### Between Love and Duty

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org) at [http://archiveofourown.org/works/9404762](http://archiveofourown.org/works/9404762).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>No Archive Warnings Apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>F/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Game of Thrones (TV), A Song of Ice and Fire - George R. R. Martin, A Song of Ice and Fire &amp; Related Fandoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship:</td>
<td>Jon Snow/Sansa Stark, Minor or Background Relationship(s), Talisa Maegyr/Robb Stark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Alternate Universe - Napoleonic Wars, Alternate Universe - Age of Sail, Alternate Universe - Navy, Drama &amp; Romance, Adventure, Jon and the Starks Are Not Related, Masturbation, Oral Sex, First Time, Explicit Sexual Content, Explicit Language, Angst, Past Child Abuse (mentioned), Implied/Referenced Torture, Some Violence (mostly mentioned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series:</td>
<td>Part 2 of Captain Snow and His Lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2017-01-21 Completed: 2017-03-11 Chapters: 16/16 Words: 68217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

Part 2 of this Series, continuing from "Across the Sea I Would Sail with You", finds Jon Snow serving as an officer in the Royal Navy during the French Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars as he and his sweetheart, Miss Sansa Stark, long to reunite after having been separated for several months.

Again, this series is my self-indulgent delight to write born out of my love for Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin series and C. S. Forester's Hornblower books combined with my obsession with JonSa.

### Notes
Mr. Snow is in London to sit his examination for lieutenant while longing for the opportunity to return to Gibraltar and Sansa.
Chapter 1

Whitehall

London, England

August 1796

Acting Lieutenant Jon Snow sat in the waiting room of the Admiralty awaiting his turn for his examination. His captain’s letter of recommendation, his certificates and his journals all sat at his side on the wooden bench where he waited. After months of blockading Toulon aboard HMS Queenscrown, the frigate had sailed to Portsmouth for long overdue repairs and his captain, Sir Jeor Mormont, had sent Mr. Snow to London to take his examination for lieutenant at last. He had been an acting lieutenant for over ten months now but there had been no opportunity before now for him to pass from acting to a fully commissioned officer in the Royal Navy.

At 19, Jon had served over four years in the service now and had displayed an aptitude for command and natural instincts as a seaman. Blockades were tedious business, wearing on men and ships alike, but at least it had provided Jon plenty of time to study for this. Not that that was much comfort at the moment as he sat there with 22 other young men waiting his turn. The captains sitting as examiners had chosen to go down the list alphabetically and Jon knew he would be in for a long wait…at least he thought so. The first young man they had called in had lasted less than five minutes and already fled the hall close to tears. Jon fervently hoped he would pass but he’d be damned if he cried over this, especially here in front of all the other candidates.

As he sat and waited, he looked back over the last letter he had received from his beloved, Miss Sansa Stark. He had met the red-haired beauty last fall in Gibraltar where she lived with her father, Sir Eddard Stark, and her younger siblings. They had met at a dinner party at the Starks’ home but she had later sailed with him on a mission to Alda Mehran in Tunisia to act as a translator on behalf of the navy being as she spoke Arabic quite well and they had found themselves without an official translator rather suddenly. Miss Stark was not just a beautiful young lady though. She was intelligent and witty and full of a fierce determination not to let the world dictate what she could or could not be based on her sex alone. He had fallen in love with her, on sight in some respects but that love had deepened as they became friends over the length of their journey together.

Jon had confessed his feelings to Sansa shortly before they had returned to Gibraltar but had unfortunately been sent off with the Queenscrown almost upon their return and he had not been granted so much as an hour’s shore leave to speak with her father and ask for her hand or even to say farewell. Not that Jon felt worthy of her hand being that he was the bastard son of a deceased French marquis and a young lady who had died giving birth to him in disgrace. He was raised by his uncle, a minor lord, who had no great claims of fortune and who had not named Jon his heir regardless. His other uncle was the reason he had joined the navy as Uncle Benjen was a well-respected frigate captain. Miss Stark on the other hand was the daughter of a knighted gentleman, formerly a colonel in the army. His family may have been involved in trade in the past few generations but had done well there and was quite well off. And her maternal grandfather was a duke no less, whose daughter had eloped with the handsome army officer, Eddard Stark, causing the gossips to wag their tongues for quite some time.
They had been parted for many months now but, as Jon had sent her a letter to tell her of his unexpected and much lamented departure, they had begun a correspondence. The post at sea was somewhat irregular being practically nonexistent but occasionally the much-loved mail ship would make its way to the ships on blockade and *Queenscrown* would receive a sack of mail. Sansa had learnt after a little trial and error to always date her letters, as they may not all arrive in the order they were sent, to always send copies, as nothing is certain at sea, and to seal them all in waxed sailcloth after the first letter Jon received from her was completely illegible due to dampness having caused the ink to run. And, unlike many sweethearts, Sansa, as the daughter and sister of soldiers, understood the demands of duty might keep even the most ardent young lover from writing as often as he might wish. She was also intelligent enough to realize that it was difficult to post letters regularly when surrounded by nothing but salt water. He smiled and read her words for the twentieth time at least since he had received this latest letter in Portsmouth two days ago.

**Dear Jon,**

*I pray this letter finds you well. I was pleased to learn from your last letter that Queenscrown would soon be receiving some much-needed relief from blockade duty and I have sent copies of this to Portsmouth and Plymouth in the hopes that it may find you at one of those places. I wish you were coming here to Gibraltar but, since your destination is England, I am hoping that means you may soon sit for your examination. I have every confidence you will pass with flying colours based on your clear readiness when we held our question and answer sessions aboard the Francine.*

*Please give my regards to the captain, Dr. Seaworth, Mr. Clegane and Mr. Tarly as well as Selmy and Tollett and all of my old shipmates. I am certain they do not think of me often if at all but I think of them quite regularly. I miss you dearly and confess time creeps by very slowly here at home compared to life aboard, even with Rickon and Bran to keep in line.*

*I regret to report that my dear Papa’s health is poor. As I related in my last letter, Gabriel has been reported missing in action for many months now after sailing to the West Indies for the campaign there. Our father fears the worst, I think, though he tells us not to worry. Thank you for your kind words of comfort regarding Gabriel in your last letter. I have reread it many times when my spirits are low.*

*My brother, Robb, sailed for London this past month to take care of some family business matters of Papa’s as he is not fit to travel at present. But please do not fret on our behalf. The doctor is confident that he will soon recover and that it is only the melancholia of worry that allows this illness to linger. For myself, I still pray for my brother’s safety every night, just as I do for yours, my love, but I cannot believe he is dead. Surely, I would know it in my very bones if my twin were gone. Perhaps I am overly optimistic though.*

*On a happier note, I am so glad that Papa is allowing us to continue our correspondence. I know you wish to speak to him in person to ask for my hand. And while he says I am too young to marry just yet, I am encouraged that in time he will be inclined to give his consent to our match.*

*I am sorry for so few words this day but the boys await me for their lessons. Until I write again, please know that I think of you every hour of the day and long to see you again.*

**All my dear love,**

**Sansa**

Jon folded the letter once more and placed it in his breast pocket next to the lock of Sansa’s hair that he had brought with him for luck. He was an educated and well-read man but he was enough of a seaman by now to share the lower deck’s superstitions and agree with their almost covetous belief in
Three hours later, Lieutenant Jon Snow stepped out of Admiralty House with his freshly signed commission crinkling in his breast pocket next to Sansa’s letter, shining with happiness and benevolence towards his fellowmen. He sent a boy round his Uncle Brandon’s London house to leave word that he would be able to meet his uncle at his club for dinner that night and headed to Smith & Sons Tailors to purchase a new uniform coat. As he left the shop considerably poorer but looking quite smart in his new coat at least, he literally ran into Sansa’s elder brother, Captain Robb Stark.

“I beg your pardon,” the captain said after their collision, as both men dove to retrieve Jon’s journals and papers.

Jon remembered his reddish-brown hair and blue eyes well. He was in his red coat which was naturally covered in far more bullion than Jon’s as the army was far more ostentatious than the navy in their dress. Captain Stark’s gold gorget shimmered in the afternoon sun but Jon thought his stock looked to be tied so tightly it was likely to bring on an apoplexy and the young officer’s face was rather red already.

“Captain Stark?”

“Well, that is handsome of him. I wonder if he knows anything of my and Sansa’s understanding. Perhaps not though.

“I’m to meet my uncle at Black’s for dinner but I am free for the next hour anyway.”

“I was here to be examined for lieutenant and passed not two hours ago.”

“Why, Mr. Snow! This is a surprise. What brings you to London?” he asked cordially when he recognized the sailor in front of him and the two young men shook hands.

“Oh, that is excellent news. Why, we should celebrate such a momentous occasion! If you’re free, I would be delighted to buy a bottle to share with you to toast your commission.”

The two of them headed to a tavern frequented by officers of both services and found a booth to share their bottle. It soon became apparent to Jon that Robb Stark knew nothing of his feelings for Sansa or their understanding. He told Jon he was there for business on behalf of his father and mentioned his brother had gone missing in the Caribbean. He had been allowed a few months of furlough to take care of his family matters in England. Jon talked of Sansa’s voyage aboard the Queenscrown, her invaluable assistance in Alda Mehran, and their return voyage aboard the Francine but left out any unpleasant details since he wasn’t sure what Sansa would wish him to share with her brother. And naturally he failed to mention that he had kissed her…more than once.

Despite having only met Robb once before, Jon found he liked him. He was an earnest young man in some ways, two years Jon’s senior, but also friendly and quick to laugh and smile. Jon already knew how dearly Sansa loved her family and how much she valued her elder brother’s opinion so he was predisposed to like him regardless.

What made it clear that Robb Stark was unaware of any attachment between himself and Sansa though was that the young officer asked if he’d like to go to Mother Adley’s with him later that
evening. Jon could not condemn the young man for going to a brothel since so many of his shipmates were no doubt doing the same with their shore leave but he highly doubted the suggestion would’ve been made if he was aware that Jon hoped to be his brother-in-law someday. Mother Adley’s was a very high class establishment which did not surprise Jon considering that Robb Stark reportedly would draw an income of 5000 a year someday.

As they rose to leave the tavern, a young man, perhaps a year or two older than Robb, came in apparently looking for him. He was about Jon’s height and slim and dressed rather fine…a little too fine really. His plum colored jacket was fashionable for certain though a bit flamboyant in Jon’s opinion. He had sandy brown hair and a moustache.

“There you are, you bloody lobster,” the young man said when he spotted Robb in a tone of outrage but with an easy smile.

“Greyjoy,” Robb said with a smirk. “What brings you to this hovel amongst us common soldiers and sailors? I thought a dandy like you would never dare be seen here.”

“Careful now. I’m your way in at Mother Adley’s, so you should be nice. Who’s this? You leave your oldest friend waiting while you associate with sailors now, Stark?”

“I have not left you waiting,” Robb said with a certain stiffness that reminded Jon of Sansa a bit when her hackles were raised. “We agreed to meet half an hour from now. And since when have you ever been on time? Allow me to introduce Lieutenant Jon Snow of His Majesty’s Navy. Mr. Snow, allow me present the greatest pain in my ass since the age of five, the Honorable Theon Greyjoy, Lord Pyke’s younger son.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Snow,” the earl’s son said with a friendly handshake. “Snow? Are you related to Lord Brandon Snow, the baron, by chance?”

Jon saw Robb stiffen once more and appreciated his new friend’s concern on his behalf but Jon was used to this. When he was forced to acknowledge his relationship to his uncle and his status as his bastard nephew was known, people usually had one of two reactions to him, a sudden discomfort in meeting his eye or an obvious sense of superiority…sometimes both.

“I am. I am his nephew, sir.”

“His sister Lyanna’s son then?”

“Yes.”

“Oh,” he said with a smirk. *Superiority, it is then,* Jon thought without much surprise. “Well, would you like to come along with us to Mother Adley’s? She’s supposedly got a new girl from France, quite the beauty they say…and talented with her tongue,” he finished with a cheeky grin.

Jon’s eyes widened at Greyjoy’s remark but merely replied, “No, thank you for your offer. I am actually supposed to be meeting my uncle at Black’s for dinner.”

“Well, we could give you a lift in my coach then since that is close to our destination.”

Jon had been surprised by the offer to join them at the brothel and even more surprised by the offer to share a ride. It was evident the Honorable Theon Greyjoy thought himself above a bastard and yet did not seem unwilling to be in his company. He wondered if Robb’s willingness to be in his company was the deciding factor. He agreed and they rode together companionably enough. Jon thought he could possibly learn to tolerate Greyjoy with his easy manners and droll remarks…until the subject of Sansa was raised.
“And how is that bluestocking sister of yours, Stark? Has she bloomed into an exquisite beauty as I predicted when I last saw her? Has she grown much, if you take my meaning?”

“I would warn you not to speak of my sister in such an illiberal manner, Greyjoy. And, there is nothing wrong with an intelligent young lady being well read.”

“Oh, come on, Robb. She was already a beauty at 14 though she insulted me for saying so at the time. I imagine she has grown even lovelier as she has, um…matured,” he finished with a leer.

Jon let out a huff of indignation before he could stop himself and drew the man’s attention.

“Have you met Miss Sansa, Mr. Snow?”

“Yes, I have had that privilege, sir.” I have had the privilege of kissing her sweet lips and I carry a letter from her and a lock of her hair with me, you contemptible scrub.

“So, what’d you think of her? Such fiery red hair to match a fiery temper…enough to get any man’s blood up, no? A lovely bloom like that is begging to be…”

“I would thank you not to speak of the young lady in such a way, sir, especially in the presence of her brother who has already given you warning and a man you just met, who you do not know well enough to speak so unreservedly.”

“Are you really a sailor, Mr. Snow? Sure you’re not a parson?” Greyjoy said with a laugh before changing the subject.

Robb, however, looked over at him with something like new-found respect and nodded to him as the coach came to a stop in front of Black’s. Jon thanked Greyjoy for the ride and bid them both adieu before entering his uncle’s club.

Black’s had an esteemed reputation as a gentleman’s club and his uncle clung to his membership tenaciously as a sign that he was still au courant with the ton. Jon was led upstairs to a semi-private dining room to wait for his uncle. Jon was always punctual, having had punctuality literally beaten into him as a newly-joined midshipman at the age of 15. He had overslept and been late for muster on three occasions, having had a difficult time adapting to no more than four hours of sleep at a time, when Captain Mormont had had him turned over a gun in his cabin and Mr. Clegane had administered a dozen to his posterior with his cane, a painful and humiliating experience that had convinced Jon to never again be late for anything. His uncle on the other hand, having never had to answer to anyone regarding his punctuality, was forty minutes late but did apologize for his delay before launching into the question of the day.

“Well? Did you pass?”

“Yes, uncle.”

Jon reached into his pocket and produced his commission. Unfortunately, he also pulled the lock of Sansa’s hair out with it. He quickly stashed it again but not quickly enough.

“What is that?”

“Nothing, uncle.”

“A lock of hair would’ve been my guess,” his uncle said with a wry smile. “Did some doxy give it to
you in Portsmouth, boy?"

“No, sir,” Jon said with an icy glare. His uncle looked up sharply at him but decided not to press further.

“This is very good,” he said, fingering the prized piece of paper. Jon suddenly wished to snatch it back. He would’ve rather shared this with his Uncle Benjen, a man who would’ve understood all that it meant to him. “I am glad you are well on your way in the service, Jon, for I have some news.” His uncle leaned forward with a conspiratorially look and continued, “I am to be wed to Miss Jeyne Poole.”

“The steward’s daughter, my lord?” he gasped out as he choked on his wine. Why on Earth would he marry the steward’s daughter?

He remembered the girl naturally enough. She had lived on the estate all her life. She had mousy brown hair and soft brown eyes. She was sweet in a way but a bit of a flirt and gossip. The servants had always been aware of Jon’s unusual status and, while they accorded him respect, they did not shield him as much from their private world as they did his uncles and, naturally, he had played with their children when he was a boy. Jeyne Poole had kissed him once on a dare when he was 11, the dare having been her suggestion. It had been a chaste peck on the lips but for a week Jon had fancied himself in love with her until he had learned she had allowed herself to be dared quite often by many of the other local boys.

“Yes, Miss Poole has quite won my affections, such a spirited young lady and so sweetly devoted to me.”

She’s twenty-six years his junior…he must’ve gotten her pregnant. She will be pleased to be a baroness at least.

Jon forced the unkind thoughts from his mind and congratulated his uncle. He wanted to be happy for him but it only made him think of Sansa and their long separation which looked to be longer still. He wondered how long he would have to keep her waiting…assuming Sir Eddard ever gave them his consent.

Three weeks they had been in England and the ship was nearly back in fighting trim after much hard work and harrying trips to the dockyard on behalf of the captain to wrangle for this or that. Jon had been granted liberty on a couple of other occasions though which allowed for him to meet with Robb Stark again, in Portsmouth this time. Thankfully, his friend, the Honorable Theon Shithead, was not with him. They met for dinner at an inn near the docks and got along very well over the course of their dinner and conversation.

“May I trouble you for the salt?” Robb asked before continuing, “Have you heard the latest news regarding Spain, Jon?”

“That they will soon declare war upon us? Yes, I have heard. More wine?”

“Yes, please. It seems that soon all of Europe will be against us. The French have had so many victories to crow over and us so very few,” the young captain said dismally.
“True, the French have had their successes…by land,” Jon said with a slight smirk.

“Yes…yes, the Navy has done very well,” he said with a nod. “I will grant you that.” As the plates were cleared he next asked, “Are you free this evening? There’s a musical performance I’m planning to attend. The soprano is a gorgeous, young Italian lady…Talisia something. I never can say her last name correctly. An acquaintance of my father introduced me to her in London and I confess that part of the reason I travelled down here was to see her again. The other soloist is quite lovely, too, a very lovely blonde if you’re interested.”

“I wouldn’t object to the performance tonight but…Robb…have you spoken with your sister lately?”

“Sansa? No, I’ve had little time to see her or my younger siblings the past several months. Why do you ask?”

“I…I’ve asked your father’s permission to court her. I’ve asked and received his permission so, naturally, I am not interested in meeting any lovely blonde soloists or going to Mother Adley’s or…”

“Oh, I see,” he said with a look of complete surprise.

“I hope you are not offended that I didn’t speak before or that your sister is being courted by a bastard.”

“No…I’m not offended at all. It was your private business and you were not in any way obliged to share it with me. And as for your…parentage…if you’ll forgive me mentioning it, you are mistaken if you think that matters to me. For my part…well, I like you very much and, if my sister must marry someday, I’ll be glad to call you my brother. Much better than Greyjoy for certain,” he said, sipping his wine.

“Oh? I didn’t know he was…”

“Oh, he’d like to court her certainly but Sansa’s despises him and Father is not exactly fond of him either. And, while we played together as boys, I know for a fact that he would never make a good husband to any girl and I would likely wind up hating him if he were married to my sister. You have nothing to worry about from him. Knowing Sansa, you have nothing to worry about at all. Has my father given his consent to the marriage then?”

“Not yet. I’ve not been able to meet with him to actually ask for your sister’s hand so for now I must be content with letters. I know he doesn’t wish for her to marry too young and expects me to be in a position to provide for her so…”

“Well, let us drink a toast to your eventual success and happiness then.” Once they had finished their wine, Robb asked, “So, shall we go and be entertained tonight?”

As they walked to the small theater, Robb mentioned that his father wished to return to England with his younger siblings and Jon wondered if it might afford him better opportunities to meet with Sansa again. He certainly hoped so. The performance was very fine and the singers were talented though they could not move Jon the way Sansa’s voice did. He spent much of the performance daydreaming about Sansa playing the piano forte in the drawing room of her father’s house the night they met. Once the performance was done, Robb urged Jon to come with him back stage to meet his singer. While no young lady was as lovely as Sansa in Jon’s eyes, there was no denying that Robb’s Italian girl was a beauty. Jon stood to the side, avoiding the overtures of the blonde soloist, to allow his friend time to speak with her before they headed back out into the night, Robb to his inn and Jon to his ship.
It was quite dark once he reached the quay. He was attempting to find a wherry willing to row him back to his ship when he was approached by an older man in a plain blue coat.

“I beg your pardon, sir. Are you from Queenscrown?” the gentleman asked. His manners were impeccable but his pierced ear was a clear indication that he was a seaman.

“Yes, sir,” Jon responded, wondering if he were getting ready to be asked if they needed more men at present. Perhaps he’s some sort of warrant officer with that blue coat and needing a ship to join.

“I hope you’ll forgive me asking but would you mind taking a note to your captain for me?”

“I, uh…well, I can’t see any harm in that, Mister…”

“Mormont. My name is Jorah Mormont,” he replied with a slight smile.

Jon’s eyes widened but then he collected himself. He took note of the thinning blond hair and blue eyes and could certainly see a resemblance to Sir Jeor in the man before him.

“Certainly, sir. I would be glad to be of service to you.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant…”

“Snow, Jon Snow, sir.”

“Thank you, Mr. Snow,” the older man said then and he walked away after handing Jon the note.

Once Jon returned to the frigate, he went to hand the letter over to his captain. Sir Jeor seemed eager to read his son’s words without an audience and Jon quickly excused himself. Regardless, he had been upset by rumors from the wherryman that the frigate was being sent to the African station. He hoped they were not true and simply gossip. Such a mission would last two years at least. He sought out Dr. Seaworth, who was the captain’s particular friend, in the gunroom to see if there was any truth to the rumor and was relieved to learn from him that they were bound back to the Mediterranean instead. Davos further shared with Jon in confidence that they would probably be stopping in Gibraltar and his heart began pounding with excitement at once. In his joy, Jon got a bit ahead of himself.

“May I write to Sansa, do you think, sir? And tell her there’s a chance I may get to see her?”

“Are you daft, Mr. Snow? No, you may not write her about orders you know nothing about since I most certainly did not share such confidential information with you. Use your head, boy. If the captain announces our destination to the officers and crew, you may write to your miss about it. If not, you must keep your musings confined to her beauty and your longing for her…or whatever it is young lovers write about. I can’t remember anymore.”

Jon grinned at the older man’s response and begged his pardon for his rash suggestion to share naval movements in a private letter without proper permission. But, it didn’t stop his heart from singing in anticipation at the thoughts of seeing her once more.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Sir Eddard has news for Sansa. And when Queenscrown arrives in Gibraltar, Jon encounters obstacles trying to see Sansa, while she is having a terribly frustrating day of her own.

Miss Sansa Stark gazed out the bay window in the second story room that they used for lessons at Summer Hall as her youngest brother, Rickon, continued conjugating his Latin verbs. When he got stuck, he would huff and tell her Latin was stupid. Sansa would only tell him to begin again and look back out the window. It had been nearly ten months since she had last seen Jon Snow, she reflected. And ten months since she had last laid eyes on her twin brother, Gabriel. As Rickon continued conjugating and huffing, Sansa quietly pulled out the letter that had arrived yesterday from Jon to reread.

My Dear Sansa,

Sweetheart, I hope this letter finds you well. I hope that your father is improved since your last letter which I was so very pleased to receive in Portsmouth. Please give him my respects and send my greetings to your sister and brothers as well. I miss you terribly, my love, and I am presently awaiting orders to learn where we shall sail next. Let us hope those orders will send me your way again. I passed along your greetings to all you named in your last letter. I’ve never seen Selmy or Mr. Clegane blush before then and I had to hide my smile as they did. The others all send you their compliments and best wishes.

I am very pleased to share with you that Captain Mormont did send me to London for my examination and I passed. You will not laugh at me I know when I admit that I took your lock of hair with me for luck and am convinced that it brought me just that. The examining captains were as unpleasant a trio as you could ever imagine and they must’ve thought me quite strange at first as I sat there smiling at them like a fool. You see, I did exactly what I told you I would do and I forced myself to picture that it was you there asking the questions. Suddenly, my nerves evaporated and I answered their questions in a sufficiently seaman like manner for them to have the good grace to pass me.

While I was in London, I was surprised and pleased to run into your brother, Robb. We got on well in London and even better when he later came down to Portsmouth and dined with me. I hope you will not mind, sweetheart, when I admit that I told him of my intentions towards you. He was quite agreeable to the notion of me as a brother though which pleased me greatly.

I hope you will not let your spirits be low too often worrying over your brother, Gabriel, and your father. It hurts to think of you being sad when I cannot be by you to offer any comfort. I will pray for your father’s recovery and your brother’s safety, just as I pray for you at night, my darling girl. I must go now, sooner than I would wish for I am on watch tonight. I will post this letter as soon as I can though I should like to think I could be my own postman and deliver it into your hands.

With Much Love,

Jon
“What does he say, Sansa?” Bran asked.

Sansa looked up and saw that both boys were sitting there, staring at her with amusement.

“Oh! I am so sorry. Did you finish, Rickon?”

“A while ago.”

“Oh…um…perhaps we could take a short break then.”

“What’d he say? Did he pass?”

“He did, Bran.”

“Will you ask him now then? To help find a ship for me?” Bran asked eagerly.

“No, Bran. You must speak with Papa about that.”

“But he’ll say no. I thought if Jon asked…”

“Is he coming here, Sansa?” Rickon asked over Bran's argument.

“Not that I know of,” she said sadly.

She could hear Papa coughing as he came down the hall. She straightened and told them to finish up their assignments just as the door opened.

“Papa!” Rickon shouted as he sprang up to hug their father.

Bran was more subdued being two whole years older, nearly twelve now. “Good morning, sir,” he said.

Sir Eddard Stark ruffled his youngest sons’ hair lovingly and looked to Sansa. “A word with you, dearest, if I may interrupt.”

“Yes, Papa,” she said, rising to follow him.

“Another letter?” he asked, pointing to the letter still clutched in her hand.

“Yes, Papa,” she said blushing.

She followed him from the room and downstairs to his study. Will he ask me about Jon again? she wondered. He had asked her to his study several months ago when Jon had sent a letter to him begging permission to write to his daughter and to court her.

“Is this something you want, Sansa?” he had asked.

“Yes, Papa. Very much.”

“Is there anything I should know regarding your time with Mr. Snow while you were away?”

“Only that we came to care for one another…very much.”

“And he has not done anything that I would object to…”

“No, Papa…” But her father’s piercing gaze had prompted her to add, “We kissed…that is all,” she had finished with a blush.
Her father may not have been pleased by that but he did not seem terribly displeased either. He said she was still too young for marriage though and hoped that Mr. Snow was prepared for a long engagement if he were serious. He also said he would not give his consent until he felt assured that Mr. Snow would be able to reasonably provide for her. He said that he could perhaps be swayed though when he knew the young man better.

Once they reached the study though, it was not Mr. Snow that Sir Eddard wished to speak of.

“Sansa, Spain has declared war against us. It is not unexpected as you well know but it puts those of us in Gibraltar in a more precarious position. You know I have wanted to return home for a while now but I would like to get you all home as soon as possible given this development.” Sansa nodded at his words. It was not really a surprise. Perhaps it will be easier to see Jon then… “However,” her father continued, breaking in on her daydreams, “I cannot bring myself to leave the Med while Gabriel is still unaccounted for. I’ve received word from an old friend that he may be in Spain.”

“Sansa? But I thought he was…”

“Sansa,” he said, his grey eyes sharp and cutting despite his recent illness, “you’re a smart girl. I know you’ve ran across some of my papers. It was careless of me to not hide them better but I wasn’t…I wasn’t giving you enough credit at the time. You know things about me that the boys and Arya do not.”

It was true. While searching through a ledger to sort out an issue with the household accounts a couple of years ago, Sansa had run across some of her father’s papers…confidential papers. Her father had been an intelligence agent for the army and was still quietly working in that capacity for the army except that he was now the one helping handle the agents instead of going on missions himself.

“Your friend then…”

“Is a Spaniard that does not agree with his government’s support of France. Gabriel went to serve under Colonel Brown when he joined without my permission but he was recruited into acting as an agent on a mission in Spain as he knows French and Spanish well. But, Gabriel has no head for this sort of work being too passionate and temperamental. I wonder at times how you are twins.”

“I can be passionate and head-strong, too, Papa.”

“Yes, but it is always tempered by your sweet nature and your good sense. Anyway, it’s my fault he ran away from home like he did and I must try and get him back.”

“What are you saying, sir?”

“I’m going to Spain to try and recover my son and you, my dear, are going to take your sister and younger brothers home.”

“But Papa, why can we not just stay here until you return?”

“Because I want you safe back in England in case things deteriorate here unexpectedly.”

“But the Navy keeps the port defended.”

“For how long though? They’ve got the French, Spanish and Dutch navies to face now with precious few allies on our side and none of those a naval power. And by land we’re surrounded by Spain here. I’d rather know you were away. I’m sending you to live with your Aunt Lysa.”
“Aunt Lysa? But, I’ve not seen her in years and she’s…” Not right in the head, she finished in her mind.

“I know but she is still your mother’s sister.”

“But Uncle Jon is dead and she…” Sansa trailed off and closed her eyes, trying to still her heart. She could hear Bran’s cries and Arya’s screams in her mind still. It was a long time ago.

“She will take adequate care of you all until I return to England. And Lady Arryn has remarried, a civilian with some high-ranking government post, a Mr. Baelish. I would rather send you to your aunt, especially knowing a man will be there than have you and the children alone at Winterfell with only Nan and a few servants.”

Sansa bit her lip to keep from arguing further and simply asked, “When do we leave, sir?”

“I will do my best to have all of that arranged before I leave.”

“When do you leave then?”

“Within the week, I hope.”

---

Gibraltar Bay

October 1796

Jon bolted up as he awoke panting and hard with Sansa’s name on his lips. He tried to remember what had woken him. No, there was no one knocking…there doesn’t seem to be any emergency aboard. He collapsed back in his cot and could hear Mr. Thorne and the steward talking on the other side of the door when he remembered. Today…today, I'll see her! He had been granted shore leave for the day which would start within an hour or so. He smiled to himself and laid back down allowing his hand to idly slide down to grasp his cock before letting his mind wander back to his dream.

Sansa in her blue dress in Captain Baratheon’s small cabin with the bawdy book she had found under his cot. Him walking in on her as she raised her skirts and started touching herself as she stared at one of the erotic drawings. Her sweet blush when she saw him watching her and then asking him shyly to try something from one of the pictures with him. And then she wantonly shoved him to the cot and climbed atop of him with her skirts about her waist and…

“Mmm…oh, Sansa…” he moaned and then the grunted rather loudly as he came.

He felt a touch of shame remembering he would soon call upon her and her family but it would hardly do to go to her house with his cock jutting out like the bowsprit of a ship. It was better to sate himself now, he thought. He rose and cleaned himself before he dressed to face the day.

He left his tiny cabin to find Yoren and Mr. Thorne at table less than four feet from his door. Jon self-consciously smoothed a hand over his queue and uniform coat when he felt Thorne’s critical eye on him, then blushed when he wondered if they’d heard him a few minutes ago. Probably…I hear Thorne’s snoring and Yoren belching and farting most nights after all.
“Good morning, gentlemen,” he said and was pleased his voice sounded normal at least.

“Good morning, Mr. Snow,” they replied.

Yoren was devouring bacon like a starving man and Jon looked longingly at the serving plate. *Two meagers strips left,* he thought a bit ruefully. *Well, Yoren has never hid his love of bacon.*

“Fresh supplies and plenty of soft tack, sir. Would you care for coffee?” the gunroom steward asked.

“Yes, thank you.”

He sat and sipped his coffee before he reached for the last of the bacon which Yoren begrudgingly allowed him and started to spread some marmalade on his toasted soft tack.

“Captain granted you leave today, Mr. Snow?” Thorne asked.

“Yes, sir.”

“Well…and will you call on Miss Stark then?”

*A ship has no secrets*…“Yes, sir.”

“Does she know you’re here?”

“No, sir. Well, I’m not sure. I suppose she may have heard *Queenscrown* arrived in port yesterday.”

“Well…let us hope your miss has not grown too tired of waiting for us to return,” Thorne said sourly as he rose from the table and clapped on his hat. “I’ve a few duties for you to attend to before you go, *Lieutenant* Snow. Once you’ve finished your breakfast that is and assuming you don’t need to return to your cabin to fist your cock again before you see her.”

Jon’s mouth fell open and his cheeks were burning as Mr. Thorne left. Yoren was snorting to himself and started choking on his bacon before he laughed and said, “Ah…me! God, Alliser’s such a petty bastard at times…no offense, Snow.”

“None taken, Mr. Yoren,” Jon responded with what little dignity he could as he heard the steward stifling his own guffaw.

Once the steward had left, Yoren leaned over and said, “He had a miss once when we were younger, you know. She left him for a parson when he was gone for two years sailing to Botany Bay and back. He’s a bitter old sod…though a fine seaman.”

“Yes, sir,” Jon agreed before whispering to Yoren, “Why does he…does he hate me?”

“Probably. You’re a lord’s nephew and he doesn’t care for aristocrats but you’re a bastard so he thinks he’s better than you. And, your Uncle Benjen and he have never gotten along. They were shipmates once. Benjen got made post and Alliser’s still a mere lieutenant though he was older and ahead of him in seniority. Other than that, I’d say he hates you the same as he hates everyone. Just an unhappy man with nothing in his life but the service and his duty, Jon. He resents those that might have more in their life than that.”
Jon was sweating from the heat in Gibraltar in his new broadcloth coat as he made his way to the Stark residence. It was not even midday yet but later than he had thought to be heading to Summer Hall. Mr. Thorne had set him to supervising a task that a midshipman could’ve easily been placed in charge of but Jon knew better than to complain. As the first hour of his leave time slipped away with him still aboard though, it was hard not to feel resentful. However, Sam had seen what Thorne was about and just happened to mention in the captain’s presence that he’d be happy to take over for Mr. Snow to Mr. Thorne. The captain had given Thorne a hard look and sent Sam to take his place. Jon was grateful but he worried that his friend had exposed himself to Thorne’s wrath for his sake.

“Don’t fret over that, Jon. He hates me anyway. What’s one more thing? Give Miss Stark my regards.”

“I will. Thanks, Sam.”

As he got closer to his destination, he began to worry that perhaps he should’ve sent a note ahead announcing his intention to call this morning. And when he actually saw the house, he realized that it didn’t look quite right to him. In fact, it looked quite wrong somehow. Two windows on the first floor were boarded up and the front door had been taken off the hinges. There were men carrying furniture out and trunks. His mind ran uneasily to plagues and illnesses that Davos had warned him of where entire families might be wiped out in less than two days’ time. *God forbid,* he muttered to himself and he said a silent prayer before he witnessed a perfectly normal sight...at least for the Stark household. Bran and Rickon were leaning out an upstairs window and hallooing at their sister, Arya, who had just stepped out the front door to harangue the men carrying furniture about something.

“Shut up, you savages, or I’ll tell Sansa you’re neglecting your studies!” she shouted up at her brothers.

“No, you won’t, Arya! Sansa didn’t leave us any lessons to work on today anyway!” Bran shouted down to her. “Mr. Snow!” he then screeched when he noticed Jon standing uncertainly at the edge of the walk.

“Jon!” Arya shouted as she ran up to him with a joyful smile and started to hug him before she remembered herself and curtsied.

“Miss Arya,” he said with a smile as he bowed, “you are looking well.”

She smiled again and this time she did hug him. “So, you are fully a lieutenant now?”

“I am.”

“Oh! Sansa said so. I’m so happy to hear it! Sansa will be so cross though to miss you. She’s out this morning.”

Jon tried to keep his smile from falling too quickly when he heard the news but was soon distracted by the two boys that had thundered up to him.

“Jon! Mr. Snow! Did you come from the Queenscrown? Will I get to see your ship this time? Are you going to sail us home?” Rickon asked.

He’d barely met Rickon previously as the boy had bolted past him escaping the house when Jon had first met the Starks but apparently Rickon considered him an old friend now.

“Mr. Snow! How was your examination? Was it terribly hard? Could you speak to my father for
me? I want to join the navy, too. He’d never let me join the army so young but there are boys my age aboard your ship. I know Father would let me join if you asked him, sir,” Bran said at the same time.

“Would you both be silent, you stupids? I mean…please, permit Mr. Snow to speak and answer your questions one at a time. It’s rude to ask so many questions at once,” Arya said before launching into a litany of her own questions. “Did you come to ask for Sansa’s hand? Papa is not here. He's been away on business for weeks now. Will you take us to see your ship again? Is Mr. Reed still aboard? Do you like my new dress? It was one of Sansa’s that she altered for me. I prefer breeches but Sansa insists I wear dresses everywhere now that I’m 15.”

Jon’s head was spinning by the time he answered all their questions and he was soon asking a few of his own.

“Why would you think I would be sailing you home?”

“Rickon’s just being stupid.”

“I am not!”

“Papa arranged for us to sail home on the Indiaman Mercy but it was captured by the Spanish. Guess they didn’t have much mercy for the Mercy.” Arya laughed at her own joke and continued, “The lease is up here. We were supposed to have sailed weeks ago, and the men have come to take the furniture and paint and such and said we must get out. Sansa has tried to beg them to let us stay a bit longer until she can book us passage home but the owner wouldn’t even receive her for several days. And now, she’s gone again this morning to try.”

“Alone?”

“Yes…well, I told her I’d join her but I…I overslept and she left without me,” Arya said as she suddenly moved her eyes to her feet and scuffed the walk with her toe.

“Well, let us go and seek your sister together then,” Jon said before he turned and told the boys to go back inside and wait for them to return.

“Please, Mr. Lannister…won’t you consider letting us stay just a few more days. I’m sure I can book us a passage soon. My father and elder brother are away and…”

“Really, Miss Stark, we’ve already been through this. Your father did not continue the lease and I’ve someone lined up to take over the house. I’ve already given you three extra days.”

Tywin Lannister was not a man to be easily swayed, Sansa had learned. He was not swayed by tears or sweet words or even angry words. He wanted his property back to lease to someone else. But there was one thing that could sway him…money.

Sansa sighed with resignation and said, “Please, sir, I’ve brought the sum you mentioned when we last spoke.”

His green eyes lit up then and he kept trying to keep his smirk in check. It was extortion, usury, the
vilest sort of blackmail but the Lannisters loved gold and little else and Sansa knew it was her best option for keeping them in their home until they could find a way to England. She hated giving him this money though. She could’ve used it to rent rooms at the inn, she’d only have needed a fraction of it really, but she didn’t feel safe staying there without Papa or Robb…or Gabriel even.

As she headed back out into the blinding sunlight, she pulled her hat off for a moment to wipe away the tears of frustration that had threatened to spill as he took her money and told her she could have another week. Another week to find a way home…and no Indiamen expected again this month. She would have to find a smaller vessel to take them and that would mean going to the docks again…alone.

