Sansa is the main witness in the DA’s case against the Lannister family. She stays holed up in an apartment, resigned to the fact that her life is put on hold until the trial ends. One rainy winter day she discovers that a certain someone is back in town and things begin to fall out of place.
Chapter 1

She rushed into the house, flinging her gloves and keys on the table and reached for her phone. It had been ringing for some time now, lost in the deep pockets of her coat. An unknown number flashed on the screen.

"Hello?" she gasped "Who is this?" An unmistakable rasp greeted her. Blue eyes widened and she smiled, it seems Arya was wrong. "Sansa? It’s me... Clegane. I... You still have the same number, good... How... How have you been?"

"You watch the news don’t you?" She wanted to laugh, but it almost turned into a sob. Why was the house so cold?

She’d been trying to forget. Robb’s murder. Endless questions about Joffrey, about Tyrion and about Robb, even about her father. She didn’t know who was worse, the police, or the reporters. Then Baelish had come out from nowhere and offered to help her with the investigation. His star witness. That’s what the lawyer had said and she didn’t trust him, but she had little choice. He had helped her, it was true. She had perfected the art of hiding the truth. So many lies to keep up with. She had lost count.

"Yes" he said "bloody hell. I..." his voice trailed off and she stood there, her soaking coat and umbrella making a small puddle in the hallway. "How are you doing Sandor?"

It had been almost two years. "Come with me!" He had said, drunk and mad and afraid. She could feel his gun even now, cold against her temple; and warm, sticky blood, his blood and tears coating her fingers. She had thought about it many times since then, wondering what would have happened if she had left with him that night. They always turned up dead in her dreams. Both of them dead in some motel room, in an alleyway, in the flaming wreckage of a car chase.

"I’m back in town and I’m doing better than I have any right to. That’s why I’m calling, I... I need to apologize."

She leaned her back against the front door "Apologize?"

"Shit, yes, I need to. I should never have come to your room that night and..."

"Sandor!" she interrupted, "Nobody was thinking straight when the shooting started. You tried to help..."

A strained noise came from the other end "I held a gun to your head! I could have killed you. I could have..." his voice broke. "Bloody hell, two years later and you still try to make shit into roses!" He was almost shouting now, all his hesitance had suddenly disappeared. Typical.

"Two years and you still can’t let a simple word go Clegane, is this part of the apology?" She gritted her teeth. As if her day hadn’t been bad already.

"Shit, little bird; I didn’t... I’m not good at this." he said in a calmer voice.

"Nonsense, you always had an excellent gift for taking what I say and tearing it apart till it was hollow. Why are you really calling?" She didn’t think it possible but she felt even more bitter and drained than before. If only some wine could magically appear and make everything better.

"That’s the only reason I’m calling Sansa... I’ve been getting some help and thinking about many
things lately. I was a fucking asshole and I hurt you. I..." he let out a long breath "I failed you so many times. I... Sorry..."

"Of all the people in the world Sandor, I never..." she rubbed her eyes and sighed, sinking further down the door; she was almost sitting on the floor. "Thank you. You never failed me though, you know. It turned out a mess for everyone involved... At least we’re still alive, right?"

He laughed but it wasn’t a happy sound, "It’s not over..."

"I’m not sure it ever will be" she said. Not even an hour had passed since Baelish had stopped making her go through her testimony over and over. She wasn’t sure she could tell the difference between the truth and gilded perjury anymore.

"Are you doing alright, girl?" he asked and it surprised her. The honest concern in his voice was something she had grown to not expect from people when they were addressing her.

"Nothing I can’t deal with in time, it’s just that this has been a very hard day."

"Shit, can’t have made it much better with my whiny crap. Be safe, ok?"

"Thanks Sandor... Do you..." he had already ended the call.

"Do you want to get some coffee and catch up", the words rang out in her empty apartment and she understood how ridiculous she sounded. Stupid, stupid, stupid. Joffrey’s ex-girlfriend and Joffrey’s ex-bodyguard strolling through town together. Not even Baelish could tame the press after that. Years after his death and he would still control her it seems.

Sansa sighed and got up; shoulders slumped, she dragged her feet to her room. She fixed the thermostat and undressed in a slow, mechanical manner. Sansa always felt the need to shower after every meeting with the so very much esteemed DA. She stood under the falling water for the longest time, trying to wash away the day’s stress and hardly succeeding.

When she came out, she didn’t bother gathering her towel properly and flung it on a chair. She walked towards her wardrobe, her wet hair sending rivulets of water down her skin and on to the carpet, but she didn’t care. She rummaged around until she found it hidden away at the very back.

Sandor’s leather jacket was buried under a summer dress she hadn’t worn in years.

She ran her fingers over the scuffs and burns, her eyes closing for just a moment before taking it out and placing it over her shoulders. She pulled it close from the inside and buried her nose in the soft lining. It didn’t smell like him anymore, but she could pretend.

Outside the rain had started again.

She lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling until she fell asleep, still covered in his heather jacket.
Chapter 2

He looked at the cop straight in the eyes and scowled at him for good measure. The kid didn’t flinch and took the seat opposite him in silence. Bah, he’d been away too long. He added a sneer and finally got a reaction. The boy scowled back and shifted backwards in his seat. That’s more like it.

He looked familiar, there was something about him. He was definitely too young to have been a cop last time he was in town. He stole a glance at his tag. G. WATERS. Where the fuck did he know him from...

They hadn’t charged him with anything yet and the officer that picked him up said he was just wanted for questioning. But they never just wanted him for questioning. Was it the fifth time he had been in this very precinct, in this exact room? Add to that a couple of actual arrests and he had seen enough of the 5th to last him a lifetime. No charges though. There were never any charges. None they could make stick anyhow. But now it was different, no Lannister lawyer was going to walk through the door and sort this fucking mess out. Not even a bit of panic and confusion to make him a lesser priority. Not like last time. This was going to be interesting. He took a sip of his coffee and grimaced.

The door opened and an unwelcome old face walked in, with files and a smug grin.

"Fucking Lem, I should have fucking known" he murmured, rolling his eyes.

"Oh, now! Great to see you too Clegane! Haven’t seen me in years and that’s your hello? I feel hurt!" he sat next to the Waters and smiled. "I hope you find the accommodations to your satisfaction."

"Your coffee is still shit if that’s what you mean and that fucking light has been broken for what, is it five years now?" he motioned to the flickering light on the ceiling that made the room dance. "It feels just like home. What the hell have you brought me in for Lem?" he rasped.

"Didn’t the girl say? Just a few questions."

"Bullshit, you know I’ve just come back in town, hell you saw me the last day I was in this snake pit, two fucking years ago. Is this the part where you tell me to be careful and keep my nose clean and my feet on the straight and narrow? Or else?"

"I don’t know Clegane, you planning to start up again?"

"And what would I be starting up again?" he crossed his arms and leaned forward. "I couldn’t possibly be using my position and skills to order revenge hits on civilians; somebody’s already cornered that market." he spat out, reveling in the fact that Lemoncloak finally dropped that fucking smile.

"You better watch what you say Clegane, you don’t have many friends left" Lem said. He had more frown lines since the last time he had seen him. Good.

"I never had any friends," he said and shrugged "but I do hear things. Now what the fuck do you want with me?"
"Where have you been for the last two years?" he asked in a flat tone. So it was back to the regular.

Sandor tossed a card at him "If you’re looking for alibis, call this number. I was working there, for food and board". First honest work I’d done in years he thought. "I don’t have to answer a fucking thing without a lawyer. So charge me or let me go."

The kid stood up and leaned right into his face "You'll stay here and answer the fucking questions, asshole!"

Good move, the rookie was risking his jaw of course, but if he was a bit younger and a bit drunker he may have done something unwise. Something that would let them keep him in a holding cell at least overnight. He stayed in his chair, arms still crossed, but his hands were in fists, clenching and unclenching like a pulsing heart.

"Where is Arya Stark, Clegane?" Lem said in his flat questioning voice, and there it was, the reason he’d been dragged there before he’d even had his morning coffee.

"How would I know where the Stark sister is?" he said, taking another sip of that god-awful coffee.

Waters pulled a couple of photos out of a file and slammed them in front of him. They were from security cameras. In the back you could clearly see a large man and a tiny girl, walking away from the station and the man seemed to have a close hold on her.

