galaxy it would be strange the importance that is placed on wedlock in Benjen's home system, but, elsewhere people inhabit more hospitable worlds, and in Benjen's homeland the byword is to endure, above all else.

And so change comes to those planets slowly. If it comes at all. Indeed life on Winterfell is much the same as it was three hundred years ago.
They have their own way of doing things. A culture that's part belligerent bull-headed stubbornness and part ruthless efficiency borrowed from their Mandalorian neighbours.

Honour matters more than gold, or credits or any other currency in the lands Benjen hails from. Which is probably at least part of what makes Benjen the great Jedi that he is, and there is no doubt that he is a great Jedi.

The night after Benjen arrives he seeks Jon out in his little room and sits on the bed next to him. Jon has his hands clenched into fists so hard that the nails are biting into his skin. He knows what's happening.

There's always been a Stark in the Jedi. Always. He'd thought that Father might send Bran to the temple since he's, well, so odd, but Father loves his children too much to part with them, that is, he loves his *trueborn* children to much to part with them.

Benjen looks at him thoughtfully.

“I know what you're thinking Jon.”

“Because you're a Jedi?”

Benjen shakes his head. “Because I was sitting where you are once.”

Jon blinks and a fat tear he's been trying not to shed rolls down his face. “What am I thinking then?” he asks, proud of having made it through the sentence with a relatively steady voice.

Benjen sighs and shifts. “You think they don't want you. That you're being sent away because your the one that mattered least. And I can't tell you if that's true or not but I can tell you that's not what's important.”

Jon turns to look up at his uncle desperate and hopeful, willing to grab onto any sliver of a chance.

Benjen smiles at him. “You're going to be a Jedi, and the Stark blood runs strong in you, so odds are you'll be a powerful Jedi. You'll get to leave this house, and this planet and start somewhere new. I
know you've never felt you've truly belonged here, but you will belong with the Jedi. You'll miss your family here, but you'll find a new family there. New brothers and sisters, people who've never heard of the Starks, or Ned or the blight upon the honour of the family that the backwards locals of this system believe you represent.”

Jon stares at him wide eyed. “Really? People wouldn't..wouldn't know any of it?”

Benjen pauses and reconsiders. “Well, they would know some of it. My brother is a hero of the Rebellion people keep track of these things, but the point is that they wouldn't care.”

Jon's eyes bug out. “But, I'm a Snow. How could they not care?”

Benjen puts an arm around his little nephew and give him a squeeze. “Because, snowflake, outside of our slightly backwards little corner of the galaxy, matrimony is not particularly important.”

Jon just stares at him slightly bug-eyed and open mouthed before bolting to his feet and bustling around the room.

“What SHOULD I PACK?” he asks.

Benjen laughs. “Only what's very important. The temple provides everything you'll need as an initiate.”

Jon turns to his uncle and beams, some half forgotten treasure clutched to his heart like all his dreams are coming true.

Benjen suddenly feels a little uncomfortable. After all the life of a Jedi is not easy. They have few connections outside The Order and next to no personal belongings of their own.

Everything in their lives belongs to the Order, even themselves.

But, he knows that Jon can't stay here. If he stays under the cold cruel eye of Lady Catelyn the bright joyous little person whose already started fading away will disappear entirely and all that will be left is the quiet dutiful bastard.
Benjen doesn't want that. Not just because he enjoys the bright energetic optimistic little boy who reminds him of his sister, but also because he truly believes that in the long run Jon will be better off with the Jedi.

After his talk with Uncle Benjen Jon is excited to leave. Well, excited is maybe not the right word. His stomach feels fluttery and his heart is in his throat. Like during the last summer he and Robb had gone out to a lake in the mountains to swim. There'd been a cliff there to jump off of, and Jon feels the way he had standing there. Half-afraid and unwilling to show it and half giddily excited to take a running leap into the empty space.

He tells Uncle Benjen he doesn't want to make a big to do of saying goodbye. It would be harder for him to leave if everyone made a fuss, and most of his siblings are too little to really understand anyway. So, Jon taps softly on Robbs door and gingerly slides it open.

Robb is asleep and the room is dark, but he stirs when Jon steps closer. He blinks up at him blearily and suddenly Jon doesn't feel like this is the start of a great adventure, he just feels like he's going to cry.

“Robb...” Jon whispers.

Robb mumbles something, that sounds a bit like “Go back to sleep, Jon.”

“Robb. I came to say goodbye. I'm leaving with Uncle Benjen. I'm going to be a Jedi.”

Robb makes another noise that is almost, but not quite a word, and sits up staring at Jon in bewilderment.

Jon looks at his brother, who's always been his best friend and greatest ally. It's hard thinking that he's going to give this up. So, he just gives a little wave.

“Bye, Robb. I'll come visit once I'm allowed.”
Robb lunges out of bed and crushes Jon in a hug, he holds on for a long, long moment, but eventually he has to let go.

Jon gives him one last timid smile, and leaves.
The Temple

Chapter Summary

Jon Snow settles into his new home and makes new friends, but can't forget where he comes from.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jon likes the Temple.

It's calm in a way that Winterfell, with its clenched jaws, and hardbitten need to survive can't ever hope to be.

He's wouldn't say that he is happier there, though. There are no days of light and joy at the Temple, the way there were at Winterfell, no breathless days where the sun was like liquid and he ran breathless with laughter through the Godswood with his brothers and Arya screaming their joy along with him.

But, there aren't bad days either. No cold frigid days when he is frightened and sad and alone, because the Lady Catelyn can't stand the sight of him and has banished him from Robb's luxurious suite to his own small spartan chambers. No days when he shivers with uncertainty and despair and an aching loneliness he didn't even know enough to name.

So, he is not happier at Temple, but he finds he prefers the even and unchanging days- the monotony of the expected and the understood. He appreciates expectations he can meet and tasks at which he can excel.

He's good at the Force exercises and the physical exercises. Opening his mind and body to the Force, using the practice sabers and practicing katas all come as naturally to him as breathing.

But, that's not all there is to being a Jedi, as the Master of Novices often says with a sneer or a slap to the back of the head. And it's those other areas: the philosophy, the strategy, the scholarship, where Jon struggles.
It's not easy. But, it's good. He thinks. It's life.

Sam helps him with his school work and he coaches Sam at light-saber training and fighting. Some of the other initiates hear and start asking him to help them.

Somehow Jon ends up leading what amounts to a supplementary lightsaber class in the evenings. Which is where he runs into trouble.

Jon is finishing up. It was a good night. Sam finally completed a kata correctly. Granted, it was one he should have mastered nearly two years ago but still it was progress!

He's wiping the sweat from his face with a towel and heading towards the initiate showers when he runs into what feels like a statue.

He winces and looks up into the dour and disapproving face of Master Baratheon, the most upright and dedicated Jedi Master in the Temple. The one everyone fears and avoids, because he is..hard and cold and unyielding in his adherence to the Code and to The Rules and is merciless in his punishment of those who break them.

And he is currently glaring at Jon.

Jon gulps. Distantly, Jon knows that there's more to Stannis Baratheon than a cold hard man who torments everyone around him. He knows that while Robert Baratheon and Jon's own father were off fighting flashier more active battles, Stannis had engaged with and resisted nearly half of the Imperial Forces by withstanding the blockade of the Storm sector. He single handedly held that system and everyone knows it.

He deserves Jon's respect.

Jon swallows and stands at attention before remembering the proper etiquette and performing a shallow bow.

“Master Baratheon.”
“Initiate Snow. Why do I see members of your age cohort loitering around this practice room every other day at around this time?”

“Uh.”

“Do you have the authorization of a supervisory Knight or Master for the use of this room?”

Jon frowns. “No. It's a practice room. We're practicing.” he mutters beligerantly.

“It didn't look like practice to me, it looked like you were-”

Sam rounds the corner at speed and jogs over to stand in front of Jon. “What Jon meant was...we all find it helpful to meet and go over the lesson together once a week. Jon's the best at sabers so he gives us some tips. It's group revision, really nothing else.”

Sam smiles guilelessly up at Stannis Baratheon who raises one eyebrow in contempt.

“If the Master in charge of the lightsaber training for your cohort is so categorically inept as to make this necessary than that Master will need to be seen to. I will deal with this and these sessions will stop.”

He sends a particular glare Jon's way.

Jon makes a face back despite the warning smack Sam gives him where Master Baratheon can't see.

Sam smiles at Jon brightly once the Master is gone. “Alright, now that that's outta the way, we're going to go over the mathematics behind ship navigation.”

Jon turns to look at Sam who just keeps grinning. “Now I know you said ye hate it but, I think that if ye keep an open mind and look at the theories underpinning it you'll see it's absolutely fascinating. Lightspeed travel is...”

Jon scowls as Sam declaims at length about the wonders of various navigation technique but slowly
follows him to the library anyway. If nothing else explaining the conceptual background of the math required to pilot at lightspeed makes Sam happy.

When Jon gets back to his room he comes his little sister on Winterfell. The connection is weak.

He smiles at her and calls her little sister. She scowls back and tells him she's not little, but it's all in fun.

“Are you ready for today's lesson?” he asks, reaching for a plain staff that he hides in his rooms.

She holds up a stick she's been carefully crafting into a practice weapon. “Ready.”

He smiles, and puts his blade up.

“We'll begin with the kata we practiced last week...”

He's breaking every rule by doing this. Attachment, sanctity of knowledge, oaths of loyalty and secrecy.

But he loves his sister, and he misses her, so he teaches her what he can and tells her the stories it won't hurt her to here and in this way years pass.

Jon excels in using the Force and a lightsaber, he is tutored by Sam who remains brilliant at book learning and hopeless at anything approaching field-work. He comes his little sister and teaches her how to fight with a blade, and worries about the anger he can see roiling beneath the surface and thanks all the old gods he's not supposed to believe in anymore that it was him who became a Jedi, not her.

Anger, is after all, the path to the Darkside.

Jon is good at calm, good at keeping his head, and finding his center when the world catches fire (which is does surprisingly often in a Jedi Temple, a danger he supposes of mixing children and lightsabers).
He doesn't always understand what his teachers tell him but bewilderment is apparently close enough to serenity that they don't usually notice and he can find Sam afterwards to explain it to him in words he can actually understand.

Jon has been with the Jedi the better part of four years and their insistence on the use of metaphors as teaching tools is still completely incomprehensible to him.

Chapter End Notes

So, I promise that there will be something resembling a plot soon. This fic just has a long time setting the wheels in motion. Thanks to everyone who gave kudos or commented on the first chapter! I always appreciate that.
Life on Winterfell

Chapter Summary

Robb has trouble adapting to life without Jon. Ned tries to get past it. Life goes on and Theon Greyjoy enters the picture.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Robb is the only one old enough to really understand what's happened when Jon leaves; Arya and Bran don't.

Arya throws a such a tantrum when she wakes up to discover that Jon has left in the night with Uncle Benjen that Robb can't blame his brother for slipping away quietly. Bran just wanders from room to room confused and bereft as though Jon is hiding somewhere and if he can just look under the right table or draw aside the right curtain there his brother will be with a grin and a laugh at the joke he's played on everyone.

Rickon is too little to even realize that Jon's left and just keeps asking where he is and when he is coming back.

Robb doesn't say anything, he doesn't tell his siblings that Jon had woken him up to say goodbye (and not just because Arya might have stabbed him with a dinner fork out of rage and jealousy).

Sansa pretends nothing at all is different and Robb's not sure if that makes him want to hug her or punch her (he does neither).

The others are too little to fully grasp what's happened and why, but Robb is old enough now to understand more of what Jon's position is. Why being a bastard makes him different, and why though his father has six children, the distinction that he has only five trueborn children is important.

Once upon a time, before Bran had been born when Sansa and Arya were still babies, Father had taken Jon and Robb aside and solemnly told them that they were brothers first and nothing could change that. At the time Robb had believed him. He'd never been given cause to doubt his father's word and, at first, it was exactly as Ned had promised: They were equal. The same. Allies, and playmates, and brothers in all things.
Part of this was by necessity. There were few other children in the compound during their formative years. They were different, but close enough that it didn't matter. Their lessons, chores, and games were all the same. They were equally spoiled by the kitchen staff, equally scolded by the mechanics in the garage, equally in awe of the godswood, and equally eager to begin weapons training.

Robb didn't remember a time before Jon. His first playmate had been Jon Snow. Together they had been allies against the world. The Winterfell compound had been their joint shared kingdom, and as boys they'd run riot through it. He hadn't questioned that when they saw their Father they would both run shrieking into his open arms, but when they saw Robb's mother, Jon would duck his head and stare at his feet while Robb scampered forward for kisses.

That was just how things were.

Later had come the explanations, the excuses, and the lies.

But, there were differences, even in those early days, things that at first Robb didn't question, but in time he couldn't ignore. Jon had fewer toys, and less expensive ones. His clothing was less careful, less colourful. His room was smaller. His birthday barely noted. Their tutor did not insist on his instruction in certain subjects and would occasionally allow him to occupy himself while he drilled Robb on law, or philosophy. Robb was proudly parading before anyone and everyone of importance who visited Winterfell. Jon often kept to his rooms or the servants quarters when there were guests.

Robb had come to certain conclusions long before Jon left with the Uncle Jedi—the reality of his father's neglect and indifference, his mother's cruelty, the opportunism of the Jedi, and the powerlessness of his brother against them all. Robb had seen how Jon's only hope of escaping the unfairness of the Northern system was with the Jedi and the Jedi fucking knew it.

If Jon had had to go than Robb wishes he could have gone with him, after all, if Jon is strong in the Force he's no stronger than Robb.

If there was a strangeness to Jon, it was one that must be in Robb in equal measure because he'd never noticed Jon doing anything that seemed abnormal to him. Jon may have slightly quicker reflexes, but Robb is good at knowing what someone is about to do before they actually do it.

Like everything else, they're almost same, just a little different. Jon is quicker with a blaster, but Robb's a better strategist. Robb is excellent at sums and physics, Jon has a memory for literature and speeches. They are a pair of evenly matched race horses running full tilt, shoulder to shoulder.
towards some great and wonderful goal.

When Jon leaves, Robb misses his brother. He misses having someone to talk to, and share his lessons. He misses the feeling of not being ashamed, because that more than anything is what burns him when Jon leaves. He's ashamed he didn't do something.

He'd known for months that Father had been talking to the Jedi, and Robb is the heir to Winterfell. If he'd just said something...or done anything Jon might not have had to go. Father hadn't wanted to send him, it wouldn't have taken much to make him change his mind again.

Someone should have fought for Jon. Someone should have made a fuss and demanded he be allowed to stay. But, who would speak for the shy bastard of an unknown woman?

There had been no one to speak for Jon, or fight his cause. No one but Robb, and Robb had failed his brother.

He leans his head against the chill glass in the window. Jon has been gone for weeks but the house still somehow feels too big without him. Bran shuffles up next to him and takes his hand.

“Jon will be alright. You'll see.” Bran reassures him.

Robb frowns and looks down at him. “You can't know that.”

Bran smiles up at him beatifically. “Yes, I can. I saw it.” He grins once more and then skips off...No doubt to go climb the walls or the heart tree or the great spires of the city, or something equally insane.

Robb knows he should probably go after him and stop his little brother from doing something dangerous, but Bran doesn't fall. He won't ever fall. Robb knows it, and it doesn't occur to him to question how...

He continues, and he endures, because that is the way of his family and his people, but he never can quite see his parents in the same way, and he never regains that intrinsic trust in the goodness of the universe, the Force or anything else.
For if his Father, who everyone heralds as merciful but just, firm but fair, and his Mother, whom everyone assures him is everything a lady should be, are capable of concealing such thoughtless cruelty, and callous indifference, than truly nothing at all can be relied upon, and the ideals which Robb believes in with a childish fervency are far more besieged than he'd ever realized.

The planet of North has an unstable orbit, the seasons are unstable and winter can last a generation, and come without much warning.

Other planets can't understand what it is to be a Northerner.

Nobody notices but when they send Jon away, Robb takes some of that cold steel into his soul. Not too much, just enough to fill him with a steely determination not to make the same mistake again.

He should have fought for Jon.

And right then and there, not yet ten years old is where it all begins for Robb Stark. The stubbornness of a Northman is such that it is greater than the human mind can comprehend.

Robb's stubbornness is several powers of ten beyond that of a regular Northman. He may have lost faith in his father, but not in what his father taught him. He believed is freedom, justice, and personal responsibility. He had the heart of a fighter and cool-headed mind of a strategist.

Which is all to say: Robb decided he would become King of the Northern sector at age nine standard years.

He announces it to Father over dinner a few months after Jon has gone. Arya is still angry but has mostly given up sulking, and Bran has more or less completely returned to normal (at least, as normal as Bran ever is).

“Father, what do I have to do to be elected to the Senate?” he asks.

Ned Stark accidentally inhales his wine and squirts it out his nose, before sputteringly looking down at his bright eyed eldest son.
“What?”

“What do I have to do to be elected Senator?” Robb repeats.

“Aren’t you a little young to be thinking about that sort of thing?” Ned asks incredulously.

“Of course not!” Robb tells him brightly. “I’ve been doing research, and in lots of places political service begins quite young, I just want to be prepared.”

Ned stares blankly at his son for a minute before clearing his throat. “You can’t run for Senate right away—”

“I know that!” Robb protests.

“-there’s a minimum age required to hold a Senate seat you need to be at least 25, besides which I am the Senator for our planet and I have no plans on retiring so the only way you can be elected would be to run a campaign against me and win...”

“and that's impossible!” Robb wails.

“-but, there are more local and equally important positions you could become involved in.” Ned informs his son.

Robb sits up. “Like what, exactly? Most of my research has been about the senate!” he asks brightly.

Ned glances at Catelyn who, he can tell, is trying to telepathically tell him to cease and desist with encouraging this sort of nonsense.

“Well, lots of things, everything from a village council to the planet's governments.”

Robb is thinking very seriously about something. Ned can practically see the wheels turning in his
“What's the most important thing I could run for at the youngest age?” Robb asks.

Ned shrugs and laughs. “I guess King, since there was never a minimum age on that..” he chuckles to himself. “But, the Empire banned the office, and no one's bothered to run since the Rebellion, what with all the real power being in-”

He stops because Robb has gotten this deeply troubling look of serious intent on his face, and Catelyn is glaring at him while slowly shaking her head and-...uh oh.

Robb nods decisively. “Good. That's what I thought. I'll do that then.”

Ned meets Catelyn's gaze and realizes he has been played by a ten year old. Robb had started this entire conversation with the goal of gaining Ned's implicit support for his hypothetical furture political career, and Catelyn had known. She does not look happy and Ned thanks the old gods that the Ironborn have been causing trouble in the Reach sector again because if he weren't literally leaving for battle he has no doubt at all that his wife would murder him.

The trouble with the Ironborn turns out to be not so much trouble as 'a full scale provocation of war'. Something they all really should have anticipated given the Empire's stance of complete control and regulation of the ship dwellers had been one of the few things unchanged by the Rebellion.

Ned has always had sympathy for the Planetless people, which was the politest name he could find for the folk of the lost planet of Pyke who now lived only on their ships and space stations and rarely, if ever, settled permanently on any planet,( and usually only after stealing everything of value on it, and killing it's native inhabitants).

The Empire had hated them. Hated their defiance and their freedom and most of the unstoppable power of their ships. The Ironborn ships are their only treasures and loved more fervently than their children. Nothing and no one else in the galaxy has anything like the Ironfleet which runs twice as fast on half the fuel with life support systems that no one's ever heard of failing, and navigation systems that do things no one else has even thought of yet.

But not even the Ironborn can live on ships alone, so they raid and pillage. Sometimes they trade. When they turn their mind to trading there's no one like them, because their ships can go places no one else can reach, but they rarely bother. Mostly they just fight and steal. It's easier that way, Ned
supposes, because they have no planet they can be pursued back to. Nothing to lose but their ships.

And their lives, as it turns out. They lose their rebellion, badly and bloodily. More than half of the ships are destroyed and many of those that are left were badly damaged enough that they're as good as destroyed.

The Ironborn spit defiance up until the end, when their leader is arrested and carted away.

Ned's not really sure what prompts him to take the youngest son of the Reaver king home with him. Well, he does if he's honest with himself.

The boy is the same age as Jon and Robb (and the thought of Jon still makes something stutter painfully in his chest), his brothers are dead, his sister is a teenager and his father is on the way to permanent incarceration. So, obviously someone needed to look after Theon, but, it's not exactly protocol for foster placement to scoop children up off the battlefield and more or less refuse to give them back.

And that was before he'd found the bruises on the boy's arms, once that had happened there was nothing in the verse that was going to make him return that child. Turns out being a famous war hero has it's perks and the Stark lawyers push the guardianship paperwork through without much difficulty.

None of the Ironborn contest it, the only one who puts up even a token protest is Yarra, Theon's sister, who sadly is too young to assume the role of guardian herself and categorically refuses to take up residence on Winterfell to be closer to him.

It hurts Ned to separate siblings, even a pair as prickly and unaffectionate as those two. But, he's not comfortable sending Theon off alone with Yarra, who while very capable for a 15 year old is nonetheless, *15 years old*.

So, Yarra, disappears one day, presumably picked up by one of the remaining Ironborn and Theon comes home with Ned.

It's only once they've made it back to Winterfell that it occurs to Ned to wonder why the other Ironborn- the adults ones who haven't been arrested or killed in the battles of the last year, didn't step forward to contest his plan to foster Theon.

In retrospect it probably would have been better for the boy if one of them had.
It makes Ned feel guilty for a while, that his position may have inadvertently left Theon with the impression that his own people don't want him, only because they didn't think a group of nomadic refugees would win a custody battle against one of the most well-known and admired war heroes of the last generation.

All of which seems simple in comparison to Robb's reaction when Ned introduces Theon.

Robb and Sansa are the best behaved of Ned's children. Sansa is shyer though, so Ned had thought that Robb would be the better choice, as the first introduction, to ease Theon into his new life.

But, Robb just stares at Theon in shock and then turns a look of pure fury on his Father.

“You can't replace Jon.” he says in a voice cold with hate. “You can't undo it.”

Ned tries to explain. “That's not what I'm doing Robb, Theon is-”

“I DON'T CARE!! YOU CAN'T JUST BUY ME A NEW BROTHER BECAUSE YOU THREW THE OLD ONE AWAY AND FEEL BAD ABOUT IT!!!” Robb shouts.

Ned gapes, taken aback and too shocked for words. He'd known that Robb was having trouble adjusting to a life without Jon, and that his new focus on politics and obsession with holding office was somehow related to that, but he'd thought he was doing okay. He'd thought that Robb had understood.

Ned opens and closes his mouth a few times, at a loss for words. He wishes that literally anyone else were standing here with him. Most people are better at speaking. Most people would find what to say. But, Ned has never been one for speeches, or the right words in the right spot. He flounders in the face of his son's rage, and can't find the words to explain that he's only tried to do what was best for everyone.

Theon starts crying and that breaks the spell. Robb runs over to comfort the other boy, ushering him away to sit in Robb's room, sending Ned venomous glances the entire time as though Theon's distress is somehow Ned's fault and not his own for implying that Theon was: A) disposable, B) a slave, C) a replacement for a superior slave.

Ned lets them leave, and goes to find Catelyn. She just rolls her eyes when he tells her he's taken in a
Reaver prince.

She's less happy when he tells her it upset Robb. But, if she has to choose an evil it's clear she prefers Theon to Jon. She's always hated Jon.

Robb is livid at his father. You can't just replace Jon. And you can't just plunk Theon down in Jon's place and expect everything to work out. Sure, Sansa seems to view Theon as a significant upgrade to Jon, but Arya and Rickon keep trying to bite him and while Bran likes Theon well enough, Theon is clearly mildly terrified on Bran.

As usual Robb has to take charge and clean up the mess. He adopts Theon, even if the rest of the family (except Ned who seems excessively fond of the skinny foul mouthed kid) isn't so sure about him.

Theon is watchful and quiet a lot of the time, but if you get him talking he tends to run his mouth like an Outer Rim bounty hunter.

He tells Robb about the Ironborn ships. Robb tells him about how he's going to change the galaxy. Together they develop ten-year plans (well, Robb develops them and Theon occasionally makes useful suggestions but more often complains about how Robb's mania for organization takes all the fun out of things), and if all goes well Theon will have his own spaceship and Robb will have an elected office by the time they're twenty.

It's during one of these planning sessions that Theon finally asks the question that must have been sitting heavy on his mind for weeks.

“Robb? What happened to your brother?”

Robb freezes and looks up from where he was scribbling in the dirt of the Godswood.

“What?”
“You said your father threw him away. What happened?”

Robb swallows and blinks back tears. “Jon wasn't my full-brother. He was my half-brother. He had a different mother and my Mother hated him. So, Father decided to give him away to the Jedi, and the Jedi give up all attachments, so as far as most people are concerned he's not even my brother any more.”

Theon nods and spits. “Jedi are scum.”

Robb nods.

“Do you miss him?”

Robb shrugs. “Yeah, less now.”

“I don't miss my brothers.” Theon admits. “I wish I had one that was worth missing.”

Robb looks at Theon. “What about your sister?”

Theon's turn to shrug. “She tried.”

Robb nods. “That's good.”

Theon grins at him, and no one can grin like Theon. It's something about his teeth. Robb smiles back. “I didn't try...for Jon. I should have done something.”

Theon looks at him incredulously and then laughs. He laughs so hard he has to sit down.

“Robb, you're ten. You couldn't have stopped your brother being sent away, anymore than I could have stopped your Dad from taking me away from my sister.”
Robb stares at Theon for a minute and then starts crying. Theon gapes.

“Robb.”

“Robb. I'm sorry what did you say?!”

Robb sniffs and wipes at his eyes. “Because that's why I have to get elected! So that next time, I can do something! They shouldn't have taken Jon away, and Father shouldn't have taken you away from your sister, and when I grow up I'm going to stop that sort of thing from ever happening to anyone ever again!!”

Theon stares at him, and laughs. “You're crazy, Stark.”

Robb scowls at Theon and throws a handful of dirt at him. “You're one to talk Greyjoy.”

Theon grins again, and with slow telegraphed movements tackles Robb.

Life goes on.

It's different than when Jon was there. He and Robb were always so similar that they existed as individuals and built entire identities on slight shades of difference. Theon is nothing like Robb or Jon. He's not quiet or thoughtful or focused. He's crass and rude and has a habit of saying the worst thing he can think of to someone and then smiling like a heartless bastard as he waits to see how they react.

It feels like a betrayal, but Robb thinks Theon is probably a lot more fun than Jon. And that hurts, because Jon may never have the chance to meet Theon, and find out how fun he is for himself.

The ten year plan is bumped up when Robb gets news of Jon's death.

He's elected as King in the North, first person to hold the title in 300 years, only a few days past his
fifteenth birthday. It's exceedingly satisfying.

Chapter End Notes

Ned got conned by his ten year old son. Does this really surprise anyone?

Also, a big part of this story is going to be that people aren't working with the whole story, ie: Robb doesn't know that Jon's actually pretty okay with being a Jedi, etc.

We'll see how it goes. Hopefully it won't get too confusing. I hope people are liking this. Comments are always very much appreciated!
Somewhere in the Outer Rim

Chapter Summary

Jon is brought before the mysterious king of the Mandalorians...Mance Rayder. Mance isn't sure what to do with a baby Jedi, so he improvises. The Stark children get some bad news.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mance Rayder does not lounge so much as sit in as relaxed and as comfortable as is possible while wearing full Mandalorian armour, which means he's more or less sitting at attention and only the well trained eye could pick him out among his guard if they were not familiar with the Clan patterns painted on said armour.

He straightens when they throw the boy down in front of him. He's young enough that there's no doubt he's not yet grown, but old enough that he occupies the unsteady position of youth and, might, depending on which part of the galaxy you're in, be considered nearly a man.

Whatever the case he's too young to be important enough to be brought before the King, and too old to have been snatched for adoption.

He looks up at Mance through tangled black hair and that's when Mance spots it: the beginnings of a long thin braid behind the ear.

The beauty of the helmet is that Mance doesn't need to play act to intimidate this boy. He isn't forced to pretend that he enjoys brutalizing and frightening a child. But, he is still the King of the Mandalorians, and they've brought him a baby Jedi.

He leans forward and yanks on the braid. The little Jedi winces and lets himself be dragged forward.

“Why have you brought him a baby Jedi?” Tormund rasps from somewhere to Mance's left.