No, you can’t go there alone. You’ll need to bring Jenkins with you at least. Wonder if he’s stopped crying over the tea service the movers broke yet? Perhaps I should’ve just waited for Arya to wake up. That girl could sleep till noon though. Papa, why did you have to hurry off and leave us in a mess like this?

She knew she was not really being fair to her father. He’d arranged the passage on the Indiaman and paid the lease for an additional month in case of a delay. He hadn’t thought of this potential delay though that the Spaniards had brought about by entering the war. But she was still crosser than she had ever been with her Papa at that instant. And, her anger made her bold. Sansa put her hat back on and made her way down to the docks.

“Hello, darlin’! Come to brighten me day, have ya?” a sailor called out to her.

Sansa kept her head down and adjusted her shawl though she was sweltering from the midday sun.

“Looking for something, love? I think I’ve got what you need here,” a soldier said her as she passed by him and his companions burst into raucous laughter.

Stupid, Sansa…this is stupid. Go back home. None of the captains she’d hoped to ask about booking passages would give her the time of day.

“Hello, Little Bird,” a gruff voice called.

Sansa ducked her head again and started to walk faster when the voice and the odd nickname stirred a memory. She looked back over her shoulder and saw Mr. Clegane, the bosun, smirking at her with a few of the other Queenscrows in his company.

“Mr. Clegane? Are you…Is Queenscrown here then?”

“Aye, miss. Dropped anchor yesterday.”

“Oh! Well, how are you? How are you all?” she asked looking at the group of men standing respectfully by, touching their hats to her in turn. “I hope you all are well. I’ve miss you all very much and I’m so happy to see you here!”

“What’s the little bird doing down here all alone is what I would like to know.”

“I…I’m trying to find passage home to England for my sister and my brothers.” Mr. Clegane gave her a curious look and she continued, “It’s a rather long story, I’m afraid. Is, um…is Mr. Snow
aboard?"

The big man smiled at that and said, “Not at present. He was given leave this morning.”

“Oh?” Did he come to call then and I’ve missed him…or what if he didn’t come to call…

Sansa’s face had crumpled a bit with her momentary doubt but Mr. Clegane set her mind at ease.

“He was headed to see you from what I heard.”

“Oh! Really? I can’t believe I missed…I mean, that’s very kind of him.”

“Shall I see you back home, miss? The docks are no place for a lady alone and I’m sure Mr. Snow would be happy to help you search for a ship later. That is…if you don’t mind being in the company of an ugly, old dog like me.”

“What nonsense, Mr. Clegane. Of course I’d be delighted and honored if you would escort me home.”

Arya talked non-stop from the house to the solicitor’s office where Miss Stark had called first. They were told she’d proceeded to the banking house next. As they headed to the next stop, Jon reflected how much Arya had grown since he’d last seen her. She was 15 and quite lovely with her dark brown hair and grey eyes like her father’s. If she lacked the ravishing beauty of her sister, it was not to her discredit. Few women could hold up well next to Sansa, especially in Jon’s eyes. But, Arya had a wild beauty of her own and, though she was still very much a girl, it was plain that she would soon be attracting suitors. He thought of Robb Stark’s irritation over Greyjoy’s lewd words and wondered if he realized he would soon be doubly damned with two beautiful sisters to worry over.

At the banking house, they were informed that Miss Stark had left for Mr. Lannister’s office.

“Damn it,” Arya fumed as they headed back outside. Jon’s eyebrows shot up at her language but then Sansa had warned him of her sister’s less-than-ladylike behavior. “I knew it! I knew it! I knew she’d cave and give that arse the money!”

“Arya…what are you talking about?”

“Tywin Lannister!” she shouted. Seeing his look of total incomprehension, she continued, “He owns the house. Papa paid the rent through the 15th but the time is up and he wants us out. She’s trying to get him to let us stay a bit longer so we don’t have to stay at the inn without Father or Robb but he’s refused. But yesterday, he suggested he might let us stay a bit longer for a ridiculous sum. I told her not to do it but she’s been desperate to prove she can handle everything with Papa and Robb away.”

Arya kicked a few rocks on the path before she said, “She’s right anyway. We don’t have anywhere else to go.”

“What? No friends or acquaintances here that would take a young lady and three children in for a few days? You’ve lived here for years. Surely, there’s someone. Admiral Defreys and his wife?”

“His wife died last winter and Sansa’s too proud to ask anyone else. And I don’t blame her. We can’t go to a widower or a bachelor’s home…not with the things they say about Sansa already. And the ladies here…”
“What do you mean? What do they say about Sansa?”

“She went with all of you on that mission…alone. It didn’t do her reputation any good. Those viscous bitches in Mrs. Brown’s circle love salivating over rumor and innuendo. Sansa tries to pretend she doesn’t care what they say but, you know Sansa…she cares. Women can be so cruel, Jon. You have no idea.” Arya stamped her foot and cried, “Bloody hell! I can’t wait to get out of here! Sansa says England will be worse, living with Aunt Lysa, but I can’t see how at the moment. I feel like we’re chasing our tail trying to find Sansa. Perhaps we should go home and wait of her return, Jon.”

“No, Arya. I’d prefer to call upon Mr. Lannister first if you don’t mind showing me the way.”

 Sansa had talked non-stop all the way from the dockyards to the house but Mr. Clegane had smiled indulgently at her prattle and let her talk. She’d had such an irritating day and talking helped some at least. He took his leave soon after and mentioned bowsing up his jib while ashore…whatever that means.

“Did you see him, Sansa? Did you see Mr. Snow?” Rickon asked excitedly as she took off her hat in the hall and put an apron on over her grey morning dress.

“No, did he come here?” she asked sadly, wondering when and if he would return.

“Yes! He left with Arya over an hour ago to look for you!”

Sansa felt thoroughly depressed now. Twenty pounds had bought her one more week in the house and one week only to find them passage home. Twenty pounds! And she had missed seeing Jon. The first time he’d been here in nearly a year and she’d missed seeing him. He had to return with Arya at least so she’d get to see him but still…every minute of his shore leave that they were not together, seemed a heinous waste after her extremely frustrating day. Sansa sat down in her father’s chair and felt like crying.

But, the front door that had mercifully been replaced since she’d left this morning opened a few minutes later though and she heard Arya calling from the hall.

“Sansa? Are you home?”

Sansa rose, yanking off the apron and straightening her skirts. She glanced in the mirror and swept a hand over her messy bun to pat it back in place. Her heart was already pounding in anticipation.

“I’m here, Arya! In the drawing room,” she answered. Please, let him be with her.

“Look who I brought, Sansa!” Arya said with a smile as she led Mr. Snow into the room. “You won’t believe what he did for us today!”

Sansa could not attend to a single thing Arya was saying though. He was as handsome as ever. His face was flushed from the heat and exertion of seeking her out no doubt. His coat and hat would’ve been terrible to bear in the afternoon sun but Sansa felt a surge of something thrumming through her veins just looking at him, especially in his uniform again. He held his hat in his hand and his curly black hair had partially escaped his queue. Sansa wished she could take the tie from his hair and run her fingers through it. His solemn brown eyes found her blue ones and there was a nervous smile on
his lips. Neither of them had breathed a word in the minute since he’d walked through the doorway.

“Miss Stark,” he finally said with a bow.

“Mr. Snow,” she answered with a curtsy.

They both stood stiffly then and stared at one another while Sansa subconsciously rubbed her sweaty hands across her skirts and Jon seemed continuously on the verge of speaking again without managing to get any words out.

“Shall I go and check on the boys a moment then?” Arya asked with a grin. “But, I’ll be back shortly,” she finished with a prim little sniff. *Please don’t hurry back, dear sister.*

The door closed and they hesitated for only a second or two before crossing the room to each other. He grasped her by the waist and lifted her up before embracing her. Sansa laughed and then the tears came. He was smiling…that stunning smile she had missed so much.

“Oh, Jon! I’ve missed you so!” she said holding his broad shoulders for support as the tears spilled down her cheeks.

“I’ve missed you, Sansa. You are so beautiful. How could I’ve forgotten you were this beautiful?” he asked as he wiped her tears away and kissed them from his fingertips where he’d collected them.

“I’m sweaty and all disheveled,” she protested as he leaned in for a kiss.

“I rather like you sweaty and disheveled then,” he said before giving her a hearty kiss on the lips and sending the most delightful thrill coursing through her.

“Mr. Snow,” she said laughing at his daring. “Kiss me again,” she whispered then, “quickly, before she comes back.”

He wrapped his arms more firmly around her waist and angled his head to claim her mouth more fully. His soft, full lips were slightly chapped and tasted of salt just as she had imagined they would months and months ago before they had ever kissed. He pressed his mouth to hers and his tongue swiped her lips. Sansa gasped in surprise and, when she did, he slid it past her lips into her mouth. It was warm, wet and pleasant. She liked the way he seemed to be tasting her mouth and, when she met his tongue with her own, his groan caused the heat building in her sex to increase dramatically.

He pulled back for a moment while they both caught their breath. He rested his forehead against hers and she took the opportunity to run her fingers through his hair as she had wanted to do earlier. He started kissing along her jaw, working his way down her throat and she couldn’t stop the moan that passed her lips.

“Sansa, my love, I’ve missed you so much. I’ve thought of you every day and night, my darling girl,” he murmured against her collarbone as his hands moved from her waist to her lower back.

“Jon,” she breathed, “I’ve had the absolute worst day but now it is suddenly the best.”

He kissed his way back up her throat and, when he began kissing her lips again, he pressed himself more firmly against her. Sansa liked to feel his warm strength against her but she felt something between them that she hadn’t before through her skirts…something hard. She looked down to see if his sword had come between them. It hadn’t…at least not the sword she had imagined.

“Jon?” she asked uncertainly.
He was panting and had to catch his breath before mumbling out an apology. Sansa was grinning though when they heard the thunder of rapidly approaching feet. They had just seconds to put some distance between each other before Bran and Rickon came rushing through the door. The boys immediately launched themselves at a very disheveled and flushed Lieutenant Snow and Arya stood in the doorway, eyeing her blushing and somewhat disheveled sister with a smirk on her face.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa spend an afternoon together in Gibraltar before the Queenscrown begins convoy duty. The frigate makes a fine capture and Captain Mormont has a new plan of his goddaughter and her younger siblings.

Chapter Notes

I own nothing...I freely confess to borrowing from Patrick O'Brian's 'HMS Surprise' in one section of this chapter. The letter Jon sends Sansa and the action he describes is certainly inspired by Jack Aubrey's letter to his sweetheart and future wife, Sophie, in that book.

"Don’t be coy with me, Sansa Stark. You were kissing right before we walked in. I could tell.”

"Sometimes, Arya, I really don’t like you,” Sansa giggled as she adjusted her hat in the hall. “But considering your much-appreciated absence in the drawing room a while ago, I’ll admit to kissing him. Happy now?"

"Yes,” her sister said with a laugh as they walked back out into warm afternoon where Jon and the boys stood waiting.

Jon had somehow convinced Tywin Lannister to give half of the money back and extend their time in the house for an additional month. He was not forthcoming with details of how he had accomplished such a feat but Arya had been duly impressed regardless.

“I never would’ve imagined Mr. Snow could work himself into such a passion, Sansa. He’s always seemed a friendly enough gentleman to me but in a quiet sort of way. He sounded positively menacing though from what little I could hear through the door. I should’ve liked to see old Lannister’s face when he gave back the money.”

They walked down to the docks together with Arya and the boys in tow. They needed a chaperone after all and Arya was just old enough to serve the purpose. And the boys would’ve revolted if they’d been excluded from this outing, too. Sansa held on to Jon’s arm and was certain she was talking his ear off. He didn’t seem to mind though. He tilted his head towards her to listen to all she said and occasionally would touch her hand with his free hand and he had worn a smile on his face since they had left the house.

“What did you do?” she asked him when they were standing alone while the children ran along the docks chasing gulls.

“I did nothing, Miss Stark,” he said with a grin, watching the children.

“You can’t fool me, Mr. Snow. You did something. Tywin Lannister never would’ve given the
money back that easily and extended our lease like that without some sort of…and I’m surprised he even agreed to see you right away.”

“When I walked in, they thought I came from Defreys. I was shown in at once. Apparently, he has hopes of some lucrative business with the admiral. I immediately dissuaded him from his misconception but it ended up coming in handy. I told him what I thought of his usury first off. To blackmail a young lady with no protector at home out of her money, to threaten to cast children out into the streets…contemptible,” Jon said with heat and Sansa could well imagine his raised voice and the spark that must’ve been in his eyes during their exchange. “I then suggested that a gentleman might prefer not to do business with a man who could treat women and children so. I may have mentioned the admiral by name,” he said with a self-conscious grin. “Anyway, I then sweetened my tone and said that my captain might be looking for a new midshipman if he had any young man in the family to recommend or perhaps a business partner that might appreciate him finding a place for his boy. There are always spare boys about that people are looking to do something with it seems. Trant left the ship in England and with me officially a lieutenant now, Sir Jeor’s been on the watch for a new young gentleman for the berth.”

“And Mr. Lannister had someone he wished to suggest?” she asked trying not to let her vexation show.

“Yes, some associate’s nephew or something. I promised to speak with the captain later today. Sansa, are you cross with me?”

“No…not truly. I just wanted…”

“To handle matters yourself?”

“Yes,” she answered, looking down at her feet.

“I’m sorry…”

“Don’t be. It is the way of things. And I don’t mean to sound ungrateful. I can’t begin to tell you…”

“It was nothing, Sansa. I…I only want to take care of you but I know you can handle things as well. You…well, let us recall the children and see if we can find a ship for you.”

They continued walking as they searched for an appropriate vessel to carry them home. *Jon will know all manner of things that I would not know to ask and he will find us a suitable way to get home,* she reminded herself. They finally found a merchantman that would be leaving in a few weeks that had two cabins available. Jon had expressed his concern over Sansa and the children traveling alone. He was not certain of the captain’s character, knowing absolutely nothing about him but, as they had little choice at present, he had acquiesced and helped Sansa make the arrangements.

“Have you no servants to take with you at least?” he asked as they headed back.

The boys were running ahead again and shouting at each other and back at Jon. From time to time he would answer their multitude of questions regarding the men-o-war and merchantmen in the harbor. Arya was walking along ahead of them, pretending to fence at times with a stick she had found.

“Just Old Nan. She’s been with our family since Papa was a boy and she’s anxious to return to England she says.”

“An elderly woman, two young ladies and two boys…Sansa, I wish I could arrange for leave to see
you all home but I can’t at present. And, it wouldn’t really be fitting since we are not married or even engaged yet. Still…”

“We’ll be alright, Jon. Try not to worry so. Plenty of ladies make the voyage to and from the Med or the West Indies without a male escort. And you said it was the best option available for now.”

“For now,” he grumbled, clearly displeased and Sansa held his arm firmer and looked up at him sweetly until he smiled.

He walked them all home and had agreed to stay for dinner but it would be time for him to return to the ship soon afterwards. Sansa suspected he had not had anything to eat since breakfast and he confirmed it when she asked. She was grateful that she had instructed Cook to prepare a good, hearty meal before they left for the docks. The house was enveloped in the aroma of beef and cabbage when they returned and the boys darted off to wash up for dinner. Arya excused herself for a moment and they found themselves in the drawing room alone together once more.

“I can’t thank you enough for your help today,” Sansa said as she leaned her head on his shoulder now.

He kissed her hand and responded, “There is no need to thank me. I was happy to be of service to you. Do you have any idea when your father will return? I’m not certain how long we’ll be in port but I had thought perhaps if he returned before we sail I could ask him…”

“He’s in Spain, Jon.” Seeing his shocked expression, she continued, “He had reason to believe that Gabriel is there…perhaps being held there as a prisoner. I don’t expect to see him again until after we’re settled in England. I’m sorry, my love, but I can’t say any more than that at present and I beg you not to repeat what I’ve told you. He said I’m too young to marry yet anyway. I am yours though as soon as he will give his consent or even if he won’t but…”

“Sansa…your father is taking an awful risk going to Spain.”

“I know,” she said quietly, looking down at her hands in his.

Suddenly, it was just too much. She had born the responsibilities of the house and her younger siblings for weeks now, for years truly. Her twin brother had been missing for months and was quite possibly dead. Her father had headed into danger seeking him and Robb was not expected back anytime soon. They wouldn’t even see him before they sailed. They were returning to her native country but she had only childhood memories of it and they would be living with a woman of whom Sansa harbored some very unpleasant memories. In that moment, she felt old beyond her years and only wanted to be 17 for a day and not have so many concerns placed upon her. Her eyes filled with tears and her body started to shake with sobs. Jon looked anguished to see her so upset but he quickly pulled her into his arms and let her cry.

“Sansa,” he murmured, “I did not wish to make you sad, sweetheart. You have so many burdens to shoulder and I wish that I could ease them all for you. I love you. I have faith your father will soon return to you all and hopefully your brother as well. And I will gladly wait for your father’s consent to our match.”

“I’m sorry…I don’t mean to be crying at you.”

“It’s alright. I’d rather you cry on my shoulder than anyone else’s. There’s no one I’d rather comfort,” he said with a sweet smile as he kissed her tears away. “I’m sure the merchantman will get
you safely home to England and you’ll go and live with your aunt and be happy.”

“Jon…I’m afraid of Aunt Lysa,” she whispered.

“Afraid?” he said pulling back to look at her.

“Yes, she’s…” She couldn’t say. It had been so long ago. You’ll sound like a silly child. And Jon was already following his own line of thought.

“Sansa Stark afraid? Rubbish. I can’t believe the girl that threatened to level Drogo Bey’s port around his ears would ever be afraid of anything.”

Sansa couldn’t stay upset when he was trying to make her laugh…when he was laughing. She wiped at her eyes just as the door opened.

“Can’t you two keep your hands off each other for two minutes?” Arya said behind her. But when Sansa turned and Arya saw her tears, her grey eyes turned to ice. “Bloody hell! What’d you do to make her cry?! ” she shouted at Jon.

Jon looked horrified and more than a little concerned by her sister’s hostile expression before Sansa spoke, smiling through her tears now.

“He didn’t do anything at all, Arya. He was just perfect. I only needed to have a cry and I am better now.”

“Oh…well, in that case, Cook says dinner is ready,” she said though she still eyed Jon with a suspicious look.

“Miss Arya, I’d rather be flogged round the fleet than make your sister cry, you know,” Jon said with a smile.

“Alright then…but I’ll hold you to that.”

November 1796

Near Funchal

Jon paced the windward side of the quarterdeck several nights later with his hands clasped behind his back. The frigate had been on convoy duty for the past two weeks and had just escorted some merchantmen to Madeira. The watch dog had managed to see all its sheep safely to port. They were returning to Gibraltar now with a few more sheep to watch and on the lookout for any wolves in the water. French and Spanish privateers were having a heyday with the English merchant ships at present but the Queenscrown was plenty large enough to scare most of them away. A little prize money would be welcome though, Jon reflected as he paced. A finely built privateer could fetch an excellent price when sold and, while Captain Mormont would see the bulk of the money, along with the admiral, every man aboard would get a share. And a lieutenant’s share was better than a midshipman’s.

Naturally, the conflict Jon would’ve preferred was with an enemy’s man-o-war. Prize money in those cases was not always as likely since a national ship would often fight to the bitter end and
burning or sinking the enemy was as likely an outcome as taking it a prize but there was more distinction in defeating a well-matched ship from the French or Spanish navies, and better chances for advancement. Of course, there was also the risk of the biter being bit. But there was head money for either at least.

The fattest prize though was an enemy merchant ship though. Unless they could outrun the Queenscrown, they could not possibly hope to stand against her. The frigate became the wolf then and would happily run down a nice fat sheep that could fetch a man three times his yearly pay or more in prize money all in an afternoon’s work. And, there wasn’t a soul aboard who didn’t fervently long for a little more gold in their pockets. The ship’s gunnery was in excellent shape and Jon couldn’t help but hope for something to turn up to help his own finances if he wished to be able to set up house for Sansa someday.

“Sir,” Grenn said as he approached and broke in on his rambling thoughts. “Tollett thinks he spies something in the dark, three points off the starboard bow.”

“Thank you, Mr. Stanley. Tollett, lay aft here.” Tollett headed aft and knuckled his forehead to Jon. “What’d you see?”

“A shape, not a mile distant, sir. Saw the wink of a light before it was doused, too.”

“Man-o-war?”

“Not sure, sir, but I’d guess a merchant or privateer,” Tollett answered with a piratical gleam in his eye.

Jon took the telescope Grenn was handing him and looked out into the darkness. His eyes begin to water with the strain of trying to make out anything on the rocking deck in the dark when he caught a flash of something in the moonlight...something that looked like a sail.

“Damn, you’ve got good eyes, Edd. Prepare to wear,” he told the man at the wheel. “Mr. Stanley, give my respect and duty to the captain and inform him of a sail three points off the starboard bow, about a mile distant.”

“Aye-aye, sir.”

The next morning, Jon sat at the gunroom table composing a letter to Sansa to tell her of the fine Spanish privateer they had caught while it was fresh on his mind. The Misericordia de la Madre, despite the name, was one of the wolves hoping to catch a sheep while the watch dog was napping. She was disappointed in that. When the frigate wore round and headed straight at her, she tried to flee but a lucky shot from the bow chaser under Mr. Altin had pierced the mainsail just so and split it. Jon had been sent across with a prize crew to secure her but the privateers were not ready to submit too easily.

My Beloved Sansa,

I am happy to write this morning that Queenscrown made a fine capture during the night of an infamous, Spanish privateer...

Jon tried not to get too technical in his description but he couldn’t help telling her of Pyp’s lucky shot and the way the wind veered at just the right time to allow the frigate to come up a bit faster than the prize had anticipated. And naturally, he gave credit of the capture to Tollett for spotting it in the first place.
I was sent across in the launch with Mr. Tarly, Tollett and some of the Malays that recently joined the crew. Unfortunately, a shift in the breeze caused Queenscrown to fall off a bit and, as the two ships became more separated, some of the privateersmen decided they didn’t want to rot in prison. They had hauled down their colours of course but, as the launch drew nearer, they began peppering us with grape, hoping to scare us off while attempting to bend a new sail and escape. The frigate was unable to support us naturally without firing into us so there was little choice but for us to close her. I ordered the men to follow as I jumped into her mainchains and Tollett was right behind me with a cheer. Poor Sam missed his footing and landed heavily in the boat but the Malays were all silent and did not follow at first. I thought for a moment that I was surely dished as it appeared that I had a crew of fellows that wouldn’t follow me. But I boarded all the same…

Jon sat there with his pen poised above the ink pot remembering the deck full of privateersmen trying to swivel their popguns towards him and Tollett when the dripping Malays climbed aboard as nimble as cats. Many had apparently dove under the ship and swarmed up the other side or the stern. They ducked to avoid any musketry and then tackled the Spaniards in pairs, one to trip up an enemy before the other cut his throat to the bone and then they’d move off to the next. Jon was busy fighting the ship’s captain with his sword but could hear Spaniards shrieking as the swift yet silent knife work continued. Just as he had defeated his opponent, Sam came up the side and promptly vomited from the gore all along deck.

“Get the prisoners in the hold, Tollett.”

Edd’s shocked reply, “There ain’t none, sir.”

Jon stood looking about the deck at the bodies and the Malays silently looting the dead or squatting on the deck, chatting companionably with their neighbor. A profound memory…but how to write it down?

It was then that it struck Jon that he could not possibly write it down for Sansa. Sansa was as intelligent as any person he knew but he doubted she had much notion of the blood and gore of fighting, real fighting. And she worried over him enough as it was, he certainly didn’t need to add to that worry. He couldn’t possibly convey such a bloody little affair to his sweetheart so he dipped his pen and finished.

However, I was wrong and the Malays supported us remarkably and the prize was claimed. There is nothing like a prize to put the men in good spirits, or officers for that matter.

I hope this letter will find you well and whether I see you in Gibraltar or you receive this in England, please know that it carries all my dear affection and love for you. Please give my regards to Arya and the boys and take care of yourself.

With much love,

Jon

Jon and Sam Tarly stood on deck watching the schooner tear off again with the same thoroughbred grace and speed she had displayed when she had come racing up to them. The commander had come aboard and met with the captain and then Mr. Thorne had been called to the cabin.
“Wonder what’s the to do?”

“I don’t know, Sam. I expect we’ll find out.”

They were still a few days out from Gibraltar, slowed down by the slugs of the convoy. Jon had been relieved of the prize for the time being by Mr. Yoren.

“How’s your new messmate?” Jon asked.

“Mr. Payne? He’s a vast improvement over Trant. He seems alright. Still a lot to learn.”

“Well, I hope he’ll work out. I may have another favor to ask of the captain one of these days. Let us hope Mr. Payne doesn’t exhaust his goodwill towards me.”

Sam smiled and said, “I don’t think you’ve got to worry about that.”

Jon looked around to find Mr. Reed at his back. “Mr. Snow? Captain’s asking for you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Reed.”

Jon headed down to the captain’s cabin with the most particular memory of being called down a year ago to suddenly be told they would be heading off to Toulon within the hour and there would be no opportunity to see Sansa and say good-bye except via letter. Let us hope that is not the case now.

“Mr. Snow, come in,” the captain said. “Will you take a little lemon shrub?”

“Certainly, sir. Thank you.”

Dr. Seaworth was sitting in the cabin setting up the backgammon pegs and gave Jon an enigmatic smile before returning to his task.

“That was very fine work last night with the prize crew and the capture by the way.”

“Thank you, sir. The credit certainly goes to the men.”

Sir Jeor poured him a glass and then sat back down and looked at him. Jon sipped his shrub and wondered what this was about.

“The commander of the schooner had some news. Seems likely that we’ll be joining Sir John Jervis’s squadron in blockading Cadiz soon. After we reach Gibraltar, we’ll be sailing to join them once we’ve taken on wood and water and fresh supplies for ourselves and the squadron.”

“Yes, sir.” More blockade duty then, Jon thought dismally. He would’ve been happier in this duty since they would be operating from Gibraltar when they needed supplies or to refit but Sansa would be leaving for England soon.

“The question is…will you be sailing with us?” Captain Mormont asked next.

“Sir?”

“I’m considering sending you home with the prize. Such a prize is more of a lieutenant’s command but we’ll have to help you get a crew for her.”

“Home, sir?”

“To England.”
“England, sir?”

“Yes, England, Mr. Snow,” Sir Jeor said with amusement. “Big, damp, foggy island you may recall seeing once or twice. Last I checked it lies north of Ushant. Isn’t that right, doctor?”

“I believe that is correct but I am no navigator. Should we call the master in and ask him to be certain?” Davos said with a serious expression while Jon smiled at their facetiousness.

“So, Mr. Snow…how would you feel about sailing our fine prize there?”

“I would…I would be happy to do so, sir,” Jon said, wondering what this might mean regarding Sansa. *I could see her in England possibly.*

“Now, I apologize for delving into your personal business this way, Mr. Snow…as you are aware, Miss Stark is my goddaughter and I am only asking this out of necessity. Are you…is there an understanding between you and Miss Stark?”

“Well, sir…there is an understanding between us; however, I’ve not had any opportunity to speak with Sir Eddard in person. I wrote to ask him to allow us…to allow me to court Miss Stark which he agreed to but he says Sansa…Miss Stark is too young to marry just yet. And I haven’t asked for her hand yet…since I’ve not actually spoken to Sir Eddard since before Miss Stark sailed with us. In short, we are not engaged, sir.” *Dear God, this is awkward…*

Captain Mormont smiled though and said, “Thank you, Mr. Snow. I appreciate you sharing your personal affairs with me and apologize for having to ask. I’m not happy with the notion of Sansa and the children sailing to England alone and I was considering sending them in the prize we captured…and allowing you to take her home.” Jon opened his mouth to readily acquiesce until Mormont raised a hand. “But if you are not officially engaged, I’m not sure that would be appropriate.”

“But, sir, permit me to say that Miss Arya would be with her.”

“Miss Arya is 15. Not the most suitable chaperone for such a voyage,” he said with a smirk. “I believe Miss Stark’s reputation took some hits from sailing aboard our ship and the *Francine*; though how any of those gossips even learned of it, I’ll never know. Well, rumor finds its way to eager ears anyway.”

“Miss Stark told me a servant, an elderly woman, is to sail with them.”

“Oh? Old Nan, no doubt. She was Eddard’s nurse and then the children’s. And she was no youngster when she went to work for Eddard’s father. She must be quite elderly now.” Jon sat quietly and tried not to get his hopes up too much. “Well, let me think on it. And if I’m not satisfied with the captain of the merchant ship you helped her find, I may just send them with you.”

“Yes, sir.”

Sansa was singing to herself as she repacked Rickon’s trunk. He’d had the strangest notion that rocks from Gibraltar might be a rare and precious commodity in England and had filled the bottom of his trunk with them. She had set him to putting the stones back in the garden where they belonged,
allowing him one to take with him, while she refolded his clothes. She jumped in surprise and nearly shrieked when Arya came bursting through the door.

“Is it true then? We’re to sail with Jon?” Arya asked with her eyes aglow.

“Yes, truly!” Sansa answered with enough enthusiasm to match or even exceed her sister’s.

“Bran said but I thought he was…oh, Sansa, I’m so glad.”

“So am I. Sir Jeor said he should be happier to have us sail aboard the Misericordia de la Madre with Jon and a prize crew than the merchant ship. So many are being captured at present.”

“The Missy…what?”

“Honestly, Arya, you should practice your Spanish a bit more. Mother’s Mercy is what it means.”

“Mother’s Mercy? Oh, that is good,” Arya started laughing then.

“What in Heaven’s name is so funny?”

“Don’t you see, Sansa? We were to sail on the Mercy before it was captured by Spaniards. And now, Jon has captured a Spanish ship called Mother’s Mercy. Let us hope it’s not a bad omen.”

“Oh, Arya…you are too ridiculous sometimes.”

They went aboard two days later with their trunks and belongings. A bosun’s chair was rigged for Sansa and Old Nan but Arya still climbed aboard like a boy. Bran and Rickon raced along the deck hooting and shouting until Mr. Snow told them both to pipe down. They were silent at once. Sansa pursed her lips at her little brothers who never settled down so quickly for her. Jon and his crew were very busy trying to get the ship ready to sail and Sansa ushered the children below to get them out of the way. However, once the ship was moving, Jon sent Tollett down to invite them up on deck.

“Last you’ll see of Gibraltar Bay for a while, miss.”

Sansa nodded to Tollett and gathered the children. Arya had her look at the bay and then turned to talk with Mr. Midshipman Podrick Payne who had joined the Queenscrown last month thanks to Mr. Snow’s visit to see Mr. Lannister. He had been chosen to help Jon sail the prize to England. He was 16 and was brand new to the service but Jon said he seemed a quick learner. Old Nan sat on deck in a chair the men had fashioned for her and gazed serenely out at the water. Bran and Rickon were already climbing to the tops with one of the younger seamen and having a grand time. Only Sansa stood at the taffrail to watch Gibraltar Bay pass out of sight slowly. She wiped her eyes as Jon came to stand next to her.

“Are you alright, Miss Stark?” he asked with such loving concern. Here on deck, she was Miss Stark and he was Mr. Snow…or Captain Snow in this instance but it did not change the way they felt for one another.

“Yes, thank you, captain. I was just wondering if I’ll ever see Gibraltar again.”

“Well, someday perhaps.” He lowered his voice and asked, “You’ll be glad to go home though, won’t you?”

“Home? To England, you mean? I’ve not seen England since I was 10 years old, sir. I am leaving
“Of course... I'm so sorry...”

“No, you needn’t apologize. I am sentimental at times but I am looking forward to my next voyage with you,” she finished with a smile.

“Yes, Miss Stark, I look forward to that as well,” he said with an answering grin.

He bowed and turned to see to the running of his ship while Sansa watched Gibraltar disappear from her sight. She said a prayer for her father and her brothers and she whispered a wish to the long dead Lady Catelyn in Heaven to see her family safe and together again.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Jon, Sansa and the younger Starks sail aboard the prize. They both experience the frustration of being together without being able to truly be together, all while attempting to steer clear of the Spanish coast and the enemy.

“Sansa, be an angel and fetch my blanket,” Nan said as Sansa finished her letter to Robb.

They were in the cabin of the *Misericordia de la Madre* and the sun was reflecting off the water. She retrieved the blanket and settled it around Nan’s shrunken frame. *How did she get this frail so suddenly?* She worried over her old nurse. She had been poorly in the week they had been sailing. And now she had caught a chill on top of the fever that had appeared the day before yesterday.

“Need anything else, Nan?”

“No, dear girl,” the older woman said as she took Sansa’s hand. “I’m going to nod off for a bit. Go and see your handsome lieutenant.”

Sansa smiled and kissed Nan’s hand before she headed up on deck.

Jon was standing by the taffrail with Mr. Payne and the master’s mate preparing to take the noon observation. She stood to the side to keep out of the way during this holy ritual that would start the next naval day and help determine their latitude. Jon looked her way and smiled before continuing with the two officers in training. Bran was standing eagerly nearby to watch. As the two younger officers lifted their sextants, Jon called Bran over.

“Here, Bran,” Jon said handing him his own sextant, “come and try.” Sansa watched with pleasure as her brother stepped up to join the group, swelling with pride at being included. “Hold the sextant like so,” Jon said as he showed Bran where to put his hands. “Now, bring the sun down to the horizon. Wait…let me adjust that. Alright? Now, when its lower limb touches the horizon and the orb is no longer rising, then the sun has reached its zenith and that would be noon. Mr. Payne, do you make noon?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Very well, call noon then.”

As Mr. Payne called noon, the marine on the quarterdeck strode forward to strike the bell. “Pipe the hands to dinner,” Jon said next and Red Thoros raised his whistle while Jon and Bran continued their discussion. Bran looked over and noticed his sister.

“Did you see, Sansa? Jon taught me how to take a noon.”

“I did see, my dear. It’s time for dinner now though, I believe.” Bran thanked Jon and ran off to find his brother and other sister as Sansa moved closer to Jon. “Are you trying to make a sailor of my little brother, Captain Snow?” she asked with a mischievous grin. “I’m not sure Papa or Robb will like
Jon was certain he’d never been so torn between his duty and his desires. They had sailed together before, they had had moments alone together in Alda Mehran and he had spent many moments alone with her aboard the Francine on their way back from there. He had kissed her aboard the Francine. He had kissed her in Gibraltar. He had not kissed her at all aboard La Madre as the men were calling the privateer for short.

Her sister and brothers were always around and this time Jon had a clearly defined duty to see them all safely back to England and get the prize safely there as well. She was a lady and he was supposed
to be a gentleman. He couldn’t be pulling her into the cabin for kisses and such whenever he pleased…much as he might wish to. The children were in her charge but his responsibility as well. And, even if he had had no plans to make her his wife, he would not have wished to dishonor her or damage her reputation. He did plan on her being his wife though and he would not give others an excuse to say disrespectful things about her. But it did not stop him from wanting her…every single minute of the day.

The proximity was maddening…Sansa at breakfast, Sansa at dinner, Sansa sitting in the cabin reading while he made entries in the log, Sansa on deck in the evening, Sansa teaching the children, laughing with the children, Sansa singing to herself as she sewed or embroidered…it was enough to keep his already heated passions at a constant steady boil. He was beginning to feel like a libidinous rake, except he wasn’t having relations with her…just my hand. He’d fisted his cock so many times this journey already, he was surprised there was any skin left on it and they weren’t even a week out from Gibraltar yet.

He had just finished in his hand and was wiping himself down the next morning when there was a knock at the door and he was informed there was a sail in sight. Jon quickly dressed and went on deck. He looked at the strange sail for a long time before giving the orders to avoid her. He was not completely certain but he had no intentions of getting close enough to confirm it for he believed he had just seen a Spanish ship of the line out of Cadiz.

They soon lost sight of the presumed Spaniard but all lustful thoughts were put in check the next day when Old Nan worsened. The fever and chills had continued unabated for three days and there was fear that the poor woman would soon succumb. They had no surgeon aboard the prize, not even a loblolly boy, and Sansa was left to care for her old nurse. Sansa and the children were understandably distraught and several of the hands were upset by it as well. They believed it would be a bad omen for the kindly, old woman to pass aboard their prize. His logical mind would’ve argued that considering her age it should not be too surprising that a sea voyage would be difficult for her but seamen were as superstitious as cats and whispers of bad luck and a cursed ship were soon being told on the lower deck.

Heavy fog had moved in that night and Jon went uneasily to his cot thinking of the Stark children and hoping that Nan would rally and live to see England again. Jon was sleeping soundly when Edd Tollett came to fetch him two hours later.

“Mr. Payne asks you to come on deck real quiet like, sir.” Jon rolled heavily from his cot and pulled on his breeches but left his nightshirt on and followed Tollett.

“What is it, Mr. Payne?” he called out a bit loudly in his still sleep-fuzzy state.

The midshipman turned and shushed him but Jon’s initial reaction of outrage was squashed when he heard ships’ bells…several ships’ bells ringing the hour. The fog had reduced visibility to nothing but sound would carry strangely through it. One moment he could hear nothing but the bells and then the next he was catching snippets of conversation…in Spanish.

“How many you think, Mr. Payne?” he whispered.

“Three at least…maybe four, sir,” the young man answered with wide eyes.

Jon nodded and said quietly, “Let us hope we will pass by them unnoticed then. Do you speak any Spanish, Mr. Payne?”

“No, sir.”
“Well…I know someone who does.”

He went to the privateer’s small cabin and knocked. The boys were sleeping in the dining compartment but he knew she and Arya were in the main cabin.

“Sansa?” he called quietly, opening the door.

“Jon? Are you really here? Did you want me?” she asked in a sweet and sleepy voice.

“Yes, love.” God help me, I want you but not like that just now…”Can you come on deck with me? It's urgent.”

He heard her rustling around in the dark until she lit the lantern. Arya let out a grumble of protest at the light and turned over. Sansa was wearing nothing but her shift and Jon’s mouth suddenly went dry. Mind on the task at hand, Jon.

“What’s the matter?”

“We’re in a fog and apparently surrounded by Spaniards. Can you come on deck and give me an idea what they are saying and if they realize we are among them?”

“I’ll get dressed and be there at once.”

They had nearly escaped notice. They had passed through the five Spanish men-o-war in the fog but, just as they were edging away, the fog started breaking up and they had been spotted. When the largest ship, an 80-gun ship of the line, fired a gun to get them to identify themselves, Jon had hoisted Spanish colours but they were soon signaling him and he obviously did not send up the proper reply. The privateersmen had disposed of their signal codes and such before the Queenscrown had captured her. He tried sending up a hodgepodge of signal flags and a few other ruses while trying to edge away but to no avail. The commander of the squadron had smelt a rat and was determined that the questionable ship in their midst would heave to and be boarded.