That night should have been a blur, but he still remembered it like a fucking movie. He had stepped out of the 5th with sirens wailing around him and officers running around like fools, when he spotted her. She was trying to break into a detective’s car of all things and he had grabbed her and pulled her away. She had argued and screamed until he put his hand over her mouth. Little bitch had bitten him. He traced the scar at the edge of his palm.

"Who am I supposed to be looking at? Is it you two on a night off?"

"Cut the crap, Clegane!" Lem said. "There have been multiple reports of two people matching your descriptions, heading out of town and going north. You’ve come back alone, where is the girl?"

"Didn’t your multiple reports say?" he tossed the photos back at them.

"Where is she?" this time it was the boy that asked, snarling at him. There was rage in his eyes sure, but Sandor could also see hurt, hurt and despair. Shit. He was the boy that was in holding with Arya when he first noticed her at the station. He sighed. Fuck it.

"Let’s say I did leave with her, hypothetically, I still wouldn’t know where she is now. Hell I don’t even know if she’s still alive..."

Waters’ face fell and Lem shot him a concerned look "Where was she headed last time you saw her, Clegane... Hypothetically of course" Lem added.

"Hypothetically?"

He thought he was going to die that night. Fuck, he had goaded her into shooting him. That’s how his story should have ended, the bitter killer bleeding out in the rain. It would have been a fitting end to a rotten life, that’s how men like him died. She hadn’t done him the favor.

"She may or may not have left me bleeding in the parking lot of a dirty motel a couple of miles off Towers Bridge, after she held a .45 to my head... God knows where she went then. As a betting man, I’d wager my car she’s still around somewhere. She’ll show up again." he said and it wasn’t
just for the young man’s ears. That girl was too stubborn to die and she could hold a gun bigger than her head like it was a part of her.

"Am I free to go, officers?"

They asked him a couple more questions, then cut him loose. "Watch your back, Clegane!" Lem had said and he didn’t know if it was a threat or advice. Either way, he didn’t give a shit.

He straightened his shoulders and waited for the elevator. That little brat with the bloody hands can’t be dead. Does her sister know? Has she been looking? He had wanted to tell her, tell her everything and be done with it, but he held back. Dumb brute.

The doors opened and he went forward, his mind lost in thought, almost crashing in to the woman trying to get out. She let out a small gasp of surprise and steadied herself, trying not to drop the box she was carrying. Light brown hair spilled out of her hoodie and half her face was covered by large sunglasses. "I’m so sorry" she said and he frowned. "No, I..." he tried to apologize. She lifted up her head and froze, staring at him.

His lips tightened, he should be fucking used to this.

Then she smiled and he felt lost.

Fuck.

"Sansa?"

Chapter End Notes

Hope this sudden change in POV didn't throw you off!
I'm thinking of updating this every Monday and Thursday... Thoughts?
Thanks so much to everybody that liked this, commented and subscribed! <3
Chapter 3

She rushed towards Gendry’s desk and found him standing over a stack of paperwork like a man trying to dispose of a dead body. She steadied herself and walked over.

"Good morning dear!" he glanced up and gave her a small nod and a weak smile.

"Is everything all right?" she asked, forgetting her own troubles. She left the box of cupcakes she was carrying at the side of his desk.

"Better now!" he said looking down at the box "good morning indeed!"

He opened it and hummed. "Oooh, chocolate, thanks! I needed this" he sighed and was about to say something. Then his eyes went to someone behind Sansa and he closed his mouth, his face settling into its previous solemn state.

A detective came by and left a file on the already towering pile. "Chief wants them filed by tomorrow" she said and smirked at Gendry, waggling her eyebrows and tilting her head in a hardly discreet manner towards Sansa. He sat down with a groan.

"I’m pretty sure half the precinct is taking bets on whether you’re my girlfriend or not." he said after the detective was well out of earshot.

"You haven’t told anyone, have you?"

"Of course not Alayne!" he winked at her and she rolled her eyes and smiled. "I can’t believe nobody’s figured you out yet, they’re supposed to be cops!" he said, his voice muffled by large mouthfuls of cake.

She peered at him over her sunglasses. "Do I look anything like I’m supposed to?" she motioned to her baggy hoodie and torn up jeans, tucking a strand of brown hair behind her ear for good measure.

He chuckled. "No, you look more like..." he paused and frowned. "Damn it." he said under his breath.

She came closer and softly squeezed his hand. "She’s going to come back you know."

Cupcakes and vague optimism were a poor substitute for the truth. She wished she could tell him, but she had given her word, so she just smiled.

"Hey stop that or people will really think you’re my girlfriend!" he jerked his hand away and smiled at her, but his eyes were misty.

He had been the only kind face in a sea of accusing investigators. At first she thought he was playing good cop when he got her some tea and a box of tissues, yet he surprised her. He introduced himself and started talking about her little sister. He was with Arya for the couple of months after she left home. He never talked about anything in detail, but there was a darkness to him, the kind of darkness one feels every day after they witness murder. She knew it well.

Gendry in that moment had not been an officer inquiring into a person of interest. When he had asked her if she knew anything about Arya’s whereabouts, he had been a concerned friend. She had seen those same teary blue eyes back then, nothing compared to her puffy eyes and red nose of course, but she was glad to not feel like she was the only one looking for Arya because she loved
her. It had given her hope. Since that first time, he had rarely mentioned Arya by name and avoided talking about her.

She didn’t expect today to be any different.

He turned away from her and grabbed the top half of the pile closest to him.

She was about to say goodbye when he looked up again.

"I know you said you’ve moved to a new place and it’ll be hard for anyone to find you, but Clegane is back in town." Gendry said with furrowed brows.

"He won’t be a problem, Gendry. He left the Lannisters years ago."

"He’s still dangerous, so keep an eye out and call me if anything goes wrong, okay?" he said.

She nodded. "Thanks, Gendry..."

Still dangerous... She was sure there had been no one else near the elevator, so it was silly of her to worry, yet it ate away at her no matter what she told herself. It had been barely more than a whisper and the sound of her name in an open place made her panic.

She had just muttered "Good day!" and sped off, making her way to Gendry in long strides. She rubbed her neck and frowned. She needed to fix this.

"I have to go dear, I’ll leave you to your filing." she gave his hand one last squeeze. "I’m taking one of these if you don’t mind" she said, taking a cupcake out of the box.

"Sure, sure..." he waved her away and opened a file, sighing. "Thanks again."

"Good luck with those!" she said and headed for the exit.

"You’re a goddess Stone!" he shouted after her. She laughed and turned around. He gave her a wide chocolaty smile and waved.

"Be careful out there Waters!"

As soon as she was in the elevator she took out her phone and scrolled through her incoming calls. She looked at the unknown number from yesterday and bit her lip. She could not decide what to do and made her way out of the station, still wondering what the best course of action was.

She had to speak to him.

Her bottom lip was about to start bleeding from all her worrying. They needed somewhere private and close. A safe place. She let out a long breath and started texting.

"Sorry about before. In about half an hour I’ll be at the place you always used to find me at when I went missing. Can you meet me there?"

She pressed send and walked down the street. It was a lovely day for December, crisp and sunny. Nothing compared to yesterday’s nightmare.

Sansa sat down at a bus stop, placing the cupcake on her lap and took out her phone. She removed the battery and put it and the phone back in her pocket. She didn’t wait for an answer; she just hoped he would come.
Baelish had promised that he respected her privacy, but she had long suspected that he was tracking her phone, if not actually listening in on her calls. No one had been following her today, so she was confident she’d be off the grid for a while. He would ask her of course, but this gave her more time to come up with a nice alternative story.

He could figure out where she was going with ease and send his people to shadow her, but this bought her some time. Besides, his resources were spread pretty thin because of the upcoming trial and elections, she doubted he would personally oversee her movements.

She got on the downtown bus, heading towards the little church that had been her refuge and hoping that she would have company.
The church was surrounded by buildings almost twice its size. The gap between the tall rises was impossible to miss, as was the small encompassing garden, bursting with green even in the cold of winter.

Sandor parked his car down the street and walked towards the church in slow uncertain steps. The place you always used to find me...