It makes Mance smile a little behind the mask. It's for moments like these that he keeps Tormund around. Moments where someone needs to fucking talk or ask the obvious question, and Mance, as
King, needs to appear as near to all knowing as possible so asking stupid, obvious or rude questions is really off the table.

Mance turns to look at the group that brought him in, expectantly. He's not pleased to see it's a group sworn to the Lord of Bones. That guarantees that whatever happened to bring this boy before him it was most likely grisly and possibly unspeakable.

“He's not any Jedi.” The warrior on the left with scorched armour crows. “He's Benjen Stark's blood.”

That makes Mance drop the braid and push the boy away. The boy doesn't quite cower but he's ready to protect his head if someone takes a swing. Or a shot. They're all wearing blasters, after all.

Smart boy.

It makes Mance's stomach churn to think the Jedi still send them out so young. It's not like he didn't know. Of course he knew. Everyone knew that padawans were usually chosen at twelve and in the field by thirteen, it's just that it's been a while since he was confronted with one of the child soldiers.

It feels obscene. Mandalorians have rules about the protection of children and for all he was raised like this boy was, Mance has always been more Mandalorian than Jedi. It's been a long long time since he walked the hall of a Temple.

“And what of it?” Mance snaps. “The Jedi don't reckon by blood as we do. Or as the Northerners do.”

There's a pause. “He's Ned Stark's bastard.” The girl with the scorched armour, Ygritte, adds.

Mance pauses to consider that. “So there's a possibility of ransom.” he concedes.

“Better than ransom.” Ygritte says with relish. “There's a possibility he'll join us.”

That makes Mance pause. Any other child soldier claiming to turn their cloak he would believe. Everyone knows that all that came before the donning of the Mandalorian armour is forgotten once
you're adopted into the Clan. There's plenty of young frightened children who flee towards the Wildings that sweep across the galaxy rather than away from them.

But, Mance is familiar with the ways of the Starks, and more familiar with the ways of the Jedi. The brainwashing starts young with both, and especially with the Jedi is insidious and all but eradicable.

He doesn't doubt the boy would go through the motions, follow the code, say the words, don the armour, and follow orders, but only to save his own skin. In his heart there'd be a Jedi, watching and waiting for it's moment to betray them all. Maybe not for years, maybe not for decades but there would come a moment when the Mandalorian and Jedi codes would conflict and the boy would choose the Jedi.

In the end, no matter how many Mance has tried to save, almost all the padawans that have crossed his path choose the Jedi.

He takes a deep breath and crouches to get a better look at the boy who meets his gaze defiantly despite having his arms crossed protectively over his chest.

“What's your name boy?” he asks.

The boy swallows. “Jon Snow.”

“Are you a Jedi, Jon Snow?”

Jon shakes his head, but then lifts his chin proudly. “I'm a padawan. I am-” he falters and corrects himself. “I was Qhorin Halfhands padawan.”

Mance smirks beneath his helmet. “Qhorin took a padawan?” he chuckles. “And here he used to swear to me he never would!”

At the Jon's baffled expression he explains. “Back when he was my brother, and he still had a whole hand.”

He sees the moment it connects for Jon and the boy gasps. “You're one of the lost thousand!” he
You mean, I once wore those ridiculous robes and mouthed along to the utter claptrap those pious windbags preach—yes.”

Jon’s breathing is shallow, his eyes are wide, and his gaze darts frantically around the room.

“You’re Mance Rayder.” he whispers. “They took me to Mance Rayder.”

It makes Mance wince a little to see his name whispered like a terrible curse. As though the boy were about to be fed to a Rancor. He supposes he can’t blame him. Mance is the most prodigious and talented Jedi slayer of the last age.

But, he’s Mandalorian, and much like the Jedi, the Mandalorians have a code. Unlike the Jedi, Mandalorian’s leave the children be.

Mance yanks the boy to his feet. “I think me and the baby Jedi need to have a talk in private. Get out.” His eyes linger on Tormund, who manages to look petulant even with a full helmet and armour mask on. “All of you.” He adds, just to be clear.

Tormund goes and once the cockpit is clear Mance removes his helmet.

Jon backs away from him the minute he lets go of his grip on the boy’s shoulder. He has very wide, very dark eyes for a human with such pale skin. It makes Mance wonder how long the boy’s been planet hopping with Qhorin—there’s a certain sickening pallor that spacers and a particular breed of Jedi tend to get when they don’t stay on planet’s long enough for the sun to even touch their skin let alone paint a little colour into it.

He glances at the padawan braid again. It’s longer than he’d thought at first glance. At least a couple year’s growth there, maybe even three. He eyes the kid thoughtfully. Probably three, there was something about the kid that made it seem like he’d been precocious in his Jedi training. Mance wasn’t sure exactly what it was, desperation probably.

“Why were you Qhorin’s padawan? He wouldn’t have chosen you if there weren’t mitigating circumstances.” It’s not exactly what Mance means to ask, but it will do. It will keep the boy off balance if nothing else.
The boy opens and closes his mouth a couple times before ducking his head and replying in a voice so small that Mance has to lean forward to hear it. “I was repudiated.”

That nearly makes Mance see red. “What for?”

Jon licks his lips. “Mormont said I was meant for the work in the field. And he works in politics, and diplomacy.”

Mance relaxes a bit. The Jedi habit of discarding children who aren't quite good enough is one of the thousands of reasons they disgust him, but this sounds more like a last minute shuffle of teachers to ensure the best fit than it does a callous abandonment.

“When did you join the Jedi?” Mance asks.

Jon blinks. “Ten.”

Mance scowls. “That's a bit late.”

Jon shrugs. “They took me anyway.”

Mance nods. “They took me too. But, I was younger. My family not so influential, and the Force was strong with me. I don't think my mother realized she was allowed to refuse. I didn't realize until much later.”

He spits. “If there are gods, they'll curse the Jedi for child-snatchers.”

Jon stares up at him in awe. It's rare to see the Jedi openly insulted anywhere but in Mandalorian controlled space.

“They took me in.” he protests. “I didn't have anywhere else to go.”
Mance scowls. “And so you must serve forever now? Poverty, and servitude, and loneliness because they helped you? What are you? A slave to the Republic? To the Jedi?”

Jon glares at Mance. “No!”

“But you're allowed nothing. To keep nothing. Nothing belongs to you and you belong to nobody!”

Jon inhales sharply like Mance has hit him. “I belong.” he insists. “I belong with the Jedi.” And Mance knows he's found the weak spot, because Jon speaks with the wild desperation of someone who prays that if they just believe what they say fervently enough than it will become true.

Mance's heart squeezes again because he knows: Jon Snow has never belonged. Mance remembers how it felt to be out of step and out of place among the Jedi. He doubts there's anything in the entire galaxy that is quite so lonely.

He knows now what he needs to offer. What Jon might surrender his principles for.

The boy won't betray the Jedi, not yet. But, Mance can welcome him into his Mandalorian caravan, find him a place, give him some security, and belonging.

He’ll never trust the boy. Maybe one day, in a decade or more, he might. But, it will be the long game he plays with this boy. There are no quick methods for the technique he's planning to try.

You can't beat the Jedi out of a person. Or torture it out, or argue it away. But with enough time and careful tending even the staunchest Jedi will abandon everything for love.

Mance stands up. “When did you last eat?” he asks.

Jon just stares at him in bewildered mistrust.

Mance sighs. “We don't hurt children among the free folk. Nor do we let them starve.” he jerks his head towards the door. “C’mon lad. We'll get you a plate of something warm, and then see about getting' you some proper clothes and somewhere to sleep tonight while we decide what we'll do with you.”
Jon gingerly gets to his feet, biting his lip. “Can I keep my lightsaber?”

Mance pauses. “Do you have it?”

Jon shakes his head. Mance smiles behind his mask. “If you can get it back from whoever took it, then you can keep it.” he promises.

Jon looks like he can sense a trap, but isn't sure.

“Really?”

Mance nods. “On my honour as a Jedi.”

Jon scowls. Mance does his best not to laugh, and thanks the gods above for the helmet that hides his grin.

Someone nudges Arya awake in the middle of the night. She stirs to find Bran sitting grey-faced in his hover chair.

“Jon's ship was captured by Mandalorians.” he whispers in a hoarse voice. “I think he's dead.”

Arya grabs him hard enough to bruise. “What?! How do you know?”

Bran looks at her with wide haunted eyes. “I dreamt it Arya.”
Arya swallows. Bran has always been strange, but that strangeness had only increased in the years since his fall. The Force is strong in him, and he knows things sometimes.

She spends weeks jumping at every comm call. Tensing at every mention of a message or arrival of a ship.

It's more than a month later, when she walks out of her lessons to see Robb sobbing in Jon's favourite window seat that she knows Bran was right. Jon's dead. The news has finally arrived.

Robb's breathing like he's trying to stop crying, but can't. It doesn't even occur to Arya to cry.

She's too angry. Too numb.

The Jedi took Jon away and they got him killed. She remembers the last time he had been here. How they'd laughed at the way the snow sticking to his black hair looked like he had terrible scalp problems. He'd mussed her hair and called her little sister. He'd secretly taught her a few Jedi katas in the Godswood and never gave the slightest hint just how much he was slowing down for her until she'd caught him practicing on his own and had realized he could do them all four times as fast as he had shown her.

Robb has his hand over his mouth to try and stifle the choked gasps of his sobs.

“Is it true then?” she asks, in a curious sharp voice. “What Bran said? Jon's dead?”

Robb nods. “He and his master were on a mission in Mandalorian territory. It's been months and there's been no word from them. They found his Master's body a few days ago, no sign of Jon but... Mance Rayder kills every Jedi that crosses his path, everyone knows that.”

Arya nods. “So why did they cross his path at all then?”

Robb looks at her sharply.

“Jon's only been with Qhorin a few months. Why did they send him on such a dangerous mission?” She demands to know.
Robb looks at her pityingly, as though she's missing some stupid obvious reason.

“To be a Jedi is to serve.” he tells her, like she should already know.

Arya stamps her foot. “THAT'S STUPID!!” she screams. “YOUR STUPID!! I WISH YOU WERE DEAD INSTEAD OF JON!!”

Robb's face goes gray. “I know. I know you'd rather that.” He bites his lip and looks out the window towards the mountains. “What happened to Jon shouldn't have been allowed. You're right to be angry.”

Arya rushes at him and pounds her fists against his chest. She call his names and screams. He grabs her, and barely manages to hold her still until she calms down.

She still doesn't cry. She's too angry to cry. She has to do something anything. Jon can't be dead. He can't have died for nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Mance is fun. Arya is pissed. Hope people are enjoying this little piece of insanity! Comments are always fun and feed my muse!! Thanks. I'm going to try and update this weekly. So a new chapter every Saturday, we'll see how that goes. ;)
Stannis considers the trouble that the Starks cause and wonders what he did to deserve it.

Stannis is quite certain the Force has sent the Stark family to test him. First with the infuriatingly difficult Jon Snow who had in the course of his time at the temple been responsible for no less than three brawls, one serious bout of blackmail/death threat, and somehow taken over the Lightsaber training for older beginners, and all that had been before the deeply trying ordeal which had been trying to find the young initiate a Master once he'd made his lightsaber.

The boy had had four unofficially, three officially, and all of them had died.

Now Stannis is not saying that that had been the boy's fault, but he can't help but think there might have been a connection there. The Force had clearly been trying to tell them something. After all Jeor Mormount had been in the diplomatic corps for kriff's sake, and died in a freak cannibal attack not three weeks after he'd passed the boy's training along to Qhorin! Who'd promptly met a bloody and violent end at the hands of the Mandalorians!

Troublesome or not, Stannis nonetheless wouldn't wish the boy's fate on anyone. The wildlings in uncontrolled space were a vicious lot, and Mance Rayder was a Force user famous for butchering Jedi. Stannis can't imagine Jon's death was swift. He had grieved the boy and his potential, and then considered the matter closed.

If only.

The boy failure to relinquish attachment meant that the Starks have seen to it that the matter is far from closed, may in fact never be closed, and Jon Snow may continue causing Stannis terrible migraines until the day Stannis finally goes mad.

He has so many more pressing matters requiring his attention. The tragic death of a young padawan,
while regrettable was little more than a minor annoyance in the face of the current political climate.

The Senate is in a deadlock and has been for over a year. The only piece of the government that seems to actually get anything done is the Jedi, and now agitators are trying to tie their hands.

One agitator specifically. Robb Stark, the child-King the Northerner's had elected who, Thank the Force, didn't actually have a Senate vote but was eligible to speak in front of it and who had not stopped carping on about Jedi oversight and accountability since he'd turned up in that ridiculous wolf-pelt nearly a month ago and who also happened to be half-brother to aforementioned tragically deceased padawan, and apparently had taken it upon himself to avenge said brat's death by annoying Stannis into an early grave.

And that was without even taking into account the issue of the other Stark children.

There have been reports, disturbing reports, about the youngest girl and next youngest boy. The girl seems to be setting out to replicate something like Jedi training, scouring the galaxy for holocrons on the Force and other...sensitive topics.

As for the boy, Bran, well...since his accident reports of his behaviour- visions, predictions, uncanny luck have been so extreme that they've reached the Core even from the distant and remote planet of North.

That's not even mentioning the very strong probability that the current King of the North most likely has been touched by the Force with some sort of clairvoyant ability. Honestly, the Stark family is just a perfect demonstration of why those with a strong Force Sensitivity shouldn't be left to their own devices.

It makes Stannis feel like his skull might split and that's without the Senate, his reprobate brothers, the Seaworth issue, or even Ned Stark's refusal to leave his frozen waste of a homeland and cast his kriffing Paramount vote in the senate to relieve aforementioned deadlock.

Oh, the stiff necked fool had blithely sent three of his five children off into the world to, respectively, safeguard peace and justice, fight for freedom and reform, and attend fashion school (the last one being the eldest daughter), but Force forbid he enter the Core unless Chancelor Jon Arryn sends him a personalized engraved invitation.

Stannis sighs and stands to observe the unending streams of traffic on Coruscant from the high
window of his room in the Jedi Temple. He wonders at the willful blindness of Ned Stark, Jon Arryn, the Baratheon brothers...all the great families really.

The Republic is broken in it's Core, the ideals it was founded on have been dead a long long time, it's just taken this long for the body to catch up, but the rot has begun to take root and there's no stopping it now. Something must be done, to either save the Republic or construct something new in it's place...but no one will act, they're all too concerned with their own self interest, with the self-serving need to preserve their own power and comfort, rather than face inevitable sacrifices that will be required of them.

But, the longer they delay, the worse those sacrifices will have to be.

Stannis has no patience for it. He's a Jedi purist, one who embraced an austere life of little comfort in the pursuit of the great ideals the Jedi serve. He has no understanding of weakness, never having lacked resolve a day in his life. Even his own brothers- Robert, and Renly baffle him with their hedonism, their wanton indulgence of their emotions. He does not love them, has never loved them.

He shakes his head and grabs his cloak from the hook on the wall, heading down towards the Temple exit. If anyone ask he'll saying he's going ot visit Seaworth and dare them to pursue the matter further.

He passes Renly in the hallway but doesn't acknowledge him, letting his eyes slide over him as though he is not there. He sees the way Renly turns to look after him, the hurt in his eyes. It's irritating. Renly is not a child anymore, surely he must understand that Stannis belongs to the Order first.

It is not until Stannis is ducking into the street that it occurs to him to wonder why Renly had been visiting the Temple at all, bedecked in finery and smelling of perfume.

It's known that Renly had seduced a young knight into flouting the code, but Loras Tyrell at least had the decency not to entertain his lover in the Temple itself.

Stannis wonders for a moment before discarding the thought. He has more important things to occupy his thoughts than oath breaking reprobates.

No one had stopped him on his way out. There are no greetings called in passing or pleasantries exchanged. No one in the Temple speaks to Stannis willingly, unless the situation demands it. Stannis is not fully aware of his reputation, but even if he were he would not care. He sees a virtue in hardness, in unbending adherence to the strictest interpretation of the code. He doesn't see what is
lost in this stance. While he knows the expression 'Only a Sith deals in absolutes' he discards it as hyperbolic propaganda and ignores those who cautiously warn him with it.

He doesn't understand, the way his little brother does, the need all beings have for attachments of some kind. The fact that, to truly accomplish your goals it is easier to have the many than the few.

But, Stannis sees no value is softness or kindness. Only in actions, and ideas. Which is why he winds his way down to the lower levels of the great city and knocks on a particular unmarked door.

The nightsister who opens it is many things, but mostly she is great, and terrible and red.

She smiles at him and it seems there's a fire in the depths of her red eyes.

“Welcome my Lord Stannis,” she intones. “I've been waiting for you.”

It should be noted that Stannis' motives are completely pure. That he has no intention of breaking the code, and no selfish ambition save a desire to uphold the true mission of the Jedi: the guardianship of peace and justice.

He truly is motivated by altruistic motives, and believes he is doing what needs to be done to safeguard the well-being of those who live in the Republic, but, by Stannis' own accounting, intentions and feelings count for nothing, only actions, only ideals.

But, Stannis is what he is: unbending, unrelenting, and uncompromising. He seeks the salvation of his world through whatever means necessary, and unknowingly betrays all he holds dear and begins sinking into darkness.

It is a slow descent, but Stannis falls all the same.
Short chapter. Stannis thinks he knows everything but he really really doesn't. Next week is a monster of a chapter featuring a different Baratheon brother so it should make up for this short one.
Chapter Summary

Renly gets caught in the cross fire of Stark family drama. Quite literally.

Alternatively: Renly Baratheon's Horrible No Good Very Bad Day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Ned Stark's assassination took them all by surprise.

None more so than Renly Baratheon, former King of the Stormlands, current Senator for the planet who had been standing next to him and his son on the Senate steps when a high powered blast from a sniper had all but taken the man's head off.

Robb Stark, who Renly was distantly fond of and would have considered a protege if he hadn't had so many terribly inconvenient ideas of his own, had immediately gone into shock, not that Renly could blame him considering the poor boy had been wearing half his father's brain spattered across his face.

Renly can barely think which still puts him in a better position than poor Robb who is on his knees wailing over his Father's corpse. A second blaster shot takes a chunk out of the ceremonial archway and Renly drops into a crouch instinctively to present a smaller target.

Everyone in the square is panicking and running.

"Robb! Robb we need to get inside! Robb it's not safe here!" he yells over the pandemonium, touching the young man's face, trying to keep his stomach from rebelling at the gore.

Robb is slumped over. "You go Renly!" he chokes out.

"Robb! NO!" Renly shouts. "I'm not leaving you!"

Robb looks up at him. "I can't leave him. Not like this! Not for the vultures on the holonet to see!"
Renly glances down at the ruin that used to be Ned Stark's head and then looks away quickly. He will not vomit on the corpse of a martyr for democracy. He won't. He swallows a little desperately. Mind made up he doesn't hesitate, Renly gets to his feet, steels himself with a deep breath, and rips his heavy over-robe from hem to shoulder and tosses it aside to free his legs. That, deeply painful task complete, Renly squares his shoulders, reminds himself he is the scion of a proud warrior race, and grabs Robb Stark by the waist to haul over his shoulders in a fireman's carry as he sprints for cover.

A kid in a flight suit beckons to him from the corner of the building, covering their run with well placed blaster shots. Renly hadn't realized it, suspended as he had been in a bubble of shock and gore, but the square is the center of a firefight, most of the crowd has already fled and people are trading blaster shots from half a dozen places.

The kid in the flight suit shoots him a dirty look as he sets Robb down, as though it's his fault Robb had been to stunned to run. Robb is practically catatonic right now, and the skinny pilot with the teeth starts shaking him and screaming at him to snap out of it.

Renly looks down, realizes that he is currently smeared with what's left of Ned Stark's head from where Robb was hauled up against his shoulder, and immediately doubles over and vomits on his shoes.

While it's utterly humiliating, it gets the young pilot's attention and he stops screaming at Robb and focuses on Renly with a pitying stare.

“If you have somewhere we can hide, I can fly us out!” the pilot yells.

Renly nods feeling oddly detached and wondering if he's in shock himself before allowing himself to be lead away.

“Good! C'mon! This way! As soon as I saw Ned go down I brought the ship in as close as I could to get Robb out!” The skinny pilot yells, towing Robb behind him as he takes off at a run. Renly's glad for his wrecked clothing then, there's no way he could have kept up otherwise and he's got no doubt this harsh voiced young man would have left him behind without a thought.
His apartment was once voted the most beautiful on Coruscant but you'd never know it the way that kid (Theon Greyjoy, son of the Reaver king, Renly reminds himself, having gotten the name on the ride over, which honestly explains a few things) bustles in and starts overturning everything as he fusses over Robb.

He grabs what Renly assumes he must think is a washcloth (it's not it's a silk pocket square but Renly is a politician through and through and knows when to keep his mouth shut) and starts wiping the...let's call it blood, off of Robb Stark's face.

“Robb.” It's surprising to hear such a gentle tone coming from someone who's so far been nothing but brusque and borderline violent.

“Robb. Who should I call? Robb I don't know what to do! Please, I know there's stuff that needs to happen, but I don't know what. Robb-” Theon's voice breaks and he ducks his head, before looking up with a deep breath. “We need to do something. We need to get them for what they've done, but I haven't the faintest clue where to start.”

Robb blinks and slowly focuses on Theon. Then his eyes fill with tears and starts to sob.

“You need to com mother, and find Sansa. She's at school and she doesn't follow the news holos.”

Theon nods. “I can do that.”

“We should call someone official.” Renly chimes in from where he's been hovering by the door. “The Jedi or the Judiciary, or someone. We probably weren't supposed to flee in terror. There are probably protocols about that sort of thing.”

Robb and Theon shoot him identical withering glances.

Renly throws his hands up and goes to call someone himself. He hesitates by the com. Technically he should call Loras, since he is Renly's Jedi liaison, but with everything that's happened Renly needs the comforting solidity of a real Jedi at his back, and Loras, for all he has many wonderful qualities and is probably the greatest Jedi swordsman in a generation or two is...not quite a real Jedi knight, for all he no longer wears that crime against eyes padawan braid.

He doesn't entirely know what possesses him to call Stannis. But he does, and Stannis arrives only a
few minutes later looking uncharacteristically emotional. When he sees Renly he even goes so far as to hug him, stiffly, but still. A Hug from Stannis is a rare and precious thing indeed.

“I saw the news.” Stannis says gruffly. “You're not hurt are you? There was so much blood! And no one knew where you went or what happened to you.”

Renly shakes his head against his older brother's shoulder. For once relieved that Stannis is stalward and unyielding with the emotional range of a rock- it's comforting in moments like this to hae someone you can call.

“Good, that's good.” Something catches Stannis' attention in the other room and he tilts his head to one side. Renly waits.

The Baratheon's are not a family known to be strong in the Force and it's anyone's guess how Stannis ended up with the power to be a Jedi at all let alone a Jedi Master, (personally Renly tallies it as one more point in the 'Mother had an affair' column).

Stannis scowls. “Why,” he hisses. “Do you have an enemy of the Republic in your living room?!!”

Renly blinks. Whatever reproach he'd been expecting. It hadn't been that.

“I have Ned Stark's son in the living room? Or do you mean the Reaver prince?”

If possible Stannis' scowl gets even deeper.

“Have you not heard the...poison that boy has been spewing in the Senate?!!” Stannis growls.

Renly raises an eyebrow. “Yes, Stannis. I've been the one arguing with him about that drivel and I hope you're not suggesting I should have left a shell-shocked teenager alone in a firefight because of his political beliefs?!!”

Stannis looks disgusted. “I should have realized even the few principles you appeared to have were fake. What with that...perversion of the Force you insist on parading around with!”
Renly rears back and slaps his brother across the face as hard as he can. “Brienne is dedicated to the ideals of the Jedi and has done her best to pursue their teachings without having had the privilege of studying in the Temple!”

Stannis gapes at him briefly paralyzed with rage that his little brother had had the audacity to slap him over an unsanctioned Force user.

“Careful brother!” he whispers low and dark. “Or I'll bring you up on charges.”

“What charges?” Renly scoffs. “You can't throw me in jail just for betraying your precious code.”

“How about statutory rape?” It's Renly's turn to be briefly paralyzed with rage.

“What?!” he sputters.

“Loras Tyrell was 16 years old when he began working as your Jedi liaison during that incident with the weird stalker who wanted to eat your face. You were 21 and age of consent on Coruscant is eighteen.”

“I didn't touch him!” Renly protests. "I mean, not until he worked with me a couple years later!"

Stannis glares at him. “So you say, but your love affair with him is the worst kept secret in Coruscant and I'm not sure how well your career would weather such accusations. Not to mention his- He's lucky he hasn't been expelled from the Order as it is.”

Renly seethes with rage. There are very very few things he and Robb Stark agree on politically, but the Jedi attitude towards it's young initiates is one of them.

He sputters, not even sure which of these ridiculous threats he should answer first. As usual, his love for Loras wins out.

“First of all! Loras was tossed to the Jedi by his family as a child! He never agreed to live by your
precious code! He should be free to live his own life as he sees fit!”

“He took an oath. He made a vow. He should have the integrity to live by it.” Stannis snaps.

“Well- YOU’RE JUST JEALOUS NO ONE LIKES YOU!!!!” Renly screams.

Renly's tirade is cut of by a soft voice. “Theon...? Does shock make a person hallucinate?”

“No. Those morons are real.” The Reaver boy replies from the other room.

Stannis snaps his jaw shut with a click and turns an impressive shade of red.

He turns on his heel. “The Council is already investigating the matter of Senator Stark's assassination. It seems likely that it was part of a larger plot either targeting those holding paramount votes, given what's happened to Jon Arryn and Robert or, given what's happened to Ned's bastard and Benjen, someone is targeting members of the Stark family in particular. Either way, Robb Stark is in danger and should increase his security.”

Stannis pauses and the door and looks over his shoulder with pursed lips, his eyes settling on the Reaver prince who has wandered over to investigate the shouting.

“Aren't you that...pet Reaver of Ned's?” he asks.

“I'm Theon Greyjoy.”

“Yes. Didn’t your Uncle eat the Governor of-”

“We don’t talk about that.” Robb counters sharply, still in the other room.

“And didn't your sister Yara burn the-”
“We don’t talk about that either!!” Robb shouts.

Stannis raises an eyebrow and sends a scathing glance at Renly. “Such excellent taste in companions you have, brother.”

Renly sighs and sits down. Robb is looking slightly more lively, though that means he now just looks a tad corpsey rather than just dead.

Theon has his head cocked and is staring at the wall. Renly turns his head and follows his gaze. He is met by one of the tasteful nudes of his boyfriend that he’d installed back in the first flush of their relationship when not being able to display actual holos of his boyfriend’s face had seemed like a cheeky excuse to showcase some of Loras’ other assets. Today is the first time it’s occurred to him tasteful framing or not, nude photos of the person you really shouldn’t be sleeping with maybe shouldn’t be displayed prominently in your home.

Theon grins at Renly and waggles his eyebrows. “Don’t listen to your brother,” he says with a shit eating grin. “That kid looks willing.”

Renly glances nervously at Robb. “How old is your sister again?”

Robb, thankfully, is still not quite fully present, and takes a moment to snap out of his intense contemplation of the carpeting. “Fourteen, Renly. Why?”

Renly jolts to his feet. Yeah, he’ll definitely be turning the holos off before she gets here.

While he’s up Robb calls after him. “Renly? Can I use your datapad? I need to start drafting a formal address about what’s happened for the citizens of North.”

Renly bites his lip and nods. “Sure Robb. Whatever you need.”

Looking at the kid he can’t help but think of himself, back when he was tiny and had stood with his brothers paralyzed in horror as their parents ship had immolated on atmospheric re-entry. How he and Robert had been helpless, both of them so consumed by what had happened, by what they’d lost that they’d been useless, but desperate not to let it show.
And then there'd been Stannis, dry eyed and somehow hard even then, barking orders and making the arrangements. There'd been no question that he'd been any less devastated than Renly and Robert, Jedi Academy or no, but that devastation had manifested in a need to keep moving, to be useful and active and never ever still long enough for what he'd lost get him.

Renly is reminded of that more than anything when he looks at the kid, Stannis' steely eyed determination not to let this tragedy get the best of him.

Not that Robb is really a kid anymore. The boy king of the First Men diaspora is eighteen years old, meaning he's been legal in some systems for two years, is legal in nearly all systems now and will be legal in all the rest within the next three years.

Not that Renly is paying attention to that sort of thing. Certainly not now, with the things Stannis has been insinuating.

Not when the kid's still white as a ghost and smells faintly of blood and vomit.