And, Jon had no choice but to put the ship before the wind and run. The chase had lasted nearly two days as La Madre was a fast ship. But the wolf was now being hunted by five keen hounds and, when the seas grew heavier, he knew it would favor the larger ships. The privateer was tossing up and down on the enormous swell while the bows of the Spanish ships blithely cut through the water with grace and ease.

Jon thought he had outfoxed them the next night by falling off to see if they would simply pass by him in the night. But he was clearly dealing with a wily and experienced commander who was not so easily fooled. It had almost worked until a sharp set of eyes aboard one of the ships had signaled that the stranger was nearby. When Sansa relayed the words to him, he knew they were nearly beaten.

They flew once more, farther out into the Atlantic. They were reduced to casting all the guns save the chasers overboard and then pumping the water out and over the side next. Anything to lighten her and perhaps give them a bit more speed. He knew in his heart it would probably not work though and the self-castration of throwing the guns over was a bitter pill to swallow.

Jon ordered Sansa and the children down into the hold at last. They had left Nan to rest in her cot though for she was too ill to be moved. He had Tollett escort them there and knew it would not be
pleasant for them down in the dark, smelly and rat-infested hold after so many hours of anxiety already. He couldn’t even bear to face them at present. When daylight came and two of the ships were within firing distance, Jon had their own colours run up and started firing with the stern chaser on the frigate nearest them, more for form than anything else. Once the frigate started to return fire with their 18 pounders that could turn La Madre to kindling in short order, he hauled down their colours to surrender.

He went below to put the dispatches he was carrying for Captain Mormont and the signal book in a sack to be thrown overboard with a shot in the bag to help it sink. He instructed Mr. Payne to toss it overboard once it was prepared and, when the boy had left to follow his orders, he sat down heavily at the desk.

He held his head in his hands for a moment as he tried to come to terms with what was about to happen. He had failed. The only pride he could feel in all of this was the excellent performance of the men under his command. They had toiled ceaselessly from the first and followed his orders quickly and without comment. He was proud of them and it killed him to know he had failed them. He had failed altogether he thought. He had lost their ship’s fine prize. They would all rot in a Spanish prison because of his failure to elude the enemy ships.

And far worse…he had failed Sansa and the children. He had failed to see them safely home. He was about to surrender his sword to the enemy and could very likely sit out the rest of the war in a cell. He might not see Sansa for years. It was enough to make any man cry but right now there was a duty to perform and he would see it done properly. But first, he would fetch his beloved and bring her and the children on deck and try and reassure them that they would be fine, that the Spaniards would not harm innocent young ladies and children and would send them on to England in a cartel soon enough. Defending them was still the thing that mattered most to him and, despite feeling like an utter failure at the moment, he would continue doing so until his last breath.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Jon, Sansa and the children are taken aboard the Spanish squadron's flagship.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to mynameisnoneya for double checking my French here!

A young lieutenant was rowed across with a dozen men to accept his surrender. The other ships of the Spanish squadron had joined the frigate and the ship of the line that had captured them by this point and La Madre was hopelessly surrounded. Sansa hushed Rickon’s tears while Bran tried to look stoic and Arya glared at the approaching boat. Mr. Payne stood beside his lieutenant and reported that the bag filled with the signal codes and dispatches had sunk out of sight.

“Very well, Mr. Payne. Thank you.” Jon glanced over at the young man, three years younger than him and new to the service but standing tall and determined to not look defeated in front of the enemy. “I’m sorry, Pod.”

“It’s alright, sir. It’s not your fault.”

“I’m pretty sure it is but never mind that now,” Jon said out of the side of his mouth as the Spaniard climbed aboard.

The handsome, lean lieutenant looked around the deck. He had olive skin and curly, black hair and dark eyes. His eyes widened in surprise when he noticed Sansa and the children but they soon fell on Jon and he walked over to him.

“¿Hablas español, señor?”

“No…”

“Parlez-vous français?”

“Oui, je parle un peu français, monsieur.”

“Je m’appelle Trystane Martell, Lieutenant de La Santa Anna. Vous rendez-vous, monsieur?” Do you surrender?

“Oui,” Jon responded as he handed the Spaniard his sword. “Je suis Lieutenant Jon Snow.”

“Will he give Jon back his sword?” Rickon asked Sansa rather loudly.

She shushed him and the Spaniard looked over at her again. Jon noticed some of the Spanish seamen looking at her as well. He did not like the look in their eyes as they openly stared at her and Arya and he suddenly wasn’t so certain he believed all the reassurances he had given them.
We are at war. We like to think we are enlightened compared to men from centuries ago but we are still men. Despite the code of honor gentlemen of different nations have agreed to follow this past age, it does not necessarily stop atrocities from happening during times of war. And, women and girls are still raped in times of war and peace regardless.

The Spaniard passed Jon’s sword back to a subordinate and then continued in French, “Qui est-ce que cette dame et ces enfants, Monsieur?” Who is this lady and these children?

“Ma femme et ses frères et soeur.” My wife and her brothers and sister.

Sansa’s eyes cut towards his but she made no comment. He saw Bran’s brow crease in confusion but Arya’s face was a mask. Rickon however was only 10 and not about to be silent.

“Did he just call you his wife, Sansa? Ow!” he yelped as Arya stepped on his foot and hissed under her breath to be quiet.

Jon introduced Sansa to Lieutenant Martell and breathed an inward sigh of relief at the polite courtesy he showed her and the children. He was also pleased to let Sansa take over the translating as he was about to the limit of his French. Sansa made arrangements for Old Nan with the lieutenant and Jon then introduced Mr. Payne as three other boats came from surrounding ships to take Jon’s men as prisoners. Most of them went cheerily enough considering and Jon could not help but admire once more the foremost hands’ acceptance of fate with no railing or moaning or tears. They were men-o-war and they did not let trifling…or not so trifling… misfortunes rule their outlook.

They were rowed across to the 80-gun flagship with Payne. A litter was being prepared to move Old Nan. As they sat together in the boat surrounded by the boys and Arya, he took the opportunity to speak quietly in Sansa’s ear.

“I’m sorry for the lie. I thought it might be best under the circumstances.”

“You’re trying to protect us…to protect me, Jon. I understand. You needn’t apologize for that.”

“I thought it might keep us all together for a while at least until they get you on a ship to take you home. I’d rather know that you are safe and not being mistreated. A man of honor would never mistreat a lady. And certainly not another officer’s wife, even an enemy officer…at least that’s what I’m putting my faith in.”

“What about you?”

“I’ll likely be visiting Spain…for a good long while. I’ve never been there before so I suppose I’ll get my chance to visit now,” he tried to joke. She smiled but he knew the tears would soon come so he changed the subject. “Don’t let on that you know Spanish right away. Wait until you see what you think and then you can decide how much you let them know.”

“Yes, my dear husband,” she finished with a grin despite their circumstances.

The Santa Anna was enormous compared to La Madre. With over 700 men aboard and two gun decks, she was enormous compared to Queenscrown in truth and it was a long climb up her side. No bosun’s chair was rigged here as no ladies had been expected and, as Sansa climbed the slippery ladder ahead of Jon, he focused on her footing rather than looking up her skirts. Arya and the boys were ahead of her.

Once they reached the deck, the young lieutenant that he had given his sword to stepped over to the officer in charge. They exchanged a hushed conversation in Spanish before the older man came over to Jon and Sansa.
“Good afternoon, I am Comodoro Oberyn Martell of His Most Catholic Majesty’s Navy. I am honored to have you aboard La Santa Anna,” he said with an extravagant bow as he swept his hat off his head.

“You speak English, sir?”

“Yes, quite well, Mister…”

“Snow, Lieutenant Jon Snow of His Britannic Majesty’s Navy and this is my wife, Sansa,” Jon said with what he hoped was a convincing smile.

“Your wife? What a lucky man you are, Mr. Snow. Such a lovely young lady,” the Spaniard said with a smile as he captured Sansa’s hand for a kiss.

Jon fought down the sudden urge to strike the commodore. It is only their way, he reflected. He was satisfied when Sansa pulled her hand back rather quickly from the man all the same.

“You gave us quite a chase, Mr. Snow. I thought we’d lost you the night before but my nephew has sharp eyes,” he said nodding to the young lieutenant.

“Thank you,” Jon said uncomfortably. Thank you for not letting us get away? Thank you for capturing us? Bleeding Christ, this is bloody ridiculous. “Allow me to introduce my wife’s sister and her brothers, Miss Arya and Masters Brandon and Rickon Stark.”

“Stark?” the commodore repeated with an inquisitive look back towards Lieutenant Martell. He looked on the verge of saying more but then simply said, “Welcome, children. Mr. and Mrs. Snow, we will find suitable accommodations for you all and I hope that you will dine with my officers and myself this afternoon. It is not often that we have a lady to entertain. There’s something about having a cultivated woman at your table, yes?”

“We’d be honored, sir,” Jon said with a bow while inwardly loathing the idea of trying to pretend to enjoy dining with the enemy.

Sansa, Arya and Old Nan had Comodoro Martell’s sleeping compartment to themselves while Jon was permitted to stay with the boys in one of the larger cabins of the flagship’s wardroom. He had given his parole not to attempt any escape or cause any trouble while aboard La Santa Anna and he was permitted to walk the quarterdeck and spend time with his ‘wife’ and her family. Sansa and Arya were both comfortable with the deception and, as poor Old Nan was rather insensible with fever at present and spoke no Spanish, they did not think the Spaniards would pay her any mind. They soon helped Bran and Rickon to understand the ruse was to try and keep them with Jon for a bit longer.

Comodoro Martell was a gracious host as well as an educated and well-bred gentleman. He was near 50 and quite handsome with his black hair, olive skin and moustache. Sansa was sure to only speak English or French with him though. His nephew, Trystane, who had taken Jon’s sword, was a polite young man as well. He returned Jon’s sword to him with his uncle’s permission but it was understood that it would be taken from him again once they reached Spain.

“At least, until you’re granted parole there, monsieur.”
Sansa overheard the commodore speaking to his nephew in Spanish the next morning. He said that they would take their reconnaissance squadron and return to Cadiz due to the presence of the lady and the children.

“Necesito contactar al viejo lobo sobre sus hijos.”

She was puzzled by that last comment and whispered it to Jon on the quarterdeck that afternoon before they were to dine again with the commodore.

“Viejo Lobo means old wolf. And sus hijos means his children,” she told Jon. “Why would he need to contact an old wolf?”

“His children? Perhaps he means his own,” Jon responded while reaching up to run his fingers along her braid.

“No, he didn’t say my children, he said his,” she said, trying to keep him focused on what she was saying. “Jon, are you attending what I’m saying?”

“I’m sorry,” he said with a grin. “I confess I’m a bit distracted at present, sweet girl.” Seeing her vexed expression though, he continued, “I don’t know what that could mean really, Sansa.” He put his arm around her waist then as two Spanish officers paced nearby. He put his forehead against her temple before he whispered, “I love you. I’m so sorry for all of this.”

“I love you, too. And you needn’t keep apologizing. Such are the fortunes of war, my father would say.”

“Speaking of him…do you know to where in Spain your father was going?”

“No, he didn’t say.”

Sansa stopped worrying over the meaning of the commodore’s words as she allowed Jon to hold her close by the rail. His arms were wrapped securely around her and, though they were the unwilling guests of the Spanish, she felt safe. She was grateful for his ruse because it meant they could act as a married couple aboard...except in one respect. Their separate quarters aboard were completely understandable given the circumstances. Sansa was more than a bit terrified of the thoughts of the marriage bed as most innocent girls would be, especially not having a mother around to prepare her. But there was another part of her that wanted to experience that with Jon…very much. As he held her on the quarterdeck of Santa Anna that afternoon, she wondered which part of her would've won out if they had been placed in a cabin together.

They soon joined the commodore for dinner. This evening they were alone with him in the large stateroom. They were well into the meal when the commodore started asking questions. And, not for the first time, Sansa wondered if there were things the commodore knew about her that he was not revealing.

“Do you like the wine, Mrs. Snow? It's from my estate's vineyard.”

“It’s very good, sir.”

“Forgive my curiosity…how long did you live in Gibraltar, Mrs. Snow?”

“Nearly seven years, sir. My father brought us there a few years after my mother’s death. He retired from the army soon afterwards.”

“Your father was an officer in the army, was he? Tell me…what is his name?”
“Sir Eddard Stark.”

The commodore started to speak but then choked over his wine for a minute. “My apologies, Mr. and Mrs. Snow. The wine went down the wrong way,” he said with a grin before he added, “I knew a Colonel Stark during more peaceful times between our nations. Perhaps he is the same man?”

“My father was a colonel when he retired from the army, sir.”

“What a small world it is at times, Mrs. Snow,” he said with a wide smile now.

“As you say, sir,” Sansa responded, not quite sure if his smile boded well or ill for them. “So, you know my father?”

“Yes…I have had a…um, passing acquaintance with him, you could say. But perhaps my English fails me there and that is not quite what I mean,” he finished mysteriously.

“You speak English very well, Comodoro. May I ask where you learnt it?”

“My mother’s mother was English, Mrs. Snow. She taught me. May I ask where you learnt to speak Spanish, señora?”

“Señor? I…” she began, giving Jon a perplexed look.

“You’ve done well hiding it but after a while I could tell you understood what we were saying. Your intelligent eyes give you away, I fear. Oh, please don’t look terrified, child. It’s alright,” he chuckled. “It is clever not to let on too much to an enemy, at least not at first. But I promise that I will never be an enemy to you or your family, señora.” He glanced over at Jon. “How long have you two been married then?” he asked them next.

“A little over a month, sir,” Jon answered tersely at once. “Right before the Queenscrown took La Madre.”

Sansa suspected that he was as concerned as she was that the commodore with all his perspicacity would be calling them out on their lie next but she was mistaken.

“Oh! And, here you are captured, so soon after your marriage. That is a shame,” he finished sincerely though Jon still looked rather cross.

Later, Jon and Sansa took a moment with Arya and the boys to tell them they were being taken to Cadiz where they would await the next cartel to England. When Rickon asked Jon if he would go with them, Jon said that he would likely be transferred on to prison with his men from there. Rickon began to cry and soon the other two were crying as well…even Arya. Jon tried to comfort and reassure them that everything would be alright, as Sansa fought to hide her tears. Her heart felt it was being torn in two at the uncertainty of his fate though.

As for Jon, as they drew closer to Spain, he became quieter and often would be brooding. It did not diminish his kindness or attentions to her, Old Nan or the children but Sansa knew he was feeling his capture sharply. She would spy him staring hungrily out to sea when he was on deck, no doubt hoping to see the British blockading squadron that could possibly take La Santa Anna and the others. Perhaps even his own ship. And, she knew his heart was aching at the prospect of an undermined time in prison separated from her. He was a lieutenant and could possibly be exchanged in time but how long that time might be they did not know. And he was troubled by the fate of his men. They could certainly be exchanged but just as easily might languish in a Spanish gaol for years.
Once they reached Spain though, there were some unexpected developments. The seamen were rowed off towards the quay under guard but then the \textit{Santa Anna} sailed alone to a cove a little further north. Jon said he didn’t think it was part of the city and there weren’t any official looking buildings at all. Sansa thought it looked more like a walled estate with a few outbuildings. It was dark when they arrived though so it was hard to tell. They were told the cartel had just left Cadiz for an exchange before they arrived and another was not expected for a couple of weeks at least. The commodore came ashore with them and said Jon’s men had been put in ‘temporary’ quarters while their transfer to a prison further inland was arranged. He then led them into a large manse and said they would be staying here for the time being.

But the most unexpected development was \textit{their} quarters. Arya was given a room and Bran and Rickon shared another but Lieutenant and Mrs. Snow were granted a room of their own. They had been rowed ashore near midnight and ushered to their new quarters rather hurriedly as it was so late. Due to his status as a nominal prisoner, they were locked into the room for the night before they even quite knew what had happened.

Jon stood staring at the door when it was closed while Sansa’s eyes were on the bed. Heat flooded her cheeks. The bed could hold two people certainly but still…\textit{it will be a tight fit}. There were two lanterns lit in the room but no fire was burning in the fireplace this night. Sansa shivered with the cold and with nerves…and a bit of anticipation as well.

“I’m so sorry, Sansa,” he said, his voice low and soft and his eyes still on the closed door.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa spend the night together in their quarters in Spain.

Chapter Notes

Ahoy there! Smut ahead. You’ve been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He stood still as a statue staring at the closed door with his eyes wide. He looks more frightened than I feel at present.

“I’m sorry, Sansa,” he said yet again.

“It’s fine, Jon,” she said breezily, hoping she sounded as though sharing a room…or a bed with him was the most natural occurrence in the world. Oh, dear…

“I’ll sleep in the chair there,” he said resolutely next indicating one of the two wooden chairs by the fire.

“Jon…”

“It’s alright…I’m…I’ll be fine right here,” he said as he walked over and sat in the chair…the chair that looked terribly uncomfortable for sleeping at least. “Go ahead and get yourself ready for bed, Sansa. I…I won’t look at you. I promise.”

Her heart was pounding in her chest. She wanted to tell him that she wanted him to look at her while she undressed but the truth was she was nervous. She had never seen a naked man before and no man had ever seen her naked. You’ll be nervous on your wedding night, too. As soon as the thought entered her mind, another thought formed. Tonight could be your wedding night.

“Jon…look at me, my love.”

He stayed seated but turned his head to face her. The expression on his face was endearingly sweet and he was clearly nervous. She told herself to settle her own nerves and met his gaze steadily. Sansa started working at the top buttons on the back of her mint green dress that Arya had done up this morning for her. When she had unbuttoned as far as she could reach, she motioned for him to come to her. She turned her back to him, indicating what she wanted without words.

She heard the chair creak as he rose from it and sooner than she expected she could feel his hot breath on her neck. He was breathing raggedly…with nerves no doubt. Why should that embolden me? Why indeed…but it does. Nevertheless, she felt gooseflesh spreading across her skin from his closeness in the silent room.

His fingers were warm and careful as they occasionally grazed her skin while he worked at the
buttons of her dress. There seemed to be a hundred of them such was the tension she felt as he worked though in truth there were only a dozen or so. When his hands stopped moving, Sansa slid the dress forward over her shoulders until it rested at her hips and she stood with her back to him still. She felt his hands ghost across her back over her shift before he stepped back, removing his warm hands and husking out an apology.

She turned to face him then and took his hand. “You wanted to marry me, you said.”

“I do,” he said softly, looking down at her bosom still covered by her shift. He raised his eyes to her own next and said, “I will.”

“Then, let’s be married.”

“But, Sansa…”

She leaned her forehead against his and said, “Tonight is ours. Whatever may come, I want this to be our wedding night.”

“It’s not the same…I’ll dishonor you if we do this. I’ll be in prison and you’ll be returned to England…if I get you with child…you’ll be shamed like my mother. I couldn’t live with that,” he finished, his brown eyes so sincere yet full of longing, too.

“We’ll be married then. Tomorrow, we’ll tell the commodore the truth and beg him to find us a priest willing to marry two heretics like us. But tonight, let us marry each other.” He was clearly uncertain and looking down at the floor now. She tipped his chin up with her fingers and made him look her in the eye again. Then, though her stomach was knotted with nerves, she spoke the words, “I marry you. I marry you, Jon Snow. From this day until my last day, I’ll be your wife, keeping only unto you for so long as we both shall live. Now, you say it, Jon.”

“Sansa, it’s not so simple as that. We can’t just…”

“Will you refuse me now?” she asked as she felt her lower lip and chin begin to tremble and her eyes started to sparkle with tears at the thought that he might do just that.

He would never refuse her. He could never refuse her anything. He would love her till his dying day and even if tonight was all he ever had with her he would not throw it away for anything…not even honor or duty. And her tears and the uncertainty on her face as she asked him if he was going to refuse her melted all his remaining doubt.

“I marry you, Sansa Stark. From this day until my last day, I’ll be your husband, keeping only unto you for so long as we both shall live,” he said as his voice shook with emotion.

“I am yours and you are mine now,” she said smiling through her tears now.

“I am yours and you are mine and the rest of the world can go hang for all I care,” he finished as he pulled her into a passionate kiss.

Her mouth fell open to him at once and he kissed her deeply, relishing the feel of the soft, bare skin of her arms and then moving his hands down to the curve of her hips, while tasting her mouth. He groaned and pulled back just a bit to look at her. She pulled her dress the rest of the way off allowing
it to pool in the floor at her feet as she stood before him in her only shift. The shift was thin enough that he could see the outline of her nipples through it and he gave an involuntary growl. She shivered then and whether she did from the sound he made, the intensity of his gaze or the chill of the room, he was not certain. He only said he would start a fire for them though.

As he busied himself with getting the fire to catch, he tried to steel his nerves and growing excitement. He had never done this, she had never done this. Once the fire was crackling, he glanced back over at her as she was now sitting on the bed. She had pulled her hair out of her bun and was combing through it with her fingers. It hung in messy curls all about her shoulders and shone like copper in the firelight. His fingers twitched with longing to touch it. But, she was looked far more nervous now than she had earlier. She reminded him of a doe in the woods with hounds all about and he decided he would do whatever he could to set her at ease. He sat down next to her on the bed and pulled off his boots.

“We don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do, Sansa.”

“I know. I know you would never force me, Jon. This was my idea. But, I swear to you that I want this. I want you. I want to feel your touch.”

He closed his eyes, trying to keep her words from fanning his desires too swiftly. He pulled off his coat and neckerchief and then his shirt. When he was bare from the waist up, he leaned in to kiss her once more. He felt her hands gingerly exploring his upper body, squeezing his arms and shoulder muscles. Her fingertips played delicately at the sprinkling of hair across his chest. His skin seemed to catch fire wherever she touched him, though her hands were cool. He kissed her ardently then and heard a moan escape her throat. His tongue swiped at her lips and she parted them beneath him. Her hot and sweet mouth was his to explore tonight with no one to burst in on them. His cock was growing harder with every thrust of his tongue into her wet mouth as he thought of the other wetness he wanted to seek.

“Sansa…may I see you? All of you?” he asked when he came up for air from their kissing.

She nodded and stood, slowly pulling the shift over her head. Her body was so beautiful but he found his tongue was tied when he tried to find the words to express it. His eyes were busily trying to memorize every inch of her regardless. Her lovely face and blue eyes, her creamy white skin, her full, pink-tipped breasts, the auburn curls that covered her womanhood, the flare of her hips and all that luscious red hair spilling down her back and over her shoulders…it was all so much to absorb and he thought he could happily spend the rest of his life just looking at her.

“You are so beautiful,” he croaked out at last. “Will you lie back on the bed now?” Sansa stretched back uncertainly and he noticed the way she pulled her knees tightly together. “No, not that,” he said gently as he put a hand on her ankle. “I just want to kiss you, Sansa. I want to…may I kiss you… everywhere?”

“Yes,” she answered with a small grin then and curiosity in her eyes.

“I won’t take your virtue tonight, sweetheart. I couldn’t risk spilling inside of you. I won’t take that risk until we are truly married in the eyes of God and men. I love you too much to risk dishonoring you with a bastard child. I won’t ever let any child of ours know the pain of being called a bastard and looked down upon simply because we have loved each other.”

Sansa’s eyes filled with tears and she said, “Of course, Jon. You are right. I wasn’t thinking of the pain you must’ve endured from that.”

“It’s alright, my sweet girl. Just let me kiss you,” he said as he moved his body up and over her own.
He started kissing her mouth, then along her jaw and over to her earlobe. “Let me kiss you everywhere,” he murmured. He moved his mouth down her throat, giving attention to every inch of her porcelain skin. “Let me remember the taste of you when we are far away from one another,” he said kissing along her collar bone and then peppering her shoulder with soft kisses.

He moved his mouth down her chest and to her breasts. He looked in the crystal depths of her eyes before lowering his head to claim a nipple with his mouth. As he kissed and sucked lovingly at her breasts, Sansa moaned with pleasure. He held her gently by the hips and she moved her hands up to grasp his hair. He felt her tug the ribbon out from his queue and felt her nails lightly scrape his scalp. There was a delightful sort of pain when she would tug at his curls. He ran one hand up to the other breasts and felt her nipple harden under his thumb while he laved and suckled her with his tongue some more. She was arching her hips up and her thigh was brushing against his erection which was straining painfully against his breeches. He rubbed himself against her thigh to bring some relief to the ache.

“It’s hard,” she breathed.

“It is. That’s what you do to me.”

“I’d like to see you. Are you ever going to take those breeches off?” Sansa asked with a coy, little smile. “I’ve never seen a naked man. Surely, I get to see my husband.”

He felt a blush forming on his cheeks at her sauciness but quickly sat up to remove his breeches. She stared at his cock with evident concern at first but then bit her lip and swiped it with her tongue. *Sweetheart, I will surely spill all over you if you keep looking at me like that.*

But then his restraint was tested further when she asked if she could touch him. He nodded and felt her small, delicate hand wrap around his cock. It was enough to make him pant with need and he could barely think straight as it was.

“Sansa…please, love. Let me kiss you some more,” he gasped.

She laid back down with a smile as he started on the other breast and then kissed his way down her stomach. She giggled and writhed beneath him when he reached her naval and, somehow, he was just as close to spilling then as when she’d had her hand wrapped around him a few moments earlier. He kissed his way down to her hips.

“Spread your legs, my wife,” he said as he nosed her hip and started kissing his way inward.

Sansa’s eyes got round with shock. “Jon!” she said in a scandalized tone, “You can’t…you can’t do that, can you?”

“I can and I fear I really must,” he teased. “I did say I wanted to kiss you everywhere, remember?”

Her face turned pink and she drew her legs more firmly together at first. But he gave her a playful pout which caused her to laugh. Soon, she was relaxing and spreading her legs for him…slightly. *Let us hope I am equal to the task of convincing her.* He kissed the soft curls on her mound and worked downward to her folds. He lightly traced them with his tongue and heard Sansa’s soft gasp. Her legs parted a bit more and he hid his coquettish grin. He darted his tongue in between her folds this time and tasted a heady sweetness. *She’s wet…I must be doing something right then. I hope so at least.* Her hands were back in his hair and the sounds she made as he experimented with tasting and teasing her most private place were driving him wild with lust. She spread her legs fully apart next and he found a little hooded pearl at the apex of her folds. When he sucked at it gently, Sansa bucked her hips strongly and she nearly shouted.
“Was that good…or bad?” he asked, wonder and terror being equally mixed.

“It was good. That’s the spot that I…I touch sometimes,” she finished with a blush that covered her face, neck and chest now.

“You sometimes…I, uh…Sansa, do ladies do that? Do you touch yourself…for pleasure?”

“Yes. I don’t know what ladies do but I do that sometimes.”

Oh dear…God. “Do you ever think of me when you do it?” Please say yes.

“I always think of you when I do it.”

“Could I…would you let me watch you sometime?”

“Jon!” she shouted clearly piqued and yet laughing, too.

“Sorry…um…may I kiss you some more?” he asked hesitantly.

“Yes,” she smiled now. “Kiss me some more…down there.”

He grinned and happily returned to his exploring. He kissed and suck at the little nub he’d found and then licked her folds and entered her with his tongue again. Sansa was moaning once more and rocking her hips rhythmically. He focused his tongue on her pearl and slid a finger inside her cunt. It was just as warm and wet as he had dreamed it would be. It was also tight and he stilled for a moment imagining that warm, wet tightness wrapped around his cock.

“Jon…don’t stop,” she cried and he reapplied himself to the task at hand.

She was tugging harder on his hair now and yet it seemed to spur his desire. His cock was aching but he was determined to bring her as much pleasure as he could before seeking his relief. She was grinding up against his mouth as he continued his attentions with his mouth and fingers until she cried out loudly and he felt a fluttering around the two fingers he had buried inside her now. He raised his head to see her eyes closed and her mouth parted in abandon and felt an intense sense of satisfaction in knowing he had brought her pleasure.

“Was that…did you reach your peak, Sansa?” he asked.

“I did,” she said as she shuddered and grew still.

He gave his mouth a swipe before he moved back up her body to lightly kiss her again. His own needs were so intense now though and he rolled to his back and grasped his cock. He started stroking himself intending to finish himself quickly. He didn’t want her to be frightened of him and he hoped to return his attentions to her pleasure. Sansa propped up on her elbow to watch him though with fascination. She covered his hand with her own.

“Will that bring you to your peak, Jon?”

“Yes,” he grunted trying not to spill in her hand as she brushed the tip with her thumb.

“I want…may I do that to you? Will you let me pleasure you?” she asked with a sweet shyness.

Jon let go of his cock and nodded. She wrapped her hand around him once more and squeezed gently. He closed his eyes and groaned.

“Did I hurt you?” she asked with concern.
“No, sweetheart. You didn’t hurt me at all.”

She smiled again and wrapped her hand around him more fully and began to stroke him as he had been doing. He slid his hand down to cover her own for a moment, to guide her to the pace and intensity he wanted. Once she had found her rhythm, he closed his eyes and enjoyed the feel of her hand and the soft warmth of her body so close to him. As his peak neared, he could feel his balls tightening up. *She’s innocent. Will it disgust her or frighten her?* He decided to warn her and take over if necessary.

“Sansa, I’m about to come. It’s messy and I don’t want you to be…”

She shushed him and didn’t say another word. She just kept stroking him, her gaze flitting from his eyes to his cock and back again. He cried out as he started to spill and he saw her eyes go wide but then she started giggling as the last was spurting out.

“That’s funny, is it?” he grumbled as his cheeks flamed. “It hurts a man’s pride to be laughed at that way, Sansa.”

“I’m sorry, my dear. I’m not laughing at you,” she said as she continued to giggle. She kissed him to take away some of the sting and said, “I was just thinking of what Miss Murray would say if she could see me now. She’d probably faint dead away.”

“Who the devil is Miss Murray?”

“Never mind that,” she said as she laughed again and nestled up against him. “I love you, Jon,” she sighed.

“I love you, Sansa,” he said pulling her more firmly up against him.

Later, he brought her to another peak with his fingers alone this time as he kissed her mouth and breasts. Dawn was just a few hours away and he felt sleep coming to claim him. He yawned widely though Sansa was still chatting in his ear. He smiled languidly and his eyes began to drift closed. He nearly jumped out of his skin when she ran her finger down his face unexpectedly.

“Oh, sorry!” she said. “Jon…where’d you get this scar?” she asked tracing his eyebrow.

“In a fight with Trant when I was 15,” he muttered sleepily as he started to relax once more.

“What about this one?” she asked touching his shoulder.

“Pike thrust when we boarded a French corvette outside Brest.”

“What about…”

“Sansa, we have the rest of our lives to discover every detail about one another, you know.”

“You’re right. Are men…are you normally this sleepy after you’ve…um…”

“I wouldn’t know,” he said with a snort. She looked at him with some confusion and he said, “It’s been a very long few days, darling, with the chase and then being captured and the anxiety…”

“Of course. I know you must be quite exhausted. Let’s rest, my love,” she said decidedly then.

She smiled and laid her head back down on his shoulder before they finally gave into exhaustion and
The morning sun was already shining brightly through the room’s small, barred window and the fire he had made had died out when he woke to the sound of birds chirping. Sansa was tucked up against him, smiling sweetly in her slumber, and Jon brushed a stray lock of red hair out of her face and tucked it behind her ear. *I love nothing on this Earth so well as you, my darling girl.* He lay there looking at her and anticipating what he might say to the commodore, hoping that the man would forgive them their lie and help them to get married.

He leaned over to kiss her shoulder and rouse her when her eyes opened and she said, “I’m awake. Is it our wedding day?”

“I hope so, sweetheart.”

“How will we start the day?” she asked with a grin spreading across her face.

“Oh...that is a good question,” he said with a grin of his own. He moved his hand to her hip and grasped her ass to bring her closer. He was already hard as he pulled her against him. She moved her hand down to touch him and he sighed. “Sansa, can I put it...can I...just between your legs...without doing...” he began to ask feeling awkward and bashful at the same time.

She looked a bit perplexed but when he nestled his cock up against her folds she instinctively closed her legs around him and began rocking back and forth. She was soon moaning at the contact against her sensitive bud and he was certain he would be making a mess all over her soon when he heard loud voices outside the door...speaking English.

There was a sudden loud banging at the door and, before Jon could do more than sit up, it flew open. Sansa bolted up with a screech, clutching at the blanket to cover her breasts. Jon took in the angry man standing in the doorway but it took a moment for recognition to hit. He moved to shield her from the other men’s eyes and felt his stomach drop along with his jaw.

“I’m surprised I wasn’t invited to my own daughter’s wedding,” Sir Eddard Stark said with icy rage as the astonished commodore stood behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh...caught by Dad.
This can’t be happening, she thought as the tears threatened once more. She had spent the night in the arms of the man she loved...my husband. He had refused to take her maidenhood until they were officially married though. He had insisted that more than the words they had spoken to one another were needed before he would risk getting her with child. But, he had loved her in another way. He had kissed her everywhere and then he had done something with his mouth and fingers that left her completely undone. It was so delightful and intimate that she could not think on the experience without smiling while she blushed. She had loved him, too. She had touched him, she had seen a naked man and touched him. She had brought him to fulfillment even though it was not inside of her body. She had laid in his arms all night afterwards as they spoke words of love and devotion before fatigue carried them off to sleep.

And then, the absolute unthinkable had happened. Her father had burst in on them. Her father was there in Spain...in the very place Jon and Sansa had been brought to. They had been in Spain mere hours and her father was there with them. How on Earth is that even possible? Of all the places he could be in Spain, why here and why now?

He had spoken with a fierce though controlled anger at first. But when Jon tried to reply, Papa had hauled Jon out of the bed and struck him as Sansa screamed. They were both still nude. They had been lying in bed together. Her father had assumed what anyone would assume. It's what would've happened regardless had it not been for Jon's honor...for his desire to protect my honor. And it's not as though we were completely innocent as we lay there either.

Sansa felt the blame keenly. If she had let him sleep in the chair, her father's rage might have been diminished. He may have only been moderately angered by the question of their fake marriage. As it was though, her father's wrath had been horrifying to behold. Sansa had cried and said she was still a virgin but he would not even look at her. He had told Jon to get dressed and challenged him to a duel before Comodoro Martell had finally stepped in and tried to calm him.

Sansa sat by herself now. Jon had gotten dressed quickly under the eyes of her father and the commodore and been led out of the room. She had cried herself dry by the time a knock on the door brought a maidservant with a tray. Sansa had no appetite but she drank the lemon water they had brought and waited to see when someone would come to her again. She waited to learn what had become of her beloved. And at last, he came...not her father but the commodore.

“Miss Stark? Are you well, child?” he asked glancing at the untouched food on the tray.

“No, Comodoro, I am far from well. Please tell me what has happened to Jon. Tell me what my father has done.”

“Eddard was in a great passion when we left but I have managed to talk some sense back into him.
Your lieutenant is in a cell on this compound but is quite well.” Sansa’s heart stopped beating for a moment thinking of Jon thrown in a cell. “He lied to us, Miss Stark, and your father’s wrath was great. I understand the reason for his lie but we never would’ve put you in this room together had we known you were not truly married. I’m hoping Eddard will forgive me in time. I thought under the circumstances a cell was the safest place for Mr. Snow at present. But I believe things will be better soon.”

“How? How are they going to be better? Will my father permit us to wed?”

“You’ll need to ask your father that.”

“How do you know my father?”

“You should ask him that, too. I will say that we have known each other many years.” The commodore got up to leave and Sansa asked if she was to be a prisoner as well. “Of course not. I am sorry that you’ve been left here waiting. You are free to move about my house and gardens.”

“Your house?”

“Yes, this is my estate. Your sister and brothers are anxious for you. We’ve had your servant brought ashore as well. I will take you to them…but, at present, your father has insisted that you not be allowed to see Mr. Snow.”

Sansa bowed her head and thanked the commodore before she allowed him to lead her to her siblings.

Jon’s jaw ached from Sir Eddard’s fist and his pride still stung from being hauled naked out of bed. But these were passing trifles compared to his worry over Sansa and any pain or remorse she was feeling. He had been so happy waking with her in his arms this morning and so certain that things would work out. Until it all went to hell in the most unanticipated and embarrassing fashion I could’ve ever envisioned.

The cell the Spaniards had put him in was small but, compared to his cabin aboard Queenscrown, it was quite roomy. It seemed to be some sort of a subterranean building. He had not paid much attention to where he was being led that morning. His head was spinning too much from the blow and the shock. Wonder how long these will be my accommodations? Or if they’ll find a hole to stick me in instead…assuming Sir Eddard doesn’t follow through with his threats for a duel.

Jon knew he would die if that was the case. He wasn’t about to fight Sansa’s father. He rubbed his hands across his three days’ stubble. His spirits had been down and he had not bothered shaving aboard Santa Anna and he’d had no opportunity to do so here. The scruff itched abominably now, especially with the heat underground here. Least of my worries, he reflected as he got up off his cot and paced his cell.

The cell door was wooden with a small, barred opening in the door. He had been granted a lantern and there was small desk and chair in addition to the cot. There was a chamber pot under the cot and a basin for washing but no water in it at present. He’d not eaten since supper the day before and he would’ve been hungry if not for the worry twisting his gut. He peeked out the opening in the cell door. He saw nothing but yellowish-white stucco walls and a torch burning across from his cell door. He listened for footsteps or voices or any noises to indicate that he was not alone in the world. He
heard nothing at present. He went back over to sit on his cot once more and waited.

The children were gathered in Old Nan’s room when she joined them. Rickon and Bran rushed to her side but Arya hung back with worry etched on her face.

“Where is Jon?” Rickon asked.

“I’m not certain,” Sansa replied, hugging the boys. “He is safe though.” *I hope he remains so…* Arya bit her lip and Sansa went to her sister. “Have you seen Papa?”

“Yes. Sansa, what is Papa doing here? And what happened? You were lead away with Jon last night. Papa said nothing to us beyond seeing that we were unharmed but he was so angry about something. Why?”

“How are you, dear Nan?” Sansa asked the old woman in her bed as she cast her anxious sister a glance that she hoped conveyed that she was not at liberty to discuss everything with her just yet. Nan raised her head off her pillow for a moment and squeezed Sansa’s hand.

“I’m alright, my angel. Are you a wife now?” Old Nan asked.

“I suppose I am,” Sansa said, not knowing what the truth was for certain but hoping to comfort Nan anyway.

“Good,” she responded with a smile before she lowered her head and started snoozing again.