After a while he didn’t even bother looking for her in other places. The others didn’t know about how her feet found their way there, time after time, despite the restrictions, the distance and the dangers. He had long suspected that she wasn’t just praying, he was sure that he’d caught her once hiding something in the pews, though he made no mention of it to security. Those fuckers didn’t even notice she was missing half the time, but he went to find her, to bring her back safe. Better him than those animals on the Lannister payroll. Better a criminal than a corrupt cop. He didn’t hide what he was behind a fucking badge.

The small gate was open and he made his way down the cobbled pathway. He thought about turning back. It hadn’t been the first time since he’d received her message. The fact that this was a terrible idea was constantly at the back of his mind. But she had asked him to come; she was expecting him, so here he was.

He stood in front of the front door, a simple wooden thing if not for its size. It didn’t even have a handle, just bronze rings on either side. He grasped one and pulled, hoping the large door would creak and groan, announcing his presence. It swung open with no sound. He stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

Sansa was not there yet and he let out a sigh. It was the first time he was in this damn place alone. He felt a chill go up his spine. The walls were covered with paintings of stern old faces, their sunken eyes looking at him in silent judgment, as the lit candles along the walls cast shadows everywhere.

He always used to find her at that corner, kneeling and trembling, prayers stumbling out of her mouth. "God won’t help you." he’d told her "What has he ever done for you?” God, if such a thing even existed, didn’t care. He had been sure of it.

Sorry about before...

She looked like a stranger, yet felt the same somehow. Her smile... When he saw it again, it didn’t seem like years had gone by since the last time he felt it pierce through him. It hadn’t been often then, how could it have been, but anytime she smiled, truly smiled, she unmade him. It was like lightning across a stormy sky, bright and stunning, godlike. And terrifying as hell. God save the man that found himself in its path.

He usually had responded to it by falling back to his strengths, intimidation and scorn. Asshole.

He saw light fill the room and turned around. The door had opened and she came in, surrounded by light. Just fucking great... As the door closed behind her, it took a moment for his eyes to adjust. She’d come forward, candlelight bouncing off the corners of her face. How could he not have recognized her at the station? She moved closer to him, too close. He took a step back, she was
smiling again. He steadied himself and crossed his arms.

"You came!" she said, smile widening.

"What do you want Sansa?" He asked, looking down at his feet.

"It’s Alayne now, Alayne Stone..." she sighed. "That’s why I ran earlier, sorry. I’ll... I’ll explain. Cupcake?" she said, offering him the cupcake in her hand.

He looked at it bewildered and then up at her. She was biting her lip and looking at him with wide, pleading eyes. He decided to shut up and take the cupcake, waiting for her to speak again.

She took a deep breath and sat at a pew near the back, inviting him next to her with a tilt of her head.

"I’ve been keeping out of the public eye ever since..." she trailed off. "Do you remember how much they chased us around? If they weren’t professionals, it was any idiot with a camera phone." she said bitterly.

No money and threats could stop all the stories from leaking on the web. The little shit had been enraged when photos of her bruised face had found their way to the public. He had dropped ten points in the polls and had kept screaming that it was her fault. It had only made him take measures to ensure new bruises could remain hidden. Two days later she had been forced to smile and laugh for a ten page glossy spread about their perfect relationship. Nobody seemed to fucking care that the girl winced every time her back touched a surface. He had sat by and done nothing. He frowned, his free hand tightly gripping the bottom of his seat.

"When their precious little prince died they took full advantage of their media outlets. The press called for my blood, as much as they hated Joffrey they loved milking the story for all it was worth. They were everywhere. I had to drop out of college. I stayed in my apartment for days, ordering food in and keeping the shutters closed." her voice had began to break but she cleared her throat and continued.

"He phoned me then, Bealish. He’s the new DA. He offered me a deal. I walked in his office as Sansa Stark and emerged two days later as Alayne Stone. I’m working for him and I live at one of his properties. Not much has changed really; I’m just kept in different cages."

"That doesn’t sound like witness protection. Where is your security detail?"

"I don’t have one. It’s not witness protection; he’s just helping me stay out of the spotlight until the trial is over. I’m still scared every time I go out that someone will recognize me, a security detail would just make me obvious."

"I doubt Cersei’s little private army isn’t looking for you. You need protection."

"I imagine Cersei would love tearing me apart, but she can’t at the moment. Most of their assets are frozen, the Tyrells have moved in on their territory, payoffs haven’t been steady and arrests for corruption have been high. They are struggling for survival and the death of yet another witness would not look good for them." she shrugged. This was a conversation she was familiar with.

"You think they care?" He roared. "They took out the fucking pride of the North, when the entire world was watching!"

Fuck.

Narrowed eyes that threatened to spill angry tears zeroed in on him.
"Joffrey is dead."

"Tywin is dead. Jaime is tied up in a hostile takeover with Edmure, two cities away. Tyrion has disappeared god knows where and nobody is after him, even though she hated him more than she ever hated me. The few men she still has are guarding Tommen and trying to bring Myrcella home safely. People say she’s scared to walk out the house."

"It is not the same. This time..." she said, balled fists trembling at her sides. "This time they’re going to pay."

"It’s still the same, make no mistake. If they don’t come after you now, they will in the future. Lannisters always pay their debts. If even a single one is left standing after this, they will come for you, remember that."

"Then they would find me, with or without witness protection."

"How did you survive?" she asked, staring at the painted dome above them. "It’s not like you would be hard to track down."

"I matter even less than you do in their games. They probably figured I was dead."

"Don’t say that. Don’t ever say that, Sandor."

"Don’t say that. Don’t ever say that, Sandor."

"I’m not important, never have been."

"I wouldn’t be alive if it hadn’t been for you."

They’d stopped the convoy transferring the prisoner and opened the door. She’d been sobbing and pleading the whole time. It didn’t matter. Ned Stark had been brought to the edge of the road. A shot was heard and he’d crumpled in front of them. The once proud commissioner, the damn war hero, wasted with a bullet to the back of the head.

She’d passed out when Ilyn Payne fired his gun, but Joffrey, fucking monster that he was, made sure she saw her father’s body. He’d forced her to look at the head. Half of the face was gone, blood and brains spilling out. She’d stared at it in silence, tears running down her cheeks. "It’s a shame that Stark escaped and brave officer Payne had to shoot him down, don’t you think? It’s your brother’s turn next" he’d said, smirking at her. "Or maybe it’s yours" was her reply and Joffrey had ordered Trant to hit her.

He had to stop her. The moment he had seen the look she shot Joffrey, eyeing the distance between the road’s edge and the jagged rocks bellow, he knew he had to stop her. One more step and she was as good as dead.

"And what a life it’s been." he muttered. "You deserved better."

"Life isn’t a fairytale" she said and her words stung.

"Watch yourself now that you’re back. You might think you’re not important, but the guy that betrayed the Lannisters... Let’s just say your arrival will be noted and used. I don’t know how. The DA’s office will contact you. Don’t trust Baelish."

"You seem to." he frowned.

"No. I don’t. I’m just letting him use me, because I have no other choice. Take care, Sandor."

She left and he was still sitting down, holding an uneaten cupcake in his right hand.
Chapter End Notes

A big thank you to everyone that has liked and reviewed this, you really keep me typing!

I'm worried that with two updates a week, my editing may be off and the writing seems rushed...

If you notice anything please tell me <3
It was raining again and she didn’t want to get up.

The alarm went off a second time, killing the last traces of pleasant slumber and replacing them with drowsy irritation. She let out a muffled grumble and kicked off the covers.

She stumbled to the kitchen and put on the coffee machine, rubbing her eyes. The fridge was almost empty; she had to remember to go shopping after work. She resigned herself to eating scrambled eggs, well egg really; those cupcakes had exhausted her supplies.

She turned on the stove, reaching in the cupboard for a mug and a frying pan. Soon she was drinking coffee and making her breakfast, her mood not improved by caffeine.

She had slept very little yesterday.

She looked down at the sizzling white and yellow mess in the frying pan.

The day had started so well. It was her day off and she got up a full hour earlier than usual, feeling rested for once. So she’d made Gendry cupcakes and left the house with a smile on her face. She had returned with a headache and a lump in her throat.

Sandor...

Sansa had thought him dead for so long and there he was. Broad, burnt and looming as always, though he seemed changed somehow. His eyes were kinder, less wild. It might have been his brother’s death or just being dead and away from this hell. She had run away from him before she could find out. Twice she ran, the first time she had been far less upset than the second. She had walked out of that church with her heart pounding. He might have seemed calmer but he could still make her loose her footing.