“You should clean yourself up.” Renly suggests. “Before your sister gets here.”

Robb nods absently but doesn't move.

Theon ends up having to fetch Sansa since the attack on the Senate has closed most of the public transportation, and only someone with a government pass would be able to make it through the pandemonium in the traffic lanes.

Sansa Stark is as lovely as any fourteen old girl has ever been. Her hair is redder than Robb's and her cheek bones are higher, but there's a strong resemblance there all the same. It's a physical resemblance not a spiritual one. Sansa's dresses like a Core-world beauty, not an outer rim barbarian the way her brother does.

She even gives Renly a half-heart grin of excitement when she sees him and says she voted for him as “Most Stylish Senator” in one of those Holonet poles.
He smiles and thanks her. She's even more like Stannis than her brother, while her brother is barely holding on to his emotions she comes across as poised, and calm in her grief.

“What happened?” She ask Robb, who immediately starts crying again. Theon gets up from where he was lounging semi-pornographically on the couch and begins hovering awkwardly around the two siblings.

“He was shot.” Theon explains. “Totally blood-bath- don't watch the holonet footage if you can avoid it.”

Sansa's face crumples and she begins blinking very rapidly and nodding a lot. “Of course, yeah.” she sniffs and wipes a hand across her face before looking around.

“Why are we in Renly Baratheon's apartment?” she asks.

Which actually is a very good question, that no one (including Renly) had thought to ask until that moment.

In the end it takes rest of the day to clear everyone out. The Jedi have security concerns for Robb, and none of the Starks are really quite up for facing reality outside the little bubble of Renly's flat, so no one feels particularly motivated to get a move on.

Sansa ends up painting cunning patterns on Theon's nails using nail polish borrowed from Renly and revealing that she's been acting as the Reaver boy's stylist for the last several years, which snaps Robb out of the strange spiral of speech writing and despair he'd fallen into long enough to once again demand to know whether shock can make a person hallucinate.

It's a strange day. Probably the strangest day Renly's ever had.

Renly didn't really know the Starks before it. Obviously he'd known Ned, the Rebel hero and his elder brother's best friend but only in the passing way that you knew people who'd frequented your house a lot when you were a child and they were nearly grown, but he'd never met the Lady Stark or the seemingly innumerable Stark children.

And now he's met them all and spent what he knows is the worst day of their lives hiding out with them in his apartments. It's hard not to be bonded with people after something like that.
In the end the Jedi find some knights they can spare for Robb's bodyguards which causes the young king to throw another fit about political integrity since he'd been outspoken in his criticism of the Jedi and their lack of oversight.

Eventually between Theon, Sansa and Renly, the three of them they'd managed to convince him that Ned's integrity would have allowed him to accept the protection detail on offer, and they'd all gone off leaving Renly alone for the first time all day.

Though not for long.

Loras blows in like a hurricane only a few minutes after Renly has finally managed to remove all Starks, and Stark-related humans from his apartment.

“Honestly Renly! How could you!!” he shrieks, and Renly loves Loras, he does. He loves his drama and his passion and the truly incredible ass he has. But. It's been a long day. He's tired and numb and really just wants to have the most epic bubble bath ever created.

“How could I what?”

“I'm your Jedi liaison, and yet you called Stannis! Do you understand how that makes me look?”

Renly puts his head in his hands. “I'm sorry, but I don't-...?”

“You hate Stannis!”

“I know, I just...I panicked, alright? I needed a real Jedi and I wanted my big brother to come and set everything to right.”

Loras is speechless with rage for a moment and Renly knows he's made a mistake as soon as the words leave his mouth.

“That is- I didn't mean it quite like...” but the damage is done.
“Are you saying I'm not a real Jedi?”

“No, of course not, I misspoke and-”

“Because, I know a lot of people say that but I never thought that was how you felt.” Loras sounds genuinely heartbroken, and normally Renly would let it go. But, he's tired, and annoyed, so he twists the knife instead.

“Well, come on. You don't take the Jedi code very seriously. You practically never go on missions and you spend most of your time lounging in sickening luxury with me- your forbidden lover. Forgive me if I thought you didn't particularly care about the Jedi!” He snaps.

Loras blinks back tears. “I...I never thought you'd say that to me. I thought you understood Renly!”

He flees the room in tears and Renly just sits there staring at the wall and wondering whether that tips the scales and makes this the worst day of his life instead of just the strangest. He has no idea why he just said that. He knows how much the Jedi mean to Loras. He does.

Force, maybe he is as stupid as Stannis has always said.

Just when he thinks he can take anything else the holocom rings. He answers it automatically and is surprised when he sees a small blue Brienne peering at him with great concern.

“Renly are you okay?”

Renly opens and closes his mouth but no words come out. No one has asked him that all day. Suddenly tears are streaming down his cheeks as he shakes his head.

“No,” he finally manages to croak out. He was in a firefight. He saw a man he's known and admired his whole life killed in front of him, and he's spent the whole day trying to look after everyone else, but he's not. He's really not okay. “It was horrible Bri. Really, just. I.” He shakes his head, waves and ends the holocall too embarrassed at being such a mess to let her see.
Renly changes in his sleep clothes and tries to sleep. But whenever he closes his eyes he just sees the inside of Ned's head spattered on the pavement and then he thinks about after the Rebel's won when Ned visited him on Storm's End. And then he cries some more.

When a weight settles on the bed next to him he turns, assuming it's Loras, instead he finds the solid presence of Brienne, wearing some approximation of the robes human Jedi usually wear.

She looks down at him.

“I'm sorry, Renly.”

Renly just gapes at her. “What are you doing here?”

“I promised to look after you didn't I?”

Renly shifts uncomfortably suddenly aware that he's puffy from crying, and disheveled from lying on the bed. He doesn't like people to see him like this.

She looks at him softly. “C'mon. Let's get you cleaned up and in bed properly.” she dabs at his face with a damp cloth. He sniffs and hugs her. “Thank you. So much Bri. I-it was horrible. I...why does Ned Stark have so many children? Wait...no...why did he..because he's dead and his stupid son used all my pocket squares to clean the blood off and the apartment is a mess and Stannis hates me and I hurt Loras and I-”

She wraps her arms around him and rocks him a little bit. “It's alright. I'll take care of you, Renly.”

Renly cries against her shoulder until he falls asleep. When he wakes up Brienne has done her best to undo the damage the Starks had done to his apartment and cooked him breakfast.

“I called Loras.” she tells him brusquely as he stumbles in from his bedroom. “You can sort that out later today.” she pushes the plate towards him.

Renly picks up his fork and then stares between her and his food. “I love you Brienne.”
She laughs. “I know.”

“Not, like, physical love but like-”

“Shut up, Renly, and eat your breakfast.”

He takes a bite. It's terrible. He smiles at her and takes another. “Thank you. Really, you didn't have to do this.”

Brienne smiles and leans against the counter. “Yes, I did.”

“Why?”

She laughs and darts forward to peck him on the cheek. “Because I love you too, you moron.”

For the first time since Ned's death, Renly smiles.

Chapter End Notes

I just wanted Brienne and Renly to be besties. Cause the way she talks about him in the show is super cute.

Anyway. Hope you like it. :)


Chapter Summary

Jon settles into an uneasy captivity with the Mandalorians and falls in love along the way.

Chapter Notes

Takes place over the same period as the last two chapters. Jon is 14 when he is first captured and is around 18 by the end of the chapter.

Life among the Wildlings was very strange for Jon. Mostly because he didn't have a fucking clue what was happening. This was not particularly unusual for Jon, but life among the Wildlings took things to a whole new level.

He wasn't even sure whether he was technically a prisoner. They seemed to treat him too nice for him to be a prisoner. Actually, treating him nice was a gross understatement, it was more like they were fussing over him.

Which, honestly, couldn't be the case. He must be misreading things somehow. After all these were Mandalorians not matter what high-flung idealistic names they preferred, or snide jabs were more common, they were Mandalorians and anyone who knew anything about Mandalorians knew they'd spent the last couple thousand years fighting the Jedi whenever they got bored.

Fighting was a kind word to describe what the Mandalorian and the Jedi did though. It was less fighting and more 'massacring one another while they're sleeping'.

Nemesis. Would be a good way to describe that relationship. Or what was the plural of that? Nemeses? Nemesisss? Whatever. The only thing that topped the Jedi's hatred of the Mandalorians was the Mandalorian's hatred fo the Jedi.

So, obviously. Jon must be a prisoner. What else could he be after they murdered his Master and the literally dragged him back to their space station to, again, very literally throw him at the feet of their king.
Only, as far as he knew, *prisoners* got dragged screaming off of battlefields and had all four of their personal belongings taken away by guards. Only prisoners were confined to certain areas and left with vague but dire warnings about what might happen if they left those prescribed zones.

But, on the other hand, prisoners weren't usually allowed to steal their weapons back from the foul mouthed and strong-fisted young soldier who'd confiscated them in the first place. And, Jon wasn't entirely sure how these things were done in the Jedi but, he was relatively certain that prisoners weren't usually nagged about eating well balanced nutrient rich meals and constantly being shooed to stand in front of the UV lamps *because honestly lad ye can't be getting enough vitamin D with skin like that, yer so pale it's unnatural...or do they not have sun on your home planet?*

Mance seems to have set Tormund (large, slightly smelly, rude, very large very ginger beard) as his minder and most of the time Jon's not sure whether Tormund is meant to be tormenting him, but is too jolly a fellow to do a proper job or it, or whether Tormund's meant to be looking after him and is just so naturally foul-mouthed and brusque that he sort of accidentally brow-beats Jon into exhausted submission if he puts up any resistance.

Jon is still allowed to meditate. Still runs through his practice katas, but the thing is...people ask him if he's alright a lot.

They ask how he's feeling constantly. Which, aside from the bewildering question of *why do they care*, is actually a pretty confusing transition considering the Jedi policy on feelings could be summed up in a single word: Don't.

Tormund even appears one day with a pair of wooly socks he claims one of his daughters had knit and reverently gives them to Jon with many reassurances that no one's going to take them away from him. Which makes Jon question if socks have some sort of significance in Mandalorian culture that he's forgotten about. Why do they think he's had a problem with people stealing his socks? Who would even want to?... It's confusing.

They ask him to make decisions a lot too. Not in a normal way either. In a 'we're staring at you very intently and are weirdly insistent that you make an informed decision and will not let you wiggle out of doing so no matter how unqualified you may be to make a choice on the matter at hand' way that makes Jon very nervous because he thinks it must be some sort of test.

Which is how the disastrous week of the cafeteria attempting to cook traditional Northern food happened, where nearly everyone except Jon got food poisoning or just flat out refused to eat at all.
Mandalorians are apparently stubborn enough to faint from hunger rather than eat food they find genuinely repulsive.

Which made Jon laugh. Which in turn made everyone around him freeze and then very slowly turn to stare at him in wonder as though he were some sort of majestic but critically endangered critter that had wandered into camp and no one wanted to scare him away.

Someone had actually run to tell Mance about it and the Mandalorian king had descended from on high with much back slapping and weirdly proud overly emotional speeches.

Jon was so fucking confused.

But, whatever, the Mandalorian's wanted with him, that much was clear. It was also clear that they were working towards some sort of goal, but they didn't seem to be planning to achieve that goal through torture, unpleasantness or even particularly hard work, so Jon's not too worried.

He asks Mance more than once if they've sent a ransom demand to his family, like they'd originally planned, but he doesn't get a straight answer either way. Mance just starts muttering about the Jedi, and reassuring Jon that he doesn't need to worry now he's with the Mandalorians, which segues into Mance's favourite speech that Jon has heard multiple times which he has privately titled “Feelings are important and yours are valid”, which honestly just makes Jon feel sorry for Mance- a man more unsuited to the life of the Jedi has probably not been born.

Honestly, Jon has no fucking clue what they want. Still. It's not so bad and all he knows is that when he finally managed to flying tackle Ygritte in a stealth attack and stole back his lightsaber about a year into his captivity, Tormund and Mance had gotten all teary-eyed with pride and given him a few of the lighter pieces of Mandalorian armour for him to wear. Despite the fact that he still wasn't technically allowed to leave the space station.

It was weird.

Ygritte is also weird but mostly in a good way. He's only got his lightsaber back for about two days when she strides boldly up to him and snatches it straight off his belt. She holds it above her head and stares at him defiantly.

“Ye can have it back if ye give me something in return.” she informs him smugly, leaning in close with a strange sort of smile on her face.
Tormund, who had been lurking nearby (and how can someone in full armour whose primarily orange manage to lurk so effectively?) barks out a laugh. “If you want something like that you should just take a grab.” he shouts, shaking the crotch of his own pants.

Jon stares at Tormund with wide eyed alarm.

Mance pops his head out of a room down the hall. “No grabbing unless he asks before hand!! Remember, he's a baby Jedi! He doesn't understand these things! Be gentle Ygritte!” he hollers before disappearing back into the room.

Jon just looks around in confusion before standing on tiptoe and taking the saber back.

“We're the same height Ygritte.” he tells her seriously. “Had you not noticed?”

Ygritte is bright red. Not that Jon can blame her given Tormund's ongoing commentary which has more or less devolved into a series of increasingly explicit sex tips.

Reaching up to grab the lightsaber had put Jon's face very close to hers, and he realizes that he'd quite like to kiss her. He looks Ygritte square in the face.

“I'll trade you a kiss for an explanation.” He tells her.

She looks confused, but nods.

“What the fuck do you all want from me? If you're not keeping me prisoner why won't you let me go?” he asks.

Her expression softens and she looks at him pityingly.

“Because you need help.”
“What?! No I don't! You're the ones who killed my Master!”

“You don't see it, but the Jedi are wrong. They disrupt the balance of the Force. They shine so brightly that they must cast long shadows...they've filled your head with foolishness and lies!”

“No, they haven't! The Jedi are good! They fight for ideals that are worth protecting! I believe in them.” Jon protests.

Ygritte cups his cheek. “That's why we can't let you leave. Mance is trying to save you from them.”

Jon looks away. “I have a family you know.”

Ygritte scowls. “The Jedi are not—”

“Not the Jedi. I'm Ned Stark's bastard, or have you forgotten? I have brothers and sisters that I used to come twice a week. They probably think I'm dead by now. They probably mourned me, and cried for me. Because of you and Mance and what you've done. You could have explained. You could have let me go home.”

“What is the punishment for oathbreakers in North? Do they still keep the ancient laws of the First Men?”

“Yes. The punishment is death.”

She just looks at him, and he understands. He'd sworn a sacred oath to the Jedi and if he returned home they might consider it broken.

Or they might not. He had only been a padawan after all. He hadn't taken the trials or spoken the oaths that would have made him a true Knight of the Republic.

Jon glances away and then looks back, he leans over and softly presses his lips to hers. It's his first kiss. He steps back and smiles sadly.
“Thank you for explaining.”

Ygritte watches him walk away before calling after him. “The Jedi would have denied you even as pale and weak a kiss as that. They would have had you abandon your siblings as surely as we have forced you to part from them. Only it would have been worse because they would have taught you not to love them at all. And if you couldn't have they'd have taught you that you were weak for caring about them. They'd have taught you never to love anyone, never to care for anyone, not even yourself!”

Jon freezes. She's right in a way. The Jedi would have pushed him to release his attachments. In time no doubt he would have drifted away from his siblings, and become a stranger in their lives, a visitor only, as Uncle Benjen was to Father.

But, she doesn't see that that was a choice. There were ways of bending the Jedi Code without breaking it, and there were sacrifices that were worth making in pursuit of it.

He turns on his heel to face her and shakes his head.

“There are things in the world worth more than kisses Ygritte.”

Ygritte grins and shakes her head. She walks towards him and grabs the front of his shirt.

“Not if your doing it right.”

She kisses him again and it's not like before.

“Huh.” Jon says breathless as she pulls away. “I see you point.”

Tormund starts cheering.

After that things with the Mandalorians become considerably less confusing. If only because he has Ygritte around to act as a translator, so to speak.
For some reason the fact that he and Ygritte periodically make-out around the place has put everyone's mind at ease about his mental state and they stop handling him with kid gloves and are actually direct with him.

He's still very much a prisoner, but he's Mance's prisoner and that apparently is a distinction that's important, because if he were the Mandalorians' prisoner, as a collective, than Mance would have been honour bound to ransom him as it was what was best for his people, but Mance is stubborn and Tormund confides that this isn't the first time Mance has tried to 'save' a padawan from the Jedi teachings, though so far none of his attempts at breaking 'Jedi brainwashing' have succeeded.

Jon privately thinks there's next to no chance that Mance will ever succeed at breaking anyone's loyalty to the Jedi.

Despite that, the Mandalorians are, in many ways, wonderful. They have a strict code of honour and morality that everyone follows, they're wild and free in action and in words. They are open in all their dealings and their feelings.

Tormund lets him start blaster training, and then gets a bit huffy when it turns out Jon is a better shot than him (but not as good as Ygritte who has some sort of magical ability to always hit her target). It's actually not particular difficult to be better with a blaster than Tormund, who is an almost supernaturally terrible shot and mainly seems to fight by trusting in his armour and running full tilt at people while screaming....Not that Jon knows for sure that's how Tormund fights, seeing as he still hasn't been allowed off the space station. But, judging by the training bouts that's how he rolls.

Tormund and Mance let Jon train with the rest of the warriors his own age. He bites his tongue about how these young people don't seem to have any other future open to them other than as warriors. He keeps himself from asking where the art and poetry and book learning of the Mandalorian culture happens.

They have a different way of doing things here. He can respect that.

It doesn't make him miss the Jedi Temple any less though. There are days, when everything is too raucous, too loud and he'd give his left arm to find himself back in the quiet serenity of the library listening to Sam wax poetic about the beauty of predictive trajectory mathematics.

He misses Sam, and Qhorin and the old Bear Mormount, and Uncle Benjen. He misses Arya and Robb as though someone's hacked a chunk of his chest out. Even though he barely seen them face to face since he was ten, he'd talked to them. He'd known they were alright and he'd talked to them all them time.
He'd known they were alright and *they'd* known he was still alive.

Mance hasn't had the heart to tell him but, Jon knows. There were no rescue attempts because Jon was presumed dead along with his Master, and that is the worst part. Living and knowing that everyone he loves thinks he's dead. That they have felt the pain and grief of his loss despite the fact that he's still alive. Knowing that he could ease their pain but he's not allowed to contact them. Knowing he might live his whole life with his family believing he died violently at fourteen years old.

It makes Jon's chest ache when he let's himself think about it. So he tries not to.

Ygritte fills some of the emptiness. She teaches him all sorts of tricks related to feelings, and he even manages to teach her a thing or two, though that's mostly down to instinctual improvisation.

Tormund is weirdly proud of the amount of sex they have when they finally get around to trying it, which Jon finds disturbing since, on North everyone pretended that teenagers were rational human beings not controlled by their genitals, despite knowing they were slaves to their hormones. Tormund had no such qualms and seems to have made a game of seeing just how red he could make Jon turn.

Jon spends a lot of time in Ygritte's room and around the station people seem to be beginning to forget that he was ever a Jedi. They call him 'the pretty crow' now instead of 'the baby jedi', which he thinks is probably an improvement even though, in his heart of heart he aches to think he's lost his chance at being a Jedi. That he'll never get to grow up to be like Uncle Benjen.

Even if he got away right now, he'd be lightyears behind everyone, and no doubt had picked up all sorts of bad habits from the Mandalorians. There was no way he'd ever catch up, even if they did by some miracle release him that very afternoon.

On the plus side, he did get to see Ygritte naked a lot. Which was spectacular. And did make up for things a little bit.

She was the only one he'd admitted some of these thoughts to. He'd told her a little bit about life on North though she tended to disbelieve him if anything was too different from life as she understood it. In return she told him about the Free Folk, mostly their legends and histories. She rarely talked about herself and Jon suspected she was an orphan who Tormund had taken a liking to, but he didn't ask and she never asked about the Jedi.
They both preferred to leave some topics off limits, as though, for the most part, their lives had started when she'd kissed him in the hallway.

“What's a crow?” he asks her one night as he lies next to her. She's running her fingers through his hair. She likes the curls.

She smiles at him. “S'a bird, from Mandalore, Or it was. Nothing lives on Mandalore now 'cept Mandalorians. The civil wars saw to that.”

Jon wrinkles his nose in confusion. “Why do people call me a bird? I'm not particularly bird-like.”

Ygritte grins. “It was black.” She tugs at a strand of hair.

Jon mock scowls and tugs at her hair in retaliation. “Oh that's nice. You get to be kissed by fire, and I'm some mangy bird.”

Ygritte grins and props herself up on elbow to get a better look at him. “You know nothing, Jon Snow. Crows were clever. They were tricksters in the stories. Always trying to fool people into doing what they wanted or making a silly mistake.”

Jon stares up at her. “So...people don't trust me?”

Ygritte sighs and flops down. “It's not that. It's just you're a Jedi. We all can tell.”

Jon stares up at her ceiling. “I'm not actually sure what I am anymore.”

He feels Ygritte shift beside him. “Doesn't matter. S'just words. What to words have to do with anything?”

He smiles and moves towards her. She runs her fingers through his hair again. “If I say you're not a crow...” She muses. “If I say your kissed by the darkness between the stars... would you have your sister make me a dress someday? One of the beautiful ones like you'd told me about. To put even the most fashionable senator to shame.”
Jon grins and rolls over to rest his head on her shoulder. “I’d love to see you in a dress like that.”

Ygritte hums, starting to drift off to sleep.

“But, for my sister to make it...she'd have to know I was alive.”

Ygritte sighs and kisses him. “When you've proven yourself, he'll let you go see your family.”

Jon nods and lets her curl around him as she falls asleep.

After a long moment, Jon stands up and wanders to the 'fresher.

There's a mirror above the sink. It's been four years since he was captured and he doesn't look like he used to. His face has lost some of it's baby fat, and he looks almost like a man.

He even has something of a beard now, thin and patchy though it is in comparison to Tormund's massively well maintained and impressive growth.

The only thing that's really the same is the eyes which are, obviously, still brown, and his hair, which is still a slightly unmanageable mass of shoulder-length black curls.

Kriff, he's always loved his hair. Even when he was little they used to have to chase him all around Winterfell whenever it was time for a haircut. He splashes some water on his face. It makes his hair even darker in the dim light, like spirals of shadows have somehow collected around his face.

*Kissed by the darkness between the stars. Fucking Ygritte trying to be poetic to cheer him up.*

He snort laughs and smiles to himself in the mirror.

He turns the light of and crawls back into bed next to Ygritte.
Even if he is a prisoner life with the Mandalorians isn't so bad.

It could be a whole lot worse. He does love her, after all.

She pulls him close. “Ye may be a mangy untrustworthy bird.” she mutters half-asleep. “But, you're my mangy untrustworthy bird, and I'll protect you.”

Jon smiles to himself in the dark. Force, he loves her so fucking much.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all like Jon and Ygritte! I've been reading parts of this story to my roommate and she finds them ridiculously cute.

Let me know if you liked the update! Comments and kudos feed my muse ;)
On the Streets in the Bad Part of Town

Chapter Summary

Theon fails to confess his feelings, meets his sister, and causes a scene.

Warning for Yara's potty-mouth.

Chapter Notes

Let's all just pretend Space has Snapchat, okay?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Theon stares intently at the mirror, leaned back to glance around and then opens the drawer below the sink where he keeps his...special fashion aides.

He deftly unscrews the lid of motor grease and carefully dabs a little on his face and then smeared it, like he'd unthinkingly touched his face after fixing an engine. He takes a step back to admire the effect. It's good.

He looks great.

He takes a little slow pan holo of the look and sends it to Sansa. She's the only one he knows who understands that he doesn't just roll out of bed each morning and throw whatever wrinkled clothing on that was nearest to the bed.

Actually, the disheveled look his hair has is the careful result of a prescribed regime that involves four different hair care products and half-an hour's careful work in front of the mirror every day. But, it looks as though he woke up like that.

Theon's not born to the purple the way the Starks are. His family is a bunch of scrappy little nobodies compared to them, fleet of impossibly high performing spacecraft or not.
Less than nobodies, really.

Reavers are roaches. Vermin, carrion. How many times has he heard that? Ned tried to keep that kind of talk away from him. He knew that. He knew that Ned had taken him away from his family to try and protect him, because after the battle he'd seen the way Balon was. He'd seen that Theon was too little and too weak to ever really be Ironborn the way Yarra, and (other brothers) were.

He had his mother's weakness. So, Ned hadn't taken him away because he hated the Ironborn. Ned start was just and fair and he saw the Ironborn for the things that were good and bad.

His comm chirps and there's a short little video of Sansa waggling her eyebrows. “Damn! What's the occasion?”

Theon stares at it for a second before closing the message. There's no good way to reply to that.

'I'm going to try and work up the nerve to tell your brother how I feel (for the 349th time) and I'm going to talk to my sister (you know the criminal one wanted in 14 different systems?) ' just probably wasn't going to go over well.

He sighs and looks at the effect once more in the mirror. It would have to do. He took a deep breath and stalked out the door into the sun.

He wasn't a Stark and didn't live as a member of the family anymore, so he had room in the shipyards.

Robb is waiting on the landing pad, swathed in fur despite the natural heat of Coruscant, when Theon arrives in the family speeder to pick him up. He raises his eyebrows at Theon's grooming and rolls his eyes that his best friend managed to get engine grease on him first thing in the morning.

Theon smiles and Robb rolls his eyes again and turns away.

Theon climbs into the cockpit as Robb boards the ship. “The Senate?” he asks over his shoulder.
“The Senate.” Robb confirms.

Theon considers banging his head against the dash until he comes to his senses. Instead he starts the engine and flies out into the unending stream of Coruscanti traffic.

He drops Stark off in the square in front of the Senate building so he can make a grand entrance. Things have gotten more and more tense between the First Men colonies and the Republic since Ned's Stark's assassination. Robb is barely able to keep matters from getting violent.

Robb now holds a Senate seat, a Paramount vote, and the Kingship of his culture, and all before his twentieth birthday, which makes him one of the most powerful people in the galactic governments, but he still needs allies, and more and more he's being shouted down by the majority.

Unlike Robb, Theon doesn't blame the Core worlder politicians for not being interested in the problems specific to the remote and unforgiving world that were settled by the first human explorers to reach this galaxy millenia ago, but he thinks there's an obvious solution that Robb isn't seeing: break with the Republic and pursue independence.

The worlds of the First Men are all pretty much self-sufficient anyway, and at this point the Republic is more a hindrance than a help. But, Robb insists on not making any rash choices, or taking any dangerous gambles.

So the talks drag on. And on. And on. With nothing resolved and nothing decided, just more and more wasted time.

Theon has the entire day to kill before Robb will need a ride back to his apartment and heads down to the lower levels. He's heard a rumour he needs to investigate.

So he heads down to Davos' Diner in the lower levels of the ship yards. The owner is a friend of one of the bigwigs on the Jedi council so it's the only place where Jedi Knights brush elbows with smugglers, and politicians sit next to thieves.

It helps that the food is amazing.

Theon finds a spot at the counter in sight of the door and sits there self-consciously fiddling with the menu.
Davos ambles by and gives him a sympathetic look. “Can I get you something?” Theon gulps and stutters out an order for fried tubers. Davos gives him another considering glance and then moves on.

Theon knows the minute Yara arrives with a crowd of loud-mouthed Ironborn. He tenses up, hoping she'll notice him and come over.

He manages to look up just as she passes, she freezes when she catches his eye and tells her friends to go on ahead.

She takes the stool next to him and they sit awkwardly in silence for a moment. She orders a mug of caf, and a breakfast platter.

“Theon. Force, you didn't get any better looking did you?” She finally asks once the food arrives.

Theon scowls. “You didn't either.”

Yara smiles. “What do I care? You're the one dressed like some Core-worlder's porn fantasy of a Reaver.”

Theon blushes.

“What are you now? The Stark's errand boy?”

“I'm Robb Stark's personal pilot.”

Yara pulls a face. “Force, that's even worse. And you the son of Balon Greyjoy.”

“S'not my fault Father decided to fight a stupid war and lose.”

She rolls her eyes, but let's it go. He'll never apologize for leaving, and she'll never regret not going with him.
“How is Father, by the way?”

“Still a miserable old stoat, and still in prison.”

“Mother?”

“Still crazy.”

“Ummm... Uncle Euron?”

“Dead. Hopefully.”

That was a bit of welcome news. Theon raises his cup. “I'll drink to that.”

The corner of Yara's mouth twitches in amusement but she clinks her cup with his.