“How’s she been?” Sansa asked Arya.

“Weak but better than on the ship. Sansa…”

“Soon, sister. Boys, have you eaten?”

“Yes.”

“Good. The commodore has kindly granted us the use of his gardens. Shall we let Nan rest and go outside to explore?”

The children acquiesced and the boys were soon running along the garden paths calling to one another and playing hide and seek. She knew they were worried but they were young enough to not let their worries keep their spirits oppressed for long. Sansa took her sister’s arm as they walked slowly down the path.

“Now will you tell me?” Arya asked.

“Yes. They put us in a room together last night.”

“Because they assumed you were married as Jon said.”

“Yes. Father found us there together this morning.”

“Well…that’s…Sansa, were you sharing the bed?”
“Yes.”

“Were you…did you…”

“Yes and no. We were not clothed, Arya. Papa found us that way. We had done things…but I am still a maiden.”

“Oh…” Arya said as the wheels were certainly turning in her head. However, Arya, for all her bluntness, was a kind-hearted girl in many ways and she did not embarrass her sister by asking more questions in that matter. “So, Papa thinks that you and Jon…”

“Yes. He struck Jon and threatened him before the commodore intervened. I’m not sure what will happen. I…We’d agreed last night that we would confess the truth to the commodore and see if he would arrange for us to marry but now…” Sansa couldn’t continue. Her eyes filled with tears and Arya moved to embrace her tightly.

“It will be alright, Sansa. He ran off with Mama. Surely, he of all men can understand young people letting passion carry them away.”

“I’d thought so but he was so angry. I told him I was still…I don’t think he believed me. But now I wish I had lied and said that I was no longer a virgin. What if he chooses to send us on to England and pretend nothing happened?”

“I don’t think that is Papa’s way, Sansa.”

“Yes, but at present, I don’t know what to expect,” she concluded miserably as she twisted the handkerchief she had brought out to wipe her eyes.

They had brought him a meal around midday. He was hungry enough by then to eat some at least and he drank every drop of water they brought. After his meal, he sat back down on his cot and took out the lock of hair she’d given him so many months ago. His commission and that were the only things he had managed to put in his pocket before La Madre was taken. He had lost the handkerchief she had given him the night they’d met when they were captured. It bothered him to think of someone else having it, some Spaniard possibly finding it and giving it to his señorita as a gift. It doesn’t matter now. I only hope that she is well.

He allowed his finger to caress the length of hair and remembered running his hands through her tresses last night. He was fearful that he might not ever have the opportunity of doing so again now. Her sweet innocence last night was more enticing and intoxicating than a thousand whores, he thought. His own minimal experience might not be much to go on but he was quite certain that loving like they had shared last night was why poetry and music were created, why men were moved to write sonnets or compose symphonies, far more than brief couplings between strangers who held little to no regard for one another and were only interested in satisfying their physical desires. It did not trouble Jon that they had not taken their loving to the final act, that he had not ‘possessed’ her, for lack of a better term, fully. She was his and he was hers in their hearts. But will the rest of the world ever see it that way?

He heard footsteps approaching and he stashed her lock of hair and stood. He could hear two voices
speaking, two voices whispering in English…two young voices. Bran’s face appeared at the cell door opening a moment later.

“Jon! He is here, Rickon!”

Rickon’s face appeared next to his brothers. “Jon! We found you! Are you alright?”

“What are you two doing here? Won’t you be in trouble coming to see me?”

“We overheard the guards talking as we were running through the gardens. They probably didn’t realize we were there or that we understood Spanish. Anyway, we snuck down here when they were busy eating their meal. We’ve come to rescue you,” Bran said with pride.

Jon bit back his initial impulse to laugh at them and ask them exactly how they planned to get him out and where they planned on taking him being as they were somewhere near Cadiz without a ship to sail away in. Instead, he smiled at them both before telling them that he was not in need of rescuing at present but that he appreciated their concern.

“How are your sisters and Nan?” he asked to distract them from their disappointment in his refusal to be rescued.

“They are fine. Nan is resting,” Rickon answered.

“Sansa was crying when we left them in the gardens,” Bran said.

“Oh…I’m very sorry to hear that,” Jon responded, feeling as though someone had just punched him in the stomach.

“We’ll find the rest of your men and plan an escape, Jon. It’ll be such an adventure,” Rickon said.

“No, I don’t think that would be wise, boys. Your father is here. He will get you away safely. My men and I will find another way to leave in time.”

The three of them heard footsteps approaching soon after and Jon admonished the boys to go and not to return unless they had permission. However, when the new arrival appeared, Rickon called out a greeting to his father.

“Boys, you should not be here,” Sir Eddard’s voice said from the corridor.

“We only wanted to see that Mr. Snow was well, Father,” Bran responded nervously. “He’s our friend.”

“Jon said we couldn’t rescue him, Father,” Rickon said. “Are you going to rescue him, sir?”

Sir Eddard chuckled and told the boys to return to their sisters and that he wished to speak with Mr. Snow alone. Bran clasped Jon’s hand through the bars before he darted off after Rickon. Sir Eddard was visible through the opening now. His grey eyes were still piercing but not angry now. He looked quite worn and tired though. Sansa had said he was unwell. He does not look well now but I suppose he had quite a shock this morning.

“Well, Mr. Snow, this is not how I thought to meet with you again.”

“No, sir,” Jon said, not knowing what else to add to that.

“I would have the truth from you now. Have you lain with my daughter before last night?”
“No, sir.”

“She claims she is still a virgin. Is that true?” he asked with a harsh expression.

“Yes, sir,” Jon answered, feeling his own irritation growing at his tone. “I doubt that you will believe me though if you don’t trust the word of your own daughter…sir.” Sir Eddard looked uncomfortably away as Jon continued, “Have you ever known Sansa to lie to you, sir?”

“No…Sansa does not lie but I cannot help but wonder if she would lie for your sake. Regardless, you have shared her bed. You were discovered together in that bed and neither of you were dressed. Her reputation would be quite destroyed were that known.” It was not a question so Jon did not speak suspecting that there was more he wished to say. “What are your intensions regarding my daughter?”

“I had hoped to marry her, sir. I had hoped to ask for her hand when you and I next met. I had to leave for blockade last fall and, when we returned to Gibraltar in October, you were not there.”

“So, you decided to take matters into your own hands?” he asked.

“No, sir. I love your daughter but I respect her too much for that. I had expected a long engagement as I still have little to set up house for her at present. I have no fortune but with my pay and some prize money I’ve accrued I had hoped to be able to gain your consent in time. And I know we are rather young for marriage. Last night was…we were captured by the Spanish, sir. I feared for Sansa’s virtue and for Arya’s since I knew nothing of the sort of men that had taken us captive. The commodore has shown himself to be nothing but honorable but I originally acted out of concern for the ladies. I lied with the hopes that it would offer them some added protection and I confess I hoped it would keep us together for just a while longer until I knew they were safely put aboard the cartel to go home. Last night was not meant to happen the way that it did. But I swore to her that I’d speak with the commodore this morning and marry her. I did not take her virtue because I would not dishonor her the way my father did my mother. I love her too much for that. But we did…we did other things together and you have every right to hate me and wish me dead for those things,” Jon finished finally with a bowed head.

Silence greeted his confessions and Jon wondered if Sir Eddard had walked away. He glanced up and saw the man was still standing there regarding him shrewdly.

“Thank you for your openness, Mr. Snow,” he finally said. “I am going to speak with the commodore and my daughter now but I will return shortly.”

Jon nodded and watched Sir Eddard leave his sight. Return and do what though?

“I told you, Ned,” Oberyn said as he poured the wine. “He seems a decent young man. He's a fine seaman. I wish you could've seen the chase he led us...but I digress. He loves her. That much is plain to any man with eyes to see. She loves him as well. I don’t think he had any nefarious schemes in mind when he told his lie and he certainly did not expect to be brought to a house rather than a prison and put into a room with her for the night. Besides, you hardly have any room to get too irate considering…”

“Yes, yes…you made your point earlier regarding Catelyn. I did not lie with her before we were wed though. And if our roles were reversed and you had walked in on one of your daughters…”
“Poor Mr. Snow would’ve been run through before he got a word out. Good thing for him that you are not me,” Oberyn said with his smirk. “So, what is to be done?”

“They must marry obviously. I will speak with Sansa here shortly and then, with your permission, we will arrange a hasty marriage.”

“Excellent! I’ve always wanted to host a wedding. And the other matter?”

“You were right. Gabriel has been moved to a prison near Seville on the Guadalquivir River.”

“I know the prison well. We could approach from the river and it would make our retreat easier as well. I know some men that I could have placed there perhaps to aid us on the inside.”

“You know men everywhere it seems. How did you know you’d be capturing my children?”

“I didn’t,” he said. Ned looked at him sharply, the disbelief plain on his face. “I swear it, Ned. My little squadron was only to do a little reconnaissance…to see about Jervis’s blockade. We’d received word that Misericordia de la Madre had been captured by Jeor’s ship and was to be sent in under one of his officers. How was I to know it would be Mr. Snow who I’d never met and only heard you mention as your daughter’s potential suitor? And I certainly didn’t expect to find your children aboard. Que fue el destino.”

“Fate? Rubbish.”

“Do not dismiss fate so readily, mi amigo. How many times over the years have you and I been blessed by fate…or la voluntad de Dios perhaps?”

“God’s will? Is it God’s will that Gabriel is a prisoner then?”

“This is not a question that I can answer. As far as Gabriel goes though, it will take me some time to get the right men in place. You’ve been unwell. Will you really insist on going?”

“You know that I will.”

“How soon can you leave?”

“As soon as you say we are ready though I should like to see my daughter married and have my children packed off on a ship bound for England first if possible.”

“I think it likely that you will be able to see both things happen before we go. And what of your daughter’s husband…or husband-to-be? I should’ve had him sent on to the prison here along with his men. I took a great risk bringing him here for your sake and hers.”

“I cannot have you risking yourself any more than you already have for the seamen…much as it grieves me to say.”

“I can put in a good word for his men’s exchange. Perhaps their imprisonment will be short-lived. And your future son-in-law?”

“Oberyn…I would not part him from Sansa if I can help it,” he sighed.

“I can’t just send him via the cartel with her. There are officials aboard to check who is being sent, you know. It would bring too much attention to me if I sent a lieutenant off so soon after his capture, especially since I haven’t even had him sent in for questioning or…”

“I know. I know. You said we could approach the prison from the river though? I am no seamen.
Perhaps…”

“He speaks no Spanish.”

“No, but we do. He is much younger and fitter than either of us.”

“Perhaps younger. Certainly fitter than you,” Oberyn said with a grin, “but I am still in my prime.”

Ned chuckled over his friend’s pride though he could not argue that Oberyn was just as deadly and even more cunning than he had been when they’d first reconnected in intelligence work over 20 years ago. They had actually met 35 years earlier though on Ned’s family estate, when Ned was just a boy and Oberyn’s English grandmother had brought her adolescent, Spanish grandson over to England for a visit and attended a dinner party at Winterfell. The two boys had struck up an unlikely friendship, despite differences in nationality, religion, temperament and personality, and had stayed in touch as they grew into men.

“We could use an extra set of hands especially if you’ll be navigating a boat,” Ned said. “I’m certainly no help to you there.”

“He may refuse.”

“He may…but I rather think he won’t.”

“And once we make it back to the sea?”

“I’ll try to contact Jorah. If I can reach him, he’ll be waiting. If not, we’ll come up with another plan.”

Sansa clasped her hands together and walked along the garden path with a beatific smile on her face. Her father had consented to their marriage. They were to be married the day after next. The commodore was making the arrangements. But they would be parted when the cartel returned and sailed for England again as Jon would have to remain in Spain with her Papa until his exchange could be completed. But I will be going as a married lady. There would be time enough to grieve over being parted. Today, she meant to feel joy at their upcoming wedding. Sansa smiled widely once more and hugged herself in her glee.

Her father had come to speak with her at last. Arya had wanted to stay at her side but Papa asked to speak with her alone in this matter. He confessed that Comodoro Martell was the old friend in Spain he had mentioned to her weeks and weeks ago before he left Gibraltar. Of all the ships that could’ve captured us… Sansa was willing to accept their good fortune though it was hardly believable. Gabriel was being held somewhere near Seville and her father said he was making contacts with Spanish officials in the hopes of recovering him soon after weeks of fruitless searching. The commodore did not agree with his government’s decision to declare war on England but he was no traitor truly. He was still willing to fight for his country but his personal devotion to her father led him to act in the best interest of Sansa and her siblings.

Her father had been staying at Martell’s estate for nearly three weeks. He had been ill again when he arrived but was on the mend now. When they had arrived last night, he was already abed. He had been told early this morning of his children’s capture and arrival. He had then been congratulated on his daughter’s marriage…thus, leading to the events of the morning.
Sansa shook off that unhappy memory and went to find her sister. She would need to choose a dress to wear and the commodore had questions about the wedding breakfast. And she wanted to see Jon.

A mission in Spain, near Seville…to rescue Sansa’s brother from prison. Bran and Rickon would enjoy the idea of such an adventure.

For his own part, Jon was troubled. He was no guerilla fighter. Traveling along the river was one thing but he didn’t have the slightest notion of how they would break Gabriel Stark out of prison. He spoke no Spanish and had never been to Spain before yesterday. But Sir Eddard and Oberyn Martell seemed confident in their plans and Jon had little choice but to agree to go with them. It was that or prison. Marry her, bed her and go with them once all was prepared or marry her, bed her and then go straight on to the prison. And it was Sansa’s brother they were to rescue. It was not a difficult choice.

Sir Eddard said once they found Gabriel, Martell would help them leave the country. He said Jon could return to Gibraltar with them and report to the admiral there. There was a good chance Queenscrown would still be either with the blockading squadron or in Gibraltar. The commodore had promised to put in a good word for his men’s exchange as well. And Sir Eddard had also said if there was a change of plan, they might sail straight for England, meaning Jon would be with his wife again for a while before the admiralty decided what to do with him.

“May I see Sansa, sir?” he had finally asked after over an hour of them talking.

They had taken him from his cell and brought him to Martell’s private study for their discussion. It was driving Jon mad to think that she might be near and he might not be allowed to at least see her after their abrupt and painful parting that morning.

“Yes, I believe that would be alright. We’ll have dinner together this evening. And Oberyn says you may sleep where you did last night. Sansa will sleep with her sister until the wedding.”

“Of course, sir.”

“Mr. Snow…may I call you Jon? This was not the way I wanted my daughter to be married but everything Jeor and Oberyn have said about you makes me believe that you are a good man who will do his best to care for my daughter. Some say sailors make poor husbands though…”

“Forgive me, sir, but there are some who say sailors make excellent husbands. A wife may run her house as she wishes with a husband away at sea. I think that would please your daughter in a way. We are certainly used to following orders aboard and so she would not find me quarrelsome at home, I believe. And we are quite handy around the house having been used to mending and fixing all manner of things aboard, having very little in the way of servants to wait upon us,” Jon said before adding, “And I’ve always heard that soldiers make poor husbands, sir.”

Sir Eddard smiled at him and said, “Well, perhaps I shouldn’t listen to what they say…whoever they are.”
The white dress had needed a bit of mending. She had brought it with her from Gibraltar and it had
snagged in the trunk and had a small tear. Perhaps it was not as fine a wedding dress as some young
ladies would’ve chosen but it had belonged to her mother long ago and Sansa had altered it not long
before she had met him. She had worn it the night they had met. He had expressed his regret as they
walked in the garden yesterday that he had lost the handkerchief she had given him that night and
she had made him three to replace it and sent them to his room the night before along with a note.

_I marry you. I marry you tomorrow though you are already my husband in my heart. You make me
so happy and I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life as your wife. As for your loss, here are three to
replace what was once just one._

Arya was fussing over her sister’s hair when Rickon snuck into their room with a note in his hand.
He put his finger up to his lips and slipped it to her with a grin before he stole a small cake from the
breakfast tray and ran back out of the room.

_I marry you today. Nothing on Earth could bring me more joy than knowing that you will be mine
and all the world will know it. I love you and thank you for the gift. Perhaps I can look forward to
our family increasing like my handkerchiefs one day? Yours forever-Jon_

Sansa blushed at his note and heard Arya’s snort as she peeked over her shoulder. “Good gracious,
you are both sickeningly besotted. This is the best I can do with your hair, Sansa. I hope it’s alright.”

“It’s perfect, Arya,” Sansa said with a smile. “It’s time.”

Arya walked ahead of them into the estate’s small family chapel as she held her father’s arm. A priest
had agreed to marry them and been brought from Cadiz after being persuaded by the commodore
that the marriage take place on his estate. Jon stood at the front of the chapel next to her younger
brothers. He was in his uniform which he had cleaned and mended best he could. His hair was
freshly pulled back into a queue and he was clean shaven once more.

After her father gave her away, she handed Arya her bouquet and allowed Jon to lead her to the altar
where they knelt before the priest. The incense burning in the chapel and the priest reciting Mass in
Latin before the actual ceremony were unfamiliar experiences for them compared to their Anglican
upbringing but it did not diminish her joy in this day one bit.

If asked later, Sansa would admit that she could remember very little of the actual ceremony. She had
wept her tears of joy. Jon was happy but he was obviously moved by the seriousness of the occasion.
His solemn eyes met hers often during the service seeking her smiles that he would then return. She
could remember the warmth of his hand on her own and the way he brushed a strand of her hair out
of her face and tucked it lovingly behind her ear before he sealed their vows with a sweet and chaste
kiss. She remembered Arya hastily swatting tears from her eyes, not wishing to admit to
sentimentality. She remembered Old Nan’s smile from where she sat and the boys’ exuberant cheers
once the ceremony was concluded. She remembered her father’s warm embrace afterwards.

She turned to her husband and smiled before he led her to the wedding breakfast.

“Are you happy, my love?” he asked.
“Very happy.”

“The commodoro had put a good bit of effort into the breakfast I hear.”

“Yes…is it terrible that I’m hoping we won’t be expected to stay at it very long?”

He grinned widely and kissed her hand before saying, “Not terrible at all, Mrs. Snow.”

Chapter End Notes

Well…we've had a wedding. Wonder what comes next?
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa enjoy their honeymoon period.

Chapter Notes

Time for the bedding and some newlywed sexy times.

Oberyn Martell had put a good deal of effort into hosting the wedding and was curious about English wedding traditions. He and Sansa spent no small amount of time discussing the differences between weddings in Spain and Britain. But Sansa interest in the subject was waning quickly every time her eyes found Jon’s upon her.

“And when do newly married couples in Spain generally retire from the festivities, Commodore?” Sansa asked as directly as she could at last.

She was amused to see Jon’s eyes get wide and his quick guilty glance at her father.

The commodore on the other hand only chuckled and said, “Whenever the bride decides it is time, I would think.”

Sansa smiled at her host and prompted her father to offer his toast and then expressed her wish to retire. And, she had secretly reveled in Jon’s blush when she did so though her own nerves were far from steady at the moment. Papa only turned to give her a kiss and turned back to discussing something with the commodore while Arya and the boys were quickly out the door and off to find their own amusements.

They’d been giving a grander room for this their true wedding night although it was not night yet. A large, feather bed dominated the room that was filled by the afternoon sun. The covers were a soft shade of buttery yellow. Two armchairs sat in the room as well as a small table where meals could be taken. There was a dressing room through a doorway and her trunk had been moved into it though Jon only had his uniform at present and Sansa had only a handful of dresses with her. A large marble bath stood in the corner of the room by the fireplace. The commodore had named this to be their room for the rest of their stay and it was far removed from where Sansa’s sister and brothers and father’s rooms were…for which she was rather grateful.

They had walked from the dining room to their suite in complete silence. Sansa had her hands clasped in front of her and Jon had his hands clasped behind his back. Once they reached the door, he held it open and she began to walk through before he gave a startled shout and stopped her.

“Wait!” he shouted, grasping her arm. Sansa froze in surprise and then laughed when he picked her up to carry her across the threshold. “We can’t start this off the wrong way,” he said in all seriousness.
“You are quite superstitious, I believe, Mr. Snow.”

“Of course, I am. I’m a seaman. If I thumb my nose at centuries of dearly held belief, I would only have myself to blame when disaster strikes. Our forefathers were no fools. Who am I to ignore traditions?”

He set her back down as she laughed and then barred the door before turning to her with a reticent smile. The fact that they were truly alone brought Sansa’s nervousness back. He looks rather nervous, too, at least. They both stood staring at anything but each other for a few minutes before, by some unspoken agreement, they began to undress. Sansa’s dress was simpler than the one from the night before last and she soon was down to her shift. She looked over at Jon and blushed when he began taking off his neckerchief. His uniform coat had already been tossed over one of the armchairs.

“I don’t know why I am embarrassed. You saw me the other night,” she said as she moved over to help him with his shirt.

“Aye, I saw you then. But your husband will be seeing you bare for only the second time…and we’ll be doing something neither of us has done before.”

“So, you’ve never…”

“No, Sansa. I’m a virgin, too.”

Sansa had surmised as much from things he had said the other night but she’d never asked before and found she was pleased to hear him say so. Nevertheless, she did have a slight concern.

“But you, uh…you know where to put it, don’t you?” she said staring at her feet.

“Sansa…I…I of course, I know where to put it!” he said, half vexed and have amused.

Sansa looked up and began laughing when she saw his scowl. It made her feel lighter and less nervous. His scowl turned to mischievous grin and, without warning, he picked her back up again and carried her to the bed.

“Jon!” she shrieked as he laughed and told her he would happily show her that he knew exactly where to ‘put it.’

He tossed her down on the feather mattress before he climbed up next to her, he still in his breeches and her still in her shift. They laid there side by side laughing together like children with a secret joke to share and Sansa knew she’d never felt so much happiness at once.

“Kiss me, Jon,” she finally said when their laughter had subsided.

He rolled to his side and propped his head up on his elbow and just looked at her. “I can’t…not yet. I have something I’m trying to commit to my memory just now. I have to remember how beautiful my wife is lying next to me in nothing but her shift,” he said seriously as his brown eyes roamed all over her.

“Your wife if getting chilled lying here in just her shift with no covers atop her.”

“Oh? Perhaps I should warm her then.”

“You catch on quick, Mr. Snow.”
He leaned over and kissed her then, hesitant for just an instant before his mouth captured hers more fully. His soft lips melded into her own with a gentle yet insistent pressure. He licked her bottom lip and she opened her mouth to him. As his tongue slid into her mouth, she tasted the wine he had drank with their meal and the cake he had eaten. He moved his other hand to cradle her head as he kissed her with such sweet ardor. Sansa felt her breath getting short, a delightful dizziness, and her heart was racing. She moved a hand to his bare shoulder before sliding her tongue into his mouth. He let out a shuddering sound when she did and Sansa found she liked that very much. They stayed there kissing for ages it seemed with their hands never moving past each other’s faces or hair or arms. But when Jon moved his hand down to cup a breast at last, Sansa felt the warmth of desire spreading through her loins like a fire. She knew she was already wet between her nether lips.

“Touch me, Jon,” she moaned as he kissed her along her jawline and gave her breast a gentle squeeze.

He moved his hand down lower and she pulled her shift up to expose herself to him. He pulled back slightly, looking down to see her thighs and the thatch of curls between them.

“You first,” he said teasingly. “Touch yourself like you would when you thought of me.”

“Jon…You are quite wicked, husband.”

“You have no idea, my sweet wife.”

“Oh? Are you challenging me in wickedness? I may surprise you,” she responded with a grin.

“Well, you did seem to enjoy looking at that wanton book as I recall,” he said with a smirk.

Sansa slid her hand down between her legs and ran a finger along her folds. She gave a sigh and bit her bottom lip as she looked him in the eye. She was very pleased to see his smirk flee and hear the desperate groan he tried to choke back as she slid her finger inside. She ducked her head to look at him from beneath her eye lashes and his mouth parted. His breaths were short. She lifted her wet finger to his lips.

“A taste for you, dear husband. Let me know if it’s a sweet as the cake was.”

He devoured her finger like a starving man, swiping it clean with his tongue. “Far sweeter and all mine. No one else gets to eat this savory morsel,” he growled moving his own finger down to graze her folds before he brought it up to his mouth and licked it clean as well.

His eyes had darkened, nearly black with desire now, and he motioned for her to sit up. When she did, he pulled her shift off and laid her on her back. He hovered over her on all fours with his breeches still on. His mouth sought a nipple and he made her squirm with longing with his tongue on her breast as his hand slid back down between her folds again and he began circling her nub.

“Oh, Jon…don’t stop,” she said breathlessly.

“I won’t…do you have any idea how long I’ve dreamed of having my finger inside you like this as I licked your firm, sweet teats?”

“No,” she laughed before she moaned.

“So fucking long…” he said quite desperately.

“Such language Mr. Snow!” she said with mock outrage.
“I apologize for my language, Mrs. Snow. Please forgive your disgusting husband’s foul mouth. He is only a humble sailor and he speaks coarsely sometimes.”

“I think you should put your mouth to better use then…perhaps on my cunny,” she said feeling bold and a bit coarse herself.

Jon’s eyes widened before he grinned and lowered himself down between her legs. He licked and sucked at her bud and darted his tongue inside of her. She writhed beneath him. It was nearly too much, his mouth and then his fingers upon her…inside of her. The familiar tightening sensation rolling through her and yet more intense than when she would pleasure herself. She felt herself hurtling upwards to her end just before it crashed around her leaving her quite limp and hazy. Sansa cried out his name as she shuddered through the last of her release. He moved up to claim her mouth. Sansa could taste herself on his tongue just like before and found she did not mind it.

“How was that?” he asked with a self-satisfied grin.

“Even better than the first time.”

“Well, just like gunnery…practice makes perfect.”

“True. I’ll happily let you practice some more though,” she said.

“I will happily taste you every day of my life if you’ll let me.”

Sansa reached down and felt his hard length through his breeches. “What about this though?” she asked with a cocked eyebrow and a saucy grin. “You still haven’t shown me that you know where to put it.”

He gave an exasperated chuckle and pulled his breeches off. He started to move over her when she stopped him with her hand on his chest.

“What?” he asked concernedly. “I promise I’ll go slow, Sansa.”

“No, that’s not it. I want to have a chance to memorize what you look like, too. To remember how beautiful you are.”

“I’m not beautiful,” he said.

“You are to me.”

He laid down beside her again as she sat up to trace her fingers across his skin, making gooseflesh appear. She started with his chest and worked her way down to his belly before grasping his cock. A small amount of fluid came out the tip and she rubbed her thumb over it making Jon’s eyes roll back in his head. He stifled a moan.

“You like this?”

“Very much, wife.”

“No need to be quiet then,” she smirked.

She leaned over to put her mouth on him as he had done to her but he sat up swiftly, seemingly in panic. “No…I can’t have you do that right now. Please, Sansa…I want to be inside of you when I peak.”

“Of course,” she nodded and laid back down on the bed. “Love me, Jon,” she said, beckoning him
to her with her arms raised.

He moved back over her and kissed her slowly again with love and passion. “I love you, Sansa. I hope this does not hurt too much.”

“I love you, too. I’m ready.” I think.

He reached down between them to position himself. He stroked her moist folds with the tip of his cock before he pushed forward slowly. At first it seemed like nothing to fuss over but then as he truly started to enter her, it was tight and becoming painful. She grimaced and he stilled.

“Too much?”

“Yes…I mean, no.”

He pushed forward again and the pinch from before now felt like she was being torn. Oh, God…I can’t do this. Tears sprang to her eyes and Jon stopped once more.

“Sansa…I cannot bear to hurt you.” The sweet concern on his face helped her regain her confidence.

“It won’t hurt long.” At least I hope it won’t. “Please don’t stop.”

He pushed the rest of the way in and gave a groan. “God, Sansa…you’re so tight. It feels so good. I want to stay like this forever. Sweetheart, please tell me how you are,” he said then looking into her eyes.

“It’s better than it was,” she said in a pained voice. “Can you be still…just for now?”

“I already said I want to stay like this forever, remember?” he said jokingly. “Just tell me when I can move, darling girl. I’m afraid I won’t last all that long once I move.”

Good, she thought as she desperately tried to not cry. But soon she realized that the pain was already less than it had been. She moved her hips slightly against him.

“Ohhh…Sansa…” he moaned loudly, burying his face in her hair. “God, my darling girl. That feels…so good.”

It does. It feels good…or better than it did. Sansa moved again and was rewarded with another cry from Jon which only emboldened her. The pain from earlier was quickly receding now though it was still uncomfortable in a way. It still felt like there was too much of him to fit inside of her and yet a new feeling was building each time she moved. I wonder…

“Move, Jon.”

He slowly began to rock his hips and, as they fell into a rhythm together, Sansa was whimpering from pleasure instead of pain. The same sensation as when he’d put his mouth on her was building but it was different in its intensity as his shaft rubbed across her bud with their movement. Jon lowered his head down to suckle her breasts and she ran her hands up into his hair, keening beneath him. He was grunting with each thrust now and he started to lose his rhythm.

Just as she thought she might reach that delicious peak again, he cried out, “Sansa! Oh…fuck…my darling…ahhh…uhhhh-ughhnnn!!” His eyes were squeezed shut and his mouth was screwed up in a grimace but she suspected he was in no pain. He still above her panting, sweating and cradling her against him. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t last any longer. You were close, weren’t you?”
“I was but you are forgiven. You will just need to practice that every day as well, I suppose,” she said with a smile.

“Gladly. For however long we are here together, I will do that as often as you like, at any time of day, in any place you like and in as many different ways as we can come up with.”

She smacked his arm but then said, “You know…I still have that book I found aboard the Francine. It’s in my trunk.”

“Oh, my wicked wife…does this mean I will get to try all those things with you?”

“Certainly. You will need to thoroughly explore all the ways of love making with your wife before we are parted.”

“With pleasure, Mrs. Snow.”

After he had slid out of her, there was a little blood to be washed away. Jon fetched a cloth and some water and Sansa laid back on two pillows watching this man she loved so dearly clean her with such devotion and care. He laid down next to her after she was clean and leaned up for a kiss. The afternoon sun was still spilling through the window and they still had the whole night…our whole life…ahead of them. He held her to him and Sansa could not help but give thanks to have this wonderful, handsome and loving man as her husband. And she soon found herself eager to make love to him again.

For the next several mornings at breakfast, Jon found it hard to meet Sir Eddard’s eye…or the commodore’s…or Arya’s for that matter. Bran and Rickon were a pleasant distraction but, once they would head off to continue their boyish adventures on the estate, Jon would find himself feeling a bit uncertain in the presence of his father-in-law and his friend. Sansa seemed perfectly at ease with them all though. Jon wondered how she managed it as he recalled their latest explorations of her book from this morning.

She had been straddling his hips, bouncing up and down on his cock while he fondled her breasts and thrust up into her. She had been biting her lip to keep quiet and he begged her to be loud for him, to let him know he was doing well. She instantly began letting her moans, whimpers and other delicious little noises escape. The sounds of his wife nearing her peak were enough to spur him to his own. He started babbling nonsensically; filthy and sweet endearments about her breasts, her hair, her mouth, her cunt. When she started screaming his name and he felt the walls of her cunt clamping down around his cock, he was immediately lost and shouting her name in return. Watching her come apart as she rode him with her hair a glorious mess and her eyes closed and her lips parted in ecstasy had been the most sensual thing he could ever imagine seeing…far more sensual than any images in any book.

He grinned to himself at table with the memory and avoided Sir Eddard’s eye. His sweet, innocent wife had turned out to be quite a curious little minx in bed and they had tested out multiple pages already. He sat there trying to sip his coffee while covertly adjusting his breeches that were suddenly becoming rather tight. He glanced over at Sansa and smiled. She knew what that smile meant at once and she raised an eyebrow at him. He gave her a smoldering look in return to convey his thoughts. Yes, darling girl, I want you yet again. I’d turn you over this table right now if your family weren’t in the room and have you crying out in your pleasure.
Unfortunately for Jon and his hedonistic thoughts, Arya came up and led Sansa away to go and see Old Nan. Sansa cast him a regretful glance but also a look that promised some recompense later in the day. Jon found himself alone with Sir Eddard and the commodore.

“Tell me, Jon…may I call you Jon?” the commodore asked and then continued once he had nodded his consent. “Are you finding your room to your liking?”

“Yes. Thank you, sir.”

“Please call me Oberyn. And the bed is comfortable?”

“Yes.” Please don’t ask anything else about our room.

“And Mrs. Snow is finding everything to her liking?”

“Yes…Oberyn.” I’d swear he’s purposely trying to...

“Excellent. I hope you’ve been able to enjoy the bath.”

Why, yes Oberyn…I certainly enjoyed making love to my wife in your marble bath last night. She cried out my name so prettily when she came. I was busy grunting like an animal in heat though as I gripped her ass and pounded away. And now I am quite certain that you’re trying to embarrass me.

“Your room is warm enough I hope. You two aren’t getting too chilled in the night, are you?” Oberyn asked with a slight smirk forming.

“Stop, Oberyn. You’re embarrassing the poor boy…and me in a way. Jon, a cartel is due next week it seems. Enjoy this time with Sansa while it lasts and don’t let this one,” Sir Eddard said pointing to Oberyn, “tease you too much. I’ve some business to see to this morning. I’ll see you both later.”

Jon stood as his father-in-law left and sat back down to finish his coffee as he felt himself being watched closely by Oberyn.

“So…I would ask what you would like to do today but I suspect I already know,” Oberyn said with a laugh.

“You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” the older man laughed. “Sorry, you both are so young and sweet.”

“I always thought Spaniards were rather reserved.”

“You’ve not met enough of my countrymen then.”

“Perhaps you’re right. Please excuse me, Comodoro. I believe I need to find my wife,” he said with a smirk of his own now.

“Good God…she is unbelievable.”
“Yes,” she said with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

“You’re going to be the death of me, Mrs. Snow.”

“I certainly hope not. Lay down.”

Jon stretched back on the bed and watched her clamor over him. She straddled his face but was staying well above him as he felt her mouth softly close on his cock. He grasped her hips and pulled her down to bring her within reach of his mouth and began licking at her pearl without any preamble.

“Oh! Jon!” she cried out. “You have to give me a chance to…oh, don’t stop.”

He grinned as he continued licking and sucking at her nub, swirling his tongue in a pattern as she moaned around his cock. She had started sucking at him as well but he was distracting her efforts. She tried to pull away from him and he gripped her more firmly to hold her in place.

“Hold fast now…you’ve not been given leave,” he rumbled against her cunt. “I get to have my fill first. You can completely ignore my cock if you like but when you put this in my face,” he said giving her backside a light smack that brought forth another moan, “you can’t expect me to pass up the opportunity to make you…”

He trailed off as she had grasped him with a hand and started stroking him while licking the head of his cock and sucking. She swirled her tongue around the tip before she took as much in to her mouth as possible.

“You were saying something, I believe,” she teased next.

“God, Sansa…don’t stop…”

“Don’t stop what?” she asked before she continued sucking him in and then slowly releasing him while her hand never stopped.

“Please…ahhhh…don’t…uhhhh…stop…that…Christ…”

She kept working his cock with her mouth and hand but when she started to say something again, Jon took the opportunity to finger her and lick at her folds some more. He curled his fingers slightly inside of her and he was surprised at her sudden gasp.

“Ahhhh…JON! That…is…oh, yes…”

“Keep…doing…that…” she panted.

“This?” he asked, curling his fingers once more and he gently sucked on her nub again.

“Yes…YES!” she shouted as her thighs locked up around his head and she quivered under his touch.

He happily lapped up every drop of her wetness throughout her moaning and shuddering. Once she was sated, she collapsed on top of him and Jon enjoyed the view of her gleaming cunt sopping wet from his attentions a few inches away. He gently traced his fingers along her ass and folds.

“I’m sorry,” she breathed against his hip. “I think I failed on my end.”

“Absolutely nothing about that would classify as a failure, madam; however, I’d be willing to
practice that some more…but for now,” he said as he pushed her forward and up on all fours before scrambling up behind her, “I had my own page in mind for us this afternoon. I rather liked it the first time we did it.”

Sansa looked over her shoulder at him with a seductive smile. “I recall your interest and…um, enthusiasm with this page.”

“I recall yours as well. Besides, it’s nearly Christmas. This present will suit me better than any pudding or pie,” he said as he slid his cock within her once more.

Later, they laid together as he held her. They had started discussing the upcoming parting they would face when the cartel arrived and Sansa had started to cry.

“I’m sorry,” he said miserably wishing to stop her tears and hoping to manage to keep from shedding his own.

“It’s alright. I’m a sailor’s wife now. I must get used to this.”

“I don’t think I could ever get used to the pain of being separated from you.”

“Nor, I. I wish Papa would send us on to Winterfell but he says it’s too isolated and not been lived in for years now. He’s still insisting we stay with Aunt Lysa though I’m a married woman now. She’s not…never mind.”

“I’m sorry for your concerns there but I do agree with your father. I’d rather you be there for now rather than up in the north country with just Arya and the boys. Your aunt has remarried you said. Perhaps he is a good man who will help to steady her. And I’ll feel better knowing there is a man in the house. Still, I’ll worry so much over you, sweetheart.”

“No more than I will worry about you.”

He waved away her worries. He didn’t want her to know the full danger he’d be facing.

“Sansa, when you reach England, I want you to draw my pay so that you will not be without your own funds while in your aunt’s house. I’ll send a letter with you and the marriage certificate the good padre filled out.”

“Alright, but Papa has promised my dowry…”

“I don’t feel right taking it. I feel as though I stole you as it is. I don’t want to take your father’s money.”

“He’ll insist, Jon. Please don’t offend him.”

“Very well…we will save your money to buy our own place then, wherever you would like to live. But I want you to use my pay for now. Feel free to purchase anything you’d like…new bonnets or dresses or whatever you’d like,” he said. “It’s your money too now though it’s not much.”

“I want us to be able to set up our own house, Jon. There’s more than just the place to buy. I won’t fritter the money away on tippets and new bonnets.”

“Spend it as you see fit then, my clever, frugal wife,” he said with a kiss. “And Sansa…I will write to my uncles. Would you be willing to meet them? My Uncle Benjen will likely still be at sea
somewhere but Uncle Brandon may be in London this time of year. I’d like for him to get to know you…if you don’t mind. He’ll be amazed that I managed to marry a woman as incredible as you.”

“Of course, Jon. Once we are settled at Aunt Lysa’s, I’ll be sure to contact your uncle, both of them if possible.”
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa say good-bye to each other in Spain. Jon goes with Sir Eddard and Oberyn Martell to help rescue his brother-in-law.