Baelish had told her many lies. It was the one lie she had allowed herself to believe. That she was safe from the Lannisters. Even though she sometimes woke up at nights, her mind screaming from the terror of bruises, blood and a vicious smile. Even though she no longer answered blocked numbers because she knew that it was a rough voice waiting to threaten her. Even though the sound of her name in a public space made her run. After everything she had to believe it.

He had ripped her eyes open and it was like she was drowning. It had been slow, but the moment she heard herself spit out Baelish’s words the doubt came crashing down. She gave him a quick warning and left, her lungs begging for air. She had to leave, run away before she started trembling and crying. She hated that she could still feel that way, inside her refuge, with a man that wouldn’t harm her.

A good man.

No.

An honest man.

It might have been a lie, when he told her that he could keep her safe, but he believed it.
Life isn’t a fairytale. She wanted to scream.

She watched the morning news and ate her breakfast in slow tortured mouthfuls. The Tyrells were throwing yet another fundraiser for one of their charities. They were not commenting on the constant rumors that Margaery was planning to run for office. As if it wasn’t obvious. Then suddenly she saw images of a young woman with long red hair coming out of a limo and entering her late aunt’s estate. They thought Sansa Stark had finally been spotted, their fervent chatter betraying their excitement.

She turned off the television and frowned. Baelish had never told her about this. She could see why he did it, but she was still angry. She resisted the urge to call him, since she knew she would just end up wishing she was shouting at him, all while her head nodded and she told him "Yes. You’re right." She washed up and started getting ready instead.

She spent little time choosing what she would wear.

Almost none of the clothes in her closet were Sansa’s. They were Alayne’s, ill-fitting and basic. She never wore the few clothes of hers she had kept. They were at the very back; she didn’t even look at them. The gown she’d worn to her graduation. The pale, fraying grey dress that whispered about long summer days in Winterfell and walking for hours in the park with Jayne. The faded black T-shirt of a concert she’d taken her sister to, it had been Arya’s first. A cute yellow dress Robb and Jon had got her for her birthday; the price tag had never been removed.

Sandor’s old jacket was folded over a chair; she hadn’t put it back.

She threw a black suit and a white shirt that seemed to froth at the collar on the bed and started drying her hair. She fixed it up in a bun and got dressed. A few quick flourishes and she had her makeup done as well, none of the colors quite matching her skin tone. She checked herself in the mirror, straightening her clothes.

Alayne stared back at her.

She opened her jewelry box and pulled out the lid’s inside panel. Her mother and father smiled up at her, their arms around each other. She let her eyes drift to the background where familiar blurry figures were chasing a football down a hill, Arya pushing back Jon to get to it first. This had been their last holiday together. She tried to remember what life had been like when she took that photo, what she had been like. Sansa. The girl with the sweet laugh and a place she called home. She missed that girl. She covered the photo and closed the lid, sighing.

The trip to work wasn’t long; she took the bus for a few stops, reading on her way. Half her face was covered by a fluffy scarf and she buried her nose in it. A few days ago she had worn her mother’s old perfume and it still smelled of her.

Chapter End Notes

I know this is kind of short and nothing really happens
Updates will be erratic for a couple of weeks due to finals, sorry... <3
Sandor slammed the door of the car shut and made his way to a newspaper stand. His leg hurt like hell, it had to be the fucking rain. Shitty weather always made it worse. He picked up a paper and headed to the small diner in the corner as fast as he could with a worsening limp.

The pies in the window looked better than most and he wasn’t well known around there, it would do just fine. The place was almost empty except for the staff. A couple of guys were taking their morning coffee at the counter and an old couple was arguing over something he couldn’t care less about.

He slipped into a booth away from the windows, making sure he had eyes on all exits, and opened the paper to the help wanted section.

A waitress came to take his order; he saw her smile falter when he lifted his head up. She was trying her best not to stare. He scowled and wished she wouldn’t make the fucking effort. He asked for his usual order of coffee and eggs with bacon and went back to looking for a job.

The next half hour was spent pouring over the newspaper, his breakfast not always finding its way to his mouth, as he absently dropped bits of it on the paper, leaving oily marks everywhere. By the time he finally decided to set the paper aside and concentrate on his meal, it had gone cold. He rubbed his eyes and groaned.

They all wanted someone with a degree, or experience. Well, he knew how to kill, how to prevent murder by murdering, how to operate a backhoe and fuck all about anything else. He was sure that he had burnt his bridges with any security firm the second he turned his back on the Lannisters and quit while his charge was under heavy fire. That life was behind him. Nobody would want a shot-up, recovering mess. No ads asking for an ex-bodyguard that was once almost killed by a girl that wasn’t even out of high school.

He frowned and moved the last piece of bacon around, his fork making an awful noise on the plate.

Sandor wasn’t so much looking for a job, as he was trying to figure out what was next. It hadn’t worked for him in the past, planning. Nothing fell through. The situation wasn’t that different, though at least this time he wasn’t suffering any brand new fucking wounds.

He was supposed to come back so he could face his demons and make amends. So far it wasn’t going well and he had to eat and live somewhere in the mean time. He was getting too old for cheap hotels and diners and he was definitely running out of money.

The door opened and he couldn’t help the growl that escaped his throat when he saw who walked in. He didn’t try and hide. There was no way that the city’s new golden boy would find himself here by coincidence. How the fuck did he know where he was? He knew the man had his eyes and ears everywhere, especially now, but he never expected him to come all the way down there in person. That suit probably cost more than Sandor’s car and it was a good goddamn car. He didn’t take him for a man that liked to get his hands dirty. This seemed wrong.

He waited silently, nostrils flared and hands balled into fists, for him to come over.

He didn’t.
Instead he walked over to the counter and ordered. He sat down, looked around and gave Sandor a small nod and a wave. He chatted with the waitress until his order arrived, smiling that wide, lying smile. Then he started eating his breakfast like it was something he did every fucking day.

It had been a long time since Sandor had felt such a strong need to tear something apart. His mouth felt dry. Short nails dug into the palms of his hands and he closed his eyes. He let out a long breath and slowly inhaled.

Breath in. Breath out.

He called the waitress over, but she told him that the gentleman at the counter had already paid.

Breath in. Breath out.

He made his way to the exit, hoping like a damn fool that he could somehow avoid him. He tried to convince himself with every step he made closer to the door, that his presence wasn’t what summoned that asshole to this particular rundown part of the old town.

A cheerful voice stopped him dead in his tracks.

"Good morning Mr. Clegane. How are you? I’m so glad to see you back in town!" the man said, putting down his knife and fork and turning his head towards him. "Have a seat!" He motioned to the empty stool beside him.

"Don’t fuck around Baelish." Sandor rasped, approaching the counter. He towered over the shorter man, a sneering wall of stormy black.

"My mistake, Mr. Clegane!" he smiled, craning his neck. "You always were straight to the point. I can respect that."

He scowled, crossing his arms. "What do you want?"

"I want you to testify." he said with a shrug, as if it was a fucking order and returned to eating his pancakes.

"I’m not in the business of winning other people’s battles for them, not anymore." he said and for all the amusement in his voice he could feel his blood calling. He took a step closer, gritting his teeth. She had warned him of this.

"Oh, but you would be helping yourself Mr.Clegane. How can you not see that?" Bealish was not even looking at him, but he could see the smile on his face as he waited for a response.

"By making the target on my back a little bit clearer? Fuck off!" He roared making a waitress shoot him an angry look. He wished they would all fuck off and let him feel miserable about his future in peace.

"Don’t you want a nice piece of paper that will stop you from being prosecuted for any crimes you committed while working for the Lannisters? We both know that’s a very long list." The lawyer’s tone was friendly and it only made the urge to punch him stronger.

"Oh, yeah, a nice long list of nothing you can prove. Better men than you have tried." As if a deal with the devil could wipe the slate clean. His sins were his to carry like a fucking man.

"It’s a pity then." Baelish dabbed his mouth with a napkin and turned to face him. "You stand a better chance than most of taking them down."
"I thought you were taking care of that long before I showed up. Was that more lies for the voters to love?" he sneered. There was no way Baelish had a prayer of getting re-elected without a few convictions. Not after the promises he had made.