“D'you like the life of a lapdog then? Licking arse fun for you? Clearly you're not lacking for credits.” She says eyeing his expensive clothing.

Theon snarls at her. “Respectability has it's perks.”

Yara laughs in his face. “You're kidding yourself if you think anyone respects you. I suppose it's not your fault, but all you are to any of them is a novelty. 'Ned Stark's tame Reaver'. That's all any of them see when they look at you.”

Theon feels like he's been slapped. And not the love taps he and Ros play at sometimes. More like a backhand with someone's full weight behind it. The way his brothers had hit him that one time he'd snuck too close a look at their personal ships.

“That's not true.” he protests.
Yara shrugs. “Believe what you like. It was probably for the best anyway. Things got rougher for us after the rebellion, and you always were a scrappy little piece of skin and bones. You probably wouldn't have made it.” She reaches over and ruffles his hair. “Maron and Rodrick were shits, their deaths were hardly a loss, but you've always been my favourite brother. I wouldn't have wanted to watch you die.”

“Thanks for that Yara.” Theon says sarcastically.

“I mean it.” She says, suddenly serious. “You look healthy. Obvious the Starks look after you.”

Theon swallows. “Yeah, they do. Ned was always good to me, and Robb would never fire me.”

Yara toys with her caf mug. “You have time for much outside of squiring him about?”

Theon shrugs. “I have money and time enough to work on my ship, keep up my fight training, sleep with pretty girls. The usual stuff.”

Yara nods. “Good. Look... You may not be proper Ironborn anymore, but you're still my brother. If you get into trouble you can always-”

“I'm still Ironborn.”

Yara looks at him frankly. “Like I said, it's not your fault, Neddy decided to nap you, and I'm sure you're a better pilot and mechanic than any of the other useless Core-world cunts, but you'll never be as good as a proper Ironborn.”

Theon glares at her. “Being a smelly half-starved criminal doesn't seem worth the trade of learning a few mechanics tricks. Thanks Ever so much, though.”

Yara laughs and grins. “Whatever you say little brother...say- you said something about fucking pretty girls. Where are the best whores 'round here?”
Theon sighs. “A level down, and four blocks north. There's a bunch of good places. I like the smaller ones run by the girls. The big brothels'll happily con you or overcharge, or turn you into the authorities if it suits them. The girls working for themselves don't act so sweet, but they're reliable.”

Yara seems the weigh that and then nods.

“There's a redhead named Ros whose the best in this sector.” He offers only slightly reluctantly.

Yara grins. “I'll have to investigate that.”

Theon shrugs. “She is good.”

Yara stand to go and then hesitates. “By the way...if Robb Stark ever needs something less than legal taken care of, you be sure to give him my name.”

“Oh, so you hate him, but you'll take his money?”

Yara grins. “Eh. They're no worse than the giant slugs out in the Rim, smell better too. I'll take anyone's money and if they're lucky I'll leave them alive afterwards. Try not wait another ten years before you come find me next time.”

“You have a com too!” Theon shouts after her as she leaves.

Davos sidles up to him sheepishly a moment later. “So...are you going to be paying for the lady's food?”

Theon swears. Yara had run off and left him with the bill. “Force Forsaken, no good lying Reavers!!” he screams before forking over the credits.

Theon pays the bill and then goes to pick Robb up from the Senate and ferry him back to his apartment. Robb is a Stark after all and his feet only touch the ground when he climbs the Senate steps.
D'you like the life of a lapdog then? Licking arse fun for you?

Yara's words ricochet unendingly against Theon's skull. She meant them kindly, as close as Yara probably comes to real affection. And that makes it worse, because that means she wasn't lying.

He ignores Robb's hopeful look and drives away as soon as he's safely deposited back in his official residence.

He drives down to the lower levels, the places most respectable folks high up in their skyscrapers pretend don't exist.

He drinks a lot but doesn't stay in any one bar for very long. He kisses a few people. Thugs, and thieves and at least one waiter. Gives them his com number and palms any lose credits they have in their pockets while he's at it.

Some of his acquaintances beckon from dark corners where they're no doubt sharing substances more potent than the drinks he's been having.

But, his mood is too dark for party drugs and dancing so he pretends not to see.

He has a good head on his shoulder, and can hold his liquor well, but drugs? He tends to get a little foolish.

He's not sure what prompts him to head up a few blocks to Ros's. He's half looking for Yara, half looking to fill that gnawing emptiness that started up after Yara left.

You're kidding yourself if you think anyone respects you

He's the Stark family fuck-up and he's not even a Stark. He's an employee and a foster child who never quite fit in.
So he wanders up to the red-light district and Ros stands in the doorway of her room with the same look of bitter amusement she usually wears when she sees him.

“Theron.” she says, with a quirk of a perfectly plucked brow.

“Ros? You free?”

She sighs. “Had someone just leave, don't got another appointment for an hour. S'pose you can come in if your promise to be quick about it.”

Theon nods and starts to walk up the steps before he hesitates as something occurs to him.

“Wasn't some butch-ass lady pirate in a lot of leather was it?” he asks.

Ros turns to look over her shoulder. “Yeah. I s'pose I ought to give you a discount for bringin' in other customers.”

Theon makes a face. “Forget it.”

Ros huffs and turns around with her hands on her hips. “Why?”

“'Cause I'm not sleeping with you five minute after you just shagged my sister six ways to Sunday.”

Ros rolls her eyes. “Your the one who told 'er about me!”

Theon stares. “Yeah. Not my brightest move.”

Ros laughs. “You ever made a bright move?”
Theon grins at her. “I frequent your charming establishment don’t I?”

That makes her sneer at him. She’s a whore, she doesn’t fall for flattery. Not even from him, the boy she’s known since she was a streetwalker on North.

She’s a successful business woman now. She owns this building and rents it out to other ladies. Hires security, makes bookings and finds customers for the ones just starting out.

Unlike Theon, she’s moved up in the world.

He leans against the building.

She looks at him pityingly. How has he never noticed the way she looks at him before?

She jerks her head inside. “Ye can come in and sit if you want. I’ll get you some food or caf or something to try and sober you up.”

Theon shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

A speeder pulls up next to him and an alien leans over. “How much?”

He's not looking at Roz.

...some Core-worlder's porn fantasy of a Reaver.

Theon wavers a moment and then steps away from the wall. He leans against the door, and puts on his best smile. “Depends on what you're looking for.”

He hears Ros make a noise of outrage and she storms down the steps.

She’s shouting at the driver and at him. “Get out of here!! You can't just pick someone up off the
street like that! This is a respectable establishment!!” She swears at him in a variety of languages until he takes off at speed.

Then she turns on Theon and slaps him once across the face hard.

He takes it and just blinks at her.

“What the hell were you thinking? You've never done this kinda work before! You think it's easy? You think 'cause I run a respectable establishment you don't have to be careful?”

Theon shrugs.

She shakes him a little. “You know what it says about a person that they pick up a streetwalker when they're surrounded by brothels?!”

Theon blinks. That hadn't occurred to him. He was in the center of the redlight district, there were legal regulated brothels for blocks. Clean places where the workers were healthy and checked over, and there was a code of conduct customers needed to follow.

“Shit.” he breathes out, looking at her wild eyes.

She nods, apparently happy he's getting it. “You get picked up on my turf, and show up later slashed to ribbons. My business is liable. It's part of why we're allowed to be legal here. We regulate ourselves, keep the work off the streets, make sure no one's getting hurt that doesn't want to be.”

She smacks him again. It might be intended as a slightly too forceful pat, Theon's not sure.

She tilts his head to look at his pupils. “You take anything? Or is it just the drink?”

“Just drink.” Theon admits sulkily.

Ros checks the tiny datapad she wears on her wrist, moving things around. “You're no state to walk, let alone drive. Where did you leave the speeder?”
Theon looks significantly to the left, where it's parked perfectly in the customer parking section for her brothel.

She sighs, whaps him over the head again and fishes the comm out of his pockets, before guiding him to sit on the steps. The world's a little fuzzy, and not in a good way. In an 'I think everything's falling sideways and I'm going to hang onto this railing 'cause I think I'm gonna die' kind of way.

He hears a disapproving snort and looks up to see Jory and Dacey looking down at him in unsurprised disappointment.

Jory is head of security for the Starks. He was Ned's second in command until- Yeah, Theon doesn't want to think about that.

“I don't think I can work tomorrow Jory.” Theon admits in a small voice, still clutching the railing.

“That's alright, Theon” Jory says gently. Somehow that's worse than if he'd been angry or disappointed at Theon's state.

They don't look surprised. They look indulgent.

’Ned Stark's tame Reaver'. That's all any of them see when they look at you.”

Theon doesn't bother to hold his head up anymore. He's tired and sad. He wants to cry. He wants his mother, and more than that he wants the comforting presence of Ned Stark.

But he won't see either of them ever again.
He wakes up the next morning and staggers to the fresher. In the mirror he looks like death warmed over.

*Force, you didn't get any better looking did you?*

He washes his face. If anything that just makes matters worse. Without the make-up and the rest he looks waxy and half dead.

Then he remembers that Ros had had to stop him getting into some stranger's speeder last night and considers crawling back into bed and never getting up.

He doesn't though, because as much as he's always thought that sounded good in theory Theon's problems have always tended to come from an overabundance of energy rather than a lack of it.

His com chirps and he opens the message to see a short video from Sansa. Today's outfit. Apparently she's trying to look like a very fashionable Sith Lord.

She's smiling in the holo.

He wonders if she sees the things Yara sees when she looks at him. After all they're both his sisters after a fashion.

He wraps his duvet around his shoulders and after a moment's thought slips his feet into the fluffy star-whale slippers Sansa had gotten him last year.

Ready as he'll ever be to face the day Theon shuffles out to the hangar and crawls under his ship. The one he's been working on, on and off, since he was fifteen. Mid-size interplanetary cruiser, good for both shipping and passengers, and small enough that he could pilot it alone.

It had been part of Robb's ten-year plan. Robb got elected. Theon bought his ship.

Theon wasn't a genius with mechanics, but he had a better understanding of it than most. It was easy
to get lost in the maintenance and repair of the ship. Small improvements enacted systemically can have impressive results.

Half of it isn't really necessary. But, Theon would like nothing more than to crawl into the belly of his ship and never come out and, unlike the bed proposition, there's a real danger that he might actually do that.

He's not sure how long he's been there when he here's someone conspicuously clear their throat.

He rolls out from underneath to find Robb in his full Senatorial glory, maybe even a bit more than usual because he's not wearing that ugly ratty-ass fur (Theon suspects Sansa's influence).

Theon gapes at him. He's wrapped in a (now oil stained) comforter, wearing pajamas, fluffy star-whale slippers and absolutely covered in engine grease.

This is not the way he wants Robb to see him. He wants Robb to see him as the cool, slightly wild, Reaver pilot, not the frightened little boy he'd been.

Robb frowns ever so slightly, and Theon can feel himself turning red. He hasn't done his hair, or his face today and he can't even remember the last time Robb saw him without at least an hour of prep time beforehand.

“I'm not working today Robb.” Theon mumbles, embarrassed.

Robb brightens. “I know! Jory told me you were ill, and the Senate let out early so I thought I'd come see how you were doing!”

'IlP' was one way of putting it. Theon supposes he should be grateful that Jory hadn't chosen to share the entire humiliating ordeal- drunken rambling, a bit of crying, needing a lift home from a brothel, and killer hangover. Jory doesn't like him much so it wouldn't have been surprising if he had.

Small mercies, Theon supposes.

“Fine...I guess.”
Robb nods and then notices the slippers. “Oh! Did Sansa get you those? I remember her saying you told her a story about seeing a star-whale once.”

Theon nodded and wiggled his feet in the slippers. He'd forgotten about telling Sansa that story. It must have been when he'd first come to live with the Starks. She'd been the only one genuinely happy to have him join the family, everyone else had treated it as a minor crisis but Sansa had acted like her father had brought a particularly nice present.

“Yeah. She did.”

Robb swallows and Theon looks at him. Something's up and if he weren't such a mess himself he'd have noticed right away.

“Why did you really come here?” Theon asks warily.

Robb collapses down next to Theon. “I put the official motion forward today. The planets of the First Men are seceding from the Republic. Once it's acknowledged by the Senate we will be a free and independent people.”

Theon stared at him. “You got all the influential camps to agree? Even the Boltons on Red?”

Robb nods. “All of them. Get the ship ready as fast as you can. We'll need to be ready to get off-world day after tomorrow.”

Theon nods.

Robb looks at him again. “Are you alright?”

Theon thinks about how he'd planned to make a grand declaration yesterday and completely failed, about what his sister had said, and Ros and puking on Jory.

Impulsively, he leans over and pecks Robb on the cheek. “I'm fine Robb. Just a little under the weather.”
Robb looks a little shocked, but also kind of pleased.

“Alright. If your sure.”

Chapter End Notes

I used Yara instead of Asha here because when I reread the books this summer I was surprised by how different the two characters had become, and also by how much I preferred Yara to her book counterpart. So, Yara it is.

Also, I really liked Ros, and since this is in someways a bizarro fix-it where none of the really bad stuff happens to any of the characters (except Ned, sorry Ned). I decided to squeeze her in as the burgeoning real-estate mogul/independant business woman that she deserved to be.

Anyway, next chapter will either be Jon again or a visit with Bran and the other little Starks. But I *cough* haven't got much written *cough* so if anyone has a request for a character they'd like to see comment and I'll keep it in mind.
Bran had power and he has knowledge. Too bad he's twelve and doesn't know what to do with either.

Bran lies on his back at the base of the Heart Tree watching the red leaves dancing in the breeze and occasionally absent-mindedly directing their flight into more picturesque arabesques and curlicues.

He guesses it's the Force, it must be, but he's not entirely sure. The Force doesn't really exist as a concept in the culture of the First Men, and based on what he's heard about the Jedi what he does isn't quite the same as what they do. No one ever had to teach him most of what he knows. It hasn't come easily, but it's come naturally, like learning to run longer and longer distances, you don't start out not knowing how to run at all, you just learn how to run better.

He closes his eyes and lets his awareness spread out from where he lies. He feels the roots of the tree, and the wind in it's leaves, Mother's deep unending grief is nearby, the bustle of the compound, the workers belligerent in their jobs, the workers happy in their tasks. The warm bright simplicity of Summer's mind. The knot of complicated anger and uncertainty that is Rickon running through the hallways.

For a moment Bran hesitates as he wonders what his littler brother is up to.

Poor Rickon doesn't have anyone to mind him, or make him go to lessons. He runs wild, but it's a wildness born of hurt and neglect rather than an inate beligerence or determination like Arya.

The worst thing is Rickon barely even remembers life before everything started going wrong.

First Jon had left, Bran had been only 4 at the time but he still feels it like a distant hurt. An old injury that never healed right.

Then Jon had died and Arya had become very difficult. She ran away. They brought her back and
then she ran away again. They tried sending her to different schools, different places, and some of them worked and some of them didn't but in the end she'd always run away again.

Then Bran had fell and with that came a host of troubles and complications, and needs that needed seeing to.

Robb had gone away to the Core with Theon.

Sansa had left to go to school.

Arya ran away for good.

Then Father had gone to the Core to cast his vote and been killed, and the heart had gone out of Winterfell.

Now it was just the three of them rattling round like peas in a tin box.

Bran let his brother go and went out even further. Bird on the wing. Fish in the spring. A hart a few miles off; antlers proud. But biggest of all is the millions of plant life, the bugs the worms. His consciousness sinks into the planet itself and warms against the heat of the hot springs, the ancient ruins, the bones of his ancestors and the sacred swords of their tombs.

He can spend all day like this. Here and not here, floating on the current of life to feel the flow of the Force.

He knows they speak of the Dark side and the light sight of the Force but he doesn't understand that. As far as he's concerned you might as well assign ethics to the sky, or to the minerals in the mountains.

There's a sharp crack near his head and he finds himself jolted back into his body, which feels too small for him, especially with his wasted legs.
He blinks up at Osha who is looking at him fiercely.

“I wish you'd never found that Frog-eater.” she says.

Bran sighs. Jojen Reed had been the only one on North able to offer any explanation of Bran's expanding power. He lived on the other side of the world, and they mostly communicated via Holos over the local net (off planet connection to the wider Holonet being a slightly unpredictable solution). And yes, Jojen had taught Bran some of his more complicated tricks, but only because Bran's experimentation had been liable to get someone hurt.

Most of the truly dangerous stuff that Bran could do he hadn't had to learn, or if he had, he'd learned it from the old Jedi-holos that Arya had collected before she ran away. Jojen would never do anything to hurt anybody, ever.

Not that Osha cares about such details. She's wildling to her Core, and the Mandalorians hate anything to do with the Jedi, even the Force itself.

“I'd have worked it out myself eventually. You can't just keep blaming them.”

Osha just sniffs and helps Bran back into the waiting hoverchair.

He squirms uncomfortably. The trouble isn't his legs, or his spine, even, it's more to do with his broken pelvis.

Bacta and surger can only go so far. If it had just been his legs they'd have suggested amputation and bionic prosthetics. The spine they could repair, or even just bypass the damage.

But, the shattered pelvis had been difficult painstaking work to fix, and then there'd been an infection.

He was probably never going to walk on his own again. His legs aren't strong enough, and even with physio and exercise at best he'll be able to shuffle along slowly leaning very heavily on a pair of canes, at worse the regenerating nerves will cause him chronic debilitating pain.
So, he put his foot down about six months ago. No more surgeries, no more treatments, no more new therapists or holistic cures. He has enough strength that he can stand with a support, and, move himself in and out of his chair. That's enough, for now.

Requiring the hoverchair isn't ideal, but he's made enough progress. Mother probably won't ever let him go off world, but at least he's not trapped in his room any more like he'd been in those first awful long weeks after the accident. He's tired of his injury and his recovery dominating his life.

Osha rolls her eyes but bites her tongue.

“I'll need another transfer once I'm back in my room.” he tells her. “I want to nap.”

She nods. “And what do you call what you've been doing all day?”

“Not napping”

Osha sighs, but doesn't complain. Bran is grateful. There's only three people who know the extent of Bran's ability: Jojen, Wylis, and Osha.

He may have developed a real affinity for meditation, and visions. He's even somewhat passable at moving this with his mind (as long as they're not too heavy), but his real talent, the thing he has that is so powerful he's a little afraid of himself is something called the “Jedi Mind-Trick”, only that name is stupid and makes it seem small and harmless and not like-, well, not like he'd accidentally forced people to do things.

He'd made Wylis pick him up. He'd made Osha leave him alone. Worst was the time he'd made Rickon sit down and shut up, because he hadn't meant for him to do it, and he hadn't known how to stop it.

It had been nearly a half an hour of Rickon sitting completely still and completely silent before he'd blinked at them like nothing had happened and run off.

Osha had seen. If Bran himself hadn't been so terrified, he suspects Osha would have turned on him right then and there, instead her instinct was to protect him.
As if he wasn't the thing people needed protection from. He's not sure what the limit of his power is. He can control the dogs, Summer and Shaggydog, and birds, most mammals really. Insects are a little tricky because their brains are so different.

He thinks he should be finding a limit, but he never has. Except for insects it's never even difficult.

He suspects he could make anybody do almost anything, and it scares him.

Compared to that the meditation and the dreams are a relief.

Force-visions, Arya's holocrons had called them. His aren't like the one's described in the Jedi text. As far as he can tell he never dreams of the future, and only very rarely of the past, his dreams are almost always the present.

He'd dreamed it when Jon had been captured by Mandalorians.

He'd dreamed it when his Father died, more worryingly, Rickon had as well.

But usually he dreams of smaller things. Jojen's visits to the doctor for his bad lungs. Robb's excruciatingly boring work in the senate. A Mandalorian bounty hunter with a strong jaw and a quick draw on the blaster. A mercenary bodyguard of a member of the Banker's guild. Renly Baratheon in his golden robes. The owner of a diner. The morning routine of a member of the Jedi council.

Small ordinary events of ordinary days. If the things Bran witnessed were significant it was in a way that was only to the person who was living them.

Usually.

So, Osha helps him into bed, and leaves the chair close enough that he can get to it if he needs it, and then she turns the lights off and leaves him in the dark.

And Bran dreams.
The planet is dusty and the sun is bright. The faces of the Mandalorian's are all darkened by the suns and bad tempered. All but one, whose face is as pale as milk and whose smile is bright as the sky above him.

**It's been a long time since he left the ship. Bran thinks..**

Black curls are whipped in the strong wind, and a woman with red had turn to tell him to keep up. He jogs to catch up with her.

She smiles at him and he kisses her.

**This is only the second or third time they've tried this.**

The milk pale boy wears a miss-matched Mandalorian armour and an lightsaber at his belt.

There's a city in the distance. Actually, it's not big enough to be a city on most planets, but out here it more than qualifies.

They're here on a supply run, and reconnaissance for a job. Milk-face is mostly carrying things, and looking around in wonder at the dingy space port like he's a tourist visiting the Jedi Temple.

The woman with red hair passes him a fruit she's bought and he bites into it like it's the best thing he's ever tasted. He smiles at her like...like-like

**Like something I maybe will never understand.**

Love. He smiles at her like he loves her so much.

And then a blaster shot smashes into the wall above her head and everyone ducks and the Mandalorian's draw their blaster, and Jon- **of course it's Jon how had he failed to recognize his**
自己的兄弟？- 绘制并点燃他的光剑。

他们在尝试掩护，试图建立防御，但子弹来自空中，而且是-

它是像布兰从未见过的空袭。流线型、华丽，又不知为何看起来像肉食动物。危险。比他见过的任何东西都危险。

每个人都在恐慌，曼达洛人试图逃跑，但他们把他们的飞船停在了城外，以避免引起注意，很明显他们被针对了。

琼挥舞他的光剑来阻挡子弹，一堵墙在他身后倒下。

子弹的模式发生了变化，曼达洛人的眼睛敏锐地看到了。琼不是目标。

他们把枪口朝他附近，朝他身边。不像其他人，他们不是在试图伤害他。

一座建筑倒塌，其中一名曼达洛人被肩上的子弹击中。非致命的，非致残的，多亏了装甲。

琼正在准备撤退，而船也在快速地向他们射击。船上播放了一段琼听不懂的语音。

红发的女人绝望地四处张望，然后向琼开了腿。他踉跄了一下，跪在了一边，光剑还高举着，以防子弹。曼达洛人像地狱一样奔跑，没有回头。

船让他们离开，绕着走，而不是去拿他们真正来这里的东西。

布兰突然惊醒，现在是晚上。他不知道已经过去多久了。他爬到椅子上，心里咒骂着自己的腿又软又摇晃。

他应该叫威利斯。威利斯通常上夜班，尽管布兰一年来都没有真正需要过医疗照顾。
But, he can't wait. He races don't the hallway heading for Arya's room, bursting in without knocking because he won't care.

Jon's Alive. Jon'salivejon'salivejon'salive-

He pulls up short.

Arya's room looks like it's been ripped apart by wolves. Half her stuff is missing and the rest is carelessly tossed all over, discarded as she packed up the things she really needed before she...left.

Arya is gone, and no one knows where.

Jon is alive and Arya is gone so Bran can't even tell her.

Fuck.

There's a sound in the hallway, and Bran turns his chair to find his mother sleep rumbled and worried.

“Bran? What are you doing up? And in Arya's room?” she asks around a yawn.

Bran swallows. Mother doesn't know about his dreams, or his experiments with the Force.

“I had a dream. About..things. I woke up and for a minute I forgot that Arya was gone.”

Mother sighs and shuffles forward. She's seemed so much smaller the last few months, as though Father's death had taken something out of her physically and not just emotionally. She looks around the room, at the posters for bands she'd never approved of, and clothes she's always criticized.

She puts her hand on Bran's shoulder. “I miss her too. I know it must seem ridiculous to you- all we ever did was argue, but...I miss her, I wish she'd come home. I wish all of them could.”
It's on the tip of his tongue to say: Jon could. But, he doesn't. Mother never cared for Jon, always tried to postpone or cancel the few visits home he'd managed to make. She'd probably be angry that he was still alive.

After all, why should the bastard get a miracle, when Ned Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Great Hero of the Rebellion had died bloody on the senate steps?

Bran just nods.

“You should go back to bed. Do you want me to wake Hodor up?”

Bran shakes his head and goes back to his room alone.

He stares at the ceiling and closes his eyes. He doesn't want to dream so instead he let's his awareness expand...

He feels his Mother's deep unending grief. He feels Rickon's unsettled restlessness and dozes in an uneasy sleep. He feels the solid plod of Wylis' respectable reliable dreams. He feels the inhale, exhale, calm of the entire sleeping compound.

Summer howls in the Godswood.

Somewhere far away Jon Snow is still alive. Bran wonders if he'll be able to find him, if he just reaches far enough....

Chapter End Notes
Okay, so disabilities in the Star Wars verse are usually really weird, which made it difficult to decide how to deal with Bran. After all, everyone just gets a robot prosthetic and gets on with their day. But, on the other hand, Padme died in childbirth so HOW GOOD CAN their medical tech really be?!

Anyway, sorry this is short and kind of sucks, I just wanted to bring Bran in before things got too crazy.

Also, since the Force does not allow Time Travel Shenanigans (as far as I know), Wylis/Hodor did not suffer a traumatic brain injury as a teenager and is perfectly fine and working as Bran’s nurse. Because I say so.
A Cantina of Questionable Repute

Chapter Summary

Ygritte and Tormund deal with the fall out of leaving Jon behind and make plans to rescue him.

Chapter Notes

RECAP:
Jon is taking up the rear and the ships are firing more rapidly at the group. An announcement plays from the ships in a language Bran doesn't know. The woman with the red hair looks around desperately, and then shoots Jon in the leg.

He staggers and goes down on one knee saber still raised to ward off the shots. The Mandalorians run like hell. The ships let them leave, circling round instead to pick up what they really came here for.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

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Ygritte can't stop her hand from shaking, as they take off.

“Shit. Shitshitshitshit.” she murmurs as she hastily fastens her seatbelt and Tormund starts the take off sequence.

She shot Jon. She fucking shot Jon. Oh, god his face. He'd been so hurt and confused and she'd fucking shot him on a hunch (it had been right though, they'd stopped to get him. It was him they were after).

Tormund punches them into lightspeed before they've even cleared the atmosphere, a risky maneuver he performs with uncharacteristic silence.

“Tormund.”

He turns and looks at her, stonefaced. “What was that?” she asks.
“Imperial Fighters, Wildfyre class.” he explains.

“But- they were destroyed! After the Empire fell all their ships were-”

“Banned. Not destroyed. Not like the Dragon class stations were. The Wildfyre class was just banned.” Tormund corrects her curtly.

Ygritte gulps. She's heard stories about what the Wildfyre class ships could do to a city. In all likelihood there is nothing left of the trading colony they had just fled.

“So, we have to tell Mance.”

Tormund nods looking at the streaking lines of stars. “We have to tell Mance.” he agrees.

Mance, unsurprisingly, is not pleased to learn that they left his protege/long-term prisoner behind in the middle of a Wildfyre strike after having shot him in the leg, but, like all great leaders he's able to see the bigger picture.

So, after throwing a chair against the wall, he picks it back up, sits down at the table and steeples his fingers.

“They were there for him?” he asks.

“Yes.” Ygritte replies.

“And you're sure of this?”

Tormund glances at her questioningly. He trusts her judgement, and backs what she did, but he didn’t see what she saw.
She nods decisively.

“Positive.” she confirms.

Mance nods and leans back. “So, the Dragon queen's made her first move, and for some reason, she has an interest in our Jon.” The Mandalorian king glances between the two redheads. “Any ideas why that might be?”

They shake their heads. He sighs.

“We'll need to get him back, obviously. And we'll need to see if we can find out more about this operation.” The King informs them.

“Whose operation is it?” Ygritte demands to know. “The imperial family was killed when Empire fell.”

Mance shakes his head. “Two Royals escaped. The infant daughter, and younger son of the Emperor. They were chased out of the Republic and into Hutt controlled space.”

“And now they've come back with an army.”

Mance hums and leans back. “They' haven't done anything, but she's come back alright, Daenerys Stormborn, is what she goes by. There's all sorts of rumours about her.” He makes eye-contact with Tormund. “Some even say she has the plans for Dragon battles stations. Or worse- that she's already built some.”

Tormund swears. “We need to know the truth. Whatever she's up to will change the balance of power in the galaxy.”

Mance nods. “I have a man on the inside, he can get you out, but he won't be willing to jeopardize his position among the Imperials, so you'll need to get in and find Jon on your own.”