She watched him sleep for a long time. She let the tears glide down her face silently, whispering to him how much she loved him. But she soon dried her tears and decided to enjoy the sight of her husband in repose. He looked younger and more carefree in slumber than he did when awake. His lips were sweetly puckered and, when she traced a finger across them, he grumbled sleepily and scrunched up his nose with annoyance in a manner that Sansa found quite endearing. But, as Jon would say, ‘Time and tide wait for no man’ so she decided to wake him at last.

“Jon?” she said, pushing his messy curls away from his face.

“Hmmm?”

“Are you awake?”

“Part of me is,” he answered with a grin though his eyes were still closed.

“I noticed,” she said in an amused tone. He had started to drift off again when she poked him in the ribs. “Jon?!”

“Umm…yes, love?”

“It’s morning.”

He sighed and opened his eyes at last. The day they had dreaded was finally here. The cartel would sail today taking her away from him, possibly for a very long time.

“I don’t want it to be morning,” he said. “I’d rather stay here pretending otherwise. Believe me, love, it is the nightingale you hear and not the lark.”

“It is the lark, my Romeo, and we must rise,” she said with a laugh.

“She speaks. O, speak again, bright angel,” he said, leaning towards her lips.

“Do your shipmates have any idea what a romantic fool you are?” she laughed as he stole a kiss.

“Not in the slightest…well, maybe Sam. It’s certainly hard to imagine Yoren or Mr. Thorne reading Shakespeare. Come here,” he said as he pulled her closer.

“Jon, we’ll be late for breakfast…again.”

“Hmmm, breakfast is such an everyday thing, Mrs. Snow. But this…” he said stroking her bare shoulder, “this is something exceptional. And if we’re to be parted, let us make hay while the sun shines, my love.”
Sansa was humming to herself as they entered the breakfast parlor hand in hand and she kissed her Papa and said her good mornings to the commodore and the children. Her heart was aching all the same though. They had both agreed not to cry any more tears at present. *Later today though…I will no doubt cry the oceans full.*

“Are you all prepared, Sansa?” her father asked.

“Yes, Papa.”

“Here’s a letter from me for your aunt when you arrive. I’ve also received word from a friend that Robb’s regiment may be in England as well.”

Sansa ignored her initial urge to question her father as to how he’d learned where Robb was serving while they were in Spain. She suspected his ‘friend’ was a friend like the commodore. She focused instead on the part that mattered to her.

“If Robb is England…could we go to Winterfell, Papa?”

“Not likely, my love. Robb is serving in Ireland at present. Who knows where he’ll be sent next? For now, there’s been talk of Wolfe Tone trying to join with the French in an invasion.”

“An invasion? In Ireland?”

“Yes…don’t worry overmuch though. If the French wish to come to Ireland, there’s only one way for them to get there and I suspect the navy will have something to say to that, won’t they, Jon?”

“Yes, sir. I’m certain of it.”

Sansa finished her breakfast trying not to worry as her father had said but finding it hard. Jon and Robb were both actively serving and poor Gabriel was a prisoner. She wondered about her father’s continued intrigues on behalf of Army Intelligence and now Bran asking regularly if he could be permitted to go to sea, to become a midshipman in the navy. *The wife, daughter and sister to sailors and soldiers…how to bear it.*

Their walk down the garden path later that morning was only meant to be a walk but, when Sansa saw the quiet bower, she tugged at her husband’s hand. They were soon kissing passionately on the bench in their shady, hidden alcove. Jon’s hand had found its way up her skirts and, as he circled her nub and delved a finger inside, he was sucking and biting at her neck before working his mouth down to her chest. Sansa was breathing heavily and trying to stifle her moans as he brought her closer and closer to her release. He was kissing the tops of her breasts and had just gave a frustrated groan as her corset was keeping him from her nipples, when they heard her father and the commodore talking nearby. They stilled at once and Jon quickly moved his hand from her skirts but not before he licked his fingers with a rapturous look at her that made Sansa blush.

“Has your son-in-law told your daughter of our plans then?” the commodore asked.

“No, I asked him not to. I don’t want her overly concerned.” Sansa looked over at Jon who was looking down at his lap now.

“It’s dangerous. She’s an intelligent woman…”

“Yes, she’s very intelligent. Smart enough to realize what could happen if we fail…if we’re captured trying to free Gabriel from the prison here. Why give her more worries? My sister-in-law is enough
for her to deal with at present…and the children.”

The voices moved past them, on down the path and Sansa felt short of breath with sudden fear…and anger.

“Jon…” she began, barely able to form words for a moment.

“Sansa…I’m sorry. Your father told me not to tell you.”

“You said the commodore was arranging an exchange for you…you said you’d be sent to Gibraltar!”

“I…I will…I”

“You lied to me!” she shouted then, not caring who heard them.

“I’m sorry!”

“Did you think I couldn’t handle the truth? Do you think I’m some delicate and simple creature that’s incapable…”

“No! You know that I don’t!” he shouted back then before rubbing his hands over his face and sighing. “I was only trying to spare you more concern…and do as your father asked.”

In a moment of pride and vexation, Sansa wanted to get up and storm away from him. She wanted to say hurtful things but then she looked at her husband’s face etched with misery and she knew her heart was not so cold…never that cold. We’re to be parted in less than two hours…how would you like to spend the last two hours with your husband, in anger or in love?

She took his hands and was touched by the relief in his eyes when he saw that she did not mean to yell at him again. “Don’t keep things from me again. Alright? I want to know your plans…all of them.” He nodded and told her then…all that he knew. “If you’re captured, you’ll be shot as a spy or worse. The commodore will be hanged as a traitor for helping you.”

“Yes, I know…I’m sorry for lying, Sansa.”

She waved his apologies aside for the moment. “Jon…you don’t have to do this.”

“He’s your brother. That makes him my brother, too.”

“You barely know him.”

“But I love and adore you. I know Robb pretty well now. I’d risk myself for him. I love Arya, Bran and Rickon. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for them. I would die for you, Sansa. And, I will do what I can to help your father save your twin. Please, love…please don’t be angry with me.”

“I’m not,” she said as he pulled her up against him. She knew not what else to say and only let him hold her close. Dear Mama, you only had Papa to worry over and you worried much. How will I ever manage?

When it was time to head to the ship, Sansa, Nan and the children rode in the commodore’s coach while the men followed on horseback. Comodoro Martell had originally wanted Jon and her father to stay on his estate but he finally relented and allowed them to come see them all off at the docks in Cadiz. Jon was told to keep silent and her father was instructed to not speak any more than absolutely necessary.
“I speak Spanish,” her father said with a cross expression.

“You accent would give you away in an instant, my friend.”

“You always said I spoke it very well, that my accent was excellent.”

“I lied,” the commodore said blithely.

Sansa turned to find Jon in front of her as the children and Nan started to get settled in the boat that would row them to the exchange ship. He took her hands in his and said, “Adios, mi esposa.”

“Adios, mi esposo,” she replied before he kissed her chastely.

“Ten cuidado, mi amor.”

“You as well,” she replied. “Where did you learn your Spanish?”

“Rickon.”

Sansa laughed then and kissed his lips once more before allowing him to hand her into the waiting boat. They went aboard the cartel shortly after noon and Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon immediately went to the rail to see them still standing on the dock. Sansa pulled out a handkerchief to wave at him as the tears started rolling down her cheeks. She kept a smile on her face all the same even though he couldn’t possibly tell if she was smiling at this distance. She told her breaking heart she would see him again. When the ship passed the headland and she could no longer see the quay, she turned to her sister’s arms to cry in earnest.

Jon’s throat was tight with the tears he was choking back as he rode with his father-in-law and Martell back to the estate. Tomorrow they would be leaving in their attempt to free Gabriel Stark at last and he was nervous at the thoughts of what that might mean. He had concealed their plans from Sansa until her father had unwittingly gave them away this morning. He hated the worry it would cause her but he had loathed keeping the truth from her even more.

Sir Eddard had told the children that Jon’s exchange was being arranged and they hoped to arrange Gabriel’s. He said they’d likely sail for Gibraltar but possibly straight on to England. In truth, they were to sail up the Guadalquivir River in a boat to a prison near Seville and, once there, find a way to free Gabriel with a group of guerilla fighters loyal to Oberyn. Then, they would sail back to the sea where they would rendezvous with a British letter-of-marque, *Longclaw*, captained by Jorah Mormont, his own captain’s son. And he would sail them and, hopefully, Gabriel back to Gibraltar or England, depending on what he thought the safest course was.

Jorah had been dismissed from the service for striking a higher-ranking officer over his wife. The rumor was that the lady was not true to her husband while he was away at sea but Mormont preferred to believe his wife and attacked the admiral who’d made him a cuckold in the halls of Whitehall no less. He was court martialed and dismissed from the service in disgrace. His wife later left him and he’d taken to sea as a privateer soon after. Jon had met him briefly in Portsmouth when *Queenscrown* was being repaired. He had not imagined he would meet with him again so soon or in these circumstances.

Jon was pleased that the older men had agreed to his suggestion to take along a couple of his men for
this mission as well. He did not wish to bring them into unnecessary danger but he knew their chances of succeeding would be greater with a couple of extra hands. In the end, Pod, Tollett and Selmy were the men Jon had chosen. Martell and Sir Eddard had looked askance at his suggestion of Selmy. He was older than either of them but Jon trusted him implicitly and the wise, old man had not survived so many years at sea for no good reason. If they were to sail a small craft in the open sea, he wanted Selmy with them.

After a quiet dinner…so quiet with Sansa and the children gone…Jon dreaded going to their room alone. Sir Eddard came and sat with him for a time by the fire.

“Are you nervous, Jon?”

“No…perhaps a bit, sir.”

“Jon, we are going on a dangerous mission together. You may certainly call me Ned.”

“Yes, sir…I mean, Ned.”

Sir Eddard chuckled and clapped him on the shoulder. “Get some rest. You will need it.”

“Yes. Thank you, Ned.”

Jon walked to their room and looked over at the bed, remembering her lying there next to him that morning. He remembered the way he had held her last night and watched her sleep, trying to memorize every detail of his wife while she rested. He stripped down to his nightshirt and climbed in bed and was immediately overwhelmed by the smell of her. She was everywhere, invading his senses, and yet he was delighted to feel this contact with her. He was embarrassed when he realized he was crying and was glad no one was there to see him or hear him sob his heart out for his wife. He held her pillow to his chest until he’d cried himself dry and finally fell asleep.

---

Guadalquivir River, Near Seville

January 1797

“Sir? Come on deck,” Tollett said in his ear.

Jon rose from his hammock and followed Edd to the deck. Pod was already there in his shirt-sleeves and breeches alone.

“Where is it?” he asked Oberyn.

“There,” the Spaniard gestured.

There was only starlight tonight for it was the new moon. But, Jon could see torches burning in the distance and the faint outline of a large structure. The prison. It looks so big. How are we to find him in there?
“Don’t worry, Jon,” Oberyn said next. “We have good information. We have a good plan. We’ll get him out and be gone before dawn.”

Eight days had passed since they’d left Oberyn’s estate and it was a new year. *She should nearly be home if the winds have been kind.* Their craft was well-made and Oberyn’s personal property. Oberyn had six of his guerillas and two seamen with him. Ned, Jon, Edd, Selmy and Pod made up the rest. The river’s current was not so strong and they had managed to work their way up river fairly easily.

They anchored the small barque along the shore about 100 yards away from the prison. It would easily pass as a larger river trading vessel heading to Seville if anyone was curious enough to take a closer look. Oberyn handed Jon his telescope and pointed. He could barely make out the gated culvert at the base of the structure where the river flowed in and under the prison.

“So that it?”

“Yes, our way in,” Oberyn responded.

“It doesn’t look passable.”

“Looks can be deceiving.”

“Will we be spotted?”

“You shouldn’t be. We know the guards have gotten lax. Time for you and Mr. Payne to take a swim, I think.”

Jon nodded and pulled off his boots. The water was not terribly cold but it was night. Jon suspected they would soon be shivering. He hoped it wouldn’t set in too soon though. He and Pod eased themselves over the side and he heard Pod gasp at the temperature.

*It’s not so bad,* Jon thought. *Not the Med in summer but better than the Channel in winter.*

They swam the 100 yards to the culvert easily enough, careful not to splash too much. When they reached it, Jon tugged on the bars. They did not budge.

“When I go, Mr. Payne,” he said as he slipped down into the water.

The grate of the culvert went down nearly ten feet. It was pitch black below the surface especially up against the fortress with no starlight making its way through. Jon had to count on touch instead of sight and reminded himself to keep his focus. He pulled himself downwards using the bars of the gate to propel him until there were no more bars. He reached out and felt the muddy bottom of the river not very far from the bottom of the gate. Very tight quarters, Jon thought uneasily. He rose back up to get air and warned Pod.

“I’ll go first, Pod,” he said. “Wait until I greet you at the other side before you attempt it.”

“Aye, sir.”

Jon took a deep breath and plunged back under. He met the bottom sooner this time it seemed and began to shimmy under the gate. He had a moment of paralyzing fear when he tried to get his shoulders under the bars and got stuck. But the river bottom was soft and he was soon able to worm his way past. His lungs were burning though from want of air now and it was with a nearly hysterical relief that he passed under and started to pull himself upwards... until something caught his breeches. He tugged frantically at his pants and was ready to abandon them all together when he felt a sharp pain in his calf and the fabric giving way. He broke the water’s surface, gulping in air and
trying to master the terror he had felt in those few seconds that he had been trapped under the water.

“Take care, Pod,” he said once he felt capable of speaking coherently. “It’s a tight fit and something
snagged my breeches.”

Pod nodded and darted under the surface but he was quickly up the other side, treading water next to
Jon. They listened for any sounds that he had been detected but all was quiet. They were both
shivering from the water’s temperature now and Jon knew they needed to keep moving.

“Come on,” he said.

They swam further in the darkness, down a tunnel that led them under the prison. Just as the
sensation of being surrounded by nothing but darkness in the water in an enclosed area began to
weigh heavily on Jon’s nerves, he spotted a faint light up ahead. There was a torch burning in a wall
sconce just as Oberyn had promised there would be. There was a platform near it and they climbed
up onto it and found the lever that they’d been told about. It took the strength of them both to lower
it. The hinges of the grate they’d passed under made an ear-shattering screech as the gate lifted and
Jon winced feeling certain they would soon be found, be captured, be shot and he would never see
Sansa again. But no one came from the prison…only a small boat from the barque filled with Oberyn
and his guerillas.

“Well done,” Oberyn said as he put a blanket over Jon’s shoulders and handed one to Pod.

“Well done,” Oberyn said as he put a blanket over Jon’s shoulders and handed one to Pod.

“Now what?” Jon asked.

“Now, you and Mr. Payne wait here with the boat. We will return with Gabriel.”

Jon nodded as Oberyn and his men headed through the door nearby. He settled down on the ledge
with the blanket drawn up tightly around him and prepared to wait. He looked down at his bloody
calf and dabbed at it before tearing a bit of his sleeve to wrap around the cut. Hours seemed to pass
though it was probably no more than 40 minutes all told. His stomach was knotted with anxiety and
he tried to settle his mind by thinking on his wife. He closed his eyes and pictured her walking and
talking by his side in Gibraltar. He thought of her walking down the aisle towards him on her father’s
arm. Then, he thought of her hair falling into her face and across her breasts as she straddled his hips
and they laughed together as they made love. He thought of her biting at her lower lip while she read
or when she felt vexed or uncertain. He remembered her soft breathing as she slept, her face wiped
clear of worry or strain. Wherever you are, I hope you are well and happy, my love.

There was a small commotion from the doorway that Oberyn and his men had passed through and
Jon and Pod rose to their feet. One of the guerillas came through grinning and said, “Hemos tenido
éxito mis amigos.” Pod and Jon didn’t know what the words meant but the man’s smile and tone
made it sound like good news. They clamored down into the boat to make ready for their departure.
Jon felt a momentary uneasiness at the thoughts of lowering the gate again and having to swim back
under but told himself that he could do this. That if he wanted to see his wife again, it would only be
one more step to take to bring him closer to that goal.

Oberyn and the others came soon after, along with three other men. Two were dressed as guards.

“They will shut the gate,” Oberyn said, pointing to the guards. “Stay in the boat, Jon.”

Jon breathed a sigh of relief until he noticed Oberyn’s grim face and the shrunken shell of a man next
to him. That can’t be him, Jon thought with dismay. They’ve rescued someone else. Gabriel was not
here…Gabriel Stark is dead more than likely and this was all for naught.
“Who is this?” he asked harshly, feeling betrayed somehow.

Oberyn looked at him strangely before replying, “Gabriel Stark.”

“It can’t be,” Jon protested until the stranger looked up at him with the same crystal blue eyes as his wife.

His fiery red hair had been shorn, he was dirty and ragged and beaten down in ways Jon could not fathom. The healthy, freckled young man Jon had met over a year ago seemed to have disappeared, to be replaced by this pitiful figure that cringed in the torchlight. He looked far older than Sansa, older than Robb, as old as Sir Eddard in truth.

“What’s happened to him?”

“He has been tortured,” Oberyn replied.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Sansa and her siblings journey to the Eyrie.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning-mentions of past child abuse.

Lysa is a bitch.

‘I hope that you are well and happy, my love,’ he whispered in her ear.

‘I am with you. Of course, I am well and happy. But I am asleep and this is only a dream.’

‘Then it is a good dream at least.’

Sansa woke with a sigh and the sound of his voice in her ear. “I miss you,” she whispered.

Their two-week voyage was nearly at an end. The weather had been kind for much of the time and Nan had fared better this time. The Eddystone had been sighted before nightfall and the cartel had made its way down the channel towards Portsmouth overnight. Once they were rowed ashore, they would travel by coach from Portsmouth to Andover where Lord Arryn’s estate was. Aunt Lysa had married the much older Earl of Vale and become a countess not long after her mother’s marriage to her father. Jon Arryn had died a few years ago though and Lady Arryn had remarried last year. Sansa, her siblings and Nan would be going to live with Mr. and Mrs. Baelish and her cousin, Robin...until Papa returns.

“What do you think Rickon?”

“It’s awfully rainy.”

“Yes, much rainier than Gibraltar. It’s not always like this though,” she smiled. He had no memory of England of course. He’d been no more than two when they’d left.

As the coach rumbled along the muddy roads, Sansa tried to calm her fears. Rickon had fallen asleep next to Nan. Arya was silent but clearly unhappy. Bran was clearly nervous…as well he should be. The last time she had been sent to stay with her Aunt Lysa, it had been just her, Arya, and Bran there. Her father had been making arrangements to move them to Gibraltar. Rickon had stayed in Winterfell with Nan being so young and Robb and Gabriel were at school.

Her cousin was six at the time but a peculiar and sickly child. He and Bran had got along well enough at first but they had quarreled one day as boys will do. In the scuffle that broke out between the boys, Bran had managed to bloody Robin’s lip. Aunt Lysa had been beyond incensed. Her fury had been frightening to behold. The way she had looked at Bran as though he were some wild beast instead of a little boy of four…the things she said. Sansa had been nine but she knew the words
pouring out of her aunt’s mouth had been shockingly vulgar. *If only she’d stopped with words…* She’d grabbed a riding crop and began thrashing Bran with it. Arya and Sansa had cried and screamed at their aunt to stop and she had turned on them next. All three of them had been whipped and sent to their rooms afterwards much to their cousin’s amusement. Sansa had never been whipped in her life. That day had been one of the most shattering in her young life, right after the death of her mother. Her aunt, who liked her fine friends and fancy dresses and styled her hair so elegantly, was transformed before her eyes that day into a screaming, mad woman. Her face red and hair wild, her fists clenched around the crop as she chased them about the room and shouted obscenities at them all and about their mother and father. She had become a very different person that day when there were no other adults around to take note of her behaviour.

When Uncle Jon had returned from his hunt that day, Sansa had gone to him in tears. He had bowed his head and apologized to them all. He told Sansa that her aunt suffered from a malady and begged her to forgive her aunt but he did not leave them alone with her again during their visit.

Once they had returned home, the household was busy preparing for their trip to Gibraltar and Sansa did not mention what had happened to her father who seemed preoccupied with his own concerns. When Robb returned from school though, she had crept to his bed one night and told him everything. He’d calmed his little sister’s fears and said they were leaving for a new adventure soon and would be miles and miles from England and Aunt Lysa. He said she might not ever see Aunt Lysa again. *And now we go to live with her…and Uncle Jon is dead.*

She had not told her husband why she was afraid of her aunt though now she wished she had. *He would never laugh at me for holding onto a child’s fears.* She hoped her aunt’s new husband was kind and that the years may have gentled Aunt Lysa’s malady. *Rickon is so willful…I could not bear to see him harmed though. I hope Papa or Jon will return to England soon. I would rather stay at the lowliest inn than under her roof too long if she is the same...or worse.*

A full day in the coach had left them stiff and grumpy when it finally rumbled up the drive to the Eyrie. It was nearly dark when they arrived and the lantern had been lit inside the coach. Bran’s eyes were wide but he was hiding his nervousness better now. Nan reached out for Sansa’s hand.

“You’re a wife now, angel. Don’t let her treat you like a child. You shouldn’t have to be afraid of her.”

“How do you…”

“My sweet little man was so upset for his sisters and little brother. He always shared his worries with me when he was still at home over my biscuits in the kitchen,” the old lady said with a smile.

Sansa smiled to remember Robb when he was younger and at home with them. “We all shared our worries with you, Nan, especially when you gave us biscuits and told us stories.”

“No Gabriel,” she said sadly. “He never cared for my biscuits or stories. He said he preferred to hear soldiers’ tales.”

The coach came to a halt and a footman opened the door. Aunt Lysa had every servant turned out to greet them, along with their cousin. She stood at the front though. She had thickened about the waist some over the years and her face seemed more drawn but her hair was still as long and dark red as Sansa remembered it.

“Dear nieces and nephews, welcome,” her aunt said in a loud, brassy voice. “Robin, bow to your cousins, dear.” Robin had grown into a gangly youth of fourteen and his bow was not remotely graceful but he smiled which was a relief. Sansa and Arya curtsied as the boys bowed. Bran helped
the footman assist Nan down from the coach. “Oh, you’ve brought your old nurse, I see. Well… Parker!” she barked.

Her housekeeper stepped forward and curtsied. “My lady?”

“You’ll need to find a room for Old Nan, Parker.”

“Yes, my lady. Come, dearie,” the housekeeper said taking Nan by the arm and pulling her towards the house.

“Come, come…let’s go inside. It’s dreary out tonight.” They followed their aunt into the house and she led them to the drawing room. “Well, now! Let me look at you all! Sansa, how lovely you’ve grown. You were always a beautiful child but now…and you look so much like Cat, it is positively unbelievable. And Arya…well, you’ve grown, too, I see.” Arya’s smile fell at once and Sansa wanted very much to tell her sister that she was beautiful too and not to mind their aunt’s rudeness. “And you must be Rickon. Nearly a man already and your poor aunt has never laid eyes on you before,” she clucked as she pulled him into a hug. Poor Rickon looked quite alarmed and Sansa had to stifle a laugh. But in the next instant, her stomach dropped as Aunt Lysa’s eyes fell on Bran and narrowed. “And Brandon…here you are again,” she said with such quiet… venom.

Dear God…surely, she does not still harbor ill will towards him. He is the sweetest of boys. He was four years old then and he’s only twelve now.

“Robin, take Rickon to his room. He looks asleep on his feet, poor dear. Oh, Mr. B!” Aunt Lysa exclaimed in a high-pitched girlish voice now as a man entered the room. “I’m so glad you could join us! Children, this is my new husband, Mr. Baelish. You are all to call him Uncle Petyr. Isn’t my new husband handsome, children?” she finished with relish.

Sansa looked at the man who had stepped up next to her aunt now. His hair was graying and he wore a moustache. He was dressed very fine. He was handsome in a way but she didn’t like something about his eyes. He smiles at us but his eyes do not… they glitter with something else.

“I’m delighted to meet you all,” he said with a quick bow. Next, he captured Sansa’s hand and kissed it. “I knew your aunt and mother when I was a youth. I am stunned at your resemblance to Catelyn, Miss Stark.”

“It is nice to meet you, Mr. Baelish. But, I allow me to say that I am Mrs. Snow now,” Sansa said with no small amount of pride.

“I beg your pardon?” Aunt Lysa said sharply.

“Yes, aunt, I was married a few weeks ago.”

“Married? Married to who may I ask?”

“Lieutenant Jon Snow of His Majesty’s Navy, ma’am.”

“Lieutenant Jon…Sansa, how can you be married? Your father didn’t mention that when he wrote. He hadn’t even mentioned you were engaged.”

“I have a letter from Papa for you,” Sansa said reaching into her pocket. “I’m sure he mentions it in this one.”

Aunt Lysa was clearly cross and nearly ripped the letter in her haste to pluck it from her hands. Sansa, Bran and Arya stood uncertainly while Aunt Lysa read the letter and Mr. Baelish read it over
“Married in Spain? What were you doing in Spain?”

“We were aboard an English prize, captured by Mr. Snow’s frigate, when we were in turn captured by the Spanish. Mr. Snow and I were married before the cartel came to take us to England.”

“And where is this husband now?”

“Awaiting his exchange, aunt, as a prisoner of war,” she said as dread washed over her. Why does she care that I am married?

“Oh, I see…” she said as her tongue dripped with acidity now. “Just like Cat in more than one way then.”

“Aunt Lysa, I’m not sure what you are implying…”

“And, the brisk young lieutenant managed to secure his beachhead no doubt forcing you to marry then? I hope your father wasn’t fool enough to give him your dowry already.”

Sansa’s mouth fell open but Arya was not shocked into silence. “How dare you!” Arya started shouting. “Jon is a good man, an honorable man! Sansa and he had an understanding between them for over a year before they…”

“Arya, please…” Sansa began. She was as angry as Arya but she knew yelling at Aunt Lysa was not going to get things off to a good start.

“Lysa,” Mr. Baelish said warningly. “It’s unbecoming to speak so crudely. I’m certain it’s a love match your niece has made, just like us, my darling wife. Come, children…Mrs. Snow. You must be exhausted from your journey. Permit me to see you to your rooms and you may rest.”

Sansa and her siblings followed Mr. Baelish. As Sansa was led out of the room, she looked over her shoulder at her aunt who was rereading Papa’s letter and still fuming. So, nothing has changed with her. Oh, Robb…I wish you’d been right about never seeing her again.

“Do you need anything, sir?” Jon asked his father-in-law.

Sir Eddard looked up from where he sat by the cot they had slung for Gabriel. He looked very old and tired to Jon’s eyes. Will we manage to get either of them home alive? he wondered. His brother-in-law was breathing shallowly, his chest rattling as he slept. His hair had recently been shorn for lice and in the three days they had been sailing back down the Guadalquivir, a fiery red stubble had begun to sprout. But his face was still an unhealthy grey and he still cringed at loud sounds occasionally.

“No, Jon,” Sir Eddard answered at last. “I will sit here. You should go and rest.”

“Forgive me, sir, but you look more in need of rest at present. I can sit by Gabriel’s side.”

The older man chuckled and said, “You think me at death’s door? I am only sick and tired with
worry but I am not ill. Come and sit with me then if you don’t want your hammock at present.”

Jon sat down on the other stool. “I wish Dr. Seaworth was with us…or any doctor.”

“Yes, that would’ve been a good thing…under the circumstances.”

Jon looked at Gabriel’s hands. It was hard to look at them but hard to look away, too. Three fingernails had been ripped out of one hand and two from the other. Both hands had been smashed in some sort of machine.

“They are quite pitiless,’ Oberyn had said. ‘But torture rarely reveals the best intelligence. It is slower and harder to win it with sweetness but the results are usually better.’

‘Why would they torture him?’ Jon had asked.

‘He’s a British spy, sent here to seek intelligence about my country’s increasing hostility towards your country. Spies are not treated well…not in any country.’

Gabriel jerked in his sleep and let out a pitiful sounding whine that seemed to gut Sir Eddard where he sat. He bent his head and put them in his hands, trying to steady his breath. Jon reached out and put a hand on his arm.

“Please, sir. I know this is very hard for you. Let me sit with him a bit. You’ve been here day and night since we left the prison. Go on deck for a bit if you won’t go to your hammock.”

Jon had made his plea sincerely but he figured he would be ignored. He was surprised and pleased when Sir Eddard rose. He came over and put his hand on Jon’s shoulder.

“You’re a good son, Jon. I am glad I get to call you that and I hope…I hope to see you returned to Sansa for a time before your duty calls you away again.”

“Thank you, sir,” he said, his throat tight with sudden emotion. No one has ever called me their son.

“Call me Ned, Jon. Don’t make me ask again.”

“Yes, Ned.”

Just as Ned had left the small cabin, Gabriel stirred and Jon was surprised to find that he was watching him closely. “Do you need anything?” Jon asked.

“No,” the younger man said still watching Jon closely. “You’re a good son…I am not. I’m a fool.”

“He didn’t say that.”

“He wouldn’t. I’m saying it. I wanted…” he began coughing and Jon helped him drink some water before easing him back down on his pillow. “I wanted to be a soldier, like him. That’s all I’d ever wanted. I listened to the old soldiers sitting around spinning their yarns in our home as a boy and I wanted that. Father always said that serving…that war…is no fairy tale or yarn though. I never believed him.”

“You do now though.”

“I do now,” he said as he closed his eyes. Some of the tension had seemed to leave Gabriel’s face and Jon thought he’d fallen back asleep until he spoke again. “You married Sansa?”

“Yes.”
“That’s good. I could tell she fancied you the night we met but she never would suffer too much teasing from me or Robb. She’s a wonderful girl…certainly the better twin,” he said with a rueful laugh. “And you’ll be a good man to her. I know you will. Who could treat her otherwise?”

“Who indeed?” Jon answered with a smile.

---

Two weeks had passed since they had arrived. Sansa awoke early most mornings at the Eyrie often feeling more tired than she had when she went to bed the night before. It was chilly in her room as the fires were often allowed to burn low well before bedtime. I hope you are warm in Spain, my love...or possibly you have left already. Winter at the Eyrie is as cold as our welcome was the first night.

Things had fallen into a pattern of sorts since their arrival. Sansa spent part of her day educating the boys and Arya was helping her now. Then, they would walk about the grounds if the weather wasn’t too abysmal or play games indoors if it was. Mr. Baelish would occasionally take the boys out riding in the mornings if Sansa allowed. Aunt Lysa had not been so unpleasant again as the first night when she’d learned of Sansa’s marriage, although occasional slights and off-hand remarks regarding Jon’s family were made.

‘Lord Brandon Snow’s nephew? Oh, yes...that one,’ she’d said with a smirk.

Her aunt had also expressed her ‘concerns’ at the validity of their marriage by a Catholic priest in a foreign country and a current belligerent at that. But, Sansa dismissed her aunt’s ‘concerns’ and said that everything was legal and binding. Their aunt had not treated Bran with such coldness since the night of their arrival at least.

Sansa had written to Jon’s uncles as promised and his Uncle Brandon had already invited her to come and visit him and his new wife in his house in London or his estate of Snowden Hall in Northampton if she preferred to wait until spring. His wife was young, Jon’s age, and was lonely for the company of other girls, he said. She would gladly have gone to him and his wife at once if she had only herself to think of but she could not leave her siblings here alone and he had not mentioned them in his invitation. His Uncle Benjen was reportedly due back from a cruise around the Caribbean soon, according to his Uncle Brandon. Sansa hoped she’d have an opportunity to meet them both before too long.

Sansa had written to Robb in Ireland as well and was delighted to receive a response just yesterday.

Dear Sister,

I have missed you these past several months and your letter was most welcome here. There is hope we may leave soon as the French invasion force was completed routed by the weather at Christmas. May it be a sign to our enemies and, hopefully, the new year will bring more successes for our country than defeats. Our regiment remains for the time being to try and keep peace in an uneasy land though. I wish you were here with me in Ireland. I’ve never seen so much green in one place before as I see here. After spending so many years in Gibraltar, Ireland seems to have an ethereal kind of beauty to it that has me looking for fairies and unicorns behind every tree and under each
Forgive me for rambling though when I should be writing what I truly meant to express. I am sorry to hear that you are staying with Aunt Lysa and even more upset to learn that things have not been pleasant for you there. If I’m granted leave, I will come to you at once. I would take you all to Winterfell and we could wait for Father’s return.

Sansa, I’m so happy to learn that you and Jon have married. I do not doubt that you will be happy together. I hope his duty will not keep him always away from you. Regarding love, my dear sister, I hope you will not object to me sharing some of my heart with you. We don’t get to choose who we love they say and I have found that it is true for myself. I have met a young lady that I would very much like to make my wife though some might consider it an imprudent match for me. I would like to speak with Father first but, if I cannot do so soon, I may have to act as my heart and sense guide me. You would like her, I know. Perhaps, if we marry and I could bring you both to Winterfell, you could be a comfort to one another when your husbands are away.

I wish you could tell me more of this matter in Spain involving Father, Jon and Gabriel but I understand your discretion. I hope that they are safe and well. And, I pray for the same for you, dear sister, and Arya, Bran and Rickon. Give my love to Nan as well. I will write again when I am able. Until then, stay well and write at once if things at the Eyrie grow worse.

With Much Affection,

Robb

Sansa lay abed remembering her brother’s words. She wondered about the young lady he had fallen in love with and how it might be an ‘imprudent match’ but she had faith that she must be worthy of his love if she had won his good heart. As much of a romantic as Papa it would seem…and myself, she thought with a smile.

She also hoped to go to town to see about drawing Jon’s pay as he had instructed her to do. She was grateful now that he had mentioned it. Aunt Lysa was quite miserly with her coins…at least when it came to them. One candle was allowed at night for reading in her room. Two would be quite excessive, she was told, so Sansa often went to bed early. I’ll buy myself a candelabra to read by at night and candles to fill it and watch Aunt Lysa faint at my excess. She giggled to herself before rolling to her side and feeling the empty space next to her. I wish you were here to laugh with me, my love.

She rose from her bed to wash but as she got to her feet the room began to spin a bit. She had barely made it to her basin when her stomach voided its contents into her washing water. She stood there shivering in her shift. An ague? Nerves perhaps? she wondered. I don’t feel feverish. Her stomach seemed to settle and she got dressed on her own before the maid arrived with a knock.

“I’m very sorry, Betsy. I was ill this morning,” she said gesturing to the basin.

“It’s alright, ma’am. I’ll take care of it.”

Sansa left the room to search for her siblings and her breakfast. She found both in the dining room with Cousin Robin and Mr. Baelish. Aunt Lysa was not there. She never rose before noon.

“Good morning, Sansa. You are looking quiet lovely this morning,” Mr. Baelish said.

“Good morning, Mr. Baelish. Good morning, Robin.”
“I wonder if I will ever convince you to call me Uncle Petyr,” he said with a smirk.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Petyr. I am so forgetful,” Sansa lied.

She didn’t like calling him anything but Mr. Baelish. He was already a bit forward. She did not wish to establish any level of intimacy with him whatsoever. And though he had been nothing but kind, Sansa did not trust him very much. He was quite clever and never spoke harshly towards the children but she had the feeling they were as welcome here by him as they were by Aunt Lysa. In other words, not at all.

Robin merely smiled at her greeting with his mouth full of food. He was a strange boy but so far there had been no trouble between him and Rickon. Bran avoided him as much as possible though. Sansa filled her plate from the sideboard as she suddenly felt ravenous and sat at the table. Rickon was eating with gusto but Bran picked at his food and Arya looked at her worriedly.

“Are you alright, Sansa?” Arya whispered. “You look pale.”

“I’m fine, sister,” she responded not wishing to draw Mr. Baelish in to this conversation. He was always curious about anything being said and thought everything his business.

“I have some news that perhaps you might be pleased to hear,” the man said laying down his fork. “Lord Pyke is coming for a visit. He should be here within a fortnight.”


“No, not his father…him…Theon Greyjoy. His father and brother were killed in a carriage accident in early October. He is Lord Pyke now.”

“Oh, I had not heard…well, I am very sorry to hear of his loss,” Sansa said, wondering how Theon knew Mr. Baelish.

“I suppose the Greyjoys and the Tullys were acquainted.”

“Yes, well, I don’t think he was all that sorry to find himself an earl,” Mr. Baelish said with a cruel laugh. It was the first time she’d ever heard him speak so harshly but she thought the tone seemed to come quite natural to him. “Anyway, he is an acquaintance of your aunt’s and mine and I’ve invited him for a visit. He said he was anxious to see you all again,” he finished, looking at Sansa with a curious smile.

“He never cared to see us before. He was always Robb’s friend,” Arya said.

“Well, well…he particularly wished to see Miss Sansa. I’m sure he’ll be thrilled to learn of your marriage. On another topic though, Mrs. Snow, I was going to take Bran, Rickon and Robin out riding today if you don’t object. You and Miss Arya are most welcome to join us if you like.”

Arya’s scowl from the subject of Theon was suddenly replaced by a happy smile. “Oh, I’d love to go riding. May we, Sansa?”

“Certainly, you may if you wish, Arya. I’m afraid I’m not much of a rider, Mr. Baelish.”

“Very well. If you change your mind, Mrs. Snow, I can certainly ride along by your side at a pace you prefer.”

Yes, no doubt you would, she thought uneasily. Sansa started to respond when the dizziness returned quiet suddenly.

“That is…oh, excuse me,” she said in a panic as she fled the room. She only made it to the hall.
before she was being sick all over the floor. Arya was by her side at once with the others close behind.

“Parker!” Baelish shouted. “Please have someone see to this mess. Boys, return to the dining room. Here, Miss Arya, let me help you with your sister,” he said competently as he helped her to rise. Once on her feet, they both supported her to the drawing room. Sansa felt clammy and weak but her stomach was better again. She started trying to calculate dates in her head and felt dizzy with a nervous sort of flutter now. “Shall I go and fetch your aunt?” he asked.

“No, Mister… I mean, Uncle Petyr,” she said with a forced smile. “Thank you but I believe I will be fine with my sister. The mutton from last night is not agreeing with me, I fear. Would you please be so kind as to reassure my brothers that I am fine?”

He left the room with a bow and Arya was before her, eyes wide with concern. “Sister, what is the matter?”

Sansa smiled nervously and said, “I missed my courses this month, Arya.”

“Do you mean…”

“Yes, I think I may be with child.”

“Oh, Sansa!” Arya said happily.

“I… I don’t want to discuss this with Aunt Lysa just yet. I’m not even certain. For now, let’s just keep this between us, alright?” Arya nodded though her eyes were still aglow with happiness. “And I believe I will definitely skip going for a ride with you today.”
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa wish for word of one another. Jon witnesses a great naval victory.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Do you really think so, Mr. B? What did her letter say?” she asked in the eager, pushy tone he despised.