"Turns out Cersei can’t be touched as far as the murders are concerned and her financials are clean. She’s covered her tracks very well." He shook his head. "I didn’t expect it..." he said almost to himself. "I’m about to pin everything on two dead men and call it a day."

Sandor froze, waves of fear and anger washing over him.

He couldn't breath.

Sansa.

"You’re not... You’re not going to end it." He said and his arms fell to his sides.

"I’ll still get her to cut a deal and I still get what I want out of this." He got up and headed for the door. Before leaving he turned around and smiled again. "What do you think will happen to the Lannisters’ enemies then?" he mocked. "You should have stayed dead Mr. Clegane."

Chapter End Notes

I’ve tried tagging this to the best of my ability and I will continue to add more as the story progresses. Please tell me if you think that I should add others, or more archive warnings.
I don’t want anyone to be triggered and I’m really sorry if that happens.
As always your comments are very much appreciated. <3
She sat down at her desk with a sigh, tucking a loose strand of dark hair behind her ear and typing in her computer password. The old thing always took forever to load and she waited, looking around at the empty desks. It was very quiet, too quiet. Why was nobody in yet?

It was odd.

Mya lived in that corner office, yet her chair was empty and the sharp sound of her voice cutting through the office’s casual murmur was missing. Even after long nights, the woman would rather sleep at her desk than miss a morning update. Those impromptu sleepovers always resulted in a terrified intern rushing to find her a fresh change of clothes. It was hard to guess if anyone would have noticed the difference, since she wore black on black on maybe grey and her lips had a half-lit cigarette permanently dangling between them.

Sansa thought she would at least have been relieved that Harry wasn’t already there. Her files were as she had left them two days ago, neatly stacked and ready. He had the habit of arriving earlier than her and sitting on her desk, more often than not moving papers and documents around so he could do so. It annoyed her to no end to find her things out of order and Harry sitting there tapping his fingers on the smooth surface she had left last night’s reports on. However, that tapping and his crooked smile when he told her good morning was something she had grown to expect. This sudden change from the familiar had her biting her lip and looking at her phone.

No new calls, no messages and nothing unread in her inbox. It was ten minutes past nine and the office was empty. Not even the interns had come in. She got up and paced back and forth in the empty room that was supposed to be bustling with energy, her heels thumping against the carpet. She made a sudden turn and marched straight into someone that smelled of stale cigarette smoke and coffee.

She let out a long breath and smiled. It was Mya.

"Hey watch where you’re going, Stone! This is hot!" She waved her arms around trying to get her coat off without letting the large cup of coffee out of her grasp, her first coffee and dance of many throughout a given day. She managed to pull off this daily ritual with surprising grace. No spills yet. Harry had run a betting pool they’d all lost months ago.

"Morning!" Sansa said, her breathing coming back down to normal. "Where is everybody else?"

"Its Baelish. He called me two hours ago, fucking woke me up, said he wants the office stripped down to essentials. He’s coming over later and whatever he has to say it, isn’t for the interns to hear. I spent half my damn morning calling everybody. Nobody should have to deal with interns while still in their pajamas." She rubbed her eyes.

"And Harry?"

Mya rolled her eyes and lit a cigarette. "We went out the other night, he met a girl. You know how he is. Give him another half hour."

"Has he found the one?" Sansa smiled, leaning against the glass front of Mya’s office, and watched her fumble with her keys as she tried to unlock the door. She attempted to do this while holding a
cup of coffee, a cigarette, a key ring that was at least twenty keys strong and a black oversized coat she had draped over her arm and was now struggling to control.

"Third damn time this month!" She rolled her eyes and brought the cigarette to her lips, drawing in a long breath. "He won’t stop sending me updates, it’s annoying." The door surrendered and she stepped in, motioning to Sansa to follow her through the cloud of smoke she left behind. "How was your weekend?"

She shrugged, but her hands trembled. "Nothing worth mentioning, I tried finishing that book you lent me," she replied and moved to open the window.

"Yeah? What part are you at?" she said sitting down at her desk. "It gets better after she leaves the hotel..."

They had stopped asking if she wanted to come along for a drink after work. It was a good thing because she hated telling them no. She had not had a night out for the longest time. It seemed so stupid, with everything that had happened. Socializing should be the least of her worries. But she missed it. She missed the sight of strangers smiling with their friends, she missed dancing, and she missed stepping out of a noisy bar to the chilly air outside, that smiling girl in the summer dress. Every time she even thought about going out, the clawing fear that she would be exposing herself was there again. Her hand tightened around the window’s latch.

"Hey! Are you even listening to me?"

"Just opening the window, sorry." It was still raining and the wind made small droplets drift in, hitting her face. She shuddered and breathed in the fresh air.

"Yeah I keep forgetting you don’t smoke, filthy habit, I know." Sansa wanted to point out that nobody else in the office smoked either; she let it go.

"What did Baelish want?"

"Who the hell knows anymore?" She took one last drag from her cigarette and snuffed it out in a dirty ashtray. "Did he mention anything when you went to the DA’s the other day?"

"Nothing..." she said. They had spent hours going over single sentences. He said the jury had to believe, that there was no room for doubt. Lies.

She looked down at the road. Cars were passing by, splashing through puddles. Tires screeched and the loud sound of a car horn traveled up the building. A tall figure in a tan coat was shouting to the taxi driver that had almost run him over. A mess of wet blond hair peaked out from under the newspaper he was holding over his head.

"Harry’s here." Sansa said turning around.

Mya didn’t look up from her laptop. "About damn time." she muttered, lighting a new cigarette and typing something with strong, determined pokes to her keyboard. Icy blue eyes were darting back and forth between the screen and the growing pile of opened files. The cloud of smoke around her was growing thicker. Sansa had seen that storm coming many times and didn’t want to get caught up in it.

"What do you want me to do?" She asked, already half way out the office.

"Can you handle the schedule without Harry’s help?"
It was ridiculous that Harry still helped her do it. "Sure, no problem."

She had no degree and no previous work experience under the name of Alayne. They had only hired her because Baelish had insisted she was the only one that could work with Rob and then made them believe there was another reason he insisted.

He reminded them of their non-disclosure agreement, while having his hand on her shoulder and introducing her as the daughter of a woman he really cared about. She knew they could smell scandal from that, it was the way they worked and what Baelish had wanted them to believe, but they had never discussed it.

Maybe they had seen through Baelish, seen through her and they knew. She’d rather not think about it.

They had hired her, though it was a long time until anyone took her seriously. She had struggled to wrap her head around prediction models and data breakdowns and still felt lost when too many numbers were introduced. She had been happy to answer phones and deal with Rob when no one else was inclined to. Rob would phone, or even worse visit them with a ridiculous demand they had to talk him out of. She could talk him out of almost anything.

So she became the person in charge of communicating with Rob. Given the fact that they were supposed to be running his campaign, it was a big step in getting recognition. Having an inside knowledge of the way the most powerful families in town operated, meant she could worm her way into more and more meetings without Baelish having to call her in. Her suggestions and arguments proved useful in strategy meetings, though Rob was still 10 points behind.

She ended up in charge of his public appearances and with Harry’s supervision set up Rob’s entire schedule, though she didn’t have her own office like the other two. It felt nice to be able to finally do this one on her own, even if it was just for today.

Harry walked in a few moments after she went back to her desk. He was almost bouncing with excitement, smiling ear to ear, despite the fact that he looked like a drowned cat.

"Good morning Harry." she said and waited for the storm to hit.

"Good morning! How are my two favorite ladies today?" He put his fingers through his hair, looking around. "Where is everybody?"

"Baelish. Meeting. Get ready!" Mya barked from her corner.

"Is it your time of the month again?" he said, sauntering towards Mya's office.

"Oh I wish it was only once but this is the third time this month! I didn’t need your drunken ramblings keeping me awake till three in the morning. Work e-mails should never include phrases like amazing rack or perfect smile." She threw him a file. "Look through these and compare them to the stats I’m sending you. Now!"

"Hey, I’m technically your superior!" he said without much conviction, his eyes already scanning the documents.

"So you’ll take full responsibility for not being able to handle whatever it is Baelish has crawling up his ass this time?" She glanced up to find him lingering at the door frame. "Now!"

"You enjoy bossing me around too much..." he mumbled heading for his office.
"It keeps me young Hardyng!" she shouted after him and Sansa could see the corners of her mouth go up.