They nod. Mance transfers all the information he has on the Imperial base to their pads.
“It’s gonna be a risky job. You may have to commit most of your savings to hiring the right crew.” He admits.

Tormund snorts, but doesn't argue. Jon was their responsibility, and they left him behind. Now it's their responsibility to get him back, and they should consider themselves lucky that Mance is giving them the chance to make this right.

They nod and head off immediately for the nearest cantina where you can hire just about anyone to do just about anything, no questions asked.

Ygritte chews her lip as she goes over the schematics again.

“The trick will be keeping security occupied enough not to realize what we're up to.”

Tormund pauses. “We could go in straight.” he suggests. “Pretend we're there on behalf of Mance, say we're wondering if she'd like to purchase the services of the Mandalorian army. That would mean security would go down to let us in, and they'd be busy watching us. The man on the inside gets Jon out and takes off with him, while they're all looking at us, he's an ally he must be allowed to come and go.”

“Except he's not willing to do anything that will ruin him if he gets caught.”

“So we need a pilot good enough to get in, find Jon, get him out of the cells, hand him off to Mance's friend and get out without getting caught.”

Ygritte thinks. “That's a risky fucking job.”

Tormund nods. “And it needs to be a non-Mandalorian ship, to slip under the radar and allow us to get out.”

Ygritte eyes him. “You know of anyone good enough?”

Tormund barks out a laugh. “At the price we can muster? Who wouldn't turn around and take off with Jon and auction him as a hostage to the highest bidder?...No.”
Ygritte sighs and looks around the bar. “You posted the job yet?”

Tormund shakes his head morosely. “Still hoping I'll think of someone not too dangerous we could contact directly.”

Ygritte thinks for a moment. “We could call Davos. He knows everyone solid in the business.”

Tormund rolls his eyes, “Then we'd have to pay Davos his finders fee and we'd have even less to offer the--”

A boy with high cheekbones and wild eyes slams a round of drinks down onto the table.

“Rumour has it the Mandalorians are looking for the best pilot in the galaxy on the cheap.”

He then straddles one of the empty-chairs in a way that is probably unintentionally seductive and suggestive. He is wearing the tightest pants Ygritte has ever seen and looks more like a prostitute than a pilot.

She can't help but stare at him, mouth part-way open. Tormund, however, seems unphased.

“You heard true. You lookin' to take the job?” Tormund asks.

The boy tilts his head and grins, revealing a set of remarkably large, straight, white teeth. “I might be.”

“And how would I know you're up to the task?”

His smile widens. “My name is Theon Greyjoy, and I've got the best ship in the galaxy you can find outside of the Iron Fleet.”

Even among the Mandalorians the Ironborn, their ships, and their Greyjoy kings require no
introduction, and Theon is well known as the primary pilot and unofficial bodyguard for the Starks, which means he's got a shred of decency and honour, unlike the rest of his family.

It's not perfect but, it's the best their likely to find.

“You're hired.”

Theon grins. “Excellent.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry this is so late and kind of sucks. I have no excuses.
Chapter Summary

Jon Snow knows nothing. Tyrion makes plans, Oberyn makes trouble and Theon Greyjoy makes a dramatic entrance.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jon wakes up strapped to a cold metal table in a room made of brushed steel, and red light. His heavy Wildling armour has been removed and he's down to the linen underclothes. He can feel the cold of the table through the back of his shirt. He can't move.

He reaches out with the Force but nearly doubles over when a feeling like a static shock courses through him.

Fuck fuck fuck. Force inhibitor. He's never even heard of anyone actually having that sort of tech, most people believed it had disappeared with the Empire twenty years ago.

“Now, now. None of that.” A voice says from the darkness.

“Who's there?! What do you want?” Jon asks desperately.

A man steps into the light, a small man, a dwarf, with dirty blonde hair and a scar across his face.

Jon remembers him from before he had the scar, Lannister had visited the Stark's shortly before Jon had left with the Jedi.

“Tyrion Lannister.”

Tyrion sketches a bow. “Jedi Snow, I presume.”
Jon doesn’t deny it though he probably should. He's not a Jedi, he was a padawan when he was captured by the Wildlings and his last maaster was killed, and while Mance had done his best with Force training, it simply wasn't part of life with the Wildlings.

“Why am I here?”

“Why because, her majesty, hearing of how you had been tragically abandoned by your family and by the Jedi, was moved by your plight and rescued you from you long captivity with the Mandalorians.” Tyrion informs him archly.

Jon is unimpressed by this logic. “And why, would some Queen I've never heard of decide to rescue me and bring me here?”

“Ah! A fascinating question. One I will answer with a question of my own: Do you even know where here is?” Tyrion replies brightly.

Jon tries to shrug, which turns out to be a mistake since he can barely move. “Battle station. New Imperial, by the look of it, probably in the Unknown Quadrants, based on where I was... before I was here.”

Tyrion hums. “Not bad. Not particularly impressive, but not bad.” he looks around the room.

“You still haven't told me why I'm here.”

Tyrion raises an eyebrow. “For the same reason anyone is out here in on this station: to please her majesty...oh don't look so scandalised, bastard, I'm relatively confident that your honour is safe.”

Jon scowls at him. “It's not my honour I'm worried about.”

Tyrion seems surprised and vaguely impressed. “My, how unlike a Northman of you...or a Jedi.”

Jon makes a face and Tyrion smiles and hits a button that releases Jon's restraints.
Jon stumbles forward, not expecting it. He rubs his wrists and glares at Tyrion who cocks his head and waves at him to follow as he sets off at a trot.

Jon doesn't know whether he's on a space station or a ship. Either way he's almost certainly in the hands of Imperials. Unlike the rest of the galaxy, the Jedi order has always been aware that the Empire was shattered, not destroyed, and pieces of it linger throughout the galaxy, at the edges of civilization.

The design of the station is clean and simple—minimalism masquerading as austerity. Jon has spent enough time with both the Mandalorians and the Jedi that the difference between the two is as obvious to him as if the place was painted in gold.

“Where are you taking me?” he asks.

Tyrion looks over his shoulder at the boy. He's young but not so young as he seems, with his wide brown eyes and full lips. The resemblance is uncanny and it all seems so painfully obvious now. This was no child of Ned Stark's, he of the heavy brow and prominent nose.

Tyrion looks away. “To the queen.” he replies.

Jon Snow frowns trying to remember amidst the tangled web of the Imperial Family tree, who exactly had survived the war.

“I thought Imperial loyalists recognized the second son as king?” he asks. “Viser-asshole or something.”

“Viserys is tragically deceased and has been succeeded by his younger sister, Queen Daenerys Stormborn, first of her name—”

Jon cuts him off as he takes a breath. “I'm familiar with the titles the Imperials claim. You don't need to repeat them.”

Tyrion rolls his eyes. “They are something of a mouthful.”
Jon shrugs. “The Wildlings would say anyone who needs a full paragraph to convince you they're king, probably isn't much of one.”

Tyrion snorts. “And the nature of wildling leadership is probably why they’re still clinging to the edges of a few barren systems rather than recognized as any sort of true cultural entity.”

Jon glares at him.

Tyrion grins. “Did I strike a nerve, bastard?”

“I'm not a bastard.” Jon snarls.

“Of course you are! A rather famous one. Brown eyes, black hair, and a captive of the Mandalorians? There's no one you could be except Ned Stark's bastard.”

“Shut up!” Jon snaps. “I'm not a bastard because we relinquish all family when we enter the Jedi order,...and on top of that, I was adopted into Mance Rayder's clan. So either way you look at it, I'm not a Stark, and not a bastard. Ned Stark is nothing to me.”

“So, it wouldn't grieve you to know that he is dead?” Tyrion asks smugly.

Jon freezes and the little man smirks. “Thought so. Yes, I'm afraid the Honourable Ned Stark had his brains blown out on the steps of the Senate. An unknown assassin, most likely a bounty-hunter.”

Jon swallows and blinks rapidly. He hasn't seen his father since he was a child, but it's still a blow, and an unexpected one. As far as most Northerner's were concerned Ned Stark held up half of the sky, how could someone like that be dead?

“Following his death your brother inherited his paramount vote in the Senate and declared the Northern Systems to be a free and independent people.” Tyrion informs him.

“What?!?” Jon squawks in surprise. What exactly has been going on in the galaxy while he's been
shut up with the Mandalorians?

Tyrion nods. “Yes, the galaxy is inching once more towards civil war.”

Jon takes a deep breath. “Why am I here? What use could your queen possibly have for the bastard of a dead man?”

Tyrion grins. “That is an excellent question.” he tells Jon as they walk through a doorway.

This room is decorated in a different, more opulent style. It reminds Jon of the luxury he sometimes glimpsed when he was a padawan in the Core.

There is a handsome middle-aged man lounging on a divan, and a young woman with white hair sitting straight backed in a chair, flanked on either side by stone faced attendants.

The man jerks up into a sitting position the moment they enter.

“Yes.” he hisses, dark skinned and mustachioed, dressed in the long safron tunic common on Dorne controlled-worlds. He turns sharply to the white haired woman. “I have not the slightest doubt.” he insists.

“It could be a ruse.” she murmurs, frowning at Jon.

“If they'd intended us to discover this, it wouldn't have been so difficult.” Tyrion points out. “There would have been more evidence than a Dornish rumour and the testimony of a single handmaiden.”

The woman with white hair frowns. “Resemblance is not enough to go on.”

“It is more than enough for me.” the Dornishman purrs, suddenly right in front of Jon. “I am Oberyn Martell, and it is a great pleasure to make your acquaintance.” he introduces himself with a bow, taking Jon's hand and bringing it to his lips for a kiss.

Jon stares at him in shock, wondering if this is a usual greeting for Dorneworlders, the way kissing people is on some planets. Jon isn't sure because the hand is not an erogenous zone and therefore the
application of tongue to it is something he finds unpleasant.

Not to mention the whole thing seems really unhygienic.

The hand-kiss-thing goes on for what feels like an uncomfortably long time, before Oberyn finally let go and steps back.

He is still standing very close.

“The family resemblance is striking.” Oberyn says again, as though he is trying to seduce Jon with talk of his non-existent lineage. Oberyn turns his head to meet the gaze of the seated woman. “On both sides.”

The woman with white hair purses her lips and it takes Jon until that moment to realize it is Queen Daenerys herself, who has come to appraise him like livestock.

Tyrion hums. “You must admit, Your Majesty, there is some resemblance.”

“To Lyanna Stark.” Daenerys argues.

Oberyn smiles at Jon, and reaches up to touch one of Jon's curls, and Jon dodges, with a look of shock. It just makes Oberyn grin wider.

“You know I saw the Lady Lyanna, at the tournament on the Cursed Planet,” he says conversationally, keeping his eye's locked on Jon's despite the fact that he is clearly not really talking to Jon. But, Jon doesn't say anything, because, despite how well his captivity with the Mandalorian's ultimately worked out, he is still intimately familiar with what it's like when your survival is an uncertainty, dependent on the good will of your captors.

Besides, he wants to hear this story. He's heard it before, in different versions, his Father never spoke of it, but Robert Baratheon had when he visited (usually accompanied by drunken bawling), and Roderick Cassel had given them a clearer explanation afterwards when he and Robb had asked what the King of the Stormlands had meant.
In that version of the story Lyanna was a blameless girl, too beautiful for her own good, kidnapped and dishonoured by the Imperial heir. Mistreated to the point that even his death, and her rescue couldn't save her life.

Jon can't imagine that Lyanna comes off so well in the version the Imperial family tells. Oberyn was the Imperial heir's brother-in-law after all. It had been his sister and her children torn apart by a mob on Coruscant when the Rebellion had finally reached the capital.

“It was twenty years ago.” Daenerys reminds Oberyn Martell tartly. “Was she so memorable as all that?”

“Given what your brother did, I can't imagine anyone present will ever forget the Lady Lyanna, for good or for ill.” Tyrion reminds her.

Oberyn bows slightly to the dwarf. “Just so. She was young. As young as this boy is, and just as beautiful. Thought her skin was not so pale, nor I think, her eyes so dark-”

Oberyn reaches up and traces the curve of Jon's bottom lip, his thumb a hairsbreadth away from actually touching him. “-but the lips...the lips are the same.”

Jon remembers Tyrion's joke about the Queen's pleasure and his honour, and wonders whether it's the pleasures of Oberyn Martell that he needs to be worried about.

“It is still not enough. It is not proof.” The Queen declares.

Oberyn turns to Daeneyrs and spreads his hands in defeat. “I regret that it is all we have your Majesty.”

Jon clears his throat. “Couldn't you test my DNA?”

Tyrion glances at him scornfully. “We've already done that, bastard. But, since we do not have the DNA of Prince Rhaegar, as no one knows where his corpse is, and Lady Lyanna is buried in the crypts of Winterfell, therefore beyond our reach- the only person we can compare you to is-“ he gestures to the Queen. “And she is not convinced by the results.”
Jon frowns as he parses that out. He wishes Sam were here, he'd probably have known exactly what was going on when he entered the room and be running intellectual circles around these inbred Imperials by now.

“We're not closely related enough.” he guesses. “You can tell we are related, but I could be a bastard cousin, or the child of an aunt...there's plenty of Dragonblooded in the galaxy after all.”

Tyrion nods and points at the divan. “Now, sit.”

Jon does. Oberyn sits next to him, but, he finds he doesn't mind because Tyrion has gone over to whisper to the Queen, and Jon is too busy worry about that to be much bothered by sitting next to a salacious Dornishman.

Jon is a bit surprised by his own shyness. After all, Tormund says more sexually explicit things over breakfast (at this point everyone on the station has heard the story of how he shared a night of passion with a lady Hutt), but, Jon supposes that's what's got him so flustered, the Wildling's as a whole do not bother with seduction, the accepted method of propositioning someone being to approach them, grab their genitals, and see whether or not they punch you in the face.

Daenerys is staring at him with a small frown. She's younger than he would have thought, had he ever spared a thought to her, probably only about his age, maybe a little older or a little younger. It's hard to tell. Imperial's tend to be a little...odd. Most sentients agree they aren't actually a completely different species from humans, but they also agree that there's definitely something in that bloodline that isn't quite human.

Jon blinks at her and runs the last ten minutes back through his head. They think, that Aunt Lyanna is his mother, and his father was the last officially recognized heir to the Imperial throne, Prince Rhaegar.

Which, is logistically, not impossible, after all the details of who and what and when Father managed to conceive Jon during the middle of a war that Father was more or less masterminding singlehandedly had never really been explained. Father certainly had never spoken of it.

Jon knows he was born near the end of the war, and Lady Lyanna Stark did not die until after Coruscant had fallen. So, Father would have been among the party sent to find her.

Jon doesn't know which is more likely: that Ned Stark took his sister's child and raised him as his
own without ever telling a soul when he was famously terrible at lying, or that Ned Stark found the time to not just father a bastard with a commoner, but to return and collect the infant after it was born.

It is true that Jon has never looked like his Father, but that hadn't been particularly noteworthy. None of Ned Stark's children favoured him overmuch. Robb had some of Father's features (the nose and the brow) but generally had the Tully colouring. Arya favoured Catelyn but had the dark hair and eyes of a Stark. Sansa looked like Catelyn in almost everyway and Bran had looked more like Uncle Benjen than either of his parents.

So, if he is Father's bastard it makes complete sense that he looks like Aunt Lyanna, with a few sprinkles of 'unknown prostitute' thrown in for good measure, but if he is the bastard son of Rhaegar Targaryan than it makes even less sense because Targaryan's are white haired and pale eyed. Everyone knows that.

Daenerys just keeps staring at him.

Tyrion leans casually on the armrest of her chair, which earns him a glare from one of her attendants, but prompts no objection from the Queen herself.

“For our purposes, Your Majesty, I don't think it matters whether or not he is your cousin or your nephew. The dragon has three heads, isn't that the prophesy?...well, I've found you another head for your precious dragon.” he announces to the room at large.

Daenerys gives Tyrion a withering glance. “The prophesy may have been misread.”

Tyrion spreads his hands. “And, again I ask whether or not that matters to our purposes...another Targaryen joining the ranks might inspire millions to rally to our cause.”

Oberyn pops a small fruit into his mouth as he watches the exchange with interest.

Daenerys glances at Jon and back to Tyrion. “Propaganda?” she asks.

“Exactly!”
She smiles fondly at him. “You already have a plan.”

He bows. “Of course my Queen.”

She stands. “Walk with me, my Hand, and explain it to me.”

“Oberyn?” She calls over her shoulder as she strides out. “Keep an eye on our guest would you?”

The guards and attendants follow her out, leaving Jon seemingly alone with Oberyn. He doubts he truly is, there are probably guards stationed in the hall.

Oberyn straightens abruptly and then launches to his feet. He paces back and forth a couple time and then claps his hands.

“Well, then! That was something wasn't it?” he grins at Jon who gapes at him. Oberyn shrugs. “I hope I did not offend you with my behaviour, Jedi Snow, but,” he clicks his tongue and shakes his head. “I have a reputation to maintain, and you are a beauty. It would have been odd if I hadn't...” he makes an elaborate hand gesture that presumably means something in his own culture. “expressed my admiration for it.”

Jon blinks. “I'm not a Jedi.” is all he can think to say.

Oberyn raises his eyebrows. “No?” he plucks another fruit from the dish and pops it in his mouth. “I must confess I am relieved to hear it. I hate the Jedi, and would happily watch them all burn.”

Jon gapes at him. “Why?”

Oberyn glances at him condescendingly. “You know who I am, yes?”

Jon nods. “You're Oberyn Martell, your sister was the Princess Elia, she was married to Rheagar and the mobs on Coruscant killed her.”

Oberyn smiles humourlessly. “Yes, killed by the mobs, that is what they say.” He sneers. “They
were the children and wife of the heir, how could the mobs have ever reached them? And with Jedi
guards who would have ever dared?”

Jon shrugs. He feels caught in this man's rage, and his hate.

“The Jedi withdrew to their temples and locked the doors on the day the Empire fell...except for
those knights who guarded the royal family.” Oberyn tell him, shaking his head in disgust. “How
else could little Jaime Lannister, youngest man ever knighted have been in place to strike the old man
down?”

Jon frowns, feeling very very lost. “The Jedi killed your sister?”

Oberyn scoffs. “That or they abandoned her and left the doors unlocked on their way out. They left
her to die, and they knew it.”

Jon frowns at him. “That's very sad, but...what does it have to do with me?”

Oberyn blinks and then smiles again, this time for real. He chuckles. “Oh...you know nothing, Jon
Snow.”

Jon swallows as something clicks at the familiar word. “And You know Mance Rayder, don't you?”

Oberyn grins. “Oh sweet one, I know everyone who is anyone, and they all know me.”

Jon stares at him. “So, what now?”

Oberyn shrugs and eats another fruit. “Well, if this business of you being an Imperial Prince does not
work out, I think you could make an excellent living as whore in Sunspear.” He suggests with an
unkind grin as Daenerys and Tyrion re-enter the room.

Tyrion rubs his hands together and glances at Jon with a smile. “Come along, Snow!” he commands
with a wave.
Jon stands and follows after the dwarf out of the room, flanked by guards as they leave.

Tyrion grins at him. “I know you probably don't realize it, but that went well.”

“So, now I'm to be an Imperial Prince.” Jon wonders, more exhausted by the idea than anything else.

Tyrion laughs as the guard escorts them both to a door. “Oh, bastard, it didn't go that well.”

Jon is shoved through the door as it locks behind him. His cells is simple and austere. There's a shelf for a bed and a single pillow on it.

Well, this is depressingly familiar.

He lies down and thinks about how he's shared a bed with Ygritte for the last two years. He falls asleep missing her and wakes up with a start what feels like only a second later when someone barges in to his cell.

He looks up blearily, and frowns when he sees a young man he doesn't recognize, but who looks vaguely piratical in a decidedly non-Mandalorian way.

“Who're you?” he mumbles in annoyance, propping himself up on one elbow.

The young man steps forward earnestly. “My name is Theon Greyjoy- I'm here to rescue you.”

“Ugh.” Jon groans and collapses face down into his pillow. Wonderful, another 'rescue', just what he needs.
This entire fic happened because I wanted someone to make a "Aren't you a little short for a Stormtrooper?" joke about Jon and I didn't even get to make it. Sigh.

Hope those of you still following this story enjoy the update!
In Hyperspace Aboard the Space Whore

Chapter Summary

Theon and Jon escape. They have a difference of opinion on where exactly they should be escaping to, though.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“My name is Theon Greyjoy- I'm here to rescue you.”

“Ugh.” Jon groans and collapses face down into his pillow.

Theon scoffs. That's fucking typical, here he is finally making an effort for once, being a big damn hero, and rescuing this useless drip, and what does he get for it? Fucking ungratefulness is what!

He grimaces. Of course there was a fucking catch.

Until now it had simply been a matter of letting the very seductive sounding man on the coms know to unlock the doors remotely, and then strolling in. So far, the hardest part had been finding the right cell considering that apparently Imperials didn't feel the need to label anything clearly. Theon recognizes that labels would ruin their minimalist aesthetic, but c'mon!

Figures that the person they're rescuing would turn out to be less than enthusiastic about the whole thing, but it's not actually that surprising considering he's working for the Mandalorians on this one. So, probably this is less of a 'rescue' than a 'kidnapping/theft of valuable bounty'.

He's never taking career advice from Sansa ever again.

Theon does a mental shrug and goes to haul Mr. Mopey off his bed and onto his feet.

“Yeah, that's not gonna work. Up and a'em!” Theon grumbles hauling the curly haired target up onto his feet and dragging him towards the loading dock.
The target while not being very helpful is, thankfully, not actually actively resisting.

“Would you move a little faster?” Theon growls shoving his rescue/kidnap victim down the hallway in front of him. He gets the stink eye for that, which he supposes is fair, but honestly. They just need to move quickly and confidently towards the exit and then they'll be homefree.

“Excuse me if I'm not entirely sure I want to let a random stranger drag me off to god knows where.” Kdnapee/Rescuee deadpans.

Theon blinks at the sass, this little shit is giving him, when Theon has interrupted his busy schedule of looking at Robb's ass in those military pants to come over here and save his sorry (much less attractive) butt from whack-job Imperials, and all out of the goodness of his heart.

Okay, Sansa may have called him and bribed him with two custom outfits if he'd head out to the Cantina and see if any Mandalorians needed a good pilot, not to mention how well the Mandalorians were paying for one, but. Details.

“Oh, yeah, 'cause that cell looked real cozy! Mister high and mighty.” He snarls.

“I've had worse.”

“Well, considering it's the Mando's that want you rescued, I believe you but-”

That makes the rescuee stand up straighter and turn to look at Theon for the first time, and okay, Theon gets how you'd go to a bit of trouble for that face.

“The Mandalorians are paying you?” Rescuee/Kdnapee asks sharply. Theon puts both hands on the guy's shoulders and physically steers him back to the right direction.

Theon shoves him forward. “Yes, now less talk more run, prison boy.”

So, they do run briefly, because it turns out that Curly has shorter legs than Theon and keeps getting
left behind, so Theon has to hang back to let him catch up and keep him in front of him because the little dude is too short and it's a kriffing pain in Theon's ass...

“Kriff you Sansa, no outfit is worth this.” Theon mutters under his breath which makes Escapee look at him funny, which Theon supposes is fair, but-

“Sansa?”

“Sansa Stark, you've probably heard of her. She's a very hot up and coming designer.” Theon tells him proudly because he'll rep his girl to anyone, and if he's important enough for the Mandalorians to steel and the Imperials imprison then he might one day be in the market for some luxury designer wear.

Curly doesn't stop running but he looks at Theon as though Theon has suddenly grown a third ear in his forehead.

“Who are you?” he asks incredulously as they reach the hangar and book it for a ship.

Theon rolls his eyes. “I told you I'm-”

“Theon Greyjoy-here-to-rescue-me- but do you know who I am?”

Theon shrugs as he reaches the door to his ship and punches in the access code. “Some schmuck the Mandalorian's care about?”

“My name is Jon-” the target tells him, watching Theon very closely.

“Okay, sure, nice to meet you Jon-” Theon replies automatically as they duck inside his ship, the Space Whore, and he unhooks the com from his ear.

“Jon Snow.”

The door slams shut behind them. Theon freezes and pivots on his heel to take a better look. He
grabs Jon’s face and tilts it towards the dim lights in the corridor of the ship. Jon lets him.

Theon’s only seen a few holos of Jon Snow, and they’d all been of him as a little kid. There isn’t much resemblance. But then it’s hard to tell under all that hair and at least a week’s worth of beard.

But, he has seen plenty of holos of other illustrious Starks of the past. Lyanna Stark. Lyarra Stark. Brandon and Benjen Stark. They all tended to be heavy on the hair, and often half-covered in beards.

There’s a resemblance there, no question.

Theon gently pushes Jon away. “Fuck.” he hisses, with feeling.

Jon just stares at him.

Theon looks away, considers what he’ll have to do, and repeats himself. “FUCK.”

He stalks into the cockpit and flicks his com to hail the Mandalorian’s inside man.

“We're on our way out.” Theon states simply.

“Then the doors shall open for you, my very attractive friend.” the insider purrs as the bay door opens. “I wish you good fortune in the wars to come.”

Theon rolls his eyes and takes off. He's supposed to rendezvous with the Mandalorians who've been distracting the guards this whole time, but-

But he's got Robb's brother, the one who was supposed to be a Jedi, and supposed to be dead. The Mandalorian's killed him years ago- hadn't they? Well, obvious they hadn't, since he's on Theon's force-damned ship.

Theon repeats: “Fuck.”
Because, now he can't give the shit to the scary gingers that hired him and that's going to be a cluster fuck. Making an enemy of Mance Rayder and his mercenaries is arguably one of the stupidest things anyone could possibly do ever.

Force Damn Sansa, how could she have known? Theon thought Bran was supposed to be the weird one. He's not sure his poor cynical soul can handle two weirdass Force freaky Stark children. Especially not if one of them is his darling Sansa. Force-damnit if she goes the way of Bran and more or less loses touch with reality who is going to be his fashion consultant when he finally becomes an interplanetary sex-symbol?!

He sets his coordinates and jumps to hyperspace. He thinks about it for a moment and then plots a round-about route to North with fourteen different jumps through a variety of space debris that should throw anyone not sailing an Iron-class ship off their tail.

He turns around and Jon is standing in the doorway staring at him.

“You're not going to give me back to the Free Folk, are you?” he asks with a voice that's more resigned than anything else. Theon almost feels bad for him.

“No, I'm taking you home.” Theon replies. No point in lying.

Jon swallows. “Who are you?” he asks for what feels like the thousandth time.

“I'm Theon Greyjoy-”

“-and you came to rescue me-” Jon finishes bitterly. “Because my half-sister said she'd make you an outfit...?”

Theon nods. “I guess I'm sort of your foster brother? Your dad took me in when my family couldn't look after me anymore.”

Jon nods jerkily. “Robb was sad so Father got him a new brother?” he asks.

It's the old joke that makes Theon crack a grin, not the way that Jon looks like he might throw up as
he says it.

“That's what Robb used to say.” Theon explains happily.

Jon nods again.

“They thought you died with Qhorin Halfhand.” Theon tells him. “they'll be so happy you're alright.”

Jon looks at him. “I...” he ducks his head and stares at his feet. “I'd like it if you turned around and gave me back to the Free Folk.... I have a- there's this girl and...” he trails off.

Theon shakes his head. “I can't. There will be other girls. You only get the one shot at your family.”

“Please, a pirate like you probably doesn't know anything about love.”

“You'd be surprised.” Theon replies loftily.

Jon stares at him for a minute and then collapses down in the co-pilot seat.

“You're in love with Robb aren't you?”

Theon jerks like he's been electrocuted. It's probably a good-thing they've already made the jump to hyperspace, and the ship is on autopilot. “WHY WOULD YOU EVEN SAY THAT?!!”

“Cause you're pissing off an ENTIRE WARRIOR CULTURE and destroying any credibility you had as a bounty-hunter in order to take me back to my family?” Jon points out. “Sansa's too smart to like you, and no one else is legal, that leaves Robb, who you must be trying to impress with all...this.” He waves at himself, Theon's outfit and the ship.

Theon closes his mouth and nods. “Put like that it's not such an impressive deduction, Jon.”
Jon puts his head in his hands and leans on the dash. “I take is he doesn't know?”

Theon shrugs. “Well, technically he's my foster brother. It would be gross.”