“I’d wager a sum on it, wife. Betsy said she was ill earlier this morning, too. And there’s been no signs of blood on her sheets or her…unmentionables. She didn’t mention it in the letter she sent him last. I suspect it’s quite early.”

“The hussy…the vile little slut…just like Cat…” she sneered as her face grew blotchy in her wrath.

Petyr rolled his eyes but reminded himself to stay calm and collected. She was a very tedious wife but there was gold to be had here and he could play along. *If I can stomach bedding her, I can certainly stay calm and collected in the face of her ramblings and fury.*

“There’s no need to be angry, Lysa. Your niece is already married. What difference does it really make if there’s a pea in the pod?”

“But we told Lord Pyke…”

“Well, Lord Pyke will be disappointed is all.”

“But you said…what about the money he was going to give you?” she asked loudly…too loudly.

“Shhhh…my sweet and silly wife. Everything will work out. Don’t I always manage things?” *You ridiculous cow, I should have a gag made for you. “Did you find their marriage certificate like I asked?”

“Not yet. She keeps it somewhere in her room but she never goes riding with you or anywhere. I’m very sorry, Petyr.”

“No…no…that’s quite alright. I’ll manage to get it. And make sure Betsy continues to bring you the letters she writes him and any she receives.”

The night sky was filled with the stars and the young moon was peeping out brightly on the crisp, clear winter’s night. And, Jon could smell the sea. *Nearly there,* he thought with some relief. Gabriel was improving though still very weak. Sir Eddard was wearing himself too thin but claimed he was
perfectly well. Jon hoped so. He wanted to see them well and home again.

Home...for so long that word had meant a ship to him but now it meant Sansa. When he was a boy, it had been hard feeling truly at ease anywhere. Uncle Brandon could be irascible at times and withdrawn and distant at others. He'd had little patience with Jon as a boy though he'd tried his best. His Uncle Benjen was loving but forever away at sea. Perhaps it was Benjen's easy and open affection that had made Jon long for the companionship he'd seen displayed between his uncle and his shipmates. He had wanted to belong to something, to feel accepted. The navy had brought him that. He loved his ship. He loved the service. He had many dear friends aboard...but now there was someone infinitely dearer in his life. He had felt that way about her for over a year now but since they had married, since she had become his wife, there was a strength to that bond that made him feel her presence and her mood even when they were far apart. And tonight he felt uneasy for her.

Oberyn was conning the barque tonight and Pod had gone below just a few minutes ago. Selmy came over to him on deck.

"Why aren't you resting, sir?" Selmy asked.

"I could ask the same of you."

"These old bones long for the open water. I'll rest easier being away from this river and all the sounds of the land."

"Perhaps I will as well."

"The land is well enough for some pursuits but it's the sea that calls to me. Forgive an old man's rambling, sir. You are troubled?"

Jon looked away and considered keeping his silence but then decided against it. Selmy had always been a friend to him since he'd joined as a boy, despite their differences in station. "I miss my wife. Sleep has been difficult since she left and something..." Jon ducked his head and finished, "I worry for her. Something...something isn't well with her, I fear."

"No doubt she misses you, sir. Perhaps that's all."

"She didn't want to go to her aunt's. She said she was afraid of her aunt."

"Your missus? Afraid? I mean...well, it's hard to picture your missus afraid of much...certainly not some old bat of an aristocrat."

Jon chuckled and said, "That's what I said, too." He continued in a more somber tone, "I suppose that's what worries me now. Sansa is...she wouldn't just...I don't know, Selmy. I just know I'd like to be with her, if only for a day or two, and know that she is well."

"You've written to her, I'm sure."

"I did. The commodore said he would post it for me. I just worry that it won't get through."

"Well, sir...seems the mail usually goes through in times of war as well as in peace."

"Yes, I suppose so. Thank you for listening to my whining, Selmy."

"It's alright, sir. I wasn't aware if you was whining," the old man said with a wink.

He shuffled off and Jon considered the stars a bit longer before joining Oberyn at the wheel.
“Tomorrow, we will say adios, Jon,” Oberyn said with a smile.

“You think so?”

“Oh, yes. Jorah will be where he said. I have complete faith.”

“I could use some faith tonight. I feel…I am full of doubts and worries this night.”

“Night often does that to us. The sun will lighten the sky and your outlook, I believe.”

“I hope you’re right,” Jon said.

He watched the darkened coast slipping by. He could faintly hear the crash of waves it seemed.

*How long until I see you again?*

---

*February 1797*

*Longclaw* was a long, lean privateer with black sails that any man that was part pirate at heart, which was roughly the bulk of the *Queenscrown’s* crew, would love. She was French-built with lovely lines and a bluff bow, her masts raked forward. Everything about her pointed to speed. She had 28 twelve pounders aboard, heavy armament for a privateer that primarily preyed on merchant shipping.

Captain Jorah Mormont had been dismissed from the service for striking an admiral that had reportedly had an affair with his wife. He was a somber man from what Jon had seen of him though he was clearly intelligent and kind in his gruff way. His crew of privateersmen were highly skilled seamen, the kind that Royal Navy captains positively salivated over pressing into service. And as a privateer, they were liable to be pressed so Captain Mormont might have preferred to avoid the more common sailing routes of the navy, preferring less travelled ways to get him from point A to point B, except that to find merchants to prey on he had to take those more commonly used shipping lanes. And it was then that the speed of *Longclaw* was put to use; to capture a prize, avoid a larger enemy, or to avoid his country’s men-o-war that might wish to press his hands.

They had said their farewells to Oberyn and his men a few days ago and Jorah had been heading towards Gibraltar when a sloop had been spotted and the *Longclaw* had started edging down to get a closer look. Privateersmen were there for the money and the only money or wages for the crew came from capturing a prize so, despite Jorah’s intentions to get his father’s old friend and godson returned to Gibraltar, a prize would always come first. She was certainly French but she had more speed than expected and *Longclaw* chased her far out into the sea before they made their capture. It was while they were getting the prize repaired to send off that Jon and Pod spotted the Spanish squadron. They’d been up in the maintop this day, trying to stay out of the way of Mormont’s crew.

“Pod, do you have your glass?”

“No, sir,” the younger man answered as he saw what had caught Jon’s eye. “I’ll go and fetch it.”

Jon called up to the lookout who was apparently distracted by the activities below and aboard the prize. Soon, the privateer came alive with shouts and Jon could feel the mast trembling as someone
hurriedly made their way up it. He thought it might be Pod returning with his glass but it was not.

“Make a lane, Mr. Snow,” Jorah called as he swarmed up past him to have his look. Pod returned to the top with his telescope but handed it over to his superior for the first look. Jon was busily counting when Jorah came back down.

“Sir, may we be of assistance?” Jon asked.

“Yes, Mr. Snow, you certainly may. Unless you wish to return to Spain and truly go be a prisoner this time, you and your men could help us get underway. Just remember that I am in command here.”

Jon checked his initial reply and nodded. Privateers and merchant captains were sometimes treated rather contemptuously by their counter parts in the Royal Navy and Jon suspected that Jorah’s pride had been stung more than once, especially considering he had once served before being dismissed in disgrace.

“Sir, are you going to warn the squadron?”

“Warn the…why would I warn the bloody Spaniards?” Jorah asked as he was clearly distracted by his mate bawling at him from below.

“I meant the blockading squadron…Jervis’s squadron. They might wish to meet them head on. My ship might be there…”

“And you think I should run and tell my father that the Spanish are coming? The squadron will do very well, I am sure, without my warning them. Besides, I’d rather not give the navy the opportunity to bleed me dry of men.”

“But, sir…”

“Are you interested in helping us, Mr. Snow?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then please go below, inform Sir Eddard of the position and then help us win our anchor.”

“Aye-aye, sir,” Jon answered as Jorah’s head was already disappearing from view.

---

Sweetheart,

Just a few words this night and written in pencil at that as there is no ink at hand. But I had to write to tell you the good news. I am pleased to inform you that we have recovered your brother. He has been ill and was mistreated there, my love, but he is alive and there is much hope of his recovery given his youth. Dr. Seaworth always says the young can recover from most anything if they keep their spirits up. I hope that he is right.

As for your husband, I am quite well but I confess my spirits are low at present with longing for you. We are nearly to the sea again to meet with the privateer I mentioned and will be saying farewell to our friend here shortly. He wished for me to send you his respectful compliments and he has kindly agreed to forward this letter on for me. Your father is doing well considering his constant worry over Gabriel and I hope to see them both safely returned to you before too much longer.
Regarding worry, darling girl, I have been fretting over you terribly here of late. You spoke of being afraid of your aunt and I did not attend as closely as I should have to your words, I fear. I hope that you can soon be moved to Winterfell or spend some time with my uncle if you would like. But perhaps she has been kind and my fears are unnecessary. As soon as I am able, I will come to you wherever you are.

I love you and pray you are safe and well and beg you will pass on my love to Arya, Bran and Rickon. I will end this scribble for I am tired from little rest of late and I fear I will be rambling shortly.

All my love,

Jon

He refolded the letter as she hovered over his shoulder. “Well, Mr. B?”

“Such sweet devotion. Mr. Snow is obviously desperately in love with your niece.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Of course not. It is her letter though.”

“But we could burn it. The plan might work better if she receives no word from him. If she’s left in doubt…”

“Your brother-in-law will be writing as well. We may not be able to keep them all from her and they will be coming for her and the children eventually.”

“So, you’ve abandoned your plans?”

“Not at all, wife. I have merely adjusted them,” Petyr said.

As he looked back over the love letter though something twisted within him began to unfurl. *Such a beautiful girl...so like her mother. And left waiting and worrying for her soldier...or sailor in this case.* He unfolded the letter to reread it, the love letter from some Frenchman’s bastard...some mere lieutenant who had stolen her away.

‘I could never love a man with no honor, Petyr,’ Catelyn had said years and years ago when her precious Ned was away playing soldier. ‘The last time he had ever laid eyes on her. You could not have me so you bedded my sister and left her with child forcing her into an unhappy marriage.’

‘She lost the child but she wound up being a countess. Some might say I did her a favor.’

‘You disgust me. I wish we’d never met.’

Perhaps you were right about my honor, Cat. There’s no honor in my scheme...but a good deal of gold, he reflected with a smirk.

Lysa stood staring at him, waiting for his final word.

“Burn it.”

“And her letters to him?” she asked with a malicious grin.
Heavy fog rolled in that night and they were separated from their prize. *Longclaw* flew before the squadron but Jon could still feel them looming out in the dark somewhere behind them. The thoughts of being captured again plagued him and he stayed on deck late worrying over the fortunes of war and worrying over his wife in England.

*Tomorrow is Saint Valentine’s Day, my love. I wish I could be with you. I would recite a sonnet for you. I would write one for you if I had any talent that way…but I don’t.*

He smiled to himself and continued pacing until he spotted a light ahead. The lookout was calling down that there was a ship…two ships…three ships ahead and soon every seaman was on deck. Pod came on deck looking half asleep and worried.

“How did they get ahead of us, sir?” Pod asked nervously.

“They didn’t, Mr. Payne,” Jon answered with a smile. “We’ve found Sir John Jervis, I believe, whether Captain Mormont wanted to or not.”

Mr. Reed had the watch this night and hoped he might be left to pace in silence and daydream a bit when the letter-of-marque appeared. It had made its way past the outlying brigs and other frigates silently, like a ghost, as though it had an appointment to keep with *Queenscrown*. When it became apparent that they were sending a boat across in the fog, the frigate prepared to receive their guest, no doubt the commander of the privateer. Jojen had sent word to the captain to inform him of the ship and the impending arrival of a guest but doubted Captain Mormont would rush to greet some privateer’s captain this late.

The boat from *Longclaw* gave the frigate’s side a shrewd knock as the man at the tiller laid her alongside. Edd sat by Jon’s side, shaking his head at the man at the tiller and muttering under his breath about the proper way to lay alongside, when Jon heard Mr. Reed yelling down from above.

“Watch yourself and mind the paint or we’ll drop a shot through your bottom, you dogs!”

“We beg your pardon for the scrape, Mr. Reed,” Jon said, “but I really must beg you to mind your tone and remember your courtesies.”

“Mr. Snow?” Jojen said with apparent horror when he recognized his lieutenant climbing aboard. “What are…how are you here, sir?”

Jon waited until Mr. Payne, Selmy and Edd had climbed up after him before turning to the young man again. “I need to speak with the captain at once, Mr. Reed.”

Minutes later, Jon stood facing his captain in the cabin. This time there was no lemon shrub or wine offered and he was left standing and not invited to sit. Thorne, Yoren and the doctor were on hand to witness his admittance of losing their prize and, as Thorne’s taciturn face turned red with anger and Yoren pursed his lips, Jon wondered how long he might have to endure being the most unpopular...
man aboard. Pod stood by his side trying not to quake in his boots too noticeably.

“And so, sir, having lost La Madre, we were brought to Spain aboard the Santa Anna. We were later able to escape, after Miss Stark, her sister and brothers were sent off to England in the Cartel and, as good fortune would have it, the privateer Longclaw picked us up. So, here we stand…a few hours ahead of the Spanish squadron.”

Jon was leaving out several details to get to the essence of the matter. The important fact at present was the approaching squadron. But he could feel Davos and the captain examining him with their knowing eyes and he worked at keeping his expression neutral.

“Very well, Mr. Snow. Mr. Thorne, have us brought up to Victory. Mr. Snow will likely need to give his report aboard the flag to the admiral.”

“Aye, sir,” the premier said gruffly as he left the cabin. He gave Jon a cold, hard look before he left. I can’t say I’ve missed you either, Mr. Thorne.

“Mr. Yoren, go across to Longclaw and speak with her captain. See if Sir Eddard and his son would rather stay aboard her or come along with us.”

“Aye, sir,” he answered. “Glad to have you back, Mr. Snow,” he said, shaking Jon’s hand before he left. Well, at least he doesn’t hate me.

“Mr. Payne, you have done rather well for a first voyager it seems,” Mormont was saying next. “You should return to the midshipmen’s berth to take up your place again. You may take your ease tonight as I’m certain we’ll have need of you on the morrow.”

“Aye, sir,” Pod said, though he stood there waiting for Jon’s word. “That’s a dismissal, Mr. Payne,” Sir Jeor said with a smirk.

“Oh! Yes, sir,” he said with a blush and fled the cabin then leaving Jon alone with Sir Jeor and Davos.

“What else do I need to know?” the captain asked next.

“We freed your godson from a prison near Seville. He had been tortured and he’s still not well.” Seeing his captain’s look of anguish though, he continued, “I think given time and proper care he will do.”

“I’ll see to him at once,” Davos said, taking the hint. “I’ll get my bag and go over with Yoren.”

But before Davos reached the door, Jon added, “And I married Miss Stark in Spain.”

“Ah…well, congratulations, Mr. Snow,” Davos added with a grin before leaving.

Sir Jeor smiled and offered his congratulations as well before asking after his son, his godson and his friend. Jon related all he could to his captain of Oberyn Martell’s kindness, their trip up the Guadalquivir and their meeting with Longclaw and Jorah.

“So, are you ready to take your place aboard us again, Mr. Snow?”

“Of course, sir.”

“Good. You and I will go and see the admiral and perhaps tomorrow you will see the exciting side of blockade duty. It does not happen so very often but a fleet battle is something you’ll never forget.”
Sansa sat by the fire as her aunt rattled on over the latest reports of storms at sea and ships lost. She felt so uneasy in this house. She knew Jon would not leave her waiting indefinitely for word and that there was no certainty of when he could send her a note but it did not stop her wishing to hear from him. Her aunt talked often of how mail could be so slow, especially from abroad but she always wore a smirk on her face when she did. She had been mailing letters to him in Portsmouth and Gibraltar, hoping they might find him somehow through the fleet but she had no way of knowing if any would reach him. Weeks and weeks had passed since they’d spoken a single word to one another except in their hearts. So many days since she had last laid in his arms and watched him while he slept. Wherever you are, I pray that you are safe and well, my love.

Mrs. Parker walked into the drawing room and announced the arrival of Theon Greyjoy. Sansa stood along with her aunt, Mr. Baelish and Arya. The boys were upstairs at present and Robin was off wherever he went when he did not wish to be found. If only I could find such place here.

“Lord Pyke, welcome,” Mr. Baelish said as he bowed to Theon.

Theon strode into the room with a smile on his face and bowed to them all in returned. He was older than he was when they had last met and he was still in proper mourning attire as the requisite six months had not passed yet. Sansa had never thought to see Theon dressed so soberly. He always delighted in looking fine, even as a much younger boy. He was nearly six years her senior and had been Robb’s friend for as long as she could remember.

“My lord,” she murmured as she curtsied to him.

“Sansa!” he exclaimed with a brighter smile after his bow. “I knew I was right. I asked your brother months and months ago if you had bloomed as exquisitely as I predicted and so you have. And, can this truly be Arya? You have grown quite lovely as well,” he said kissing her hand.

Arya smirked at him and looked completely unimpressed by his display but she did curtsy and thank him. He greeted Aunt Lysa and spoke with Mr. Baelish before returning his attentions to Sansa. He moved over to her by the fire and took her hand in his.

“I have so looked forward to seeing you again,” he said with such a…hopeful smile? What on Earth is he on about? Why has he looked forward to seeing me?

“You are very kind, my lord,” she said, gently easing her hand out of his. “Please allow me to offer my condolences though for your father and brother’s tragic accident.”

“What? Oh, yes…it was quite a shock,” he said, looking down for a moment. “I hope your father is well?”

“Yes, my lord.” I hope he is, too.

“And have you heard from Robb recently?”

“Yes, a few weeks ago, my lord.”

Theon scoffed and said, “‘My lord?’ What is all this? So formal, Sansa! It was not always so
between us.”

“No, my lord, but we were children then and you were not yet an earl.”

“Well, that is true…but I long to hear you call me Theon again.”

“That would not really be…”

“We’re old friends after all,” he said patting her hand now and giving her a smile…a rather wolfish smile.

Sansa started to object when Mr. Baelish came to pull him away. “Let us leave the ladies for the moment, my lord. I’ve some very fine burgundy I recently acquired from a man in Dover. Shall we go and have some before dinner? We can discuss our business as well and not bore these lovely girls with it.”

Theon’s initial displeasure changed to acceptance and he nodded to Mr. Baelish and followed him from the room. But not before flashing another smile at Sansa and Arya.

“Well, nieces. What do you think of Lord Pyke? He’s grown quite handsome, hasn’t he?”

*She can’t be serious.* “Yes, aunt. I’m…He is…um, quite…”

“Amiable,” Arya supplied helpfully.

“Yes…amiable,” Sansa repeated.

“Amiable?” Aunt Lysa huffed. “Well then, Miss Arya…is Mr. Snow as handsome as Lord Pyke?”

“Oh no, aunt!” Arya said at once. “Lord Pyke is handsome enough, I suppose. Mr. Snow on the other hand is *devastatingly* handsome and quite amiable as well. Wouldn’t you agree, sister?”

“Wholeheartedly, my dear,” Sansa answered with a smile as she subtly caressed her stomach.

“So, then the captain said to him, ‘There are 27 sail of the line, Sir John,’ to which he finally responds and says, ‘Enough, sir, no more of that; the die is cast, and if there are 50 sail, I will go through them.’ And so…”

The table erupted in cheers and huzzahs and Sir Jeor’s words were drowned out by the merriment of his dinner guests.

“It was the completest thing. How they will cheer at Whitehall when they hear the news!” Mr. Thorne said in his excess.

*I’ve never seen him drunk before,* Jon reflected. *He’s almost bearable this way. And he’s not wrong. It is a victory worth crowing over,* Jon looked over at his father-in-law who was sitting amongst the sailors and seemed pleased enough to join in their revelry though he was quieter than they and drank less. Gabriel was still aboard *Longclaw* which was keeping station with the frigate. Jorah had come across to dine with his father and, though he looked uncomfortable to be sitting there in his plain blue coat with serving officers, it was obvious that father and son loved one another despite the disappoints that life had brought the younger Mormont.
“They are saying that old Jervie will be made a lord for this. And Nelson is likely to be knighted,” Yoren said in his ear.

_They are also saying old Jervie was in a jealous rage to make sure Nelson didn’t steal any of his thunder from the victory and that Nelson has been harping that Jervis could’ve destroyed the Spanish fleet entirely instead of backing off._ The jealousies and in-fighting between superior officers aside though, Jon was pleased with the outcome.

“What was he like, Jon? What’d you think of Jervis?” Sam asked in his other ear.

“He was…intimidating, Sam. That’s truly the only word for it. I would not like to be a flag lieutenant serving under him all the time though he is certainly a great man and a fine seaman.”

Jon had never trembled so before another living, breathing man as he had in front of Sir John Jervis when he made his report of what he’d seen of Admiral Cordoba’s squadron aboard _Longclaw_. He had not counted 27 line of sail. He’d only seen 18 but that was just as well in the end. Commodore Nelson had arrived not long afterwards to confirm what Jon had reported. Sir John had given chase at once, determined to prevent the Spanish from meeting with the French fleet and combining their forces. The British fleet of 15 line of battle ships had defeated the Spanish fleet of 27. There were rumors that over a thousand Spaniard had been killed to only 73 reported deaths amongst the British.

“They never thought Jervie would attack, I’d wager,” Sir Jeor said. “That’s one thing for you youngsters to remember about the Spanish. It’s not that they are shy, for they certainly are not, but rather that they are _never, ever_ ready.”

The table exploded in more raucous laughter at that and Jon noticed Ned hanging his head. He understood his father-in-law’s respect for the Spanish and his concerns for Oberyn. Jon shared those feelings to some extent but this was a naval victory that would go down in history almost certainly for the Royal Navy. And, Jon was proud of his ship’s small part in it. He caught Sir Jeor’s eye on Ned and his captain cleared his throat.

“Gentlemen,” he said, raising his glass and bringing instant silence to the table, “The King.”

They replied, “The King,” and completed the loyal toast and Jon was pleased to see a smile return to Ned’s face.

Davos waited for the glasses to be refilled before making his own toast. “Gentlemen…to wives and to sweethearts,” he said solemnly.

“To wives and to sweethearts,” the table responded, raising their glasses.

“May they never meet,” Davos finished and gave Jon a wink as the table erupted in laughter once more.

Jon merely smirked at Davos and returned to composing his next letter to his wife who was his sweetheart in his mind. He was anxious to tell her of the victory but even more anxious to tell her that they were sailing home.

Chapter End Notes

_I hope the time jump of Jon's letter to Sansa which Petyr says to burn is not confusing._
Having them separated gets confusing. I was trying to allow some time to pass for it to arrive at the Eyrie. Some things are happening simultaneously while some are not.

And I let Jon steal a little of Nelson's thunder by having him report the Spanish fleet to Sir John Jervis just ahead of Nelson. Hope the dead won't mind me taking a little license with history there for my fic.
Sansa is fretting over Jon while Mr. Baelish works at manipulation. Robb Stark makes plans to head for the Eyrie with his own news. Sansa and Theon talk. Jon reaches England. And, Mr. Baelish's plans may be overthrown after Sansa and her aunt quarrel.

Chapter Notes

VIOLENCE WARNING-beloved character is imperiled in this chapter.

Sansa had come out in the cold for some fresh air. She’d been quite ill this morning when she rose and the biting, March morning seemed to clear her head and settle her stomach some. She had not slept well…worry was her constant companion of late.

March already...over two months and no word from you, my love. Are you alive? I pray to God that you are. Sansa trampled the doubt in her mind as quickly as it formed. He is alive and he will come for me as soon as he can. He will always come for me. Still, the more time that passed with no word from Jon, the more she fretted. From what he had told her of their plans, it seemed likely that they would’ve left Spain well over a month ago.

She had been ready to return to the house when Mr. Baelish had appeared on the path before her. “Mrs. Snow, would you care to walk with me?” he asked.

“No, sir,” she responded, wishing for a polite way to turn him down and coming up empty. He is pleasant company at least, pleasanter than Aunt Lysa for certain.

“I believe we received a good deal of post this morning. May I ask if you’ve received any word from Mr. Snow, ma’am?”

“No, sir,” she answered as her spirits plunged. You, too? Aunt Lysa is always asking about word from Jon and making me worry.

“Oh, I’m certain he will write to you soon. Young love cannot be truly stopped, can it? The mail may be delayed by war and storms but I’m sure you will hear from him,” he said, offering his arm. She hesitated to take it but she was already shivering with the cold and there were patches of ice on the path. Best not to slip.

“Thank you…Uncle Petyr. I’m sure you’re right.”

“I was wondering…well, I don’t wish to be too forward but with your father and husband out of the country, I was wondering if you needed any assistance…in your personal business perhaps.”

Too forward? I don't imagine you'd ever consider yourself too forward since you think everything
your business. “Oh…well, I…”

“I’m quite clever at numbers and such and know a good many men in business. I’d be happy to offer any assistance with investing your dowry or…drawing your husband’s pay. But perhaps you do not wish to concern yourself with such matters,” he said with a friendly though condescending smile.

“I do though,” she answered. “I have been thinking on those things.” If you think I am some simple girl that takes no interest in such matters, you are mistaken.

“I thought so. I can tell you are a very clever girl.” Sansa felt a flush of pride at his words despite a warning voice in her heart. It was not often men saw beyond her beauty or her courtesies. “I’m sure you could manage without me but I could help you find a place for you and your husband… whenever he comes home to you.”

“Once my father or brother, Robb, returns, I’ll be living at Winterfell for the time being, I believe. Mr. Snow’s uncle has invited me to Snowden Hall as well.”

“Well that is good to hear. But both places are rather far north for a sailor to travel though.”

“Oh…well, I suppose it wouldn’t be convenient for him if he were stationed in Portsmouth,” Sansa said with sudden concern. He’ll need to be closer to Portsmouth or London at least if his duty keeps him in home waters. “I’ve been wanting to go to town to make arrangements for drawing his pay.”

“Well, perhaps you’d permit me to escort you to town sometime soon. But Mrs. Snow…you’re seventeen, I believe your aunt said?”

“Yes.”

“Oh…well, it’s just that…well, you are obviously a very intelligent young lady but with your age I fear you may run into difficulty trying to conduct…”

“Some men will not wish to do business with me. I may even be told that I am not old enough to conduct any business,” she finished for him with annoyance.

“Yes…I’m sorry.”

“I’m used to it.”

“I would be happy to help as your uncle. You could tell me your wishes and I would follow your orders.”

“Yes…that would be…thank you, Uncle Petyr.” Is there any harm in this? He would follow my orders…but would he?

“It’s my pleasure, my dear. We would only need to take your marriage certificate with us. You know how bankers and naval officials are and such.”

“Oh…yes, of course,” Sansa nodded. She did not want to admit that she didn’t know truly.

Sansa looked up as they neared the house and spotted Aunt Lysa watching them from the window. When they entered the house though, Aunt Lysa had disappeared.
“Are you happy, my love?” Robb asked as they rode back towards the house.

“Molto felice,” she answered with a sultry smile.

“Ah… ‘very happy,’ Mrs. Stark? I’m so glad to hear that,” he said, reaching over to squeeze her hand as she sat upon her mare.

“You are learning good…I mean…well, marito.”

“Grazie, moglie.”

They were riding at Winterfell this morning. Robb had married his Italian singer in Scotland two days ago. *Just like Mother and Father.* He had been telling himself this repeatedly after he’d returned to England and made up his mind. He knew he was likely in for a dressing down by his father when he returned regardless for marrying impetuously but at the moment he couldn’t care less. Talisa made him happy, far happier than any high-priced girls at Mother Adley’s or any camp followers ever would and he could not imagine any lord or gentleman’s daughter that would please him more than his beloved. He had brought her to Winterfell hoping to find his sisters and younger brothers there. *I should’ve known they wouldn’t be here yet.*

He had meant to leave for the Eyrie after they’d had a day or two on their own but the house, having sat empty for so long, had some essential issues to be dealt with in order to make it habitable for his family again.

*Three days at most and then I will come and claim you from Aunt Lysa even if the very roof of this house caves in. I am coming for you all and am sorry for the delay. I hope that you will love her as dearly as I do and will forgive me for not coming at once.*

“What about this one? Do you know it?” he asked with a smile as he pecked the tune out on the piano forte.

“No, my lord. And, I do not wish to play,” she said as she continued knitting by the fire.

“Oh, come now, Sansa…I mean, Mrs. Snow. Don’t look all cross now…I remembered. Come and play a duet with me,” Theon said beseechingly.

“I don’t know any duets, my lord,” she said with a sniff.

“Sansa Stark never told lies. I suppose, Mrs. Snow does,” he said, wagging his finger at her with a grin.

“How dare you…” she started, tossing down her knitting now.

“What? I know you know some duets. I watched you and Gabriel playing together sometimes.”

“When did you ever watch us?” she asked, smiling despite her vexation.
“When you were smaller and Robb was being stupid.”

“If anyone was being stupid, I’m sure it was you.”

Theon laughed and said, “I’m sure you’re right.” He continued laughing until she finally had no choice but to speak again.

“What is so funny?”

“That’s the most genuine remark I’ve had from you since I arrived. I missed my fiery Sansa.”

“I’m not your anything, Theon Greyjoy!”

“Ah! You just called me Theon!” he said, his eyes wide and dancing with laughter now.

“Only because you’re being an insufferable ass,” she said with a laugh.

“Sansa Stark! I mean, Mrs. Snow. Did you just call me an ass?”

Sansa blushed and laughed louder. “I did and you are!”

They laughed together for a moment before Theon continued in a somber voice, “I can’t believe you married Mr. Snow. He seemed so…”

“Honorable, kind, handsome, brave, witty…”

“Boring,” he said rolling his eyes.

“Not remotely,” she said with a private smile.

“God! I know that look. No girls ever look at me like that…but I still know that look.”

“Theon…why are you here truly?”

“Mr. Baelish said…he said you were coming to stay.” Theon looked down at the floor and scratched the back of his neck with his hand. “He knew that I…that I fancied you and said he’d arrange for a visit.”

Sansa stood to walk over to him at the instrument. She smiled to herself. He had been visibly upset when he had learned of her marriage though he had spoken no unkind words like Aunt Lysa had. Now, I know why. He was a bit of a rake but not so very bad. Robb would not have remained close to you all these years if you were all bad.

“Well, he did not know I had married until I arrived but it was wrong of him to incite your hopes,” she said gently.

“It’s alright, ma’am. I knew you might not be interested…even before I learned you had married. He’s a clever business man but I suppose he’s not much of a matchmaker. He’s helping me with my finances. I never expected to inherit and now I don’t know the first thing about money and I have more of it than I know what to do with,” he said.

“Theon, I wouldn’t…I’m not sure it’s wise to trust him too much,” she said quietly.

“But you said that…”

“Well, I’ve reconsidered. His offer to help seems sincere but I know so very little of him in truth. If I
need a man with me to conduct business, I can wait for Robb or Papa or perhaps Jon will return soon. I could even call on a certain earl I know if I was forced to.”

He smiled and said, “It would be my honor to help you in any way I can, Mrs. Snow.”

“Sansa…you may call me Sansa, Theon.”

“Thank you, Sansa. I will take that since I will never get to call you wife or Lady Pyke,” he said with a grin as he began to play another tune on the piano forte. He looked back up and asked, “Say, do you think Arya likes me?”

“Theon!”

“I’m joking! I know she loathes me.”

“If you’ll shut up, I’ll play a duet with you.”

He smiled widely then and moved over on the bench to make room. “Ladies choice.”

Portsmouth was alive with bonfires and revelers after the Queenscrown and two other ships arrived with the news simultaneously. Jon had come ashore with Davos, Sir Eddard and Gabriel. The doctor had found a small private hospital to take Gabriel and Sir Eddard in while he arranged for them to go to Bath. Gabriel was improving but still quite weak and Sir Eddard’s ague that had brought him low last fall had returned. Jon was hoping to catch a coach to the Eyrie and surprise Sansa but his captain had ordered him to go with him to London the next day.

“Soon, Mr. Snow,” Ser Jorah said in the cabin of Queenscrown when Jon protested. “I will give you leave and you may go to your wife for a time.”

“Please, sir…Andover is only about 50 miles from here. I could take the mail coach there and then cross from there to London, sir. I could go there just briefly…”

“And what? Swoop in and kiss your wife only to run off to London within a few hours? Jon… there’s talk of promotion for you. You escaped and rescued a British soldier from Spain while you were a prisoner yourself. You spotted the squadron and found us and made your report to Jervis.”

“Martell and his men rescued Gabriel. Your son found you and the blockading squadron.”

“Your humility does you credit in some circles but it may do you a disservice in your career. Your name is on the lips of some very important men in the service. You need to be seen in Whitehall. Advancement can be a tricky business and you must always strike while the iron is hot. Come with me to London. After we return to Portsmouth and check on your father and brother-in-law, I will give you leave to go to your wife.”

“Yes, sir,” Jon answered unhappily.

This was the service and it was the only answer he could give but he did not have to be glad of it. Jon sent a letter to Sansa from Portsmouth that night and rode with his captain to London the next day.
Sansa looked out the window to the snow-covered lawn where Rickon and Bran were running about and having a snowball fight. *Snow in early March with buds already promising Spring*. The surprise snowfall last night had delighted the boys. She had excused them from lessons early and told them to go outside for a little while. They were tired of constantly having to keep quiet in the house. *They need to run and shout and play like other children.* Even from the second floor, she could see their pink cheeks and noses and hear their laughter. *I should probably call them in soon. It is terribly cold.* Before she turned away from the window, she saw their cousin, Robin, coming out to join them. She watched anxiously for several minutes but the three boys seemed to be getting along well so she moved away from the window.

She felt a slight queasiness but nothing worth running to the chamber pot for thus far. It has been four days since she had been ill. *Long may it last.* She pressed her hands over her still flat stomach and smiled to herself. She was to take the carriage with Mr. Baelish and Theon to London tomorrow to see about their finances. She had not been able to exclude her ‘uncle’ from helping completely but she’d made Theon promise to come with them. Aunt Lysa had been displeased when Mr. Baelish had told her their travel plans at dinner the night before. She had asked to call on Jon’s uncle as well while they were in town. She did not relish leaving Arya and the boys with Aunt Lysa though, even if it were only a few days that they’d be gone.

There had been rumors of a great naval victory in mid-February off the coast of Portugal. Cape St. Vincent…Sansa had had the boys find it on the atlas for her during lessons this morning. Word of a battle but still nothing from Jon. She frowned and crossed to her writing desk and pulled out pen and ink.

*My Dearest Jon,*

*Ten weeks have passed and no word from you or Papa. I am so worried for you, my love...my very soul. Just the merest note written in your hand would set my heart at ease. Is there any point in writing another letter when I have no idea where you are? Not one word have I had in all this time but I do not blame you for that. I know that there are many scenarios that might prevent your letters from reaching me. And I will write and continue to write until you are by my side once more.*

*Every day, Aunt Lysa preys upon my fear regarding the dangers of your profession. I worry so much for you and, though I say my prayers each night to restore my faith, she is there each morning to bring fear and doubt back into my heart. I am not happy here. My aunt has not been so unpleasant as before but I am afraid for us. I do not care for her husband either. At first, I was inclined to accept his offer to help me with our financial business but since then I am not comfortable with involving him in our concerns. He is impertinent at times and he seems too forward at others when my aunt is not around. He has not injured me in any way but I still wish to be away from him and her both.*

*Jon, I didn’t tell you my worries before as I should have because I feared you would think me silly. It was foolish of me to think so since you have always treated me with the utmost respect and have never made me feel stupid about anything. I will share the past with you another time though and say that what she did when we were children doesn’t matter so much as what I fear she may do.*
My aunt and her husband invited Robb’s old friend, Theon Greyjoy, here on the pretense of a visit but I have learned it was more than that. Mr. Baelish told Lord Pyke that he would help arrange a match between us when he had no right to make any such promises or take any such liberties with what is certainly Papa’s concern and mine and not theirs. Lord Pyke has not done anything untoward though so I do not want you to think that I am being imposed upon by him. But my aunt is constantly pointing out what a fine husband he would’ve made. At first, I thought she was making these remarks for Arya’s benefit, though he would be a terrible choice of husband for her being eight years her senior, a bit of a scoundrel and the completely wrong temperament for her. But it appears these remarks are made for my benefit as though I am not already wed. She is quite strange at times.

These complaints though are not all I wished to convey today. It is with great joy that I write to tell you that I have good reason to believe that our love will bear fruit by the fall. Nothing could make me happier and I hope this will please you as much as it does me. Do not worry over me for I am quite well, some nausea and fatigue being expected according to Nan. I have only shared my news with Arya and her as my aunt was so unpleasant about our marriage that I did not wish to share my happiness with her for fear of provoking more of her bitter words.

I have no idea where to send this letter with any hope of it reaching you. I write it mostly for myself and hope that soon I may place it in your hands and read it over your shoulder. But I will mail a copy to Portsmouth all the same with the hope that it may find you there. I love you and may God bless you.

Your Devoted Wife,

Sansa

Sansa had finished her copy and sealed it to be posted when Arya came seeking her. Her hair was wild and her eyes were fearful.

“What is it?”

“Aunt Lysa is saying that Bran and Rickon quarreled with Robin outside not a half hour ago,” her sister told her.

“Oh, no…”

“She told the stable man to whip them.”

“What?!” Sansa said as she rose from the desk.

“When they heard…Sansa, they ran away.”

“Dear God…Arya, it’s freezing outside.”

“Theon and Mr. Baelish are out searching for them with the other men.”

“Where is our aunt?” Sansa said with sudden anger.

“I’m not sure.”

Sansa ran from her room in a passion to confront her aunt. She met her on the stair with Arya on her heels. “Why would you do that?!” she shouted at her aunt as she reached the head of the stair.
“Those heathen brothers of yours pushed my Robin down and threw snow balls at him,” Aunt Lysa screamed at her. “They deserve to be whipped. You are no mother to them and they’ve been indulged far too much!”

Sansa felt like laughing in her face at her ridiculous assertion considering how spoiled Robin was. But her brothers were out in the cold and afraid at the moment. “Aunt Lysa! He is fourteen years old,” she said. “Bran and Rickon are younger than him and neither of them is the least bit mean-spirited. It sounds like no more than play. And yet you are always willing to believe the worst of my brothers!”

Aunt Lysa’s eyes narrowed and her face began to redden. “How dare you raise your voice to me, you little hussy! I have taken you and those little beasts in when I shouldn’t even lift a finger for you after the shame your slut of a mother brought our family when she ran away with your father. You’re just like her, aren’t you? Married in Spain? He got you with child and has run off as sailors will do and now you’re to bear his bastard, aren’t you? Don’t deny it, tramp!” she shouted with clenched fists.