"This is harassment!" he shouted back.

They could go on for a while longer, so she tried to filter them out. She went through the week’s schedule, since it was pretty much set at that point, underlining some events that could prove to be problematic and started making phone calls. She had managed to get Wednesday morning’s interview at a local station cleared, before soft steps were heard as Mya and Harry fell silent. She looked up and saw Baelish standing there, his easy smile missing.

"Goodmorning ladies, gentleman. Thank you for clearing out the office." He gave a small nod to Mya. "We have a problem."

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this took so long, hope you like it <3
He drove by the estate, his windshield-wipers going at full speed as he tried to assess the situation. He could not see anyone on the grounds, though that wasn’t surprising given all the fucking rain. The cameras were in place and he counted seven black SUVs in the back. Nothing seemed to have changed in the two years he was gone. Even the fence stood tall and polished, not a trace of the fiery destruction it had bent to during the hellish night he had last seen this place.

He couldn’t park and wait there, not if he wanted to stay clear of trouble. No cars were parked on either side of the road, everybody in the area kept their fleet of cars in garages the size of houses. Meanwhile he couldn’t find a fucking shoe-box apartment for less than 300. His hands gripped the wheel and he floored the gas pedal. He could have lived the rest of his life without seeing the lion head on the front gate again.

Once more he was running away, the mansion getting smaller in his rear-view mirror. He clenched his fists around the steering wheel and started breathing in and out, trying to stop himself from reliving everything.

He sped through large empty roads towards the centre, till he hit the city traffic weather like this only made worse. He pressed down at his car horn and it felt good, the satisfaction gained from hearing it bellow outweighing the uselessness of his action. He looked at the time. He could make it to the business centre before the suits went out to lunch, if the asshole in the white Volvo didn’t cut him off at the next turn.

Fuck.

He slammed down on the brakes, just as the light went red and cars rushed by, blocking his way. He rubbed his eyes and waited. The light turned green, but a bus was still in the middle of the road and was taking its sweet fucking time to cross it. Herevved the engine in anticipation. The second he saw an opening he rushed forward, car horns screaming around him. He made a sharp turn on 5th and finally found himself approaching the tall monstrosity known as the home of Casterly Media Inc. He parked his car down the road and waited.

The rain poured down and the windshield wipers clicked along for what seemed like forever. He cracked the window open and sat there, small droplets coming in and misting his face. There was a bitter taste in his mouth and he felt thirsty.

She had told him not to trust Baelish.

She shouldn’t have bothered. He didn’t trust him, he never had. Baelish had been smart enough to never take a high visibility place in the Baratheon administration, he was supposed to just work financials for Robert.

Bullshit.

He had seen him scurrying around in the shadows, talking to Ned, to Cersei, even to Joffrey a few times. He had been a Lannister suit for most of his career, how fucking naive were these people? It was a testament to the asshole’s influence that he was elected DA while owning half the city’s strip clubs.
His fingers drummed on the steering wheel and his eyes became fixed on the rear-view mirror. He could clearly see the entrance to the Lannister building and even though many had gone in and out the large glass doors, he had seen no Lannisters pass by.

It was strange that after twenty minutes he only saw one person remotely close to the operation passing by. She had been part of the muscle since he was around. Judging by the bags she was carrying those fuckers weren’t even going to venture out for lunch.

Strange.

Perhaps they were in lockdown again.

The only time he could remember anything close to that was when Baratheon had stepped out of his private jet and all but declared the city his. For the brother of one of the most successful politicians in the country, he sure had a stick up his ass about speaking plainly.

He was displeased with the way the family fortune had been handled and it was no fucking wonder. The way Stark had written the will left a lot of people angry. Stannis was a cold fucker, but he had the balls to come down there himself instead of sending a hired army of paper pushers to clear up the mess after Robert’s death.

He went after the Lannister money. For a while it looked like he would win. Injunctions rained down until even Cersei looked scared. It didn’t help him though.

No judge or policeman in their right mind had fully cooperated. His attempt to bring public opinion around just didn’t fucking work. Half the city was laid off and hungry mouths didn’t care whose meat they’d tear off the bone.

They didn’t like the Lannisters, there were bloody riots outside the tire factory, but nobody forgot who started the fucking mess.

If that prick had succeeded he’d probably be in jail right now, or lucky enough to be dead. The girl would no doubt be in a better place. That would have been too fucking good though. He sighed and started debating whether stalking the Lannisters was really that great an idea.

Then he saw him.

He was wearing the same suit and smug expression he had on just a few hours ago.

He disappeared into the giant stone building that had Casterly Rock carved into its front and Sandor saw red.

He sat in place fuming. Baelish’s comments and her cynical, tired words ran over and over in his mind.

It seemed like hours until Baelish emerged again, pausing slightly to open his umbrella.

Sandor sprang out the car, slamming the door behind him and made his way up to the lawyer with fast, angry steps, fuck the shooting pain in his leg. He didn’t know what he would do when he caught up to him, but slamming him against the wall seemed like an altogether not unpleasant thought.

"Baelish!" he thundered, only a few inches behind him and the smaller man turned around.

He could have sworn he saw the rat smile before he started cowering, his hands weakly trying to
push him away.

He hadn't even touched him and already Baelish was backing away. He wanted to snarl and lift him by his neck and choke the life out of him. Something stopped him; this was the same man that had come to him at the diner. His eyes. There was no fear in this man’s eyes, he should know.

He froze, his breath coming out in short gasps.

A crowd was beginning to gather around them and he felt trapped.

"What’s going on here" someone said, the voice seemed to come from far away.

It was a fucking cop.

Chapter End Notes

So sorry it has been so long since this was updated <3
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She waited at the door for Mya to finish reading her memo, stealing furtive glances at her phone. She had called Rob at least four times and he still hadn’t answered or showed any signs of life.

She really hoped he was okay.

It was only a matter of time before the press got their hands on his medical records. Baelish should have prepared him for this.

Her jaw clenched.

He should have protected him from this.

She should have protected him.

"Hey! Did you know about this?" Mya was glaring at her with furrowed brows and a look of desperation behind her eyes.

Sansa shrugged in a way that she hoped communicated the lie believably; she had at least become good at that.

But Mya’s focus was no longer on her. "This is just fucking perfect." she groaned and inhaled deeply. The cigarette glued to her lips was becoming her lifeline as she sorted through her files. The cloud of smoke around her was growing to the point where lightning could make a plausible appearance.

She was swearing up a storm, with an occasional murmur of "The only thing going for us was that he wasn’t a fucking Lannister and now I don’t even think that will do."

"What was next on his schedule?" She thundered, a hand beckoning as her eyes continued searching.

Sansa handed her the marked calendar for the week.

"Do you think we should make a statement?" Harry leaned against her desk, his arms crossed. Sansa couldn’t see his face though she imagined he was wearing his concerned and slightly condescending expression.

"I think we should get ahead of this." Mya said, finally looking up at them. "It’s going to be bad, but it’ll be a hell of a lot worse if seizure stories dominate everything till election day."

She rubbed her eyes and snubbed out the cigarette that was almost burning her fingers, reaching almost immediately to retrieve a new one. Her engraved silver holder was almost empty. "Damn it! That’s the last one." she sighed, lighting it up anyway. "Where are the interns when you need them!"

"Speaking of, are we going to call them in?" Harry asked, grabbing a few files from the desk. "How long can we work like this?"

"As long as is necessary. You heard Baelish. We need to keep a lid on this." she crashed back into
her chair, the force spinning her slightly towards the window. "For as long as we can..."

She planted her feet on the ground. "You can buy and sell me for a pack at this point, fuck confidentiality agreements." she muttered darkly.

"I'll go get you some." Sansa said. Her mind was racing and there still was no call from Rob.

Mya didn’t question it. She just groaned her thank you and started typing furiously on her computer.

"Get us a couple of energy drinks!" Harry called out behind her.

Sansa almost ran out of the building.

She needed air and time to herself.

She sped off in the direction of the convenience store a block away, the one where the clerk always flashed a real smile and told her to have a nice day. She could use it today more than usual she thought and berated herself for being pathetic.

Her legs seemed to remember the way, which was a blessing. Sansa’s mind was circling round an idea it didn’t want to land on.

Rob hated that park.