Jon nods, head still in hands. “Sure, Theon. Sure”

Theon scowls at him and gives him the finger. Jon ignored him and sits up. “See, my girl. She actually knows that I love her and she loves me back,- we have a real connection: mentally, physically, spiritually, and she be VERY unhappy if I don't come back.”

Theon shrugs. “Tough break for her then.”

Jon scowls. “I could knock you out and commandeer this ship.” he points out.

Theon laughs. “You could fucking try.”

Luckily Jon doesn't try, which means he's a different type of stupid from the majority of his siblings (and also probably not as smart as Sansa).

“Look,” Theon says, finally relenting in the face of all that brooding, and making an effort to be sincere. “There are plenty of girls. There aren't nearly so many Starks.”

“I'm not a Stark, Theon Greyjoy.” Jon snarls. “And neither are you.”

That's something Theon's all too familiar with. The Ironborn won't have him back, and the only father he's ever had worth the name got his brains splattered on the Senate steps. Lady Catelyn is a wreck and never liked him anyway. Arya has disappeared and also never liked him anyway, Bran is probably going insane, though he actually had liked Theon quite a bit before that started and Rickon's gone feral.

All Theon has left is Robb and Sansa. He wouldn't trade either of them for anything, though he would very much like to upgrade his relationship with Robb to include a lot more making out, fondling and nakedness.
Judging from the glare Jon, Robb's half-brother may have slightly more Jedi telepathy than Theon previously realized. He grins unrepentantly and continues to happily picture Robb naked.

Jon's glare shifts to one of disgust. “You suck, Theon Greyjoy.” he snarls.

The silence drags on for a while before Theon blurts out. “A physical connection with your girl, huh? Tell me about that?”

Jon's glare returns with greater intensity than ever before. Theon kind of wonders how Robb missed out on that genetically. The Young Wolf had never glared a day in his life, but it seemed like every one of his siblings was a natural born champ at it.

“Sex is nice, Theon.” Jon informs him with mock seriousness. “You should really try it sometime.”

Theon sputters. “I'll have you know I have been mistaken for a hooker on multiple occasions.”

Jon continues to stare at him. “You say that like it's a good thing.”

“I'm just saying I probably have more experience than you.”

Jon gives him a disbelieving look. “The Mandalorians are very sex positive as a culture, and I was imprisoned on a space-station with nothing to do during my peak hormonal years. Not to mention I was in a relationship with an equally hormonal girl during the majority of that time. We had a lot of sex, Theon. A. Lot. Of. Sex. In all kinds of ways.”

“Okay. I'd like to hear about it.”

“No.”

“C'mon.”
“NO! You're not using my moves of Robb!!” Jon snaps, and he's so horrified by the idea that Theon (who totally was going to try such moves as were applicable to the male anatomy on Robb) can't stop laughing at him, which doesn't make Jon any less broody.

Theon can't say that it's a pleasant trip back to North, but they get there eventually, and when they do Robb cries grateful tears of happiness, so that's what really matters. Theon's never wants to passionately make-out with a crying person before, but he decides to file it in the mental category of “Things that are only attractive when Robb does them.”

Chapter End Notes

Theon's ship is called the Space Whore, because he is classy like that. Jon is just...really tired of this bullshit right now, so he's a bit snippier than usual. I'd say I'm sorry for this nonsense, but I'm really not.

Next chapter will probably be Arya, and what she's been up to. Though it's not written yet, so who knows? Anything can happen. Especially with this fic.
Meeting Places

Chapter Summary

The elite of Coruscant hold a meeting. Jaime Lannister and Brienne of Tarth consider the problem of Jon Snow.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jaime Lannister stood by the door and watched as Senator Baratheon and his retinue glided by for his meeting with the Jedi council. Of course, it wasn’t an official gathering. The Senate and the Jedi were, after all, not supposed to collude on affairs of state or foreign policy, but the practical reality was that the entire apparatus of the government functioned ever so much more smoothly when they did.

So, here was Jaime Lannister, the greatest Jedi of his generation some said, or the worst, depending on your point of view. Probably, the most accurate term would be ‘strongest’, because that was undeniably true, and not just because the..heh...lion’s share of his generation had died bloody deaths during the rebellion…anyway, here was Jaime Lannister standing in the hallway and meeting Brienne of Tarth’s eye as she walked behind Senator Baratheon with all the grace of thundering herd of Bantha.

He falls into step next to her as she passes and she shoots him a glare. He grins back. He knows she mostly doesn’t mean it.

Prince Oberyn of the Martells is already in the room, sprawled out like some sort of indolent half-tamed feral beast. Jaime had never liked him or trusted him, for all his little brother had once been fond of the man. Though, given everything, Tyrion’s approval was more a mark against, than a mark for anyone’s reputation these days.

Including Jaime himself.

They arrange themselves around this informal concil room. They’ve requisitioned a meditation chamber for the purpose, as though the mustering of the entire Jedi council and two of the most powerful political figures in the galaxy will somehow become less official in an informal setting.

They wait as the Grand Master wheezes himself into place. Jaime takes his seat as a member of the Jedi Council, however begrudging his place may be and Tarth stands behind her Senator, stoic and scowling as usual.

Oberyn catches his eye and smiles. Jaime stares straight ahead, but Brienne notices and looks between the two of them with a frown. Jaime can see her try to catch his eye but he doesn’t turn to look. She can make him ashamed in ways that actual Jedi cannot.

“Well, now that we are all here, I see no point in avoiding the issue, our dear government is on the brink of war.” Oberyn declares. “We have gathered to see how we might through our influence avoid this.”
Senator Baratheon leans forward. “You speak of war like it’s inevitable, the territories the Starks and First Men are claiming, while extensive areas are sparsely populated and have few resources. The Starks are reasonable, they don’t want war. They want to be left alone to manage their own affairs in peace…” he meets the eye of the Grand Master somewhat accusingly”…and after everything I can’t hardly find it in myself to blame them.”

Jaime blinks. That is bolder talk than he would have expected from soft-skinned weak-willed Renly.

Oberyn flicks a hand dismissively. “It would be one thing if it were just North, or Red or even the territories of the first men, but the First Men have the ear of the Mandalorians, and they hold the son of the Reaver King. It will not just be their systems that revolt should the Northerner’s succeed.”

Grandmaster Aemon protests. “Their greivances are legitimate. The Jedi have no legal reason to intervene and we are the only deterant the First Men might balk at.”

Oberyn flicks his wrist again. “The matter may not be halted, but I have reason to believe it may be slowed.” A hologram appears in the centre fo the room, a pale dark eyed young man in manacles.

Jaime freezes and he feels Brienne stand away from the wall in surprise. “Jon Snow!” she says, in a voice that feels more like a shout.

Everyone turns to look at the two of them. There’s a long pause.

“Given that these are…delicate matters I think it would be best if we cleared the room of any whose loyalty may be..divided.” Oberyn suggests with an affected thoughtfulness.

Jaime knows exactly who the problem is and he grabs Brienne’s arm and tows her out. She is not a Jedi, and despite his Council seat he is a disgraced one.

Brienne stares at him in the golden light of the hallway. “Did you have any idea Jon Snow was alive?” she whispers, grabbing his bad wrist with a too firm hold.

Jaime stares at her in shock. “Don’t be naïve Tarth.” He snaps.

He looks around the hallway. There’s no one significant around but, they are no doubt being very carefully observed all the same. Jaime hasn’t been trusted since he killed the Emperor twenty years ago, and Tarth shames the Jedi just by being herself.

“Let’s go to Davos’ and talk there.”Jaime suggests. “They’ll be talking in circles for hours, and even you must admit that no one is likely to make an attempt on your precious Senator’s life inside the Jedi Temple.”

Brienne nods and they head out. It’s strange. Being together. They are not alike, an share nothing in common except the colour of their hair.

Jaime suspects that the only reason they’ve remained friends after their shared imprisonment has long passed is that they are both of them so terribly lonely they’d befriend anyone who showed the
slightest interest. It’s the only thing he can think of that could explain for how they haven’t yet murdered each other in disgust.

They are both, in their own different ways, pariahs. And outcasts have to stick together.

Davos’ isn’t the same since the eponymous Davos had left the Core following the precipitous fall of Jedi Stannis Baratheon. This isn’t the place where everything seems to intercept anymore. It’s both less respectable and less criminal. Just another grubby place to eat that doesn’t cost much money, but everyone is used to minding their own business, so it’s one of the only places on Coruscant that Jaime can go without attracting stares.

“What did they mean about Jon Snow?” Brienne asks seriously. “And why did you call me naive?”

Jaime shrugs. “He’s an important pawn. Beloved brother of the new Northern King, or so I hear. But, legally, he belongs to the Jedi.” He pops something unidentifiable under it’s layer of deep fried batter into his mouth and bites down experimentally. The taste doesn’t provide any clues at to what it actually is.

Brienne is, predictably, upset by this entirely true pronouncement. “You make it sound like to be a Jedi is to be a slave. This is the Republic. You can’t own a human being.”

Jaime rolls his eyes. “I don’t see much difference, unpaid servitude for life with no possessions of your own. Little enough choice is where you go or what you do. Isn’t that what a slave is?”

Brienne glares all righteous fiery fury. “You can leave. All Jedi are free to leave the order. Even you.”

Jaime huffs. He’d like to argue with her. Point out that the stain of being a failed Jedi tends to be a problem if you’re dealing with anyone even slightly religious. Point out that when you’ve trained your entire life for a specific role no matter how demoralizing or degrading you find it, it’s hard to leave. Point out that when you are encouraged to relinquish all earthly attachments it means you have no relationships outside of the Jedi order to help you find your feet or to even put a roof over your head when you leave it.

But, Tarth wants more than anything to be a Jedi. Tarth, by all rights, should have been a Jedi except her father had only one child and would not relinquish her.

And Jaime understands that it would be cruel, in it’s own way, to tell her all the ways the Jedi are terrible. It doesn’t matter anyway. He will still be a Jedi, and she will still not be, and this small upset in the will of the Force will rankle them both.

“Still, legally, the Starks renounced all ties of blood to the boy when he became an Initiate, and he never formally left the Jedi. So, according to the laws he should be returned to their custody to either complete his training or formally repudiate his place with us.” Jaime explains

Brienne looks like she swallowed a lemon. “I don’t see what this has to do with the war.”

“Everything. Nothing. He’s a pawn, but a valuable one.”
Brienne shakes her head. “It’s a miracle he’s still alive after all this time. The Force must be at work in it for him to reappear at such a key moment.”

Jaime freezes staring at her open mouthed. She notices.

“What? Jaime?”

“I know you’re rather devout in terms of the Church of the Force. I know you’re an idealist, but please for the love of anything, tell me you’re not that stupid.”

Brienne looks at him in outraged confusion and he has to admit that she honestly doesn’t know. She doesn’t even suspect. What does it say about him that he’d automatically assumed? That he doesn’t even consider basic decency to be an option anymore?

“Mance Rayder had him this whole time Brienne.”

She rolls her eyes. “Of course, obviously-“

“No, Brienne, you don’t understand. The Jedi have always known that Jon Snow was alive and a captive of Mance Rayder.”

Sarah
She stares at him. She blinks. “No.”she shakes her head. “He was a child, under the protection of the Jedi order. Mance Rayder took public credit for the death of his Master, and if the boy had been known to be alive it would have been the duty of the Jedi to rescue him.”

“Brienne-“

“Mance hates the Jedi. It makes sense that you would believe he’d killed the padawan as well as the master.”

“Mance hates us because he thinks we’re corrupt kidnappers who brainwash children. He believes his vendetta is righteous and his followers believe that too. Jon Snow was a child. Mance couldn’t have hurt him without undermining his own rhetoric.”

Brienne looks like she might cry or be sick. She has her eyes closed. “He was fourteen. Did you really know or was it just…what you assumed?”

Jaime doesn’t answer.

“Did you know?” She asks again, loud enough that people turn to look.

Jaime grits his teeth. “I, personally, didn’t know for sure, but I assumed. And the Master in charge of scouting no doubt had intelligence confirming it. He was too valuable a captive for Mance to kill, Jedi or not.”

“And you didn’t do…anything?”

“The Jedi didn’t do anything. We’d have had to start a war with the Mandalorian’s to get him back, or run a rescue operation so risky that a dozen knights or more would have been expected to die.”
“What about a ransom?”

“The Jedi do not treat with the Mandalorians.”

“What about his family?! They would have paid!”

“It wouldn’t have been clean.” Jaime argues.

Brienne stares at him like he’s a stranger. It’s the look she gave him all the time when they first met, when she had known nothing about him except for all the horrible stories people liked to tell. It’s a mix of surprise, horror and disgust. It’s the way most people who know his story look at him. Jaime Lannister, the Jedi without honour, the faithless, hopeless, untrustworthy creature, who didn’t even have the decency to leave the order after he betrayed it.

“He was a child.” She repeats.

Jaime glares at her. “So was I. But Aerys hated my father and wanted me for his guard so I was knighted early. Childhood, in most parts of the galaxy, is not protection.”

She stands and storms out. Jaime pays and then hurries after her.

She’s easy to find on the streets. Tall, because of her mixed heritage, and dressed oddly in something that almost looked like Jedi robes.

Jaime catches up to her.

She’s staring into the middle distance. He puts his hand on her shoulder. It’s the prosthetic one, he realizes, the one he’d gotten after the other had rotted away during their shared imprisonment.

“I believe in the Jedi.” She tells him. “I’ve believed in them my whole life. I’ve followed the teachings, read the scrolls. I place myself at the mercy of the Force everyday.” She finally looks at him, and it’s the look he’s come to expect. She sees him. She might be the only person who does.

“The Jedi are supposed to be the moral heart of the Republic. You’re telling me it’s all a lie?”

Jaime huffs and rolls his eyes. She always takes things to the extreme. It’s a failing of hers.

“No. The Jedi are teachings are the only thing in the entire galaxy I believe in and there are many knights who unfailingly uphold them. Barristan Selmy will live and die with an unstained honour and a clear conscience of that I have no doubt. But, power will always be abused, and a pretended devotion to ideals won’t change that. Especially now, with the Senate relying on the Jedi so heavily to legitimize their rule.”

Brienne swallows and turns to face him. “Jaime, you must tell me honestly, do you think the Republic could fall?”

Jaime considers it. He thinks of all the ugly pieces the Jedi have put together that Tarth doesn’t even suspect. The Ironborn, the Mandalorians, the New Imperials... Not to mention the still unsolved plot that had seen all the leaders of the Rebellion dead, and the Paramount Votes they’d held now in the hands of children or untested youth.

Jedi Master Stannis Baratheon had fallen to the darkside, so nothing was certain anymore.

He thinks of the way he had heard Oberyn saying “In the flesh the resemblance is more pronounced, but it doesn’t matter. The public will believe he is Lyanna Stark’s son because it absolves Ned Stark
of adultery. People do so love to believe the best of their heroes.”

Jon Snow was still hardly more than a child, and it made Jaime stomach roil to think about what he’d been through and what in all likelihood still lay before him.

“Yes, Brienne. The Republic is in danger, and even if we manage to avoid a war with the First Men, I don’t know if we can save it.”

Brienne takes a deep breath. “Not with that attitude we can’t.”

Chapter End Notes

I LIVE!! I don't know if anyone is still waiting on this, but...here it is.

Jaime and Brienne were kidnapped by a religious fundamentalist who thought they were an insult to the Jedi teachings and they escaped together, in case anyone is wondering about the backstory..

If you liked please let me know! We'll probably be back to the Starks next chapter, but if you have a book or show character that you'd like to see in this 'verse let me know and I'll keep it in mind!
Sansa Stark's Sewing Room

Chapter Summary

Sansa plays manages the problems of the Stark Family. And she looks fabulous doing it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sansa tries not to frown as she draws the needle through the fabric by hand. She doesn’t have the equipment she’s used on Winterfell, and she’s having to do it herself. The stuff she bought before she left for fashion school seems hopelessly amateurish and inaccurate compared to the programmable systems she’s used to working with.

It’s forcing her to change her designs. She can’t create the elaborate structural pieces that she used to favour, and the materials she needs for form fitting outfits aren’t as easy to come by in the North system.

Not that it really matters. She’s not designing for the refined tastes of the Core anymore. She’s trying to create a visual language for her own people. Something that will brand them as something more than uncouth barbarians, while still maintaining their cultural traditions and styles.

It’s complicated.

She’s grateful for that. It keeps her mind occupied and off of everything else.

She’s not even sure what it is she’s working on at the moment. It’s just piece she picks up when she needs a break from Robb’s regalia or soldiers uniforms. She’ll give it to Theon when she’s done probably. Even though it doesn’t quite suit him. But, then neither does Winterfell or the First Men and he’s learned to wear that wonderfully.

She’s not happy here, but at least she’s not alone in that. Not even Robb is happy with the current state of things and he’s the one who set the whole damn thing in motion. It’s worth it. He’s assured her time and again. Independence would be good for the First Men.

She believes him, and it’s funny that these days the possible looming Civil War within the republic seems like the least of her worries. The problems of the galaxy seem very far away compared to how things are at home.
Jon is back and it’s complicated. She hadn’t thought, when she’d told Theon she’d design him an outfit if he went to that cantina looking for a job, that the complicated part would come after Jon had been rescued.

She’d really sort of hoped that having him back would lighten the whole up the whole of Winterfell. But, it hasn’t.

It’s just made it clear how long it’s been since Jon has really been a part of the family. And how much the family has broken since he last saw them.

The door to her work room opens and she looks up, expecting to see Theon, who often comes to sit with her and bitch and moan about his current problem of the month (his real problem is that he won’t just kiss her brother, but she thinks it would be weird if she told him that).

It’s not Theon. To her surprise, it’s Jon.

He blinks at her with his big dark eyes and she swallows her nervousness. He feels like a stranger, and he looks like a stranger, and she considers her workroom to be more her private space than anywhere else in the compound, including her bedroom.

He shuffles nervously. “Can I come sit with you? I feel like I’m getting underfoot everywhere else..”

She nods, jerkily and tilts her head towards the chair where Theon tends to sprawl indecorously.

Jon carefully moves a holoprojector and sits down stiffly.

Sansa tries not to stare at him like he’s a rare exotic creature. She’s pretty sure he has had enough of being fussed over.

She doesn’t know what to say to him. They’ve never been close. She’d been all of seven years old when he’d left, and as far as she can remember she’d barely spoken to him at all during the brief years of their shared childhood.

She can’t actually conjure up a single memory of him as a boy in Winterfell. If there had been holos of him, Mother hadn’t kept them up once he’d left.

Maybe it’s just that he’s changed, so whatever memories she does have of him don’t connect with the person he is now. He’s so pale it’s frightening, and he looks a bit too thin. She doubts Mother would have let him grow his hair so long either.

“It’s nice in here.” Jon tells her. Apropos of nothing. It’s funny, his Northern accent is stronger than
hers. She supposes that’s down to the Mandalorians.

She nods and forces a smile. “It’s my favourite place. It’s the only room that feels like mine here. Theon likes it too.”

Jon makes a complicated expression. She winces.

Jon is awkward about Theon. It can’t be easy. For all Father had insisted Theon wasn’t a replacement for Jon, there was no denying that he had in many ways stepped in to fill the gap that Jon had left.

“He seems…nice.” Jon says awkwardly. Sansa snorts, taken off guard enough to react in such an unladylike way.

“I think you’re the first person to ever say that. Most people think he’s a sexworker or a criminal.” She tells him honestly, flattening out her work to see if the seams are lying straight.

Jon huffs out a nearly silent laugh. “I can understand that. I don’t quite know what to make of him if I’m honest.”

She smiles. “Most people don’t.”

“I’m half afraid he’ll try and seduce me to make a point.”

Sansa glances up and frowns. Jon shrugs. “…We had an argument about who was more experienced…it’s a long story.”

Sansa raises her eyebrows. “I’ll take your word for it.” She doesn’t ask about what sort of sexual experience a captive Jedi could possibly have. It seems like something that you wouldn’t want to tell your little sister.

Jon forces a smile. “I was maybe not the most cooperative rescuee.”

Sansa looks up. “Oh?”

He blinks at her. Those black eyes are really something. They remind her of Arya which makes her heart squeeze. Or Bran before he started drifting so badly, which is even worse.

“I hear I have you to thank for that.” He murmurs. “I feel I ought to pay you back. The Mandalorians were alright, but I think the New Imperials would have made my life quite unpleasant if Theon hadn’t shown up when he did.”
She smiles, still forced. “Happy to help.”

“How did you do it?” He asks, blunt and attentive in a way she’s not used to anymore. Her and Robb have learned to dance around all the sore spots in order to keep the family limping forward, they look at this sidelong and approach everything with careful concern. There have been so many disappointments, lost causes and tragedies the last few years, it’s more efficient just to expect everything to be fragile.

“Do you have visions?” he asks, insistent. “I’ve known some Initiates who were touched by the force in that way, but that’s not how it works for me.”

She sighs. It’s not something she’s ever had to explain. It’s not something she particularly wants to explain.

“It’s more I know exactly where a person needs to be, and occasionally what they need to do. It’s… complicated. I don’t know. Sometimes I’ll design outfits for something and it’s only when I’ve finished that I’ll realize that I’m predicting have no way of knowing about. I guess I just know where a person needs to be sometimes, and I know what they should do when they get there.”

Jon waves a hand. “Like Theon and the Cantina.”

She nods.

Jon nods and hums. “Sounds like foreknowledge. It’s a way of seeing the future, but not seeing it. You just know what will happen. That’s how they explained it at the Temple anyway.”

Jon leans his head back against the wall and stares at the ceiling. “You need to talk to Robb.” he finally says after a long silence.

Sansa glances up sharply. “Why? What’s he done?”

Jon shrugs. “Nothing. He won’t listen to me is all. He thinks I’m-“ he wrinkles his nose “-traumatized and my judgement can’t be trusted.”

“About what?”

“Going back to the Jedi.”

It’s all she can do to stop from saying. “You are traumatized and your judgement can’t be trusted.”

“Do you want to go back?”
Jon stares at the ceiling. Shrugs. “I don’t want to stay here.”

Sansa looks at the wall. She knows in a lot of ways things have gotten really bad in Winterfell since Father died. Rickon is practically being raised by his ex-Mandalorian nanny who doesn’t believe in discipline or formal education. Bran is probably as unhinged from reality as you can get without actually being insane. Arya is gone. Mother is mentally so unwell that it’s like she looks through them most days. Theon is a walking tragedy, though he doesn’t even know it. Robb is fighting to set right mistakes that he never made.

“Is it not like you remember?” she asks in a small, voice.

He doesn’t move just stares blinking at the ceiling. “Its not that it’s different. It’s that it’s the same.”

Sansa stares at him, and puts down her work. “Oh.” She realizes suddenly that he has his head tilted like that so she won’t be able to tell if his eyes well up a little.

“Robb doesn’t understand.” Jon says, hoarsely. “How could he? He’s Robb.”

Sansa wants to hug him, or take his hand or something. But, he’s a stranger to her.

“He loves you” is all she can think to say, because she knows it’s true. It’s the only thing she knows for sure is true when it comes to Jon. “He wouldn’t want to make you miserable.”

“He thinks he’s protecting me. He thinks I don’t believe I’m wanted. Or that I have Learned Helplessness or have become Institutionalized and can’t function on my own or something.”

“You’re our brother, and you disappeared for five years. We thought you were dead. Arya…Arya took it very badly, and Robb was devastated. The New Imperials kidnapped you from the Mandalorians, what makes you think they won’t just kidnap you from the Jedi if you go back?”

“The Jedi are my family. I don’t belong here, not anymore. Maybe I’ll still fit there.”

She wants to be able to reassure him that that is true. But. “It’s been over four years Jon. You might not belong there anymore either.”

Jon nods, jerkily. “I know. But, at least I’d have something to do other than being fusssed over. The Jedi are very good at making you feel useful.”

Sansa wonders why he’s talking to her about this, instead of Robb who barely lets him out of his sight, and would listen with attentive earnestness to anything he had to say or Theon who he must
have gotten to know while the Reaver boy was dragging him across half the galaxy, or even Bran who stares at him so hopefully whenever they’re in the same room and who has become more engaged with reality than Sansa has seen in years thanks to Jon’s return.

Why would he talk to her, the girl who he barely knows?

“What’s that there? Is it a fortune-telling outfit?” he asks awkwardly trying to change the subject, and pointing to a half-pinned jacket that was on the mannequin.

She makes a face at him, because that’s the worst description of her Force gift.

“No. I’m making a mock-up for the uniforms for the army. If it comes to that.”

“It will if Robb keeps refusing to talk to the Jedi Council.”

“You think the Republic will go to war over you?”

“I think that refusing to speak to the Peace Keeping Religious Order is only going to make the problem bigger. I think some sort of symbolic gesture of goodwill like sending me back to the Temple would do a lot to help your cause.”

Sansa shrugs. That is probably true. “I’m trying to help with spreading our message. Robb gets very defensive, says we shouldn’t manipulate people, says we shouldn’t resort to propaganda and Holonet dramatics but, Holonet dramatics is what won the Rebellion.”

Jon smiles at her. “The Jedi love Holonet dramatics.”

Sansa grins. “Exactly. So we need to look like a polished, civilized fighting force. Something that people can’t dismiss but also a people who can be reasoned with.”

“Not Mandalorians or Reavers essentially.”

“Well, if you want to get specific yes. But, we also want to differentiate ourselves from the Republic. Our uniforms and the design of everything should reflect our values.”

Jon still has his head tilted back but he smiles. “Hearts and minds little sister. Hearts and minds.”

“Exactly.”

Jon closes his eyes. “Please, will you talk to Robb? I can’t stay here.”
“Yes, you can. You just don’t want to.”

He tenses up like she’s slapped him and he’s anticipating another hit. It makes her feel guilty. She hates feeling guilty.

“I’ll talk to him.” she relents.

He stares at her expectantly.

“What? Right now?”

He shrugs. “No time like the present.”

Something occurs to her. “Mother hasn’t been giving you any trouble has she? Because, Theon will skin her alive if she has. She’s not well, and you should just ignore it, but Theon feels quite protective of you since the whole rescue mission.”

“He’s protective of the fact that my being here makes Robb happy and he likes it when Robb is happy.”

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“Lady Caitlyn is her usual charming self.”

All that does is make Sansa wonder just how horrible her mother had been to Jon when they’d been children. She hates thinking of that. No wonder Robb and Theon have both become so protective of Jon. She’s known him for about half an hour and she’s already outraged by all the ways he just accepts things, by all the ways no one has ever fought for him, so he doesn’t fight for himself.

She supposes that, all things considered, if he wants to go back to the Jedi that’s his choice.

“Alright, I’ll go talk to Robb.”

Jon relaxes for the first time since he stepped into the room. “Thank you.”

She gets up and wanders out. She has no idea where Robb would be right now, probably in a political meeting of some kind, trying to come up with a way they won’t have to fight with the rest of the universe.
Theon has Robb-radar though, and Theon is easy to find. She kicks the starwhale slippers that are sticking out from under his beloved ship.

He rolls out from under it and stares at her. He’s not made up and not dressed. Any other day that would ping her crisis antenna, but right now she has too much else going on to deal with whatever drama is happening in Theon-land.

“Where’s Robb?” she asks.

“North Tower, upper-west room.” He spits out immediately. “Why?”

Sansa makes a face. “I told Jon I’d talk to him. He wants to go back to the Jedi.”

Theon sits up and just stares at her in silence for a minute. “Well, that’s fucking stupid.”

“Yep.”

“Did you tell him that?”

“I’m assuming Robb has done nothing but tell him that, which is why he’s recruited me.”

Theon shakes his head. “Robb has definitely not told him that. He’d have to say something half-way straightforward to do that.”

Sansa sits down next to him and flicks a plush tentacle on his slipper. “So, someone should tell him it’s a stupid idea.”

Theon nods. “As the member of the Stark family with the best judgement I nominate you.”

Sansa groans and lies down on the floor. “It’s not that simple.”

Theon rolls his eyes. “Sure it is. Just look at him and say ‘Jon Snow, you’re dumb. Let the smart people make the plans.’.”

Sansa shoots him a venomous look. “He’s been a captive for five years. It’s wrong to make decisions for him. He deserves to be able to choose for himself.”

“Yes, of course. You should definitely stand back and let him ruin his entire life just to spare his feelings. Makes perfect sense.”
“It’s his life to ruin.”

“And yet that has never stopped people from meddling in my life.”

“Well, you’re bad ideas will get you brutally murdered. His will just make him miserable.”