“Aunt Lysa! We are married!” Sansa responded as Arya and now Parker stood by wide-eyed and watching them argue like a couple of ill-tempered fish-wives.

“By some papist priest in Spain! And don’t call me aunt…I’ve seen how you are now. You bat your eyes at Lord Pyke when you have no intention of returning his honest affections.”

“I do no such…”

“Even my own husband takes your part…escorting you to London? Telling me he doesn’t wish to trouble me with the journey? No doubt you’d be happy to warm his bed once you grow bored of waiting for your bastard husband to return.”

“You’re deranged!”

“Deranged, am I? I see perfectly clear, I believe. If you and those brats don’t want to be here, you can leave!” she finished as she shoved Sansa squarely in the chest.

Sansa felt herself lose her footing and grasped for her aunt’s arm as she started to fall but Aunt Lysa recoiled from her. Arya screamed and raced to grab her but Sansa was already falling. She was unconscious before she reached the bottom of the staircase.

Chapter End Notes

Note to self...don't quarrel with a crazy person near a staircase.

And SPOILER-Jon and Sansa will be reunited next chapter.
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Jon receives word of his wife’s injury.

The coach thundered up the road towards Andover which was still hours away. Jon clutched the letters he had received two hours earlier. He sat uneasily. In truth, he was more like a caged beast at present, hating every minute of being unable to do anything but sit and wait. He hated the coachman, the other passengers, the horses and this cursed contraption that he was stuck in. When a horse threw a shoe and the coachman had to stop, he nearly tore his hair out in frustration.

His only means of passing the time was either to keep torturing himself by rereading the letters or to rail against God or Fate or the Service for keeping him from her side. Her letter broke his heart. For her to not have received any of his letters and to be worrying over him all this time, it was excruciatingly painful. His letter had instilled a fury in Jon unlike any he had ever known.

Sir,

I am extremely sorry to renew our acquaintance by writing to you in this way with distressing news. Your wife has been injured in a fall at her aunt’s home in Andover and I am sending this letter via the express with the hopes that you may receive it and come to her instantly at her aunt’s estate. Miss Arya is by her side constantly and begged me to write in her stead.

The doctor here feels confident that Mrs. Snow will recover but there is another concern. Please forgive me for having to write you of this when I am not even certain that you are aware that your wife is with child. She is though and there is some concern of her losing the child. I have not the words to adequately express my sympathies and regrets for you and for her if that is the case.

The other part of the tale that makes it difficult for me to write this letter is that I must tell you that your wife’s fall was no accident. Sansa was quarreling with her aunt over your young brothers-in-law. The boys had been threatened with mistreatment by their aunt and ran away. I managed to find them but, when I returned, I found your wife had been injured. According to your sister-in-law, Sansa was pushed down the staircase by her aunt during their quarrel. In the flurry of activity and concern over your wife’s injuries though, Lady Arryn and her husband, Mr. Baelish, managed to leave before I could send for the proper authorities to come.

Sansa had a letter addressed to you in Portsmouth lying on her desk so I have enclosed it with this and am sending it there in the hopes that both letters may find you there.

Your Servant,

Theon Greyjoy, Earl of Pyke

Jon looked back out the window trying to stem the tears that would be gathering in his eyes when he pictured her broken and lying in a heap at the bottom of a flight of stairs and every time he imagined
her losing their child. He was ashamed to admit that he had not seriously considered the likelihood of her being with child. Despite the many times they had made love over the course of their days in Spain together, it had not entered his mind as a real possibility. Once he had married her and knew he would not be fathering any bastards, he had ceased to worry over the outcome of their lovemaking, imagining that they would have children in time but not fully accepting that every time he spent inside her there was that chance. She had not been bleeding at any time over the course of those two weeks. He should’ve known. And somehow that tripled the guilt he was already feeling so keenly.

Jon reflected angrily then on the time wasted in London and at Whitehall. He had not been needed. He was merely someone to go along as an attendant to Mormont and listen to the old men there clutch over the victory as though they had fought it. He had only stood about while his superiors talked and talked and he had longed to be with his wife. *I would’ve been with her days ago before this could happen.*

An hour from the Eyrie, the coach broke an axel. The ground was still covered in snow but the roads had turned muddy again. Jon tried to help but managed to only be in the way and the coachman had strongly suggested that the gentleman might wish to wait at the nearby inn while they got things to rights.

Jon headed to the inn…but not to sit and wait. He flung open the door and called for a horse at once. The barman called the owner who quickly agreed to lending a horse to one of His Majesty’s officers for a small fee. Jon had never been more grateful to his Uncle Brandon for all those riding lessons as a boy as when he climbed on the back of the spirited roan stallion and headed off into the evening dusk, leaving the inn and the coach far behind.

“Sansa, have some broth,” Arya pleaded. Sansa turned away from Arya and her pleading. “The doctor said you’ve not bled and there’s been no pains to suggest…” Arya bit her lip, afraid to say more. Then, she threw up her hands in frustration and Sansa pitied her. She knew that playing nursemaid was not easy for her and Sansa was not being a cooperative patient at present. But Arya was persistent. “Surely that’s a good sign. Please, sister, don’t give up hope.”

“I’m sorry, Arya. I just want to be alone for a little while.”

She heard her sister’s exasperated sigh and felt her hand on her brow. Sansa kept her eyes closed until Arya rose from the bed and left the room. She let the tears slide down her face. *Come back to me…I need you.* She kept remembering the sensation of falling over and over and the cold look in Aunt Lysa’s eye. She reached over to the empty place beside her in the bed. *If only I could see you, hear from you…something, some word from you, my love.* Sleep finally took her off once more and she dreamed of him. She heard his voice in her ear and felt his warm hands on hers. *But this is only a dream.*

She woke to the sound of needles clicking together…*Nan.* She glanced over at the old woman sitting in the chair that Arya had slept in for the past three nights.

“Are you stirring now, my angel?” Sansa didn’t answer but simply watched Nan knit. “Wives cannot lay abed all the time. Are you sure you won’t rise? You could wash and eat a bite. You can always
lay back down after that if you’re tired.”

“I…I’m not sure I should.”

“You could try,” the old woman said with a knowing look. “The doctor said you’re going to be alright.”

“But the baby…” she said as her throat started to tighten up.

“May be just fine…or may not be. You fell down a flight of stairs but you’ve not bled and you’ve had no cramping pains. And if the babe is not meant to be, rising to wash will likely not make a difference now. These things are not in your hands…not entirely. But if the little one inside is well, then eating would be a good thing, I imagine.”

Sansa watched her old nurse rise and walk to the bed. At Nan’s gesture, she sat up and Nan fluffed up the pillows so that she could be propped up more at least. Sansa eased back down and watched Nan resume her knitting. *Click, click, click,* they went. Curiosity began to grow in Sansa the longer she watched Nan knit. *Lying here fretting and feeling sorry for myself does no good.*

“Nan, where are Arya and the boys?”

“My wild girl was sleeping earlier. Perhaps she still is. She has been by your side day and night and so worried. My little men are worried as well but I have seen them to bed for tonight.” Sansa closed her eyes and was glad they were well at least. Then, she asked about her aunt. “Your aunt and her husband have fled.”

“Fled,” she repeated, feeling strangely unconcerned. “But where is Robin?”

“Here.”

“Aunt Lysa left him?”

“So it would seem.”

“And Theon?”

“Lord Pyke is here, pacing the study with worry for you. He posted an express to your husband in Portsmouth.”

“Jon? Nan, has there been news? Is he in Portsmouth?”

“I don’t know but that was where the young lord sent his letter.”

Sansa tried to not let the disappointment hit to keenly but in the next instant the door burst open and it was Arya.

“Sansa! Theon asked me to go through Aunt Lysa’s room and I found this. It’s a letter addressed to you. It looks like Jon’s hand!”

“Help me up,” Sansa said at once.
Theon paced the study, feeling angry and useless. He had written to Mr. Snow. He had written to Robb. He was not permitted in her bedroom of course and he felt so bloody useless. The boys fretted over their sister but Theon had little experience in trying to entertain children. Bran and Rickon had been very small when he and Robb had stopped playing together. He tried but he could tell his platitudes were doing little to ease their doubts and worries. *At least I managed to find them and bring them back to the house that day. You did something right, Theon.*

He had sent men in search of Mr. and Mrs. Baelish but thus far they had not turned up. He had learned today that he had been swindled out of thousands of pounds by Mr. Baelish. All of his financial assistance had amounted to no more than a scheme to gain his gold. *At least not all my fortune was in Britain,* he reflected. *Father’s money in Ireland is still there at least.* Still, he was considerably poorer than he had been previously. *An heiress is in order I suppose,* he thought with just a hint of a smile coming to him.

The dogs were making a racket outside and it sounded as though someone was arriving…in haste. There was a pounding on the door and Theon moved into the hall. Mullins, the butler, looked extremely concerned that someone would be calling this late. Before the butler could ask the newcomer his business, Theon recognized the young man standing there. He was filthy from hard riding, clearly in a passion and ready to shove Mullins to the ground if he tried to bar his entrance.

“Let him in, Mullins!” Theon shouted. “Mr. Snow, I am very glad you are here. I hope you received my letter.”

“Where is my wife?” he said hoarsely, flinging his cloak to the butler and pushing his unbound hair back out of his face.

“This way.” He led Mr. Snow up the stair and indicated her door before Theon went far. “Thank you. Thank you for sending the letters and being here for my wife.”

Theon bowed his head and said, “You are very welcome, Mr. Snow.”

Arya was upon him before he was even fully in the door. He gave her a cursory embrace but he had eyes only for his wife. She was sitting up in bed and the smile that came to her face when she saw him went some way to easing the agony that had filled his heart for the past several hours. He rushed to her side as Arya and Nan quietly left them and sat gingerly down on the bed next to her.

“Jon,” she said softly, touching his face.

He kissed her palm and then grasped it in his hands. “I’m here, my love.”

“Arya found this letter from you not an hour ago and here you are.”

He gave the letter a quick glance. It was the one he has sent from Portsmouth several days ago when they had arrived in England and before he had went to London. Then, his eyes returned to her. She
was paler than she should be and he could see the tired and worried look in her eyes but they were shining with happy tears at present. Her glorious red hair was spread all around her on her pillow. She was wearing a long-sleeved night rail that was buttoned up to her neck and yet he believed her to be more beautiful than anything else in this world he could name.

“How are you? How are your injuries?” he asked tenderly.

“I am still a bit bruised but I am healing well the doctor says.”

“And your head?” he asked, lifting his hand up to the bruise at her temple.

“ Took a hard knock but I am quite coherent,” she said with a small laugh next. She sobered at his next question though.

“And…the child…” he began, fearing to hear the answer.

“I’ve not miscarried but…it’s too soon to be sure…” His eyes were already filling with tears before she continued, “Jon, the doctor is quite optimistic. Let us pray that he is right. You are alive and here by my side once more. That is enough for me tonight.” He let out a shuddering sob before burying his face in her neck and holding her close to him. His tears did not last for long though. He was too eager for news of her, just as she was eager for news of him and her father and brother. “Come and get in bed with me and let us talk,” she begged, tugging at his hand.

He pulled off his boots and took off his uniform coat. When he was down to his breeches and shirt alone, he climbed in next to her and pulled her to him once more. They spent the next few hours talking about all that had happened and all they had seen while apart.

“So, you were there at Cape St. Vincent?” she asked, trying to disguise her yawn.

“I was, though Queenscrown was only there to support the ships of the line, relaying orders and standing by to render aid if needed. We did very little but we saw much of the battle,” he said as he kissed her forehead. “You are tired.”

“I’m not,” she protested.

He gave her a doubtful look and she knew he would brook no argument. She nestled up against his chest, feeling his arms wrapped around her. She had not known such peace in many nights now. Since I last left his arms. He had been granted leave and said he would take her and the children to Winterfell now or to London if she preferred once she felt up to travel. Her eyes fluttered closed while he was whispering sweet words in her ear.

When she woke the next morning, he was not there and for one terrifying moment she thought she had only dreamed his presence last night until she spotted his uniform coat hanging on the back of the chair of her desk. She sat up and swung her legs over the side of the bed. She had risen to her feet but felt weak after four days abed. She was startled by his shout.
“Sansa! What in Heaven’s name are you about?”

“I was going to look for you,” she answered as he walked back in from her changing room in only his breeches.

“Lie back down at once!” he barked. He had clearly been washing and, as he paced over towards her, she wondered if she was receiving the same dark look an errant midshipman or seaman might. She sat back down on the side of the bed. His angry look softened though as she looked up at him. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have shouted at you. I just…”

“You were worried. I understand but I am not made of glass. I feel better this morning. Will you help me up? I should like to sit in something other than the bed for a bit.”

He reached down and pulled her up to him. She placed her hands on his bare chest and looked up into his eyes. His dark eyes were full of passion now as she leaned forward and kissed him. She swayed a bit where she stood and she knew it was not from her physical injuries but a dizziness caused by his presence.

“Steady now. You’d better hold fast,” he said amusedly as he broke the kiss and wrapped an arm around about her waist to escort her to the comfortable armchair nearest the bed. “Are you hungry?”

“Yes,” she answered finding that she was in fact quite famished. “Pull the cord by the bed there,” she said pointing it out.

“Aboard we just hail the steward with a shout, you know,” he chuckled as he crossed to ring for her maid.

“You are not aboard, Mr. Snow.”

As soon as she said it, her mind flew into a panic. How soon before he leaves again? He was watching her and knew what her troubled expression meant.

“I told you I was granted leave. Queenscrown may be in home waters for a bit according to Mormont. Your godfather was terribly upset to hear of your injury. He was with me you see when I received Greyjoy’s letter. He said they could manage without me for a bit and that I should check back in by month’s end.”

“That long?”

“Oh, yes. Plenty of time for you to get sick of me.”

She smothered her laugh at his joke and said, “I would never get sick of you.”

Jon had dressed by the time a knock at the door brought Arya and Parker with a tray. Jon embraced her and then she came to Sansa with a more joyful smile now.

“Sansa, I’m so glad to see you out of bed. I knew his letter would help but for him to be here...That reminds me. I told you I found the letter in Aunt Lysa’s room,” she said. “Theon suggested I look through her things for any indication of where they might have gone. Betsy has admitted that Aunt Lysa had ordered her to give her any post you received and the letters that you wrote were given to Aunt Lysa as well.”

“Why would Aunt Lysa have my letters?”

“I think she was withholding his and not allowing yours to be posted. I think she purposely meant to
keep you in doubt about Jon. And perhaps they hoped you’d feel isolated and desperate enough to trust Mr. Baelish more. They stole from Theon, Sansa, quite a bit of money. I think they meant to steal from you as well.”

“I never got to go and draw Jon’s pay though.”

“It’s not as though it’s a fortune anyway,” Jon said ruefully.

“Yes, but your dowry is,” Arya said glancing uneasily at Sansa.

“My dowry?”

“You said Mr. Baelish offered to help you invest it.”

“But I couldn’t get that without Papa here…not without a letter from Papa to his bankers at least.”

“Mr. Baelish was taking you to London before Aunt Lysa pushed you down the stair though. What if he had a plan to try and get the money, claiming you were there and…”

“Jon!” Sansa said in sudden panic. “That trunk there, under the desk…open it!”

He crossed the room and opened the small trunk. It only took a few moments for him to rifle through the contents. “There’s only a few pieces of clothing in it.”

“Oh, dear God…they’ve taken our marriage certificate. He’s going to try and steal the money!”

The carriage was slowing and Robb looked out the window knowing they were almost there. The last place I ever wished to visit again. Hopefully, we won’t have to stay more than a day or two before I can take them back to Winterfell.

“Talisa,” he said softly as he leaned into her ear. “It’s time to wake, mi cara.”

She stretched languidly beside him and her dark eyes fluttered open. “You interrupted,” she said with a teasing smile forming on her lips.

“What did I interrupt?” he asked with an answering grin.

“Un dolce sogno,” she replied.

“A…what?”

“A sweet dream…a very sweet dream,” she said seductively.

“Oh? Do you want to share?” he asked huskily, pulling her up more firmly against him before he dipped down to kiss her lips. The blood was thrumming through his veins and he was getting short of breath from the passionate intensity of their kisses and caressed when the carriage came to a sudden halt.

“We’re here, sir!” the coachman called.
“Dammit,” Robb mumbled as Talisa sat up and began straightening her clothes and patting at her hair.

“Come, mio amore,” she said merrily. “I’m anxious to meet your brothers and sisters.”

An hour later Robb’s head was a swim with all he had been told. Theon had been delighted by his impetuous decision to marry his Italian singer.

“I’m flattered to think I’ve rubbed off on you. It’s exactly like something I would do!” he’d exclaimed when Robb introduced Talisa as his wife. “Oh, I wish I could see Sir Eddard’s face when you tell him!”

Then, he had learned of the boys’ running off and Sansa’s injury and the money schemes of Mr. Baelish and his blood ran cold. Sansa had reassured him repeatedly that she was alright. She said the doctor told her all seemed to be well with her pregnancy as well that morning. Jon, however, had looked at him quite coldly when he confessed that he had been back in England several days and not come to the Eyrie as soon as he arrived because he’d decided to marry first.

“Believe me, Jon, when I say that I feel perfectly wretched to think of what might have been avoided…that Sansa would never have been injured if I’d put my responsibilities to my family ahead of my own desires.” Jon had softened slightly at that and said he would certainly forgive him and admitted that he was struggling to forgive himself for not being there sooner. “But you were duty bound to go with your captain. You were under orders. I have no such excuse.”

His guilty conscience aside, there were decisions to be made now. It was agreed between them that Robb and Talisa would take Arya, Bran and Rickon to Winterfell and write to their father regarding Aunt Lysa and Mr. Baelish…and other things. And, he would write to his father’s bankers to hopefully thwart any schemes of Mr. Baelish’s from succeeding although without Sansa or a letter from Sir Eddard with him, it seemed unlikely his plans would work.

Jon, Sansa and Theon would travel to London. Theon would go to his house there and start making inquiries into the whereabouts of the Baelish’s while Jon and Sansa would stay with his uncle. They would go to her father’s banking house and see how things stood there and await word from Theon before they made their next move.

“I will write to Papa as well,” Sansa said. “He will need to know where to reach Jon and I in London.”

“They should’ve arrived in Bath by now,” Jon added.


“Nan will come home with us,” Robb said at once. “As for Robin…he may come with us as well. I will write to our Uncle Edmure. I know Aunt Lysa and he did not speak often and he has never been desirous of knowing us but perhaps he will be willing to take his nephew in.” Sansa came over to embrace him and Robb felt his guilt smote him once more. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here for you sooner, dearest.”

“Stop that,” she said. “You are here now. Who could’ve guessed she would push me down a flight of stairs during an argument? And, I am happy for you. I’m glad to have another sister,” she said smiling at Talisa. “When my husband returns to his duty, I shall look forward to getting to know you better at Winterfell, Mrs. Stark.”
“And I, you, Mrs. Snow,” his wife replied warmly.

Two days later, the very full carriage rumbled off down the drive as Sansa stood waving to her family. Jon stood by her side and gave a final wave before he turned to her. They were to leave in an hour or so and Greyjoy was busy seeing that all was ready for their journey to London. Sansa turned to him in her dark green traveling dress and moved into his arms. Jon felt the familiar ache building again just as it had tormented him since he had returned to her. He wanted her. He wanted her very much but he was certain that it would not be permissible given her state.

The day was fine and Sansa suggested a walk since they would spend several hours in a coach this day. Several hours in a coach with you…and Theon Greyjoy, he thought with a touch of annoyance. He was grateful to Lord Pyke for all he had done for Sansa but it was hard to ignore the fact that the man had come here with the intention of courting his wife. Obviously, he did not know Sansa to be a married woman when he came, but Jon could not help feel a small and ignoble lingering resentment all the same. He then reflected though that with Theon in the coach, he would not be tempted into other acts on the road to London, acts that were forbidden to him at present.

Or so he thought…for at a turning in the garden path, Sansa led him by the hand to a back entrance to the stables. She smiled over her shoulder and pushed the door open. It was warm and dry in the stables and smelled of horses and hay.

“What are we doing here, Sansa?” he asked. She did not answer but turned to embrace him. She gave him a wicked little smile as her hands slid down to grasp his ass. “Sansa,” he gasped, “we mustn’t.”

“Oh, I think we must,” she said. “Would you refuse your wanton wife?” she asked with a little pout.

“But the…”

“The doctor said I was fine and he believes the babe is as well. He said we could safely resume our marital relations.”

“You asked him that?!” he nearly yelped with surprise and found that he was growing harder by the second now.

“I did. I have been without you for so long and I have pined for you, my husband.”

“My darling girl…I have missed you so much, Sansa. I have been longing for you since we parted in Spain.” He felt a grin spreading across his face though he was still hesitant. “But here? In the stables?”

“Haven’t you ever wanted to bed a girl in the hay, Mr. Snow?”

“I…Christ, you little minx…you’ll be the very death of me,” he responded as he gripped her hips and pulled her to him, pressing his erection against her and satisfied by the moan of need that came from her throat then. Sansa had obviously thought this out a bit. She led him to a half door where they only had to climb four steps up into a small loft filled with hay. There was a blanket lying there, waiting for them. “Did you…”
She flashed him a mischievous smile. “I did.”

He kissed her soundly then and pulled her close. The space was not so large and the ceiling was low but he was used to tight quarters aboard and this was all the room in the world at present. Sansa laid back on the blanket and began slowly lifting her skirts, watching him watch her. She gave sweet and longing sigh before beckoning him to her. He shrugged off his coat quickly before he knelt before her. He ran his hands along her creamy, long legs that he could see beneath her stockings, stopping in surprise once they reached further up her thighs that were bare.

“Where are…where are your underthings, Sansa?” he said breathlessly.

“Oh, dear…I don’t know. I must have left them off this morning. How silly of me,” she said coyly.

Oh, God… “I…I can’t…can’t wait,” he panted then as he roughly tugged at his breeches, shoving them down to his knees and sinking down on top of her. He felt her hand grasp his length, guiding him to her entrance. “I still remember where it goes,” he rumbled in her ear.

“I do not doubt that but I need you. I need you inside of me…now.”

As he entered her and felt the warmth envelope him, he cried out. “Oh, fucking hell…you feel so...I’m sorry!” he quickly said sheepishly then.

“Don’t be,” she laughed. “I find I’m getting used to sailors and their swearing.”

“You’re so wet…oh, Christ…tell me that you needed me as much as I need you.”

“I’ve needed you,” she answered while nibbling his ear.

“Sansa, you are so tight and so…wet and warm. I just know this will be over…far too quickly.”

“Concentrate, Mr. Snow. I can’t have you leaving me wanting all the way to London,” she giggled.

He began moving within her slowly and carefully, still worrying a bit over her condition. She felt so good. He had missed her and missed this as well. He worked to unbutton her traveling dress enough to expose her throat and some of her chest to him, kissing and biting at her neck, as he continued his shallow thrusting.

“Please…a bit faster, a bit harder,” she panted.

“Oh no, wife…I need to enjoy this as long as I can,” he said. I’ll spill at once if I go much harder or faster. Her hand came down with a stinging slap on his ass and he laughed to see the fiery look in her eye.

“Faster and harder, I said.”

“Aye-aye, ma’am,” he responded saucily, picking up his pace. “Please forgive my…ahhh…insolence…my dear.”

She started writhing beneath him and chanting his name. He was grunting now feeling his peak building and fearing he would reach his before hers came. He slid his hand down between them and started circling her pearl. He was instantly rewarded with a hitch in her breath followed by an erotic moan.

“Ohhh…Jon. Don’t stop…doing that.”

“Perhaps I could let you take over,” he teased as he stopped touching her there for a moment.
Another slap on his ass had him biting his lip and groaning with longing. “Or perhaps I could continue,” he chuckled as his fingers went back to work.

“Yes…husband…oh God!” she cried looking at him intently. She was so close and he wanted to watch her come apart beneath him. He pumped harder into her and kept his fingers busy at her nub. “Yes…oh, yes….mmmm…ahhhhh…YES! YES! YES! JON!!!”

“Ohhh…Sansa…FUUUUCCKKK!” he shouted as he peaked.

He was panting when he collapsed heavily on top of her. She giggled just as he remembered himself and bolted up off of her.

“Oh, God…I’m sorry! Are you alright?”

“Jon…I won’t break,” she said softly and kissed him once more. “I love you.”

“I love you, sweetheart. I’m so happy to be with you,” he responded relaxing to lay beside her now.

They helped one another right their clothes, picking bits of hay from Sansa’s hair and their clothes. They were laughing together at their messy hair and bedraggled appearance as they exited the loft.

Sansa started sneezing and Jon was searching for a handkerchief for her when he heard a low voice saying ‘Bloody hell’ and then chuckling. He looked up to see Theon Greyjoy standing in the stables right in front of them with his arms folded across his chest.

“The coach is ready, ma’am, if you are ready to depart. If you need a moment or two to freshen up inside though…” he said with a smirk.

“Thank you, Theon,” his wife responded with a perfectly lady-like nod. “I need just a few minutes to freshen up.”

Jon felt his jaw clench in irritation at being caught though part of him could not help the smug smile that formed as he put his arm around Sansa’s waist and escorted her past the amused earl.

Just as they passed him, he heard Greyjoy say to Sansa, “I suppose he’s not boring then.”

“No…not boring at all,” she responded with a merry laugh.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Jon and Sansa spend time in London with his uncle and his wife. They meet with Theon while Mr. Baelish and Aunt Lysa are being sought.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

London, England

Lord Snow’s town home in Shepherd Market had been a bachelor’s residence until quite recently and was finely appointed in dark, mahogany furniture. It had a decidedly masculine feel to it. Jon had told Sansa that he had spent little time there as a boy as his uncle preferred to leave his nephew at Snowden Hall in Northampton when he came to town. And of course, Jon had been sent away to school by the age of eight regardless and spent much of the year there until he’d joined the service at 15.

Jon’s uncle had sent her a very cordial letter in response to hers when she had been at the Eyrie but, as the carriage came to stop in front of the house, she felt nervous. Jon had spoken of his Uncle Brandon as someone he had been rebuffed or critiqued by for much of his boyhood. He also mentioned that his uncle had married his old steward’s daughter a few months ago. His first wife did not care for Jon. What if his second wife is the same?

Sansa was mistaken in worrying over that though for as soon as the housekeeper showed them into the drawing room a young woman close to Jon and Sansa in age rushed into his husband’s arms. She squealed in delight to see him before she ordered him to give his auntie a kiss on the cheek. Jon was flushed a vivid red as he made the introductions and Sansa was piqued to hear the baroness calling him by his Christian name already. She was soon informed though that Lady Snow had known Jon all his life and had been raised on the estate.

“Jon and I played together as children,” Lady Snow, formerly Miss Poole, gushed as she squeezed Jon’s hand. “Goodness! You’re quite handsome in that coat, Lieutenant Snow. How the girls at Snowden would simper over you now! He was a handsome lad but so bashful as a boy. You never would believe it. You’re so lucky, Mrs. Snow.”

“Yes…I am quite fortunate,” Sansa said a bit coolly.

She had to bite her lip to hide her smile though when she saw the horrified expression on Jon’s face as Lady Snow insisted again that he give her a kiss. Lord Snow soon entered the room though and Lady Snow had a sudden change of personality. She was all demure and quiet courtesy towards her guests. Lord Snow was tall with dark hair much like Jon’s and he had grey eyes. He had a stern face but he was smiling at present.

“Mrs. Snow,” he said as he bowed to her. “I am very pleased to meet you at last. You did well, nephew. She is certainly a beauty,” he finished, looking to Jon.

Sansa curtsied and murmured her reply as Jon greeted his uncle. “Thank you, uncle. My wife is tired
from our journey. I was wondering if we might retire for a bit.”

“Of course…of course. I made us reservations at the club for tonight at 8.”

“But, my lord…my wife is new to town. And, I would rather not leave her…”

“Oh, you’ll manage alright here with Jeyne, won’t you, Mrs. Snow? Give you ladies a chance to get to know each other and give me and my nephew a chance to catch up.”

It did not suit Sansa truly but she didn’t want Jon making a scene as they had just arrived. “Of course not, my lord. I’ll be glad to become better acquainted with Lady Snow.”

As they sat in the drawing room after dinner, Sansa found that Lady Snow was an agreeable enough companion if a little silly at times. Are all girls like this, I wonder? I’ve known so few close to my own age and most of them treated me rather abominably. But Lady Snow certainly had her attention when she mentioned what Jon had been like as a boy.

“He was so awkward and shy though sweet of course,” she said. “He was very smart with his books. He always had his nose stuck in one. Us girls on the estate despaired of ever getting his attention. I was shocked when he finally got up the nerve to kiss me as a lad.”

Sansa choked on her tea for a moment before saying, “I beg your pardon?”

“Oh! How silly of me to say such a thing to you, Mrs. Snow! It was nothing I assure you. Just children playing you know…” Sansa felt her face flush, not from embarrassment but rather from annoyance. “He dared me to kiss him. Well, I confess that I did though I’ve never been a forward sort of girl. It was ages and ages ago though,” she tittered. “I’m sure he barely thinks on it,” she said as she cut her eyes towards Sansa.

Is this girl trying to make me jealous? Why on Earth would she bother? And she will be sorely disappointed.

“No, he has never mentioned you before, my lady,” Sansa said calmly as she set her tea cup down. “Oh?” she said with a disappointed look.

“No. But here you are his aunt and a baroness and here I am Mr. Snow’s…well, Jon’s wife,” she finished with a satisfied sniff. So there, madam… Sansa raised her cup again and continued, “You know, I am quite tired still from our journey, I find. We really didn’t manage to do much resting in our room this afternoon. I’m sure as a married woman you’ll understand me,” she said with a meaningful glance. “I hope you’ll excuse me, my lady?”

“Oh…of course, Mrs. Snow,” she said with wide eyes now.

“Please call me Sansa. We’re close in age and I’m to be your guest for a few days anyway. I should like for us to be friends,” she finished, hoping that this young lady would take her hint.

“Oh, yes. Please call me Jeyne then. I should like a friend here,” she finished looking a big ashamed of her earlier behavior now.

“It would be my pleasure, Jeyne.”
“Well then…here we are at Black’s once more. And now I know whose red hair you carried with you all those months ago,” his uncle said with a smirk.

“Yes, uncle,” Jon answered, feeling at a disadvantage as usual when I came to his uncle.

“She is quite a beauty, Jon. You’re awfully young to be married. You certainly could’ve enjoyed some more time to sow your…well, never mind that. I can’t say I would’ve wanted to give her a chance to slip away if I were you either.”

“Yes, sir. Sansa is…”

“A beauty like her wouldn’t require any dowry but I’ve heard the Starks are well off…” he hinted.

None of your bloody business, Jon thought with irritation. His uncle could make his inquiries but he wasn’t getting any information from him. *I’m not your heir. You have helped raised me and supported me through school but I am not about to divulge our business to you.*

“Have you heard from Uncle Benjen?” he asked to change the topic.

“Benjen? Yes, he wrote to send his congratulations on my marriage a while ago. He was stationed in the West Indies last I heard from him but you never know with you sailors where you’ll be next. Is Mrs. Snow’s father in town still?” he said returning to the topic he wished to discuss.

“No, my lord. He is in Bath with my wife’s second brother.”

“Oh? In Bath? Is Sir Eddard ill?”

God, you should start your own sewing circle. Have you always been this nosy? *“A passing malady…nothing more.”*

“I had heard Sir Eddard’s heir made a rather hasty match with some Italian singer. I imagine the father won’t be too pleased by that.”

“I cannot speak for my father-in-law but I have met the new Mrs. Stark and I…”

“Oh, you have? Excellent! Tell me…is she the sultry siren that I’ve heard? She must be quite ravishing to make the boy lose his head and marry a singer…a singer! I guess the only thing that could’ve been more imprudent was if he married an actress…or a whore. Same difference some would say.”

Jon suppressed an irritable huff and wondered if Theon Greyjoy would enjoy this conversation more. On second thought, perhaps not. *He at least has shown himself to be a steady friend to the Starks.* Jon fought to control his anger and annoyance on Robb and his new sister-in-law’s behalf. *If we’re to stay with him, I must at least keep him in countenance.*

“Mrs. Stark is a beautiful woman,” he said and held up his hand to stop his uncle from interrupting again, “and she is a very charming and gracious lady. And I have no doubt she will make my wife’s brother an excellent wife. I wouldn’t consider her musical talent as an impediment to a happy marriage for them.”

Uncle Brandon’s eyebrows had shot up and he looked rather cross. Jon half expected a rebuke for
his tone and was prepared to respond even more sharply if necessary but instead his uncle said, “I believe our food is coming.”

When Jon and his uncle arrived back at the house that night, it was near midnight. His uncle had wanted to stay at the club gaming and, while Jon was prepared to find his own way home, he was concerned that his uncle was rather in his cups. *I can at least see to it he returns home in one piece.* He learned over the course of the ride home that Lady Snow and he did not agree much of the time. He also learned that there had been hope of a child at one point early on but she had since said she was mistaken. Jon could not say he was surprised though he was sorry that his uncle seemed to take it so hard. When Jon had pointed out that they had not been married half a year yet and that Lady Snow was quite young, his uncle had given a half-sob in his inebriated state and said that he and the former Lady Snow had been married for nine years with no issue and that to his knowledge none of his mistresses had ever had a babe to lay at his feet.

Jon saw his uncle to the door and then went to his room to seek his wife. She was abed but still awake and reading.

“Hello,” he said as he quietly made his way in the room and began to undress. He was concerned over what things Jeyne may have said over the course of their evening together. *It was one kiss when I was just a boy but I don’t doubt for an instant that Jeyne mentioned it. I should probably have said something before we arrived. I hope she’s not vexed with me.*

“Hello to you, husband,” she said with a smile.

*Alright, that’s promising,* “Did you stay awake for me?”

“I did.”

“Sweetheart…I know you must be tired.”

“I am but I had thought I would sleep a bit late tomorrow. Theon sent a note by the way.”

“Oh?”

“My father’s sent him the name of a man to help track down my aunt and Mr. Baelish. Theon has made contact with him. He has asked us round for tea tomorrow to meet the man.”

“Oh…well, that suits me fine.”

“Good,” she said as she put her book on the table by the bed.

“Well…good. Um…Sansa, might I ask…how was your evening with Lady Snow?”

“It was fine.” Jon sighed an inward sigh of relief until she continued, “It was fine once she got past telling me that you dared her to kiss you when you were younger.”

“Sansa…I swear to you, my love, that it was her suggestion and I…”

“And then I let her know, in no uncertain terms, whose husband you were now,” she finished with a smile.

“Oh?” he asked with a smirk now.

“Yes. And it turns out that I’m in the mood to remind you of that as well.”
“By all means, Mrs. Snow…please remind me thoroughly who I belong to tonight.”

“Take off your clothes.”

---

Theon’s home in Grosvenor Square was very posh and he seemed quite pleased for them to see it. The six months of mourning proper had just passed and Theon was wearing a plum colored coat when he greeted them that afternoon.

Theon led them to the elegant drawing room where a man stood who looked quite out of place in the ornate room. *He looks quite shifty but dangerous, too. I would be frightened to be left alone with him.* He was taller than Jon and Theon. He wore his thinning black hair slicked back and he had piercing blue eyes.

“Mr. and Mrs. Snow, allow me to introduce Bronn Blackwater. He was recommended to me by Sir Eddard and has agreed to help us seek out Mr. Baelish.”

Once Jon and the man had shaken hands, Jon asked if he were an attorney’s man.

“No, sir. I’m what you might call a thief-taker like. I was raised round Newgate and played with the inmates’ children as a little fella. I spent a bit of time as a Bow Street runner, too, afore I took to this. I reckon there’s no one knows more about sharps than me…who isn’t one of them that is.”

“Sharps, sir?” Jon asked.

“Oh, aye…sharps is men like this Mr. Baelish. Always looking to make a profit off a flat…like his lordship here,” he said jerking his chin towards Theon.

“Yes, yes…we take your meaning, Bronn,” Theon said testily.

“Anyhow,” Bronn continued with a smile at Theon, “I was wondering if you could give me some pertinent facts so to speak about your marriage certificate. It’s likely he’ll try and find a forger man to draw up false documents and use those along with the genuine certificate to draw Sir Eddard’s money.”

Jon and Sansa related as many facts as they could about their certificate and their marriage in Spain before Bronn asked who her father did his banking with.

“Hoare’s, sir,” Sansa said.

“Excuse me, ma’am?!” he asked with an exaggerated gasp.

“He banks at Hoare’s,” she said hiding her smile with her hand as Jon and Theon both grew exceedingly cross with Mr. Blackwater. For her own part, Sansa liked him quite well and thought he probably knew the banking house she meant.

“Oh…right. Alright then,” he said with a wink. “I’ll check back in a day or two with his lordship and let you know what I turn up.”

“Thank you, Mr. Blackwater,” Jon said as Theon then ushered the man out.
“Well, that’s that,” Theon said upon his return. “We’ll see what he turns up. Should you like to dine with me tonight? There’s a new play on Drury Lane if you’d like to see it as well.”

“No, Theon,” Sansa answered. “Thank you but I would enjoy dining with you another night. This night I would rather stay in and rest,” she said giving her husband a secret smile…or what she thought was a secret smile.

“Good God,” Theon mumbled under his breath. “I need to find a wife.”

They had dined with his uncle and Jeyne but it had been an awkward meal in a way. It was clear that Lord and Lady Snow were not agreeing well tonight. Sansa had let her condition slip to Jeyne quite by accident earlier in the day and been greeted with tears that she did not mean to cause.

“I’m sorry! I’m happy for you,” Jeyne said as Sansa handed her a handkerchief. Jeyne blew her nose noisily before she continued, “He thought I was pregnant when we…well, I thought I was, too. But my courses came after we had married and I think he believes I invented a tale to be his wife. I swear that I didn’t, Sansa. I never expected him to offer to marry me even if I had been with child. And now…well, I suppose you and Jon don’t do very much since you’re…you know.”

It took Sansa a moment to understand her and then she nearly laughed. She thankfully stopped that from happening as it would be quite cruel under the circumstances. “Oh…no, Jeyne. We have continued to be…um, intimate since Jon’s return. The doctor said it was fine even after my fall.”

“Really? One minute, Brandon seems to think I was lying about being pregnant and the next, he fears I miscarried and he caused it by being…He says it might not be safe to…well, he barely ever touches me now.”