He thought the statues were creepy and the trees were too tall, not to mention the fact that his allergies meant he wouldn’t risk it even if he enjoyed the surroundings. There was no way he would have been there in this weather and there was no way he would have been there without them knowing about it. They had been in charge of his public appearances for a long while and they were calculated and purposeful. A visit to the city’s central park would have been talked about and coordinated days in advance.

This was Baelish. It had to be.

She bit her lip and charged on, closely avoiding collisions with passersby.

She knew he was using Rob. His support always came with the condition of complete and total control. She imagined few of his actions in office, if any, would not be direct commands from the lawyer. A position he won’t be elected to without great difficulty after the incident at the park.

So why would he put in motion a reveal that weakened their position considerably?

She looked down at her phone again and gritted her teeth.

No new calls.

Baelish had assured them that the candidate was well and rested, but she was not about to take his word for it. Much as Rob had tested her patience in the past, she cared for him.

He was family and she didn’t have much of that left. She stepped into the store at last and tried not to think about family.

She would have been in and out of there in a second if she hadn’t noticed the TV behind the counter.

"What’s happened?" she asked and tried to keep the tremble out of her voice as her eyes narrowed in on a screen that had 'LIVE FROM CASTELRY ROCK' running at the bottom.
"Horrible thing." The clerk leaned over the counter and looked at her over his glasses. "Lannisters sent a man after that lawyer, the one that wants to lock them up," he said with a voice of a man that seemed to revel in the conspiracy.

"Is he alright?" Sansa found herself holding onto the edge of the counter and desperately wanting the answer to be no, her situation be damned.

The old clerk shrugged. "Saw him talking a few minutes ago. Seemed okay. Maybe roughed up a bit."

A familiar face flashed on the screen and Sansa’s knuckles went white.

"That’s the man that did him in. At least from what they say. Haven’t caught up to him yet." The man chuckled bitterly. "If he’s a Lannister dog they never will."

"He’s no Lannister dog." she thought and tried to hide her relief. Like most good things in her life that feeling wasn’t permanent.

He wasn’t arrested, but she knew it didn’t matter what he had done. If Baelish had his sights set on him, he was as good as caught.

She’d told him to stay away. Gone out of her way to warn him.

What was he thinking going right up to the Lannisters’s front door and then assaulting Baelish?

"What’s troubling you Miss?"

"Nothing." She shook her head. "Thank you." Sansa took a steadying breath and grabbed the bag of things that stood forgotten on the counter.

"Have a nice day!" he said smiling and his cheerfulness made her shoulders drop.

"Thank you. You too." she said, not looking behind her. She didn’t want to fake a smile.

Outside the rain had started falling again, harder this time.

By the time she made it to their building she was drenched.

She was rubbing her hands together and waiting for the elevator when her phone buzzed. She reached for it with trembling fingers and breathed a sigh of relief.

It was Rob.

He was shaken up and sounded weaker than usual, but he was home. She didn’t want to put more stress on him by asking questions she needed the answer to, so she just wished him a happy recovery. He was safe at least. For now.

She could only hope that was true for Sandor.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I haven't updated this in forever...
I'll try to not let it happen again...
I hope you like the new chapter <3
Rain fell heavy on his windshield and police sirens echoed over the sound of rolling thunder. Stuck between the walls of two brownstones that had seen better days, he stared at his fuel gauge. Sandor cursed under his breath and rubbed small circles into his throbbing leg, his mind racing.

Losing them had been easy at first. Those assholes had never been eager to respond, but this involved the DA and now he was trapped like a wounded animal, waiting for a mercy kill.

He'd switched the engine off and he couldn't risk turning the radio back on. All anyone had mentioned was that an unknown assailant or a Lannister thug, depending on who owned the station, had attacked the DA.

He clenched his fists and wished he had used them.

Fucking typical.

Sandor didn't have many options at this point. Booking into a new place wasn't wise. He didn't have the cash needed to keep mouths shut. Returning to his motel would be begging for an arrest. He was just glad he had no valuable personals to leave behind. He couldn't ask for help. He didn't have any friends in the city.

That wasn't true.

Strands of hair were falling on his face and he undid his ponytail, redoing it again with fingers he didn't notice were trembling.

He took out his cell phone and stared at his few contacts, scrolling through till he saw her name. His fingers hovered over the green button.

"Fuck."

He tossed it on the dashboard, not caring how it landed, and rubbed his eyes. She should never have helped him in the first place. She should be angry at him for fucking everything up. Again. Yet somehow he knew that if he called her she'd find a way to help him. He wasn't that big of an asshole.

Damn it.

He had to find a place that didn't welcome Lannisters and what passed as the Law, but was too shady to risk turning him into the police. He was already at the fringes of the Bottom, might as well head deeper. The worst that could happen was getting stabbed. Or shot. Or drunk.

He turned the key and the engine roared back to life. The glare of the headlights revealed walls painted with words a child might think is rebellion. It reminded him of Arya and the way her hands had been stained from spray-paint, black and red and sinister.

FUCK THE LANNISTERS.

ALL MEN MUST DIE.
Caught between a laugh and a growl, he reversed onto the road, making a right turn at the lights. He knew these roads well. He'd found his way there time and time again, drowning himself in dive bars and burying himself between thighs for hire. Lucky for him some things had still found their way through the haze of cheap alcohol and anger. After all, members of criminal organizations have an easy time spotting their kind.

He pulled up inside a dimly lit garage, marked as such only by the broken neon sign that once advertised 'AutoRepairs'. Its rusty, narrow entrance betrayed nothing about the vastness of the space inside and with good reason. He never collected protection money here, never made any deals, because they didn't need to be in business with the Lannisters.

Krakens.

Krakens that were far from home.

And alone. Maybe he'd make it out of there after all.

A single pair of eyes looked at him from behind the popped-up hood of a red roadster and a hand that had been resting to the side quickly disappeared, reaching for a gun. It couldn't have been anything else. Sandor had caught a glimpse of the damn octopus running the length of the man's arm, tendrils extending to wrap around fingers. Four tentacles. Impressive for a fucking mechanic. He wasn't in a rush to be the reason a fifth one was added, so he got out of the car with his hands clearly visible. Chop shops didn't take kindly to outsiders in the middle of the night.

"We're closed."

"Engine's making a noise." The exit at the back was too far away, with a whole assembly of cars blocking it.

"We're closed."

Sandor went through every way he could charge him and still make it out of there alive. He was coming up blank and his mouth felt dry. "Won't be any trouble. I just need some tools." Desperation edged into his voice, making room to stay. He gritted his teeth. "I can pay." It was more than half a lie, but it was all he had.

"I don't need your money." A lanky kid, barely eighteen, stepped out and stared him down with the steely gaze only someone with a firm grip on a semiautomatic could manage.

"Do you know who I am, boy?" He said and advanced slowly, still trying to find a way out.

"Someone who's insides are about to mess up one of the paint jobs." the kid scoffed and Sandor remembered what it was like to be young and a killer. The gun was pointing towards him now and grease stained fingers curled tighter, a moment away from squeezing the trigger, but the fire never came. "Who are you?" He asked as if just waiting for confirmation.

"The Hound." Another lie. The Hound was dead. The sound of the name made him frown, as if speaking it would bring him back, the ghost of a rage always waiting for a chance to live again.

The gun wavered slightly and he had proof that his name still carried some weight. He almost laughed. The manhunt had probably helped.

"What do you want?" The baby octopus took a step backwards, but his eyes looked him up and down, not scared in the least. A man is always smaller than his legend. He felt like laughing again.
"Just some tools to fix my ride and I'll be out of your hair." This would be the part where a religious man started praying, but despite the world's best intentions he just continued glowering.

"Has anyone followed you?" It sounded more like he was checking off a list and Sandor wondered what asshole had left this kid in charge of the whole operation, killer or not. Bored teenagers made the worst guards.

"Do you think we'd still be talking if they'd followed me?"

It wasn't enough of an answer, because the gun hadn't lowered an inch. "Do you still run with the Lannisters?"

*Fuck the Lannisters.* "I've been out for years."

A burner cell came out and the kid smashed at the buttons, his eyes barely leaving him. Then they both waited, until the phone buzzed and someone made his mind up for him.

"Way to make a comeback." The gun came down and it took everything in him to not obey muscle memory and grab for it. "You really punched that asshole?"