“Or get him kidnapped by either the Mandalorians or the New Imperials again.”

Sansa winces. “How badly do you think they want him back?”

Theon thinks about it. “Badly. Very badly. Mance had made it a clan matter. The people who hired me will be in disgrace until they get him back. And the New Imperials went to the trouble of finding him when everyone else thought he was dead and then kidnapping him from the Mandalorians as though antagonizing them has ever done anything but end in slaughter.”

Sansa groans and scrubs her hands across her face, to hell with the makeup. “Why can’t he just stay here? Why can’t he just be happy here?”

Theon laughs. “Winterfell isn’t a place for being happy unless you’re a Stark.”

Sansa peaks out from between her fingers. “Don’t lie. The best years of your life were here. We taught the sad feral child what love was.”

Theon’s grin goes jagged. “Better than the Reavers is a low fucking bar when it comes to childcare. Even Caitlyn Tully couldn’t fuck it up that badly.”

“Was my mother a monster and I just never realized it?” Sansa exclaims.

“Yeah, and Robb always used to talk about how at least she liked me more than she liked Jon.”

Sansa rolls over and tucks her face against Theon’s arm. That’s awful. She doesn’t remember much about Jon, but she remembers the way Mother had treated Theon quite clearly.

It had not been kind.

“So she was probably abusive to Jon.” It’s not a question.

“Negligent, definitely.” Theon clarifies. “Probably called him awful names.”
“She called you names, so she must have done worse to Jon if Robb says-“

“Yeah, but she mostly said them under her breath or when we were both pretending I couldn’t hear her. She probably just cursed Jon out to his face.”

“He was ten! Who cussed out a ten year old?”

“My brothers did all the time.”

“Don’t compare my Mother to your brothers.” Sansa knows a thing or two about Theon’s brothers.

Theon shrugs. “Just sayin’.”

Sansa scrunches up her face. “So, verbal abuse, at least.”

Theon huffs. “I suppose that’s what you Core Worlder’s would call it.”

Sansa sits up. “Because that’s what it is.”

Theon pushes off to roll back under his ship. “So you say.”

Sansa gets up and wanders up to the North Towere, upper-west room. Robb must have just ended a meeting. He’s sitting at the long table with his face in his hands. He’s wearing the coat with the Direwolf fur collar that she had made for him as her final project a semester or two ago. It must have been an important meeting.

She walks in quietly and takes a seat a few chairs down from him.

“Is is bad?” she asks softly.

Robb raises his head and looks at her. “The Lords of the North are itching for a fight, and the Republic isn’t going to let us go without one.”

“Oh.”

“Did you know that most people believe the Republic had Father killed?”

“No, why would they?” Sansa replies is honest bewilderment.
“They wouldn’t. His assassination has caused nothing but problems for the current government.”

Sansa hesitates. “Jon suggested that returning him to the Temple might appease the Jedi and win over their sympathies during the conflict. If nothing else, it might encourage them to maintain their neutrality.” She informs him gently.

They’ve learned to be gentle with each other, the two red-haired children who have somehow come out of this mess unscathed.
Robb looks like he’s going to cry.

“He never should have been sent in the first place. Bran is stronger in the Force and if he’d had proper tutoring than maybe…. ” Robb swallows.

He doesn’t need to finish the sentence.

Maybe he wouldn’t have had to turn to the archaic ways of the First Men and the Greenseers. Maybe he wouldn’t spend most of his time tapped into the Force through the Weirwood trees. Maybe he wouldn’t be so lost in his visions of places far away that he sometimes goes days on end without speaking to anyone else.

“Well, Jon seems glad to have gotten to go.” Sansa informs him. “He wants to go back.”
“He’s back where he belongs now. I can’t send him away again.”

“If you keep him here, when he wants to go elsewhere, aren’t you doing the same thing as the Mandalorians. From what little I’ve hear they thought they were saving him from the Jedi too.”

Sansa watches the muscle in Robb’s jaw jump as he looks away.

“You fight dirty little sister.” He murmurs.

“I fight to win, big brother.” She replies. “Just like mother taught me.”

Robb looks at her and rests his head on his hand. “It’s a good thing you’re not interested in politics, Sansa. I’d be out of a job fast.”
Sansa smiles and feels her throat close up. She looks away. She doesn’t want to be the sort of person who excels at fighting dirty in politics. She’s seen the collateral damage people like that cause.

Despite all the warnings, she’d looked up the holovideo of her father’s assassination.

“Well, lucky for both of us that I’m a fashion designer, eh?”
Robb nods.

“Can I tell Jon he’s not a prisoner?” she asks.

Robb puts his head in his hands, but he nods. “Tell him we won’t help him, but he can go back if he wants.”

Sansa reaches out and puts her hand on her brother’s shoulder. “It really is for the best Robb.”

“I know.” It comes out a bit strangled. Sansa suspects that Robb is crying behind his hands. She doesn’t mention it.

She also doesn’t mention that while this is almost certainly the best thing for the cause of Northern Independence it is equally almost certainly not the best thing for Jon.

If Robb’s already reconciled to that there’s no point in reminding him. If he hasn’t realized it, than she doesn’t want to bring it to his attention, in case he decides his conscience requires that he change his mind.

She goes back to her work room where Jon is unabashedly rifling through her sketches and swatches. It makes her clench her fists and bite her tongue. Those are her private things.

“I spoke to Robb.” she informs her half-brother.

Jon looks at her hopefully.

“He says he won’t help you, but he won’t stop you if you decide to go back to the Jedi. You’re our brother after all, you’re not a prisoner.”

Jon Snow smiles. “Thank you, Sansa!”

“You know it’s a bloody stupid idea, don’t you?” she tells him sharply. “You’ll be lucky if neither the Mandalorians or the New Imperials kidnap you again, and even if they don’t the Jedi aren’t going to feel any more like home than Winterfell does.”

Jon looks at her and sighs. “If I’m with the Jedi, than I can do something I can speak for Northern interests, or try and reconcile Mance and the Council, or even just be a Jedi Knight and fight for Justice and Freedom and all the things Father taught us to believe it.”

He looks around the room. “I’m not like you and Robb, I can’t help anyone from Winterfell.”
Sansa shakes her head. “You help Bran and Rickon and me and Robb just by being here!”

Jon just sets his jaw and despite their different features it’s an expression so Robb-like that Sansa knows there’s no point in arguing. Jon’s mind is made up.

“I made a vow.” Jon informs here. “I’m not going to break it. I may have nothing else, but I have my honour!”

Sansa doesn’t say anything, she just steps aside and lets him go.

She sits down at her table and picks up what she’s been working on. In a moment of cool certainty she knows who this outfit is for and where he’ll wear it.

The next day, Jon packs a small bag with what few belongings he possesses, and Theon agrees to chauffeur him to the Core. Sansa stands next to Robb on the walkway where their parents used to stand to watch them play. Their eyes follow the ship as it takes off.

“It was the right thing to do, Sansa, wasn’t it?” Robb asks.

“It was the best thing to do for everyone.”

“Rickon’s going to be upset.”

“Rickon likes to bite people. Rickon’s always upset.”

On the ship Jon opens his bag and is surprised to find a slim black box carefully wrapped and slipped in on top of his things.

He opens it to find elegant steel blue tissue, and a set of clothing in black, and a Jedi cloak, except instead of being the traditional brown this one is blue-grey.

There’s a note from Sansa. “Wear this when you speak to the council. It will make you look brave.”

Chapter End Notes

Sansa is great. She uses fashion design to look into the future. Comments are always very appreciated and feed my muse! I hope you guys like it!
Loneliness in the Heart of the Jedi

Chapter Summary

Jon Snow returns to the Jedi Temple.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Jedi Temple squated on the horizon like a poorly designed minimalist toad.

Jon had always believed the building was undeniable ugly, and thought it was funny that none of the Jedi he knew would ever admit it. It was beautiful on the inside, he knew that, but exterior almost managed to make the Senate, which looked like an ugly fungus, look elegant.

Jon was surprised by his own eagerness to get back.

He had expected to feel nervous, and uncertain the way he had when they’d descended onto North. But...he didn’t.

He just wanted to get back to the Temple. He didn’t care about the consequences. He just wanted to go home, because this was home. The only one worthy of the name that he’d ever had.

There’s a welcome party of half-a-dozen knights to meet him on the landing dock. To his disappointment Master Thorne is there. To his pleasant surprise so is Samwell Tarly-without a padawan braid.

It makes Jon feel dizzy. Had he really been gone that long?

It feels like a lifetime, but it also feels only like yesterday.

He steps off the transport and steels himself for their reactions. He hadn’t realized how bad he looked until he arrived on North. But, since his ‘rescue’ by Theon Greyjoy he’d gotten used to people’s mild horror whenever he entered a room.
Apparently not having seen a true sun in four years had made him paler than was Natural even for a Northerner.

He supposes the Mandalorians had just gotten used to it, and besides half of them rarely saw the light of day between their armour and their spacestations, so he hadn’t stood out in the same way.

To his surprise it’s Master Lannister who reacts best, stepping forward and grasping his forearm in greeting without a pause.

“Welcome, Padawan Snow.” He says warmly. “We thought you were lost to us forever.”

“No one is lost who is one with the force.” Jon murmurs.

Lannister grins, like he thinks that creed is funny.

Master Aemon whacks Lannister and shuffles forward supported by Sam, who grins awkwardly at Jon over the old man’s head.

“A pleasure it is, to see you again, Padawan Snow.” The old Imperial wheezes. “There is much the Council wishes to discuss with you.”

Jon straightens. “I expected as much, Grand Master.”

“You will be dealt with soon.” Master Thorne sneers. “Until then you are not to leave the Temple, and are confined to your rooms unless accompanied by a Knighted Jedi.”

Jon nods. “Of course, I understand.” He looks around. “Is Master Baratheon on a mission? I would have thought he wouldn’t have stood for any delay on discovering everything he could about Mance Rayder’s plans.”

There is a shudder that runs through the entire group.
“I am afraid that Master Baratheon has fallen.” Aemon says solemnly

Jon gasps.

“Yes. It was a terrible betrayal. One none of us anticipated.”

Jon notices they all glance at Lannister at those words. It is unspoken that it had been Lannister that everyone expected to fall. Jon wonders if the man kept faith just to spite the lot of them.

Jon nods. “Of course.”

“So, you understand why, despite our compassion for your ordeal, we must be vigilant in dealing with you?” The Grandmaster asks sternly.

Jon nods. “I submit myself to the authority of the council.”

Lannister snorts again at the rote phrase and Jon wishes he could smack him like Aemon did.

“Jedi Tarly will escort you to your rooms.” Jedi Lannister tells him.

Jon nods and follows Sam. Sam has grown, if anything, even stouter to the point that Jon wonders if he can even perform most of the standard lightsaber katas or if he has moved on to other forms.

“I’m sorry about yer father.” Sam tells Jon kindly. “and your Master. I know how pleased you were that the Halfhand took you on after the Old Bear’s death.”

Jon nods. “My Master fought valiantly, but the Mandalorians are skilled in killing Jedi.”

Sam looks at him with wide understanding eyes, and doesn’t ask “Then how are you still alive?”

Jon is thankful for that. Because, he hasn’t thought of Qhorin in years and for the first time in a long
time he feels ashamed.

He had loved his captors.

Not because they had played mind games. Not because he’d had to. Just because he’d liked him. They hadn’t even been particularly kind, not at first. He’d been desperate he supposes, but he’d never really fought.

They’d trusted him enough that they’d even started letting him come planetside with them when they went on supply runs.

Sam puts his hand on Jon’s shoulder. “Everything will be alright, because you’re home now. We’ll look after you.”

Jon looks down and blushes. “I must be years behind in my studies. I don’t know how I’ll make up for the time lost.”

Sam looks bewildered. “What do you mean? You’re Jon Snow, you were first in our cohort in nearly everything. You’ll make Knight by the time you’re twenty-five which isn’t late at all really.”

“Congratulations on your knighthood.” Jon tells him, genuinely pleased. “I’m happy for you.”

Sam flushes happily. “I’m still hopeless at the laserswords and all but I’m top of my class in anything involving book-learning. I’m to apprentice with a healer.”

Jon grins. “Sam! You’ll be brilliant at that!”

“Thanks Jon. I’m not sure who was more surprised when I passed my trials on the first attempt, me or Master Thorne!”

Jon grins. “He must have hated that! Were you the first in our cohort to be knighted!?”

Sam nods, puffing his chest out. “Yes. I was given the chance to take the trials after killing a Sith on
Jon gapes. “A Sith?! But no one has killed a Sith in hundreds of years!”

Sam nods frantically. “I know! But he killed my Master and it had to be done so- I just did it. They wanted to grant me rank of Master for the feat but, well, Master Thorne said it’d happen over his dead body and Master Stannis was still around and he felt it was against the rules so, only a knighthood.”

Jon grins and clasped Sam’s shoulder happily. “Sam the Sith-Slayer! Who’d have guessed?”

“Not me, obviously…here’s your rooms.” He touches the doorpad and the door hisses open.

Jon peaks inside. It’s a small room of a style he’s never seen in the temple before. Small, with a single bed and no small kitchen or food area. He sees a door that he assumes leads to the fresher.

Jon doesn’t know what he expected but somehow it wasn’t this. He’d never been alone at the Temple. The younglings lived in the creche and initiates lived in large dorms. Padawans shared suites with their masters.

He’d never been alone at all with the Mandalorians. They lived communally and he was a prisoner. Someone was always watching him.

He swallows and steps in clutching his bag.

“I’ll come and fetch you tomorrow when it’s time to meet the council.” Sam promises.

Jon gives him a little wave. “I’ll be here.”

The door closes. Jon sits down on the bed with a thump. The room is small. The walls are bare. The bed is big enough for only one person. There are Jedi robes hanging in the closet. It’s not a proper set of robes, of course, most Jedi’s clothing is customized and carefully curated. After all most of them only have one or two sets of identical clothing. But, it’s the robes that all human Jedi begin with and it’s roughly the right size for Jon.
It makes Jon sigh just looking at it. He may not know much about fashion but he knows that beige really isn’t his colour. He feels like he can feel Tormund laughing at him from across the galaxy.

It reminds him of the cell the New Imperials had put him in.

It doesn’t remind him of the room he’d shared with Ygritte on the Mandalorian base. There had been colours on the walls there.

And he hadn’t been alone.

He closes his eyes and he meditates. Calming his mind and finding the flow of the force.

There’s a knock on the door and Jon opens it to find a young man with wide high cheekbone and round bright eyes staring at him. He’s dressed in the traditional robes of a human Jedi, except the colours aren’t like anything Jon’s seen in years.

“I’m Jedi Tyrell.” He tells Jon. “The council wishes me to assess your training before you speak with them.”

Jon nods and steps out of his room.

The Jedi is staring at him intently. “Loras Tyrell, is my full name.” he says, looking at him expectantly.

Jon sticks out his hand and gives Loras a firm handshake. “Jon Snow, pleasure to meet you. Not sure what my title is yet.”

Loras gapes at him as they head down to a training room, but doesn’t explain why he expected Jon to know his face and his name.

Loras tosses Jon a practice saber and picks one up himself instead of using the real one that hangs from his belt.
“Did the Mandalorians allow you to train with weapons? Judging by your muscle tone you weren't wasting away in a dungeon chained to a wall.” Loras asks mildly.

“The Mandalorians knew that even if they armed me I’d have to fight through an entire space station of heavily armoured and armed fighters with experience in skirmishes against the Jedi. They let me have my saber back after I’d been there about a year. I practiced a lot. There wasn’t much else to do.”

Loras nods, and ignites his sword. “We’ll start with the first kata, and work from there.”

They do. It feels right, working with another Jedi again. Someone who knows the forms and the flow, and the conventions of using the weapon that have nothing to do with violence.

Loras seems impressed by what Jon managed to retain in captivity, though he constantly corrects little flubs and alterations of form that were the inevitable result of a novice in isolation.

After an hour he nods. “Let’s try a spar. See how it goes.”

Jon swishes his blade down in the customary marker for the beginning of a duel and they begin.

It feels good to move. It feels good to focus. And Loras is clearly close to perfection when it comes to the lightsaber.

Jon loses himself in the fight, just acting and reacting. It’s the only thing that doesn’t feel awkward or rusty or out of place.

After all as a captive the only things he’d really done had been to practice fighting with whoever was free and spend time with Ygritte.

He’s used to fighting vibrospears and men with blasters. He’s unbalanced fighting another lightsaber, but he’s felt unbalanced for years and it’s something he’d become used to and has long ago learned to compensate for.

Loras gets what would be a deadly strike in early and then they reset.

Jon wins the next bout by ducking under Loras’ blade and using a move Tormund taught him to flip him off his feet. Jon is surprised to realize he is smiling. Not just smiling, but smiling with all his teeth.
and his hair in his face and his blood pounding in his ears.

Loras just lies there for a moment winded, furious and staring at the ceiling.

He stands up gingerly, making a show of dusting off his rumpled clothing carefully.

He shoots Jon a look that he can’t quite read. “I think I’ve seen everything I need to know. I’ll escort you back to your rooms now.”

Jon nods.

The next day he carefully opens the box his sister had given him and puts on the clothes she’d made for him.

They fit perfectly and even have the pockets in the places he likes them.

He feels strange wearing them. He hasn’t had his own clothing in so long. Nothing that felt like his.

With the Mandalorians he’d worn whatever cast offs had fit, and whatever bits and pieces of armour Tormund or Mance had thrown his way. None of it had gone together and in all honesty there’d been no need for proper clothes most of the time he’d been there. It had only been for a little while, just before he’d gotten kidnapped by the Imperials that they’d started letting him off that space station.

With the Imperials he hadn’t had any real clothes at all. Just the under things they’d left him with.

The rest of what he brought to the temple is cast off from Theon or Robb that had fit him. He doesn’t have a mirror in his room. He wishes he did. He looks down at his feet and his standard issued soft soled Jedi boots in a practical shade of brown clash so badly with the blue-so-dark-it’s-nearly-black leggings.
He takes a deep breath. This is a problem he can solve. There’s definitely someone he can talk to about getting different shoes. Immediately, Loras Tyrell with his lilac robes and teal sash springs to mind.

Jon smiles to himself.

Renly is in bed when he hears the lift open in the main room, he waits to see if the protocol droid will trundle into his bedroom to announce whoever has arrived and when it doesn’t he looks up hopefully, watching the door for Loras to appear.

Loras appears silently and gracefully, as usual. He looks exhausted and Renly wonders whether that’s because it’s been a bad day or whether it’s just been too long since Loras has been in the field.

Loras is the only person Renly knows who gets less and less energetic the longer it’s been since someone has tried to kill him.

Loras smiles at him and Renly smiles back and gives a little wave as Loras turns and starts undressing.

Like most human Jedi Loras wears robes, though his strain the dogma of Jedi simplicity almost to the breaking point. It is the same simple pattern that most Jedi wear- robe, sash, belt, leggings, but done up in bright colours and elaborate patterns, though Loras abides by the spirit of the Jedi rules and uses simple durable fabrics instead of the lavish expensive materials that Renly favours and which he knows Loras would use if he was allowed.

Loras carefully hangs up his clothing and crawls up onto the bed, laying his head against Renly’s shoulder and forcing him to move his datapad in order to keep it in his line of vision.

“Hard day?” he asks.

Loras snuffles and shakes his head. “Long day.” He corrects, and tries to look at Renly datapad even though he knows that it’s Renly’s work one and therefore contains sensitive government documents.
“What are you working on?”

Renly sighs. He could try and distract Loras, or lie, but Loras is a bit like a dog with a bone when he thinks someone is trying to keep a secret. The truth is easier, and will bore Loras quickly enough. “War documents.”

Loras looks up. “We’re not at war.”

“Yet.”

“Ah. Robb Stark and the Northerners.”

Renly nods. “Thank god they gave Jon Snow back, with the Jedi committed to neutrality it has diffused the situation somewhat and the Northerners are willing to meet to negotiate.”

Loras stretches and smiles. “I like Jon Snow. I was chosen to evaluate his skill level in the saber training, and it’s really remarkable. I’ve never seen anyone fight like him it’s amazing. It’s actually a challenge to fight him because it’s so counter intuitive and he basically must have created his own form of lightsaber practice by melding Mandalorian fighting with Jedi techniques, and in a duel he’d probably not last too long but as a melee fighter in the field, which is very rarely saber versus saber, I think he’d be arguable one of the most gifted fighters the Jedi currently have available especially since the council is so distrustful of Lannister which is honestly, unfair, the man is very decent in my experience and surprisingly reliable. Speaking of which have you seen Brienne lately?”

Renly is used to these sudden breaks in Loras’ monologues, and responds without missing a beat. “No, there’s some sort of Jedi business that’s upsetting her and she’s been busy trying to deal with that, not to mention her political activity trying to beat some sense into the public about this bloody war.”

“That hasn’t happened yet.” Loras points out again propped up on his elbows and reading Renly’s pad sidelong. “Well, try and convince her to let me take her shopping sometime. I don’t understand why she insists on looking like a Jedi when she doesn’t have to. Biege is such a terribly unflattering colour on a blonde which is why Jaime Lannister wouldn’t be caught dead in those simple robes she likes so much.

Did I tell you about what Jon’s been wearing? It’s positively divine! Though it’s causing quite the scandal. He was provided with the usual robes, you know the plain ones that Brienne is trying to
imitate for some reason, and he gets called before the council and he’s wearing this custom outfit that is just...stupendous. It’s couture. But, it’s *Jedi* couture, and of course most of the Council is appalled but they can’t say anything because it’s just clothes and all Jedi are allowed their own clothes, though most do try and uphold the possessions and attachments rules by being quite minimalist there, and Jon’s clothes are simple but they are luxurious and elegant and daring and it’s just...I want some. I want some sooo bad. Not exactly the same, his clothes are like “I’m strong and dashing and you want to fuck me but you never ever will” and I’d like something a bit more...”I’m talented and amazing and sexy like a Twilek dancer but scary like a sith lord”. Jon Snow’s got this dark hair, dark eyes, pale skin, striking sort of look, that works well for him, but his colouring and attitude is completely different from mine so as fabulous as he looks there’s no way I would be able to pull that look off.

You’ve got that math all wrong their by the way, whoever did your research should get a reprimand.”

Renly pauses and goes over that in his mind. He scrolls back up to the chart. “What’s wrong about these numbers?”

Loras rolls his eyes and leans over to point. “The number of Jedi peace-keepers you predict would be available to intervene is completely wrong. Especially if we’re not taking a political stand, which so far we aren’t. If we consider this a local conflict the North insurgency will get at most two pairs of two Jedi, and even then odds are it would be Master and Padawan sets, not even two full knights.”

Renly sighs. “You’re saying the Jedi won’t intervene if things get ugly?”

Loras shifts. “They might consider it. They’d definitely talk about it. But, the council so slow moving these days, there’s no way they’d come to an agreement, agree on a motion and put it into effect quickly enough to be of use. Some moron decided to promote Master Thorne to the council and that puts the numbers at a deadlock and without Stannis Baratheon on scene to beat them all into submission to make whatever he wants happen the factions just vote down one anothers bills and nothing gets done it’s ridiculous.

I’m quite resentful of Stannis for falling to a Sith lord in a fabulous low-cut red dress, and I’m guessing that the daringly low cut of the dress had something to do with his seduction. At least I’m assuming the seduction in his case was more than just metaphorical you know what I’m saying? Though, I’ve never understood the appeal of all that myself. I know many men who are primarily attracted to their own gender are still a bit turned on by breasts, but they’ve really just never done anything for me, how about you? I assume with me it’s because I’ve seem Margarey’s so many times and after a while they just stop being impressive. Speaking of which, have you put any more thought into that proposal I made last time I was here-”

Renly winces. “Loras!” he barks, harsher than he means to. “What have I said about talking about your sister in our bed?!”
Loras droops. “Not to do it.” He sits up onto his knees to look at Renly. “But, I don’t understand why you’re so against this. She looks almost exactly like me! Except for different secondary sex characteristics, and you like me and really do feel like the two of you could really help each other-“

Renly puts his hands over his ears. “LORAS!!!”

Loras is blithely confident and completely without shame, and it was such a shock to Renly to meet a Jedi like that, back when they’d first met all those years ago. He hadn’t understood it at all at the time, much more used to Stannis who was stiff and formal to the point of unfeeling. But, when the rumours about the two of them had started flying he’d met Oleana Tyrell and Margarey Tyrell and the pair of them had point blank asked several very uncomfortable questions about his sex life, with a frankness and lack of judgement that had made Renly’s head spin, and suddenly Loras made perfect sense.

Then they’d moved on to realistic and very frightening threats that honestly, Renly could probably still have them arrested for, because the government has gotten quite twitchy about assassination threats against government officials after Robert, Jon Arryn and Ned Stark all dropped dead unexpectedly.

The fact that Oleana and Margarey must have known that and had done it all anyway is just another example of what Renly is talking about.

Now if only Loras would stop suggesting that Renly should sleep with his sister, for complicated political reasons or worse marry her, then Renly would be able to rejoice in his boyfriend’s complete shamelessness instead of being mortified.

Loras crosses his arms and pouts very dramatically in Renly’s direction while also refusing to make eye contact.

Renly takes a deep breath and valiantly tries to change the subject. “What’s going to happen with Jon Snow?” he asks.

Loras glares at him, seeing through the obvious ploy but he can’t stay mad at Renly. “They’ll knight him within a couple weeks is my guess. They knighted Samwell Tarly and nearly made him a Master just for killing that Sith Lord on Bandomeer, and Jon Snow is too advanced for a beginner padawan. They’ll let him take the trials and he’ll pass, because, honestly if you’re strong enough in the Force the trials are themselves are really not that hard, the trick is having your teachers decide you’re ready
to take the trials, and the Council don’t want him as anything but a knight. Like with me, or Jaime Lannister.”

Renly groans and leans his head against the wall. “Because what the universe needs is another Jaime Lannister.”

“It is not Jaime Lannister’s fault that his Master was going on so many dangerous missions that the Council decided to knight him for his own safety. Anymore than it’s my fault that my Master was such a lazy useless slob that the Council knighted me so that they could put him up on charges without it derailing my education.

I don’t know. Jaime’s always been very decent to me. When I first was up for my trials so young he kept taking me aside and giving me all these earnest speeches about making the right choice and committing myself for life and also Jedi history and various Jedi who have f**ked up rather spectacularly and gone down in history as ridiculous f**k-ups. He’s always been very supportive of me..even protective. I think he likes me. As much as he likes anyone at all which is like, no. I don’t think he does. Except maybe Brienne, and that’s kind of sad because he has two siblings and the whole of the Jedi are supposed to be a family but he’s so isolated.

I’m probably the only Jedi he really talks to, and that’s just because we’re both outcasts, though for very different reasons and even then he clearly believes I’m a naive slutty moron. Anyway, He’s a good Jedi by some yardsticks, no matter what your wretched brother used to say about us.

I think Jon Snow will be a good Jedi, too. You should see him fight Renly, it’s like...magical. Honestly.”

Renly eyes him. “Sounds like you’re rather taken with him.” They aren’t exclusive. There are no promises between a Jedi and their lover, none that can be kept anyway. So, they’ve decided they’re free to see other people if that seems like what the moment requires. No attachments after all.

Loras smiles and then to Renly surprise, blushes. Renly hasn’t ever seen Loras blush. Loras has been trying to convince Renly to have sex with his sister for the better part of a year, mainly for political reasons, but also, Renly thinks, because Maragarey has had a strong of bad boyfriends and Loras feels he should share what he considers to be the excellent catch that Renly is to try and cheer her up. Which is all frankly incredibly disturbing and doesn’t even touch on the time Loras’ grandmother had told Renly with a completely straight face that she had used her considerable sexual prowess to rock Mr. Tyrell’s world in order to win over his affections. Until this moment Renly had just assumed that blushing had been bred out of the Tyrell family decades ago.

Loras won’t meet his eye. “I think...we could be friends.” He murmurs. “We have similar skills so maybe we’ll be partnered on missions sometimes. Can you imagine the picture the two of us would make? Stark and Tyrell, the two greatest swordmen of their generation. Fighting the good fight. “
Renly knows he’s smiling like a moron. But, these moments, these moments when Loras doesn’t put up a front or pretend not to care, or act the way his bloody grandmother would approve of. These are the moments that made Renly fall in love with him all those years ago, when Loras had been a too young Jedi knight and Renly had been a too young newly elected senator.

“Well, you should have him over sometime.” Renly suggests.