“Do you really want him to touch you? I’m sorry. That was hardly appropriate of me.”

“No…it’s alright. I know what you mean. I do though…I care for him. He’s not the easiest of men to live with but he is loving in his way and he’s my husband. But now he rarely comes to my bed and he is sadder than I have ever seen him…even when Lady Barbrey died years ago.”

“Well, perhaps you just need to make your wishes known. Jon likes that…for me to be…um, vocal or clear about what I like.”

“Oh, I couldn’t possibly!”

“Perhaps sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.”

“Whatever do you mean, Sansa?”

“I have a book you might like to borrow, Jeyne.”
“Are you cross with me?” she asked as she settled the pillow under her belly that was still quite flat.

“Cross with you? Never, wife. I just hate to think of our book being wasted on my uncle,” he said with a snort as he moved up behind her on the bed.

“It’s our book now, is it?”

“Certainly,” he replied with a cheeky grin. “And we’ll be wanting it back.”

“I just want them to be happy. I’m so happy. I want everyone to be as happy as we are.”

“Not possible, love.” They were too preoccupied for talking for the next few minutes but, when he heard her winch, he stopped thrusting at once. “Sansa…is this hurting you?” he asked.

“A bit,” she confessed. She was more tender at times she found lately. But sometimes the extra tenderness was welcome as it made her peak more quickly…and often repeatedly.

He smiled and rolled to his back and put his hands on her hips to guide her on top of him. “How’s this then?” he asked with such loving concern.

“Perfect,” she crooned as she straddled him and sank down to sheath him.

She began to rock her hips as she rode him. His eyes were dark with passion and longing as she increased her pace. If the other position was uncomfortable tonight, this one was just fine. She liked watching him as he watched her. The adoration in Jon’s eyes as he watched her move above him in the candlelight made her feel like the most beautiful woman in the world. *I wish everyone could be as happy as you make me, my love.*

“Theon, why did you ask to meet here? You know Sansa can’t come here,” he said as soon as he sat down.

It was pouring outside and Jon was soaked through just from the run from the hackney coach to the entrance at Black’s. He was just as glad to not pull Sansa out in the spring thundershower but he couldn’t help but be a bit annoyed that Theon had asked to meet him somewhere his wife wouldn’t be welcomed. *I’ve no interest in joining a bloody club if my wife cannot join me at it.*

“Yes…I’m sorry, Jon, but I wanted to pass the information along to you and let you break it to Sansa privately. I know she was horrid but she was still Sansa’s aunt.”

“What has happened?” Jon asked with dread as the thunder clapped loudly outside.

“Bronn and his men found Lady Arryn’s body in Cheapside. She’d been murdered. It’s likely that Mr. Baelish did the deed and now Bronn says the trail leads to France.”

“How?”

“Broken neck.”
“Bronn thinks he’s gone to France, you say? He flees to an enemy country?"  

“Apparently. He had several gambling debts, Bronn has discovered. Thousands and thousands of pounds worth accrued over the past two or three years. The Arryn estate is nearly bankrupt it would seem. And, these debts have led him to this scheme to take my money and yours and Sansa’s.”  Theon leaned across the armchair closer to Jon’s ear as they sat in the front, upper room at Black’s overlooking the street below. “These gambling debts may have also led him to give away…his civil post in government was of interest to certain people in France. Bronn suspects he has started selling secrets to the French to escape his debts.”

Jon could barely suppress his rage at the thought. He’d betrayed Theon’s trust, attempted to steal Sir Eddard’s money and murdered his wife. All enough to damn the man to hell and back again but for a man with a high post in government to betray his country over gambling debts…it was too much.

Earlier that day he had received a letter from Sam. While on blockade duty near Brest, Queenscrown had been sent in on a cutting out expedition. Pyp had been killed in the action that resulted. Mr. Clegane and Edd had been wounded as well as a few other of the men. His shipmates risked their lives for their country daily with little thanks or monetary reward for their efforts. And for a man like Petyr Baelish to betray their country over gambling debts…Jon wanted to see him pay. He wanted to see him dead.

“I need to speak with my father-in-law about this,” was all he said to Theon though.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know why but I just pictured Jeyne a bit like Lydia Bennett here with some other Austen characters mixed in. Apologies to any Jeyne-lovers for making her rather silly. She's not a villain or anything though. And Brandon is quite boorish but not all bad either.

Also, I'll be wrapping Part 2 up soon so there are things being set up for Part 3 in this chapter.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Jon prepares to return to his duty. Sansa makes plans for her future and some surprises are in store for them both.

Whitehall

London, England

April 1797

Jon stood in the antechamber of the First Lord of the Admiralty’s office waiting for his captain to emerge. After nearly a month’s leave with his wife, he was to return to Portsmouth the next day and rejoin his ship. Sir Eddard had returned to London and would be taking Sansa to Winterfell to join her siblings and her sister-in-law there. Robb had already returned to his regiment in the army a couple of weeks earlier.

Since his return to London, Sir Eddard had made a few discreet contacts of his own in France to see what he could discover about Petyr Baelish, his whereabouts and his treasons. So far, nothing had turned up and Bronn the thief-taker said the trail had turned cold once Baelish had reached France. Sir Eddard’s money and Sansa’s dowry had not been touched at least.

Jon still felt strange accepting a small fortune from his father-in-law simply for marrying the most beautiful, amazing woman in the world…at least in Jon’s opinion. Sansa told him he was being silly to worry over it though and, when she’d expressed a desire to find a place for them somewhere near Portsmouth, Jon could not complain. But for now, she would be staying with her family in Winterfell and Jon would be returning to his duty. Between the two, he knew where his heart lay but he was committed to his career and he did have a deep abiding love for his profession. He only wished it would not take him from his beloved for such extended periods of time.

The outer door opened as Jon stood waiting and he was surprised and delighted to see his Uncle Benjen walk in.

“Jon!” his uncle cried, embracing him tightly. “Let me look on you. I see the boy I knew in the man before me. Has it truly been three years since we last met?”

“Yes, Uncle Benjen. I’m very happy to see you here.”

“I heard that you have married.”

“I have, uncle.”

“Congratulations to you then. I wish you both very happy. I received a letter from your wife a while ago. I hope I shall have an opportunity to meet her.”

“Certainly, sir. She’s in town. We’ve been staying with Uncle Brandon and his wife but she is to
leave for her family’s home tomorrow. I would be delighted if you could come and dine with us at Uncle Brandon’s townhome…if you’re free tonight, sir.”

“I am always free for you, nephew, and certainly if it means I get to meet your lovely wife.”

The First Lord’s door opened and Sir Jeor walked out with Lord Spencer and his secretary. Jon stood to the side as the lord greeted Uncle Benjen. Jon did not expect to receive any notice from the man himself. He was only a lieutenant, attending his captain. But he found he was mistaken.

“Is this the young man then, Sir Jeor?” the earl asked.

“Yes, my lord. Allow me to introduce Lieutenant Jon Snow.” Jon made his bow as the First Lord looked to Benjen.

“Snow? Your boy, Benjen?”

“My nephew, my lord,” Benjen answered.

The First Lord gave Jon a word or two and then disappeared with his secretary and Jon’s uncle back into his office. Captain Mormont gave Jon a knowing look and suggested they head out.

Sir Jeor and Jon’s Uncle Benjen had joined them at Lord Snow’s house for dinner that night, along with Sansa’s father and brother, Gabriel. Sansa found that she liked Jon’s Uncle Benjen very much and decided he was a more affable and communicative companion than his Uncle Brandon though she had grown fond of the baron all the same. Jeyne had been most appreciative of the use of Sansa’s book and confessed in private that things between her and Lord Snow had never been better. She had grown to be a dear friend despite still expressing a wish for Jon to call her auntie, which he refused to do, and a certain amount of otherwise silly behaviour at times.

Sansa was delighted to find her brother well on the mend and able to return with her and her father to Winterfell when they left tomorrow. His time in Bath had done wonders for his poor hands though he would bare the marks of torture for all his days. His health was much improved as was her father’s. Sansa looked forward to seeing Arya, Bran and Rickon again though she loathed parting from her husband.

Her father and Captain Snow seemed to agree well and, when Jon brought up Bran’s wish to join the service, Uncle Benjen offered to put the boy’s name in his books and take him on as a volunteer if her father agreed. Papa said he would have to consider it but thanked the captain for his offer.

The three sailors had not wished to overwhelm their host and his other guests with service talk at the table but some news made its way into their conversation regardless. Poor Mr. Altin’s mother had received a monetary gift from the frigate’s men in honor of her fallen son. As a midshipman, there was no pension for her upon his death but shipmates took care of their own. She also learned that Mr. Clegane and Edd Tollett were still recovering at Haslar from their wounds and were not expected to return to *Queenscrown* before she sailed. She hated to think of them being left behind from their ship and friends and resolved to write to them both expressing her best wishes for their recovery and beg Jon to see it to them.

But when the matter of *Queenscrown’s* destination was brought up, Sansa had to struggle to maintain her composure. Sir Jeor revealed that the frigate had received orders to sail for Botany Bay.
A year at least…maybe two. Our child may be walking by the time Jon lays eyes on him or her. Jon’s look of utter devastation was nearly enough to be her undoing at table and she was exceedingly grateful when Jeyne chose to excuse herself and Sansa from the table shortly thereafter. She had cried quietly on her friend’s shoulder in the drawing room as the men stayed behind to drink their port and talk. She did not hear Jon’s voice once though.

Lying in bed that night though it was he that shed the tears as he slid his hand across her stomach that had just barely started to swell, almost overnight it seemed. He had been determinedly slow and thorough in their lovemaking tonight, bringing Sansa to pleasure many times over while delaying his own release until she had pleaded for him to come with her at last. Sansa had suspected it was his wish to take his time so that he may savor the memory of this night in the many nights to come when they would be parted.

“Please, Jon…I cannot bear your tears, my love. Everything will be…”

“Will be what? Fine?” he said bitterly. “You’ll be with our child. He or she will be surrounded by aunts and uncles and a grandfather who loves him or her and I’ll just be some stranger when I return. And that’s assuming everything is well. How will I know? I will be at sea with no way of knowing…what if you…how will I know if your confinement…”

He couldn’t even finish and his tears were renewed. He had lost his mother in childbirth and she had lost hers that way as well. Sansa placed her hand in his and made him look at her.

“You must have faith. What else is there for us? Unless you wish to run melancholy mad aboard, you must have faith and pray. That is all either of us can do for one another. See to your duty. I will be so proud of you as I always am.” Sansa waited to let those words reach him before she brought up another matter she wished to discuss. “I’ve been thinking about our money and a place for us in Portsmouth some more.”

“Yes, my dear?” he asked dully and Sansa was grateful to see he was distracted from his sorrows at least.

“Once the child comes and he or she is not quite so small, I would like…I wish to open a school. A school for girls, I suppose,” she said nervously.

“A school for young ladies?”

“Well, perhaps but I wouldn’t make it just for…I would want it to be a school that would be open to any girl that wants to learn, no matter her background. Between caring for our child and that I’m certain I would find fulfillment while you are away. Papa says he will find a tutor for Rickon and Bran and that he may let Bran join the navy regardless. I’ve been writing to Arya and Talisa about it. Arya wants to help and Talisa is interested as well with Robb away and…But perhaps you think it too ambitious or…” she trailed off, taking his surprised expression for disapproval.

“Sansa…I think that is the most marvelous, brilliant idea I’ve ever heard,” he said with a radiant smile.

“Truly?”

“Truly, sweetheart. You told me in Alda Mehran that you were seeking something to do that would feel meaningful and give you a sense of purpose…something beyond what society expects of you in just being a wife…”
"You remember that?"

"Darling, I remember everything you tell me," he said kissing her lips. "I told you then that you would find some purpose that would fulfill you if you were on the watch for it. And if this is it and it will bring you joy, I am wholeheartedly in favor of it. And, if I’m ever tossed on the beach with no ship, I will beg the headmistress to find an occupation for me."

"Oh, Mr. Snow…the headmistress has plenty of uses for you," she said with the grin she knew he loved to see.

"Truly?" he asked with a raised brow.

"Truly, my love. Now, lie on your back," she said, giving him a deep and passionate kiss before working her way downward.

And she was certain the household could hear her laughter as he scrambled to obey and just as certain they heard his cries of ecstasy soon afterwards.

_____________________________________

"Come along, Mr. Snow. We don’t have all day," Davos said impatiently from the boat.

Jon bit back the admonishment he wished to bark out at the doctor’s tone. *You may be his superior but he is far older than you. And he would speak the same to the captain and receive no rebuke.* Jon climbed down the side into the waiting boat, saying nothing to Davos and watching Portsmouth draw nearer.

As he sat, he reflected on the past several days aboard. Jon had been quite cross in the days since his return to Queenscrown though he was trying not to take it out on his shipmates. *It's not their fault I miss my wife and am feeling tetchy. They say salt water washes away disappointments, regrets and other things. But leaving her, especially now and for so long, is different.*

He then realized part of his disappointment in this homecoming was that it didn’t feel much like a homecoming. *Things change. Life aboard is what it is and ship’s companies get broken up all the time.* A ship going far foreign might sail off and sail back with the same group of men after two or more years away, barring a few deaths, desertions and some additions in foreign ports. But in home waters, there were often changes. And changes there had certainly been since Jon had been granted leave with his wife.

A new bosun had been appointed in Mr. Clegane’s place as he was not going to be well in time to join them. There was nothing wrong with Mr. Hollar. He was a typical bosun, he knew his duty but Jon found he missed the big, surly man whose place he had taken.

Mr. Reed had been sent to a ship of the line to serve. Mr. Guymon and Mr. Payne were still aboard though and Mr. Thorne was still there and as prickly as ever towards him. Jon didn’t relish spending the next year or more sharing the gunroom with Mr. Thorne.

The biggest change was with his friends though, the three young men his age that he had sailed with since he’d joined almost five years ago, since they were all just boys really. Pyp was dead. He’d never hear him crack his jokes again or make his spot-on impersonations of Thorne behind his back.
Grenn and Sam had both been sent to take their examinations. Grenn had passed and would be transferred to another ship before they sailed. Sam had not passed. He admitted to Jon that he had been overcome by the austerity of the examining captains and had completely lost his head.

“You’ll do better next time, Sam,” Jon had said supportively.

“I could do no more than squeak at them, Jon. It was quite pathetic. My father was so angry when he learned I had failed and suggested I jump overboard when we sink the land.”

“That’s hardly kind of him, Sam. It is certainly an intimidating experience and many men don’t pass the first time.”

“Yes…but I don’t know. Perhaps my father has a point.”

“Sam…”

“Not about jumping overboard. He suggested that maybe the service wasn’t for me. I’m twenty next week. I can’t stay a midshipman forever. I do alright with the navigation and sailing the ship and such…but we both know I’m no fighter and if there were issues with the men…I’m not sure I’m cut out for command.”

“What would you prefer to do then?”

“I don’t know. I like to read and I…like writing stories,” he said with a self-conscious look over his shoulder. “Do you think there’s something I could do with that?”

“Well…you could be a writer.”

“But there’s no money in that until your published which is nearly impossible without the right connections and maybe not much even then.”

“You could be a parson.”

“Nah…I’m not all that religious. I like women too much to preach at other men about such things. Plus, I’d have to get up and talk in front of a large group of people,” he said with apparent horror as the thought of public speaking struck him.

“Well…my wife is starting a school…it’d be for girls. Perhaps you might like teaching. You’d have to stand and talk in front of others but they’d be children. Sansa wouldn’t put too much pressure on you if you just wanted to try it.”

“Do you think Mrs. Snow would be willing to give me a chance at it?”

“I’ll write to her and see if she’d be willing to accept you. Are you really serious…about leaving the service though?”

Sam nodded adamantly and added, “I’ve no wish to see Botany Bay.”

Me, neither, Jon thought sourly. Sam had asked the captain about leaving the ship the next day and he had been rowed ashore to go and stay at his father’s home until he hoped to hear from Sansa.

And now, Jon and Davos were to go make a few more purchases for the ship that would be sailing in two days’ time. Jon was mess captain for the gunroom and had been told repeatedly by Yoren to purchase more bacon and Davos had needed some more portable soup for his invalids and antivenereals for the ship.
“Once we are well out to sea such cases will disappear with no easily obtainable sources of infection,” the doctor said bemusedly. “But until then I propose to dose the entire ship’s company thoroughly to stave off any unwanted complications in men who are reluctant to come forward during the early and more treatable stage.” Jon kept his silence and Davos said, “I suppose this is very hard for you…leaving your wife for the first time and for such an extended voyage.”

“It is. How do you manage it?”

“Well, Mrs. Seaworth has had a very long time to get used to being a sailor’s wife and it was not a love match…not at first. Anyhow, I could tell you it gets easier but I would be lying. Leaving is never easy but once you’ve sunk the land and you’re surrounded by the blue sea and sky, you’ll find your duty keeps you occupied fairly well. But it doesn’t mean you won’t pine for her…especially in the quiet moments. And if you have salt water in your veins, which I suspect you do, you’ll find you miss the sea when you are home just as you will miss your wife when you are at sea.”

As Jon walked along the streets of Portsmouth beside the doctor, he wondered how Sansa was settling in Winterfell and hoped that perhaps a letter might be arriving before they left. He had her letters to Tollett and Mr. Clegane in his pocket and, once their purchases were completed, he and the doctor headed to Haslar to visit the invalids. Edd was pleased if a bit embarrassed at their calling on him to ask him how he did and he reported that he was hoping to be released in the next week or so.

“You’re lucky to be alive,” Davos commented after looking at his wound. “Gut wounds rarely heal well. Infection often carries a patient off in a trice.”

Edd had been flabbergasted by Sansa’s letter. He sat looking at the fine sheet of parchment she had written it on with his fingers tracing the ink. He ducked his head and mumbled he’d have to look it over later.

“Can you read, Edd?” Jon asked when Davos was busy talking to one of the doctors there.

“Well, I can read a watch bill fairly well but I…I never did learn to read proper like.”

“Well, there are more important things aboard, I suppose. But it has its uses, especially by land. Perhaps if we sail together again, I could help you learn a bit. Only if you’d like…”

“That’s very fine of you to offer, sir, but I reckon you’ll be on the far side of the world for a bit and they’ll be finding me another ship to serve once I’m healed up.”

When Jon and Davos called on Mr. Clegane, they found the bosun was in a fouler mood than usual. His leg wound was bothering him without a doubt but it seemed to Jon that he was feeling rather ill-used more than anything.

“ Eleven fucking years I’ve held a warrant as bosun aboard Queenscrown before Mormont was even her captain and these cunts here won’t release me to go along with you.”

He had clearly found himself a source of drink and Davos pursed his lips at the man’s inebriated state. But Jon could not help but feel sympathy for the man. Like Thorne, the service was Clegane’s life and Queenscrown was his home. He’d smiled over Sansa’s letter to him at least.

“The little bird,” he chuckled as he read. “She’s the very best sort of girl, Mr. Snow. Don’t you forget it…you’re lucky. Most of us never find a girl like her,” he finished with a sad little shake of his head. There are no other girls like her, Jon thought but he would not argue with the man.

When Jon returned to the ship, Thorne approached him and said the captain wanted to see him. His expression was inscrutable but Jon would’ve sworn that there was a great deal of anger and
resentment beneath those hooded eyes. He was ushered in to the cabin at once and surprised to find a black-coated civilian with the captain. When the civilian turned and gave Jon a bow, he recognized the First Lord’s secretary. Jon returned his bow and was puzzled as to what an important figure like the secretary was doing here.

“Thank you, Mr. Miles,” Mormont said escorting his guest to the door. “Please tell his lordship that I will adjust my plans according to his orders at once.” The man bowed and took his leave. “Wine, Jon?” the captain asked without preamble.

“Uh…yes, sir.” Mormont chuckled to himself as he poured and Jon waited for his captain to speak.

“So, we’ve had a change of orders it appears.”

“Sir?”

“We’re to sail to the Baltic. The poor steward will have a perfect fit when I tell him. He’ll be needing to find some cold weather clothing for the ship’s company.”

“The Baltic…” Jon said absently. Not so far away…not so long away…He was overcome with sudden relief. “I’ve never been there before, sir.”

“Oh, yes. I suppose you haven’t,” Mormont said with a smirk. “Too bad you won’t be going with us.”

“Sir?” Jon asked, completely baffled now.

“Here, boy…drink,” he said, pushing his wine closer to him. “It’s not every day a man wets the swab.”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand, sir.”

“Here then. Read this. Perhaps you’ll be more enlightened by it,” Mormont said before handing him a letter addressed to him with the Admiralty’s black seal.

Jon's hands shook as he took the letter and cracked the seal. His heart started pounding in his ears as he tried to steady his breath while he read.

By the Right Honorable Alexander Hood, Admiral of the Blue and Commander in Chief of His Majesty’s Ships and Vessels employed and to be employed in the English Channel, etc., etc., etc.

Whereas Captain William Brine of His Majesty’s Sloop Alayne is removed to the Thunderer, Captain James Duncan retired-

You are hereby required and directed to proceed on board the Alayne and take upon you the Charge and Command of Commander of her; willing and requiring all the Officers and Company belonging to the said Sloop to behave themselves in their several Employments with all due Respect and Obedience to you their Commander; and you likewise to observe as well the General Printed Instructions as what Orders and Directions you may from time to time receive from any your superior Officer for His Majesty’s Service. Hereof nor you nor any of you may fail as you will answer the contrary at your Peril.
And for so doing this shall be your Order.

Given on board the London

At sea, 26th April, 1797.

To Jon Snow, Esqr,

hereby appointed Commander of

His Majesty’s Sloop Alayne
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Sansa and Jon spend some time together before his first cruise as a commander and both prepare for new roles in their lives.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*Portsmouth, England*

*May 1797*

“Why is there only one?” Arya asked looking at the heavy epaulette, the mark of his present rank affixed to the left shoulder of his coat.

“That indicates that he is a commander, Arya,” Sansa replied complacently as she stood in front of her husband smiling while brushing away imaginary lint from his coat.

“I certainly hope I will get the chance to ship its twin in time, Arya, for symmetry’s sake if nothing else,” Jon said, smiling back at his wife and placing his hands on her slightly rounded stomach.

“So, if you’re made a post-captain, you’ll get the other one?” Arya asked next.

“Well, yes…but only after I’ve served as one for three years. The first three years I’d only be permitted to swap this,” Jon said tapping the epaulette, “from my left to my right shoulder.”

Sansa and Arya had arrived in Portsmouth yesterday afternoon to allow Sansa an opportunity to spend what time she could with her husband before he sailed for his cruise. She’d been overjoyed to learn of his promotion and that his orders would keep him in home waters. Neither could believe their good fortune. If it weren’t for her condition, Sansa would’ve been seeking lodgings in Portsmouth but she would be returning to Winterfell once he left for his cruise and remain there for some time after their child came. At least their letters should reach one another regularly.

A commander was not permitted to sleep outside his ship once he was sworn in but they’d managed to work their way around that. Sansa and Arya had taken two rooms at the inn they were lodging in and when he was able to get away to see them yesterday afternoon, she’d immediately pulled him up to hers. Arya had rolled her eyes at them and said she wanted a thorough tour of his command when her sister was done being perfectly indecent in the middle of the afternoon.

If the previous time when they’d made love believing they were to be separated for over a year at least had been deliciously thorough and drawn out, this time had been quite the opposite. They were kissing passionately with lips, tongue and teeth from the moment the door closed behind them. They were both moaning into each other’s mouths and, when Sansa felt his hardness through his breeches, she hadn’t bothered to do more than lift her skirts and then she was reaching for him and him for her. They’d not even managed to make it to the bed for their…*rutting.* There really is no other word for it, Sansa thought with surprisingly little shame at her unladylike eagerness for her husband.
Jon had pushed her up against the door and she’d barely managed to wrap a leg around his waist before he’d buried himself in her with a loud groan. He’d sucked blooms on her neck as he began pounding into her with his hands grasping her ass firmly to hold her in place. Sansa had done her best to swallow her moans but she suspected she’d failed miserably. She couldn’t say she cared and, when he brought her to her peak, she’d grasped his hair tightly and shouted his name.

Afterwards, as they lay together on the bed trying to catch their breath and stop laughing at everything, the baby began kicking. Sansa had started noticing its movements a few weeks earlier and she was thrilled that Jon was getting the opportunity to feel their child move now as she grasped his hand and pressed it to her belly. His look of complete adoration and pride had left her smiling all the rest of the day as they viewed the sloop and Jon patiently answered Arya’s multitude of questions.

Jon had been strongly moved by the news she brought from her father regarding Mr. Baelish. He had thoroughly gone over to the French and was now living in Paris and under the protection of one of their many intelligence agencies. Sansa pointed out that Mr. Baelish had not offered her any physical harm unlike her aunt but Jon’s anger at his betrayal of her family, Theon and their country was far too great for him to find any comfort in those words.

“Someday, Sansa…he will get what he deserves,” Jon had said stonily. She did not argue with him but only hoped to never lay eyes on Mr. Baelish again.

For her own part, she felt some pity for her aunt despite everything. An unsound woman who imagined slights and saw enemies everywhere, never realizing that she was sharing her bed with her worst enemy. She mostly felt sympathy for Robin though, the unfortunate victim in the entire matter. The young Lord Arryn was living with his uncle the Duke of Riverrun at present and Sansa hoped their uncle would help the strange boy grow into a decent man in time. However, as Uncle Edmure had never had a desire to know his sister Catelyn’s family after she’d run off with Eddard Stark, Sansa wondered if she would ever hear from or see Robin again.

Two weeks later, Alayne was almost ready to depart and Sansa sat with Mr. Tarly going over the personal supplies that she was sending aboard for her husband that afternoon. As commander, it was only fitting that he keep a decent table and have something to offer any guests besides the same salt beef and hard tack the rest of the ship’s company ate…at least in the early part of their voyage. She had agreed to accept Sam as an instructor once her school was up and running with the understanding that it would likely be more than a year before she was ready to start looking for a place in Portsmouth. Sam had happily agreed to the wait and offered his services to her in finding a place for the school in the meantime. He had even offered to escort her and Arya back to Winterfell when they left for the north in a few days. Sansa rather suspected he wished to escape his father’s house but she had accepted his offer and thanked him for his solicitude.

“I think that’s good, Mrs. Snow,” he said having counted out the sacks of coffee beans a second time.

“Thank you, Mr. Tarly. I was completely at sea when it came to amounts needed for this length of a cruise,” Sansa replied, feeling rather proud of the bits of sea jargon she was picking up.

Sansa looked out the window of the inn at the harbour busy with ships and seamen and dockside workers. It was its own contained world, full of comings and goings that so many people were unaware of but so vital to the interests of their nation. She sighed to think of returning to Winterfell in the north. The estate was isolated and rarely saw much company. At least most of the family should be there. And she had learned from her sister-in-law’s recent letter that she was expecting a child as
well sometime in late autumn. It made her smile to think of the cousins growing up together in the halls of the family home…or perhaps in the halls of our school.

Talisa had agreed to joining her and Arya at the school once the children were a bit bigger. She had asked if Gabriel would wish to join them in their venture and he said he would consider it but for now he preferred to help Papa at home and keep Rickon company should Bran truly turn sailor. Sansa was excited to get started with her plans and yet she was content to wait for a time. She knew she would be very busy adapting to being a mother in the next year, although in some ways she felt well prepared for the role.

"Shhh…” he whispered as her moans got louder. He didn’t really mind. After all, he’d dreamed of having Sansa in his cot since well before they were married. Before he’d ever spoken of his feelings for her in truth. As he felt her cunt throbbing around him though and she threw her head back and cried his name, he wasn’t so quiet either. "Ohhhh…Sansa…unnn…” he grunted as he came.

“Yes, Jon…” she sighed as she leaned back in to kiss him. He rubbed his hands up and down her thighs and kissed her deeply before she climbed off him and started giggling.

“I can’t believe we just did that here,” he said breathlessly retying his breeches in his cabin.

“Why not?” she said grinning widely as she pulled back down her skirts.

“I’m certain the sentry will have heard us, Mrs. Snow,” he replied, trying for a serious expression…and failing. “Thank God that Edd didn’t walk in. I never would’ve been able to look him in the eye again.”

“Are commanders not permitted to enjoy relations with their wives aboard their ships? I know you do not allow it but some ships have women aboard for carnal reasons. I seem to recall a phrase about captains having a woman of their own aboard.”

“To ‘ship a miss’ refers to a captain bringing along a mistress on a cruise and, while it does happen, it’s rather frowned upon. There are some captains that might choose to bring a wife along on an extended cruise but…well, in time of war especially, it would be equally frowned upon by Whitehall.” He smiled and reached for her. “But I suppose a quick tumble of my wife will not earn me too many wry looks, especially when any man can see what a beautiful wife I have.”

“I thought you should like a happy memory for us here.”

“Dear God, Sansa…that will certainly be a happy memory to reflect on when I am pining for you.” They held each other close and kissed until he spoke once more. “I will miss you so, my darling girl.” He knelt down on deck before her and kissed her stomach, “And I can’t wait to meet you, my little angel.”

“So, you’re still convinced it’s a girl?”

“Oh, yes. I feel it in my bones.”

“I will delight in writing to you of the birth of our son then,” she said with a sigh.
“Write to me and tell me of a healthy child and that you are well. I will have no reason for complaint if you tell me those things.”

“Not even if I name our son Theon.”

“You wouldn’t…” Jon started to say and then laughed when he realized he was being teased.

“Of course not!” she laughed. “Though I certainly consider him a friend now. No…it’s Jon,” she said and he thought she was addressing him at first. He looked up at her expectantly. “Our son will be named Jon is what I’m saying,” she clarified, smiling sweetly at him. He felt his heart glow in his chest from her simple and direct declaration that she would choose to name their child after him.

“And if I am right, which I am by the way, and you give me a daughter? Will she be Sansa?” he asked once he had fought down the lump forming in his throat.

“No…something else I think. Send me a list of possibilities with your next letter and I will choose one if you’re right…which you’re not.”

“I will cruise throughout the summer and fall but I hope to never be very far if you should need me.”

“I always need you…but I will be well enough at home with our family, my love.”

October 1797

Jon was finishing his letter to Sansa to report the capture that Alayne had made the day before when Edd knocked at the door. He carried in the breakfast tray grumbling that he had burnt the toast and overcooked his egg…again. He sat down the tray with a loud thump causing Jon to jump and nearly tip over the inkwell. Well, he’s not much of a steward but at least I’m comfortable with him.

Edd had been discharged from hospital shortly after Queenscrown had sailed and Jon had immediately offered the coxswain a place aboard Alayne. Jon had not given any thought to finding a proper servant for himself as commander so for now poor Edd was acting as both his steward and his coxswain.

Oh yes…poor Edd…I think he’s enjoying ordering me about.

It was true that Tollett seemed to enjoy carping after Jon like an ill-used fishwife. Perhaps it was his injury making him snappish at times or the familiarity that had grown between the two men after their travels to Alda Mehran and in Spain for Edd never would’ve been so quick to admonish Jon in the past to not throw his uniform coat carelessly on the back of a chair and let it fall to the floor. ‘Are we living in a bawdy house, sir? Do you never give a thought to how much I work to keep your coat looking fine?’ And should Jon wear his best breeches to go aloft… ‘Scrub, scrub, moil and toil for poor Edd. And will this tar ever come out? Don’t you think it.’ All the same, Jon was glad to have him.

Edd sniffed the pot of untouched coffee that he’d left before Jon started his letter to Sansa. “Coffee’s
gone cold while you sit here scribbling away…sir.” Edd seemed to think he could say whatever he pleased in the cabin so long as there was a ‘sir’ attached to the end. *And he certainly says what he pleases.* Jon hid his amusement and simply said he could drink it cold. “Drink coffee cold?!” Edd said, clearly horrified at the thought. “No need for that, sir. I already told cook to start another pot,” he said in a huff and headed off to fetch it.

*Between him and Clegane, I truly wonder who’s the commander here. I’m beginning to doubt it’s me.*

The other bane of his existence had the watch at present and was stumping above his head on the sloop’s small quarterdeck. Mr. Clegane’s leg had not knit properly but he did not need to go aloft to be a proper bosun. He had a voice of brass that could reach the foretop from the hold if he wished and he knew his business through and through. His young mate lived in fear of him but Jon knew his bark to be worse than his bite, except when facing an enemy with a weapon in hand…or just his bare hands in Clegane’s case.

There was a knock on the door and when Jon bid the man to enter, he was pleased to see the young master’s mate, Gendry Waters, that had been assigned to the sloop about a year before Jon had taken command of her. Gendry was nearly seventeen and he was a thorough going seaman. He was the son of a farmer though so it was unlikely that he would ever be made a lieutenant but Jon thought he would make a fine commissioned officer if the admiralty would ever consent to look past one’s connections and offer advancement based solely upon merit to a deserving young man like him.

For his own part, Jon hoped that his own advancement was based upon his merits and skills and not because of who his uncles were or the family he had married into though he suspected that might be part of it. Mr. Thorne’s parting words aboard *Queenscrown* had haunted him. ‘*How swiftly we rise, sir, and so young. It’s a long climb up though. Let us hope you do not fall,*’ he’d said with a blank expression after Yoren had offered Jon his congratulations on his promotion. Jon shook off the memory and waited for Gendry to speak.

“Mr. Clegane’s compliments, sir, and he asks you to come on deck.”

“Thank you, Mr. Waters. I’ll be right there.”

Jon swiftly tucked away the letter to his wife and grabbed his hat. When he emerged into the bright sunlight of the October morning on deck, he squinted for a moment to allow his eyes to adjust and then automatically cast an eye to take in the state of the sails and take note of the wind before walking over to Clegane.

“Well, Mr. Clegane?”

“Two ships in sight.”

Jon pulled out his telescope. “It looks like *Cyane,*” Jon said happily recognizing his uncle’s ship.

“Yes, t’other looks like the mail ship, sir,” Clegane said sourly.

“Ah…the blessed mail ship,” Jon said eagerly, rubbing his hands together. Seeing the hateful expression on his bosun’s face though, Jon cleared his throat and said, “Well, lots of the men aboard look forward to the mail ship.”

“Lots of cunts…sir.”

“I thought you were rather pleased when my wife sent you a letter with the last sack we received.”
The large man smiled before he could stop himself and then gruffly said, “Well, that’s true, I suppose. Perhaps the little bird has sent you word at last, sir.”

“I hope so,” Jon said with some anxiety now.

It had been over a month since he’d received his last letter from Sansa. The child had been expected in September and he longed for word at last to set his mind at ease that Sansa was well and that he had a son or daughter.

Nearly an hour later, having greeted his uncle and agreed to dine aboard Cyane later, Jon sat alone in his cabin with the sack sorting through the mass of letters for any from her. His heart nearly stopped when he finally saw that beloved and familiar hand addressed to him. He called to Edd to take the rest of the sack forward for dispersal and then sat down to read in privacy. His hands were shaking worse than they had when he’d received word of his promotion.

Dearest Jon,

My dear, it is with great pleasure that I write to tell you that our daughter was born the 19th of September and we are both well. So, you were right it seems in your prediction of a daughter. Just don’t let that go to your head. She is beautiful, Jon, though I am certainly biased in my opinion. Since it was the name of Alayne’s first capture with you as commander, I have chosen Sophia for her name from the list of suggested names you sent me. She has certainly captured my heart and I know she will yours as well. Her eyes are blue and she has a good deal of black hair on her head. She is a dear little one and the best of babies. Again, I will admit to a great deal of bias.

It is hard being parted from you my love and I wish that we could see you but knowing that you are not too terribly far away is a great comfort and I hope that you will be able to come and visit us before too many months have passed. I am intent on traveling with her to Portsmouth in the spring either way to see you and let you see your beautiful daughter. Regardless, I am telling her of her Papa every day and how proud I am of him. I love you and miss you, but know that I am happy.

Everyone here is well and sends you their love. Arya is a loving aunt and constantly admonishing everyone to be quiet when she is sleeping. Papa is a doting grandfather and Gabriel and the boys are so sweet with her. Talisa is expecting next month, so our little Sophie will not have too long to wait for a playmate.

As I write this, our daughter is but three days old and I am tired still from the birth and being woken often throughout the night though Nan says that is to be expected. So, I will end this scribble and only say that I pray for your safe return, my dear, and hope that you are well.

Your devoted wife,

Sansa

Jon read and reread the letter a dozen times while he sat there. His eyes filled with tears of joy which spilled down his cheeks without him even being aware of it. He had a daughter and his beloved wife was well. His prayers had been answered and he gave his thanks as he sat there attempting to picture his little girl in his mind before he pulled back out the letter he’d been writing earlier to tell her of his joy in receiving her news.

That evening he dined aboard his uncle’s frigate and had shared his news with his uncle when he
came aboard. Uncle Benjen had been overjoyed for his nephew. As the meal wound down and the
glasses were refilled, Uncle Benjen cleared his throat gaining the attention of his officers that were
dining with him and his nephew.

“Gentlemen, before we drink the king, there is another toast I should like to make first. My nephew
has informed me that I am a great uncle now as his wife has been safely brought to bed of a
daughter.” There was a chorus of congratulations and his uncle’s first lieutenant pounded Jon heartily
on the back until Jon nearly choked on the last bite of pudding he’d taken. “So, I will ask you all to
raise your glasses in a toast to my great niece, Sophia Snow.”

“To Sophia Snow,” the table responded with good cheer as the glasses were drained.

“Thank you, gentlemen,” Jon said while in his mind he made his own toast. ‘To Sophie, may God
bless her.’

Chapter End Notes

So, a happier ending to Part 2 compared to Part 1 and I hope you enjoyed! To all of you
who have been sticking with this series, thank you for reading. I will write a Part 3 but
I’m going to take a quick hiatus from the Nautical/Napoleonic Era world to work on
some other fics. And Part 3 will see the downfall of Littlefinger. I decided to save him
for a villain in that part.

Two things-first, if you’ve read Patrick O’Brian then yes, Edd is an amalgam of Bonden
and Killick.

Second-the name I chose for their daughter...I didn't really intend for her to be named
after Sophie Turner (though she seems a lovely young lady) but rather I named her after
Jack Aubrey's wife, Sophia, who goes by Sophie in the books. The last lines of
O'Brian's novel 'Post Captain' are in fact a toast, 'To Sophie...God bless her.' And I
wished to choose a name that fit the era rather than shoving a random GoT name in or
trying to choose between Arya, Cat or Lyanna which were the only ones I really
would've considered here. Little Sophie will be a character with her own little role to
play in Part 3 since I will set that during the Peace of Amiens a few years after this.

Thanks again for reading! Your comments really make my day!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!