Sandor laughed. If he'd punched him there was no way Baelish would still be standing or have all the teeth necessary for his shit eating grin. His laugh seemed to be enough of an answer for the kid, who walked to a bench and pressed a button that brought the entrance to a screeching close.

He came back holding a tool box in one hand and his weapon in the other. "Nice wheels."

Sandor grunted his response and reached for the tool box, but was met with a smirk and the barrel of a gun.

"Not so fast."

**Chapter End Notes**

Loads of love for all your comments and kudos

If you spot any mistakes please tell me

Thanks for putting up with my terrible updating schedule <3
Chapter 11

She looked out the window with eyes that had stared at a computer screen for too long, a deep crease between her eyebrows. The storm raged on and the lights dimmed as lightning struck, flashing bright for an instant. Everything looked pitch black for the briefest second afterwards. Calm. She braced herself for the sound of thunder, closing her eyes. It was nearing ten and she felt spent.

Sansa had wanted to visit Rob. There was only time for a hurried skype conversation where she made sure he was taking his medication and resting. She had assured him they were on top of things. He seemed to believe her; the boy trusted her. Sansa tried not to think about that.

She needed answers, though in Sandor’s case, no news seemed like good news. They had called Baelish, but he had told them the matter was of no concern, the man who assaulted him would be brought to justice. It made her skin crawl. He sounded fine. Confident. She had been researching and changing schedules, call after call, trying not to let her panic creep through to the other end of the line.

An hour into this they had all known it was hopeless. Nobody mentioned it. Nobody stopped. They just kept on going even after Mya announced her hastily drawn projections. They had poured months into the campaign and nobody wanted to be the one to pull the plug. They were just moving forward with it, even if it was going to get them killed on election day. The thought made her stomach knot.

Harry was lost to them for the past few hours, sitting on the floor, his legs splayed out and his back against the wall. He muttered and sighed, typing away at his laptop, as he rejected draft after draft of his own writing. Sansa imagined a mountain of scrunched up paper balls scattered around him. He had a lot of press releases to work out, new speeches, new venues to fill.

They had to close the window after the rain got heavier and smoke hung in the air, stale and cloying, sticking to her skin. The pack Sansa had brought Mya finished quickly and the one they made the delivery guy get for her was almost empty. She had been in her office running numbers all day, checking districts, demographics. Again and again. Trying to find a way out.

It didn't matter.

Sansa got up and walked to the window, her steps slow as her body stretched and ached, celebrating movement at last. She opened the window and let the wind and rain rush against her. The city had been washed clean. She breathed in. She only had to close her eyes and she was there, their mother rushing them to the car as rain started falling heavy around them. How they all slid into the car, too many elbows and too many dogs. The boys scuffling in the back. Arya refusing to let her fix her makeup.

Arya...

She thought the sleazy private investigator she’d hired had vanished away with the last of her money, until her phone rang and the P.I.’s number came up. She remembered the voice at the end of the line, familiar but strange, like someone had tempered her little sister until she sounded like steel. Cold and dangerous. Her own voice had been thin and weak. Ready to shatter.

"...I promise, Arya. I promise. Wh..."

"I'm not coming back, Sansa. Not yet..."

"Where are you? Are you..."
"Stop trying to find me. The next one ends up dead."

Harry blinked up from his writing when the window slammed shut.

"Shit. Is it ten already?" He rubbed his eyes.

"We're not ready." Mya said, quieter than usual, but her words cracked through the smoke like thunder.

"I wasn't... Do you want us to order food in?" It was strange to hear him sound defeated.

Mya shook her head.

"We're never going to be ready, Mya! When has..." A bit of the Harry she knew crept in again.

Mya walked up to the door and rested her shoulder against the frame. "You should go home. Both of you. There's not much more you can do." Her hands trembled as she put the cigarette to her lips.

"So what? Are you going to spend the night here? The month? Mya the one woman wonder! You can't keep doing this to yourself." He was on his feet, close to shouting and Sansa found herself walking towards them, her shoulders set.

She placed a hand on Harry's shoulder and turned to face Mya. "We have been working on this for long enough. Thursday's press conference has been set up. We have time."

Mya frowned. She exhaled a column of smoke and was about to retort, but Sansa cut her off. "We can't do this without Mr. Arryn."

"She's right. Candidate has to be briefed, prepared."

Sansa removed her hand from his shoulder and nodded. "There is no way we can pull this off if we can't convince them he can perform his duties. Harry has drafted a press release in case the story breaks sooner. And that is out of our hands at the moment."

"It's not real..." Harry looked at her and backtracked. "Yes, we don't need to throw ourselves at this. It's going to be a long campaign, Mya. We have to take it one day at a time."

The fact that their argument persuaded Mya out of her office and into her car home, was a good indication of her levels of exhaustion.

Harry offered to drive her home, but Sansa declined with a smile that didn't reach her eyes, muscle memory serving her well. He hailed a cab for her and for that she was grateful. Waiting for the bus had more downsides than usual when it was pouring with rain. She listened to the radio as they drove through the city, music blasting through her earphones, and tried not to skip to a news station. She paid and raced to her apartment. She could breakdown now. No one would see. But she didn't.

The house was freezing, yet she reached for the remote before checking the thermostat. The screen lit the room with dancing colors and she drank in story after story. There was too little of things she wanted to know more about. No news was good news.

Rob's secret was safe.

Sandor was safe.

For now.
Sleep found her lying on her bed going through reports, her head filled with worry for the few people she had left. Her dreams were twisting nightmares. She tried reaching for pale trembling hands but they slipped away and she fell. She was in a pit trying to climb out, her hair matted with mud, her nails cracked and her hands bleeding. A voice sounded, loud and gruff, muffled by the sound of crashing waves. Water started pouring in, but she did not rise with it. Cruel hands held her legs down and she gasped for air, trying to get one last breath, before she was submerged in black, cold fear. She felt her heart beat louder and louder. It turned into the steady beeping of a life-support machine and tears wet her pillow, her body wracked by sobs.

"Mommy..."
He looked up to the sky and cursed. A lightening flash answered him. Rain was falling heavy and he didn't much like the idea of dying soaking wet.

They were using him as bait. Send the former big bad Lannister dog, see if someone bites. He had to give them credit for that. Unless they were planing to go for the very long con, if they were cops he'd end up arrested, if they were Lannisters he'd end up dead. It was the only reason they'd have asked him to stand in as a fucking negotiator. He knew shit about making deals; his job had been making sure people were persuaded into respecting them.

At least they'd fixed his car.

He was out in the open, exposed, a sheer cliff on one side and open fields on the other. Standing by the side of the road with no gun and no cover he had already imagined too many ways he could die. He thought about making a run for it. They'd driven him past city limits; it was dark. But Sandor felt like he was being watched, not able to shake the feeling there was a riffle aiming for his head.

A car sped by and the lights blinded him.

His hands itched. Who were these assholes and why would they want to close a deal in the middle of a fucking storm? Another car passed by and didn't stop. Sandor wiped the rain off his face, the pads of his fingers brushing up against scarred skin.

"They're approaching, Clegane. You know what to do." Sandor frowned. He'd almost forgotten the damn earpiece. He stood straight and crossed his arms, the scowl on his face deepening.

Three cars approached and stopped at the other side of the road. A team of people burst out of the first two and an umbrella was opened. Bodyguards. So this was someone big. Or someone who wanted to look big. He was about to find out.

Lightning tore the sky apart and something glinted in the opposite field. He barely had time to shout out a warning and a gunshot followed. Glass shattered. Bullets whizzed around him. The thunder, the shouts, the revving engines, the fuckers screaming in his ear were nothing. The shot echoed in his mind. Over and over. He stood rooted in place even as the three cars drove the fuck away. There was a warmth spreading over his shoulder, building around a shard of ice. Then the pain hit him like a wall.

Sandor snarled.

He ripped the earpiece out and scrambled to get back in the car, his boots sinking into the mud. Everything seemed too far away and too close, shifting in front of his eyes. He saw himself open the door and slide into the car, but it didn't feel like him. Blood was flowing down his fingers and onto the car keys. He couldn't get them to turn. The pain moved through him, twisting and pulsing. He tried with his other hand.

Sirens wailed in the distance, coming closer.

His haggard breaths were drowned by the sound of the engine roaring to life, and he almost laughed, but his fingers couldn't close around the steering wheel.

"Fu..."
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