There’s a pause. Loras goes even redder. “I can’t. He- that is... He doesn’t know, Renly. He hasn’t got a clue about the two of us. He didn’t know my name or my face when I first met him. To him I’m just the best duelist of my generation. I’d like to have a friend in the Jedi, instead of just allies who tolerate me for my skill and snicker at me behind my back.”

Renly feels his heart squeeze. They’ve never talked about how the Jedi view this relationship or how they view Loras for conducting it. Attachment is not grounds for expulsion though it is grounds for judgement and disdain. Loras is infamous in the Jedi and in the religious community for so brazenly carrying on this relationship. Not that there’s any proof. They’ve always ensured that there’s the at least some level of plausible deniability.

The Jedi sneer at him though. They laugh at him. They forget that he once bested Jaime Lannister in single combat, and that this was before Lannister lost his organic hand. They pretend he’s only a Jedi by virtue of his family name, as though they’d dropped him off at the Temple at seventeen to be immediately knighted instead of sending him along when he was eight like most children from significant families. Followers of The Church of the Force are worse. They believe he has betrayed the Jedi code and they curse him for it, call him a blasphemer and shun him. No one takes him seriously.

Loras has never mentioned any of it to Renly. He won’t hear any suggestion of leaving the Order and he’d never complain.

Besides, for all his many faults, Loras is genuinely devoted to the Jedi. It’s a contradiction but it’s fact. Loras believes in the Jedi Code, and the will of the Force. He truly believes he’s found his calling, and he strives with an earnest and almost painfully naïve sincerity to try and achieve those maxims- Peace, Knowledge, Harmony, Serenity, The Force.

Despite that, Renly has never known Loras to be ashamed of the fact that they love each other. He’s always waved it off. *The Code is an ideal*, he’d said with the great certainty of a seventeen year old, back when all this had first began, *and it is impossible for a mere mortal to truly achieve it.*

All Jedi had moments of Ignorance, uncertainty and turmoil. They all had their moments of greed or
rage. What was important was you did not allow those things to prevent you from taking the correct action to uphold the Jedi way, and they all had attachments. Masters loved their padawans, Padawans loved their Masters, Jedi knights loved each other fervently.

_The point of the code_, young Loras had whispered to young Renly, _was not to allow your decisions to be hampered by those attachments. A life was not more valuable because it belonged to someone you loved._

He doesn’t see his attachment to Renly as a failure, just the result of his own imperfection. If he were a better Jedi, he would be able to release this attachment, but as things are Loras requires it, and insists that he’d be a worse Jedi without it.

_Besides_, he had whispered, _that first day when he’d been bold as only a horn seventeen-year old can be. The code forbade attachment, it made no mention at all of celibacy._

“Oh.” Is all Renly can think to say, coming back to the present and turning back to his reading.

Loras nods, tapping his finger against his thigh.

Renly nods. “Well, Jon Snow is a likely boy. Maybe that will work out.”

Loras lies back down and rests his forehead against Renly’s chest. Renly relaxes and starts playing with Loras’ curly hair.

“I hope Jon Snow gets knighted.” Renly muses, going back to reading over supply requirements and troop movements in a war that hasn’t happened yet. “I’d like to know that there was more than one Jedi I could trust.” He feels Loras smile against his skin.

Renly wakes up alone. It’s not unusual. Loras likes to keep up a pretense of plausible deniability even if their relationship is an open secret.

It takes him a moment to realize that the reason he’s awake is the protocol droid is standing in his bedroom. “Lady Brienne of Tarth to see you, Senator.” It informs him primly.
Renly rolls over and checks his calendar. It’s a light day today- a scheduled break in the lead up to the negotiations with the Northern Faction. He has no need of Brienne’s services as his bodyguard today. So, it must be a personal visit.

He yawns scrubs his fingers through his hair and throws on a dressing gown. He wanders out and discovers, to his delight that Brienne has made caf.

She hands it to him wordlessly. She looks troubled. Renly sits at the counter and props his head up on his hand.

“Tarth?” he asks. “Why are you here at this ungodly hour?”

She licks her lips. “I’ve learned something, from Jedi Lannister. I’ve been going back and forth..” she starts pacing the room. “It’s kept me up for days but I’ve decided you needed to know: The Imperials believe that Jon Snow is the son of Rhaegar Targaryen and Lyanna Stark.”

Renly stares at her and then swears. “Kriffing Hell! It’s too early in the morning for this Brienne!”

“They also knew that he was alive this entire time.”


Brienne nods, and silently keeps pacing. Renly sips his drink and mulls this over. Finally, cup now empty he returns it to it’s saucer and takes a deep breath.

“Alright, what did Lannister tell you?” he finally asks.

“The New Imperials think Jon Snow is the son of Rheagar Targaryen and the Stark girl. They kidnapped him to control him for propaganda purposes. The Jedi also knew that Jon Snow was alive this entire time and never even tried to get him back!”

Renly mulls that over. “The Rhaegar thing actually would explain a lot, and him rejoining the Jedi
cuts off any propaganda attempts of the Imperials at the knees, so that’s a relief. If you’re a Jedi, you’re not anything else and that includes royalty. It’s always been that way.”

“What about the fact that the Jedi left a child to possibly tortured and killed?”

“The Jedi wouldn’t risk losing many lives just to save one.” Renly tells her levelly. “By their code all lives are equal.”

Brienne grips the edge of the counter so hard her knuckles show white. “But what about protecting the weak? Championing truth and justice? He was a child and he was under their protection!”

Renly looks at her. “They do their best. Better than most, I’d say.” He puts his head in his hands and massages his forehead. “If the Imperials are preparing propaganda like that it must mean they’re more entrenched than we believe.” Renly bites his lip, staring into the middle distance. “We can’t afford a civil war if they’re waiting for a moment to strike.” He bangs his fist against the counter again. “FUCK!”

Brienne looks at him like he’s betrayed her and he softens, and puts his hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry, about the Jedi. I know how much you admire them.”

She nods sharply, and watches him out of the corner of her eyes.

Jon Snow finds Sam in the library and stare at him awkwardly until he notices Jon is there and looks up from the holocron.

“Yeah?” Sam asks.

Jon swallows nervously and glances around to make sure they won’t be overheard. “I think Loras
Tyrell wants to sleep with me.”

Sam blinks at him. “Why....?”

“He’s....well, he’s always finding excuses to be together and he wants to fight me pretty much constantly, and when I was with the Mandalorians that was pretty much the only step before fucking in the supply closet. Unless you count the part where Ygritte would start groping be right before she hauled me in there. But I figured a Jedi was unlikely to do that part.”

Sam grimaces at Jon’s crude language and he blushes. He’s absorbed more Mandalorian customs than he realized and he’s no longer aware of where the lines are between what is Northern, Mandalorian, or Jedi behaviour.

“I don’t think he wants to sleep with ye.” Sam says with a certain amount of smug knowingness, that Jon doesn’t bother trying to work out. “And when I had sex that was not all how Gilly acted leading up to it.”

“You had sex?”

“Yes!” Sam says proudly.

“With that girl we met from the lower levels?” Sam had first encountered Gilly just before Jon had left with Qhorin Halfhand through a series of unlikely events involving a crashed hoverbike, rule breaking and a pet rabbit.

“Yes!”

“Did she ever find out you were a Jedi?”

“No!” Sam’s face becomes very serious and he grabs the front of Jon’s robes and drags him in close as he hisses. “AND YOU’RE NOT GOING TO TELL HER.”

Jon can’t help it, Sam is so terribly serious and it’s not as though the signs of Jedi-hood are exactly subtle, he just bursts out laughing.
Sam let’s him go, and turns red with embarrassment at his own behaviour. “I suppose she has probably worked it out on her own.” He admits.

Jon tries to catch his breath but he just keeps seeing Sam’s face and it’s too much.

“Padawan Snow?” a voice barks behind him sternly. Jon whirls around to find one of the temple guards watching him with hard cold eyes. “The Council requests your presence.” He looks between Sam and Jon and they can both feel the silent rebuke.

It is not acceptable for them to be making a spectacle of themselves in the library. Not with the way the galaxy is going.

Jon bows his head and makes himself small, Sam notices. He never used to. In the old days Jon would set his chin and answer back. He supposes it’s remarkable that after four years a captive Jon is as relatively unscathed as he has been. But, still, it's weird to think of anyone remotely connected to the Starks as seeming small. Sam follows politics, he remembers the way Ned Stark would roll up to the senate dressed like a drab country bumpkin and still silence a room just by walking in. He watched the Holonet video of Robb Stark shouting down the entire Senate at sixteen, because he was so enraged about Jon’s capture. Jon wasn’t meant to be small, even if he is.

Jon hurries up to the highest point in the spire. He stops dead when he sees a familiar face turn the corner of the hallway near the Council chambers.

It’s Oberyn Martell, just seeing him makes Jon’s flesh crawl at the memory of the way the Imperials had discussed him. The way Oberyn had pretended to-


“Jon Snow.” The familiar voice murmurs. “I had not thought I’d see you again.”

Jon opens his eyes and is surprised to find that Oberyn looks....not remorseful, but grieved maybe. He doesn’t look like the same man who Jon had met as a captive. “You do not belong in a place like this. You should have taken my suggestion and gone to Sunspear.”
Jon bristles at the certainty in Oberyn’s voice, and jerks away from him. “You don’t know anything about where I belong.” He hisses, feeling his eyes fill.

Oberyn steps back. “Just so. But, I understand your family did not want you to return to the Jedi.”

Jon raises his chin. “I am a Jedi, and Jedi leave such things behind when they enter the Order.”

Oberyn looks away, and his mouth curls in something that might be disgust and might be terrible sadness. “We humans never leave such things behind.”

He puts a hand to his heart and bows to Jon. It’s uncomfortable. Jedi, as a rule, are never bowed to. “I wish you all health and happiness. Should you ever need help, know that you may call on me.”

His expression is earnest, but Jon knows he is not a good judge of when a person is lying. He swallows and tries to force himself to meet Oberyn’s gaze. “Thank you, Prince Martell.” He answers stiffly, wondering how Robb or Sansa would react to something like this. His mind skitters away from that, because he doesn’t know. Sam would be polite though. “I am grateful for the concern you have shown me.” He hesitates. “I trust it is thanks to your intervention that my family was able to secure my release from Neo-Imperial captivity.”

Oberyn smiles conspiratorially. “I do not stand for cruelty, my honour wouldn’t allow it. But, I trust you will keep my secret. I have a reputation to maintain after all.”

Against his better judgement Jon finds himself smiling. “No one will ever know you’re anything other than a lecherous hothead.” He assures the Prince. “Not from me at least.”

Jon notices Jaime Lannister turning the same corner as Oberyn did only a moment ago. It must show on his face because the prince’s entire demeanour shifts- he is suddenly the man that Jon met on that god-awful space station again.

He clicks his tongue. “Such a pity you did not go to Sunspear. A face like yours could make a fortune there.”

Jaime frowns and bustles forward. Jon tenses up and takes a step back.
“Leave him be, Martell.” Jaime barks. “He’s under the protection of the Jedi.”

Oberyn smiles ironically. “And much good that protection has done him so far.”

Lannister looks sick. “You’ve made your request. The Council will consider it. Don’t harass the Padawans on the way out.”

Oberyn looks genuinely insulted. “What sort of man do you take me for, Lannister?”

Jaimes glances at Jon and then moves to stand in front of him. “I’m sure I couldn’t ever guess, Your Highness.”

Oberyn forces a smile and bows again to Jon.

Lannister stays in from of Jon until Oberyn has disappeared into the lift. He turns to look at Jon. Jon doesn’t know what to do. He’s never really liked Lannister, who’d been a hard teacher the few times they’d interacted prior to his captivity, but the man had clearly taken a protective role since his return, and as much as Jon would like to pretend he didn’t need it, the truth was it was comforting.

Jaime puts a firm grip on Jon’s arm and pulls him towards the door to the council chambers. He looks at him with something like panic and maybe more like desperation. “You shouldn’t make these choices lightly, Jon Snow.” He hisses. “To become a Jedi is no easy thing, but to stop being a Jedi is nearly impossible. You are only a padawan now, your family is desperate for your return, your path to the knighthood would be hard. If you have any doubts at all you should walk away, before it’s too late.”

He let’s go and steps back. “For your own sake, Jon Snow, as much as it pains me to say it, listen to the Prince of Dorne, whores at least are free, which is more than you will be if you take your vows.”

Jon scowls mulishly. “The council will make whatever choice they believe is proper. If they say they will not have me then I’ll go to North, but if they will, then I will be a Jedi.”

Jaime looks at him, let’s go and steps back. “On your own head be it.” He snarls.
Jon steps around him and opens the door to the council chambers. The heads all turn towards him at once, some look serene, others look distinctly unhappy.

He walks to the centre of the room.

They watch him. Finally the grandmaster speaks. “It has been decided, after much debate, that the correct course of action is for you to attempt the trials. Should you succeed you will become a Jedi Knight in full standing. Your fate now is in your own hands.”

Jon nods. “I will do my best to follow the will of the force.”

Chapter End Notes

So, writing this I discovered that I secretly loved book!Loras with a deep and abiding passion. So here, we are.

Also, one thing you can say abot Jon Snow is the boy knows what he wants, and despite all advice he's gonna get it. Next chapter will probably be Robb-centric feat. Oberyn, Theon and Jaime Lannister.

I hope you all like it! Let me know! Also, as always if there's a character you'd like to see, drop me a comment and I'll try to work them in. ;)
Robb wakes up in the middle of the night and wanders down to Theon’s room with a light in his hand. He kicks the side of Theon’s bed and is gratified that Theon reaches for a blaster under his pillow when he’s startled awake.

Theon blinks at him stupidly. “Robb? How did you get here? Dacey is supposed to be guarding your door.”

Robb rolls his eyes. “It’s Winterfell and I’m a Stark. Get up, I have an errand I need to run.”

Theon sits up and is already getting his boots on. “Your ship, or mine?”

Robb waits by the door. “Yours.”

Theon nods, and pulls on his clothing. “So we’re being discrete then. What do I need to pack, are we doing anything illegal? How many blasters is this gonna take? Is this a night on the town outfit situation or an ass-kicking outfit?”

Robb hesitates, he’s never of Theon’s outfits are which and at this point, he cannot ask without ruining their friendship. “What you’re wearing is fine. It will be a short trip. Hopefully nothing illegal. I’ll meet you in the hangar.”

“You expect me to go out in my PAJAMAS Robb! I have standards! Your sister would never let me live it down.” Theon yells after him.
Robb finds himself stuck when he gets to the ship and finds Rickon sitting in front of the door with the giant of head of... was that a Direwolf? Where had Rickon gotten a Direwolf and more importantly, who had let him keep it...on his lap.

Rickon stares up at him with huge resentful dark eyes. Eyes like Jon, and Bran and Arya. Stark eyes. “You’re going away.”

Robb nods. “Just for a little while Rickon. I’ll be back soon.”

Rickon frowns and Robb notices the muscle in his brother’s jaw jump.

“I know. You’re the only one who ever comes back.”

Robb doesn’t know what to say. Rickon just looks up at him and then shakes his head. He stands up and then the wolf shakes itself and stands too. It’s nearly as tall as his brother.

Rickon shoots Robb one more venomous look and then leaves.

“Is it wrong that that kid scares the ever loving shit out of me?” Theon drawls and Robb jumps in surprise.

Theon is, as expected, suddenly his completely put together self, slightly indecent pants and subtle make-up and everything. He does a trick with the blaster in his belt, flipping it in the air, catching it by the handle and reholstering it in one fluid motion. It makes Robb smile.

Theon always makes him smile.

Robb is always happy when he gets to be near Theon. Things feel simple whenever they’re together. It’s the only relationship he has that isn’t a tortured mess of trauma, disappointment and betrayal or, in Jon’s case, kidnapping. Though, Robb does feel guilty he doesn’t know more about Theon’s private life. He’s a little afraid to ask, worried that it would upset the balance.

But, given that his brother has apparently acquired and tamed a super-predator without Robb noticing, he thinks probably should be slightly more aware of his friends and families personal lives.
He’ll have to update the five-year plan to include a break from politics, on the assumption he makes it through this rebellion alive.

“Everyone is afraid of Rickon.” Robb tells him, only half-joking. “And everyone should be.”

Theon hums. “A shame he wasn’t kidnapped by the Mandalorians. I think that would suit him.”

Robb feels all blood drain out of his face. War-lord Rickon is the last thing the galaxy needs. It’s bad enough that Arya is probably outthere running a crime empire, or becoming an assassin.

Theon must notice, because he changes the subject and Theon nods towards his ship. “Shall we? Though, how I’m supposed to fly you somewhere when you won’t tell me where you’re going is a mystery. This should be an interesting trip, or are you only looking for an excuse to fly around with me?” He waggles his eyebrows and grins.

Robb tries to pretend he hasn’t turned bright red. He wonders how Theon has the energy for this. The man had been dead asleep less than half-an-hour ago.

“Double-check the hyperdrive, we’re going to the Dornish system.”

It’s a longish trip, and once they jump to hyperspace Theon sprawls back in his captain's seat with his legs spread out to take up most of the cockpit and he just looks at Robb.

“I don’t need to remind you that Senator Baratheon is coming to negotiate with you.”

Robb smiles. “No.”

“Or that those negotiations could change the fate of the galaxy?”
“I am aware.”

“Or that if you end up dead in Dorne it would probably fuck-up the negotiations?”

Robb just gives Theon a look.

Theon looks at him, uncharacteristically serious, and then he grins. “You promised Sansa you’d okay the final designs for the Northern uniforms. Just in case the negotiations go badly and mass production needs to start immediately, which is another thing you cannot do if Prince Oberyn kills you, you know like he kills lots of people who annoy him, or you know who show up uninvited in his palace in the middle of the night. Robb, she’ll put you in burnt orange for your burial if you miss that meeting. BURNT ORANGE, with your complexion, for ALL ETERNITY, just think about that okay?”

Robb laughs, but Theon seems genuinely distressed by the possibility.

“Don’t worry, Oberyn won’t kill me, he liked Jon quite a bit from what I hear.”

“EVERYONE LIKES JON! He’s like a handsome mopey houseplant! Or a grey and navy colour scheme, nothing special but literally no one hates it. You are much more of a hard sell, Robb. Definitely not to everyone’s tastes. Though, at least you’ve finally given in and let Sansa choose your clothing, it really has made all the difference. You hardly ever look like a dirty barbarian now.”

Robb looked at Theon. The words sounded like an insult but the way Theon said it almost sounded like a term of endearment, and as for having a dirty face, Theo was the one who constantly had oil on his face, though granted it somehow seem to accentuate his features. A man could cut himself on those cheekbones.

“That’s not a very nice thing to say about Jon, Theon.”

Theon smiles even wider, showing all his teeth.
Oberyn Martell lives up to his reputation and has set a dramatic scene for their introduction. He’s standing on one of the balconies of the high tower in Sunspear, and looking out over the desert. The sunset sets his hair aflame, and kisses his skin, he’s definitely posing.

He turns with a sweep of his dornish robes and raises one eyebrow. “My, you are a beautiful boy.”

Robb turns red. “I heard you were quite taken with my brother as well.”

Oberyn’s lips quirk up in the ghost of a smile. “Your brother is a vision of loveliness, that is true, but I was not referring to yourself- your face is one I have seen many times before- I was speaking to your bodyguard.”

Robb turns to look at Theon who is standing in the doorway trying not to look pleased. Robb looks back to Oberyn and decided well, Theon could do worse.

It actually endears the Prince to Robb. Theon wants to be looked at, it’s obvious in everything he wears and everything he does. It shows that Oberyn has good taste if nothing else. Not everyone seems to appreciat how good Theon looks in those pants.

“My mistake.” Robb apologizes with a small bow. “I should not have assumed.”

Oberyn acknowledges his bow and then looks at him for a long moment. “Why are you here, Young Wolf?”

“You saved my brother.”

Oberyn gestures to a table and pulls out a chair. “Again, you mistake another for the handsome young man beside you, and even if I had a rescued your brother, a nice fruit basket would have sufficed. I’m partial to strawberries- I hear they have aphrodisiac qualities, and I’d like to partake in them.” The last bit seems to be directed towards Theon.

Robb glances at Theon again and back at Oberyn. “I know exactly what Theon did, how he did it and why. And I know none of it would have been possible without your help. What I don’t know is why you helped him. My brother is a Jedi. You hate the Jedi, famously and with great and loud
passion. He was captured by Imperials, and you and your family were loyalists.” Robb waves his hand, and sits down. “I could go on.”

Oberyn leans back, and his eyes flick to Theon again. “Surely, if you wished to know these things a king would have more diplomatic ways of finding out, rather than showing up unannounced to ask them point blank.”

Robb smiles back. “I am a Northerner, we have a reputation for forthrightness, that I wish to maintain. Besides, I asked your allies and your enemies about you and they all gave me different answers.”

Oberyn feigns surprise. “Oh?”

“Indeed.”

He looks at Theon, and pulls back the chair on the other side of him from Robb. “Come, beautiful boy. Sit here. This is not a formal visit.”

Theon looks hesitantly at Robb before lowering himself gingerly into the fancy chair. Robb has to hide his smile behind his hand. He clearly needs to take Theon to nicer places, the Reaver Prince looked like he thought the table would bite him at any moment.

Oberyn turned back to Robb. “So, you find my incosistencies...intriguing.”

Robb refuses to be taken in. “I find in them a pattern. You are your brother’s agent, and I doubt there is much you do that is not directly or indirectly in the service of Dorne.”

Oberyn raises his eyebrows. “That is quite the leap of conjecture, and I do so many things, and honestly I’m not a Lannister, I have no desire to think about my brother when enjoying...company.”

Theon has told Robb the rumours about the Lannister siblings, but he’s never had them dropped in conversation quite so casually before. Robb doesn’t know exactly what Oberyn’s plan is but he clearly does not want Robb to be comfortably in this situation. Little does Oberyn know that between Theon, Renly, and for a short but very scarring time, Jon, who the Wildlings had apparently stripped of any shame or common decency when it came to his bedroom (though apparently there was quite a lot of activity happening outside the actual bedroom in that case, which honestly just doesn’t seem
comfortable), Robb has gotten very good at ignoring these sorts of inappropriate comments.

“If you really are a hot headed adventurer allowing yourself to blown about by your passions and the whims of fate than, at worst I insult or alienate you. If you are what I suspect you are, then I must ask you: how was saving my brother in the service of Dorne?”

Oberyn grins and raises one finger in objection. “But, you mistake, I did not work with you to save your brother. I worked with the Mandalorians, as did your own bodyguard, though, perhaps without your knowledge.”

Robb nods, understanding. “Ah.”

“Yes. Quite.”

Theon looks between the two of them. “Ok, what just happened? I’m lost.”

“It was not in the interest of Dorne to rescue Jon Snow, but it was in their interest to keep him out of Imperial hands. A surprising stance given the family history.” Robb explains.

Theon looks a little worried. Robb doesn’t blame him, after all it had been his split second decision to betray the Mandalorians that had ruined a plan that, from the Dornish perspective, otherwise would have gone off without a hitch.

Oberyn quirks his lips. “Jon Snow is an important piece in the game, one that it is dangerous to allow to remain on the board.”

“Sorry, I ruined your move.”

Oberyn waves it off. “It is no matter. I am inconvenienced to find him back in the galaxy proper, but it is still a victory to keep him out of Daenerys’ hands.”

Robb considers it. “Why is he so dangerous?”
Oberyn looks surprised. “You mean you haven’t heard the rumours?”

Robb shakes his head. Theon cocks his and thinks about it. “I might’ve.” He admits. Robb grins. Theon is an incorrigible gossip.

“What rumour is this?”

Oberyn’s eyes flick between the two of them. “That Jon Snow’s mother was Lady Lyanna Stark.”

Theon grins and stretches out in a decidedly self-satisfied way. “I had heard that one. It’s part of a matching set with Jedi Lannister and his sister Cersei, and Robert Baratheon and his brothers. I never gave it much credit myself.”

Robb can’t help staring at the pair of them with his mouth open. Oberyn looks like he’s trying to decide between laughing out loud or smacking Theon upside the head for being a moron.

He opts for a smirk instead. “Not that one. The one where Jon Snow’s father is Rhaegar Targaryan, my dear departed sister’s undeserving husband.”

Robb stops breathing for a moment because that makes sense. That makes perfect sense and all sorts of little moments, and facts and oddities from his childhood are connecting, and oh shit. His brother isn’t his brother. Fuck.

Theon slaps his knees, and guffaws, looking at Robb to share the joke. Robb just sends him a stare that he hopes is icy but may just be panicked and hisses. “Theon.”

Not even hearing about Jon’s sex life could have prepared him for this.

Oberyn smiles in a very smug way. “I suppose we’re both learned something from this visit.” Robb guesses that his reaction must have confirmed something that had until now only been a theory.

Theon looks like he’s trying to put together a very difficult puzzle. “Wait, how would you have even found that out?”
“I know many powerful gynaecologists.”

Robb didn’t think that was true but it made as much sense as anything else.

Oberyn stands to leave. “If there is nothing else?”

Robb takes a deep breath and meets his gaze. “Actually there is. It’s the real purpose of my journey here.”

Oberyn frowns and sits down again. “Well?”

“Your brother plays the part of a true loyalist to the Republic, but you’ve been networking with enemies of the Republic for years, not to mention the Dornish controlled systems are a little...out of the way. It takes so long for shipments to reach Northern worlds from here, and it would be such a shame if supplies and troops just were delayed, or...” Robb gestures to Theon “...happened to be stolen by Reavers.”

Oberyn looks pleased. “And what would Dorne get out of this?”

“The loyalty and appreciation of the First Men, not to mention, if our rebellion succeeds, it paves the way for your own independence. Once we form our own government we’d happily enter into a trade agreement, should that interest you.”

Oberyn bites back a grin and sends Theon a sultry look. “Well, how can I refuse if it means this charming young man will visit?”

Robb rolls his eyes. This seduction schtick is getting old. “So, can I rely on your word? Will Dorne remain neutral in the conflict?”

Oberyn smiles. “Of course, though everyone speaks of war as though it is inevitable. I am not quite yet convinced. There is a meeting between Senator Baratheon and yourself planned isn’t there?”
Robb wakes up when the timer that turns on his lights and opens his blinds goes off. He lies there for a minute and stares at the ceiling. It’s a big day. He wishes he didn’t have to deal with it. He wishes Jon were here.

He gets up. The clothes have already been chosen. It’s embarrassing how much time and how many people had input on what he was going to wear today.

“It’s important.” Sansa had insisted, tightlipped and pale with fury or determination, it was getting harder and harder to tell with her.

So, powder blue tunic in the northern style, jerkin, cloak, hair carefully set.

He steps out the door and Theon and Dacey, who now both act as full-time bodyguards, fall into step behind him. Robb still feels embarrassed whenever he thinks about the fact that he’s got two adults minding him. His father never had a bodyguard a day in his life, and despite what his advisors and his sister say, Robb knows that a bodyguard wouldn’t have changed anything that day at the Senate.

Winterfell in now the central command of a burgeoning army. There’s been no declaration but they are at war and there are a dozen two-minute conversations Robb needs have so he can sign off on decisions. Supplies, munitions, etiquette and diplomatic missives.

He saves Sansa for last. She’s sitting in a meeting room looking pensively at the latest version of the uniform. It’s supposed to denote freedom, unself-consciousness, and counter intuitively as far as Robb is concerned, appear non threatening. Robb has absolutely no idea how a set of clothes can say all that but Theon gasps at the minor alterations Sansa has made, and Theon, despite having a very unique personal style, is the most fashion literate person Robb knows after Sansa.

So he gives it the okay. Sansa looks like she wants to argue but depending how today goes they may have to starts mass producing them tomorrow.

Then he heads to the landing dock. Senator Baratheon will be arriving any minute. With a few words they might save the galaxy from civil war, or start one.
Robb has everything in his place. The Shuttle lands and Robb steps forward to shake Renly Baratheon’s hand.

“Welcome to Winterfell, Senator!”

Chapter End Notes

Robb is oblivious. So oblivious. Oberyn is trying to drop some hints, but Robb is not getting it. Also Oberyn is very difficult to write.

Thanks to everyone who's been following this story! I am trying to wrap it up but it's gotten kind of out of hand. It will probably be 3 or 4 chapters till we get to the end.

End Notes

I've written several bits and pieces of this verse, I'm just trying to put them into something like an order. It's probably going to be a relatively long fic, but the chapters do vary quite a bit in length, so we'll see.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!