Stray Thoughts

by WriterChick

Summary

Compilation of drabbles and ficlets that I post on tumblr for increased accessibility. All Game of Thrones and predominantly PxS ship, but as I open myself up more to writing other ships, those will be included too--and indicated in the title of the chapter for quick reference.

Notes

On the whole, these drabbles and ficlets are unedited, so I will thank you in advance for your patience with my poor comma placement, lol. Tracking down things I've posted on tumblr is a process, so I will be adding to this as I find things. If you follow me @0writerchick0 and have seen something that I haven't added to this yet, please shoot me a message and let me know so I can find it too.
They Didn't Ask (pxs)

Joffrey, Harry, Petyr.

In high school, he didn’t ask, too cool for that. He assumed that because I was in the back of his car, that I’d let him. Looking back, I guess he was right, I never would have allowed myself back there if I wasn’t willing to do a damn sight more than he tried. I was so eager to feel older than I was, that I forced my own assent. I put up with sitting in the bleachers for a string of horribly boring basketball games, letting him hang his arm around my neck, and call me his girl. I went through the motions of what was expected, to get to the part where I consented.

I hadn’t anticipated that it would be so decidedly underwhelming. Joffrey’s kiss was sloppy and wet, as if enough saliva on my face would somehow slicken the path between my legs. He grabbed me over my shirt as if he were trying to win a car by keeping hold of it the longest. His vice grips didn’t move, other than to tighten and reinforce their position. I’m not sure he ever found my nipples…

Disappointed.

In college, he didn’t ask either. By now, it was just what was done. There was no preamble, no necessary pretense for why you were alone together. All it took was a quick note of interest, a smile or one-liner. You think I’m hot, yes or no? Yes? Great, come to my dorm. Okay. Harry pulled at my shirt before he bothered to kiss me. So insistent on getting what he planned for.

But I was not some meek and mild girl. I had a voice. I could make choices. I leaned in for a kiss as I moved his hands down to rest on my hips. Easy cowboy, lets dance a little first. His lips were tight and driven, his tongue darting in and out of my mouth, pointed and hard as he tried to take back the control. When did this become a power struggle? His hands persisted, sliding up my sides, taking hold of me again. It was only when I started to pull away that he finally tried to woo me, “Sansa, your tits are fucking top-notch.”

Disenchanted.

This one now, from work, also did not ask. His eyes followed me for weeks, telling me that I was worth watching. His hands moved, running along the table, playing with his pen, fiddling, gesturing, telling me what he’d do for me if he could. His smile, expressed a thousand different subtle ways, all told me he was waiting for me.

Petyr never asked to touch me, because it wasn’t necessary. I ached for him to. And when he reached for my cheek, pressing his lips to mine, I wanted his hand to cup the breasts I so wantonly arched forward. My lips opened further, accepting, begging, for what his tongue implied.

Never before, had I wished so ardently for the buttons on my shirt to burst, freeing my naked flesh to him. Never before, had a man slid his hand down my neck, and stopped, settling it over my heart. It did not, would not, move. Never before had a man teased me this way, showing me his self control. Where was mine?

Addicted.
He let his gaze settle on her for the **seventh** time that day.

Seven. No, that can’t be right. Seven was *excessive,* to say the least. Petyr had seen pretty women before—many of them, in fact. Surely, no one was beautiful enough to garner such thorough and frequent inspection. *Seven times?* Really. He’d only ever gawked that obviously at a woman during the onset of puberty. It would be preposterous to think that he, now, a man of forty, would be so flagrant in his attraction, as to look seven times! Except, that he knew for certain that it had been exactly that. The fact that he repeatedly glanced over to the redhead in the waiting room, had not been lost on him. Petyr was a numbers man, and counting came natural. People who weren’t him, may have said, “numerous times,” or “repeatedly.” They would not have the attention to detail that he did. They would lack the indisputable ability to know without a shadow of a doubt that his eyes flicked up through the glass, watching her pace back and forth, picking at magazines and shifting in her seat uncomfortably, exactly seven times.

*Six times, she turned away.*

She took in her surroundings, glancing at the service counter where she would inevitably pay whatever price-gouging service rate Spider charged. The beautiful redhead in the short skirt and combat boots, picked through the stack of greasy magazines all depicting high performance vehicles. She was seemingly unaware of how he appraised her from afar. What was her value? Moreover, what was her value to *him,* Petyr watched her eyes rove, scanning around her. He counted *six* times, she looked through the observation glass into the garage, as they worked on her car, and then looked away, as if seeing nothing of interest. Did she see him at all? Did he need her to?

*Five times, she pretended not to notice.*

He positioned himself more center in her view as he negotiated with Spider, something he usually gave more attention. Petyr knew that she could see him. He made it a point to smile to the side and gesture with his hands more than typical. Her lack of movement, however, told him that she looked right through him. He was surprised to find his teeth clench a little in frustration. Why wasn’t she noticing him? Did she not know who he was? Or even that he was noticing her, it was common courtesy to return the favor. Spider smiled wider and he knew that he was losing his footing. He breathed through his nostrils, minimizing the inhale. As he countered Spider’s last quip, he realized, why would she know him?

Why would she know his reputation, what he was capable of? She was *legitimate business,* which in a place like this, happened just enough to keep the IRS in the dark. This girl wasn’t here to get VIN numbers scratched, clean plates, or complete body overhauls. Spider said she was here off the street to get her bumper painted after a shopping cart hit it in the parking lot. Insurance wasn’t paying for it, so she must have searched for the cheapest shop in town. How naive of her to think this place was somewhere for someone like her to patronize. Did she not take note of the neighborhood? The name “Spider” alone should have been clue enough.

Petyr lifted his hand, running it through his hair to avoid getting any further ruffled. It was then that he caught glimpse of her staring straight into the garage. Not at him, of course, but in his general direction. Was she finally onto him? Could she feel him looking at her? He thought back,
counting. *Five* times her gaze wandered, though this time, it stopped, focusing more on the garage. Still not on him.

**He’d been by on four separate occasions**

Spider sent her home, telling her that the car would take hours, that he would have to remove the bumper to paint it effectively. Petyr knew better, a scratch like that would take twenty minutes at best, fifty if they went through the trouble of sanding it down, and as quick as six if cops were enroute. Spider just didn’t want her hanging around his less-than-legal activities.

Petyr kept that opinion to himself, because saying so would only highlight the fact that she had somehow gotten his attention. It was dangerous to notice people. Spider firmly believed that people were always the best leverage, and had been known to smuggle his fair share of them away for his own means. It was in working with people like Spider, and if Petyr were being honest, the man he, himself had become, that made him decide against women long ago.

Pretty girls were only good for one thing: quick relief and hard release. It was primitive, certainly, but not any less true. Petyr reminded himself that should a woman linger, the potential bulls-eye on their forehead would only become more pronounced. What did he know of this girl, anyway? Nothing. Never-ending legs. Ample tits. Long hair as bright a shade of red as the tight balls that ached whenever he thought about it too intently. None of these qualities warranted his time. It was simply superficial observations about a total stranger, biology tugging at his base needs, and nothing more. There was absolutely no reason for him to return to the shop in the hopes of seeing her again. Let alone, do so on four separate occasions that day.

**She’d been out for three, missing him but for this last.**

He exhaled in disappointment, not realizing that he’d been holding his breath in the first place. One would think that the first two times he’d done so, he’d come to expect the catch of breath that the anticipation caused. But, no. The *third* time that he arrived, not finding her, was no different from the first two. He grew a bit edgy, anxious and irritable. Who was she to affect him so? Petyr Baelish had been on this world for decades more than her, having lived an entire life before she’d even been a thought. Or, at least, he believed the age difference was that profound, judging by the taut flesh on those toned thighs, and the bright fresh face that yet held no lines of use. How dare she enthrall him so? He hadn’t even heard her utter a word and already she was capable of drawing him out after her, like a heartsick boy, palms itching to discover second base. He stood in the shop, having given various excuses for his repeated return visits, and told himself that he would not stop by again. Until he did.

**Twice she knew without question, that he was staring.**

She had to have known how he looked at her, despite her age and the fact that she brought her completely legal vehicle to Spider’s shop, advertising how naive she was, too. All of that aside, she was a woman. Something inside her had to sense him, had to know that he was lurking behind the glass, waiting for an opportunity to pounce. Hormones, chemistry, call it what you will. Though she knew nothing of him, and he nothing really of her, attraction to this degree transcended reason and logic.

When she returned to the shop on Petyr’s fourth trip, there was something slightly different about her. Her lips were a deeper shade of color than they had been hours before. She turned towards the glass, towards the garage, towards him. Her eyes continued to peruse the shop, as if she didn’t
see him looking back, as she had before. The cut of her shirt seemed lower than it had been, offering a better show of cleavage. Her hand smoothed down her long locks, somehow shinier now, as she glanced to the clock. This was deliberate. She was cleaning up for someone.

Petyr surveyed the garage, finding only grizzly looking grease monkeys, and Spider. Surely she wasn’t dressing up for the fat, bald man, always more focused on his own dealings than with women. Especially since, Petyr couldn’t help but notice that out of the two of them, she was offering him the better view. It was then that Petyr realized that she knew he was staring, at least twice, she knew.

*Only once did she look back.*

He slid his hands in his pockets, and lowered his head, unable to hide the smug smile he wore at having bested Spider in yet another way. Whether the man knew it or not, she was a competition, one that Petyr won. Petyr bit his lip, to control his pride before it was too apparent, and raised his head. He flinched at the shock given by a pair of electric blue eyes. They shined so bright, even across the garage, and through cloudy smudged glass, that he fought not to squint at the intensity. Every nerve in his body fired in awareness and his feet towed him towards her without pause for permission. She wet her lips, and tracked his movements through the glass, as he approached. Neither of them blinked, offering no reprieve from each other’s, all at once, returned attention. Petyr was barely aware of his grip on the handle to the door separating them, watching her cheeks redden and her fingers fidget. He took a step over the threshold, seeing her now in the flesh, no barrier between them, and could not doubt her affect anymore than she could pretend not to notice. Just as he opened his mouth to say something, what he didn’t know, she finally blinked and lowered her head. Petyr glanced down to the set of car keys in front of her, dangling from a pair of sausage fingers pinched together, attached to a meaty hand and even beefier arm. Spider’s smile did nothing to conceal the venom he stung with as he said, “Car’s done.”

She nodded absently, and backed away reluctantly, her eyes waiting until the last possible moment to tear from his. Spider gave him a wink and Petyr felt his arms tremor with how tightly his clenched fists flexed his muscles. He turned quickly, refusing to let anyone witness his loss of control, and returned to the garage. As he passed by the various lifts and parked cars in each bay, he found himself looking for hers. It had been parked just outside, waiting for her to finish paying. He thought of her eyes and the moment they shared, however brief, and without hesitation, took out his own set of keys and dug a deep scratch above the door to her gas tank. She would be back. He would see her again. And if that wasn’t enough to ensure it, he snapped a pic of her license plate and smiled wickedly to himself. He would know her name…and her address.
Sansa looked up, startled, clutching the driving book in her lap. “Yes, Mom.”

Her mother, rolled her eyes. “Oh for pete’s sake, Sansa. If you had been paying attention, you’d know they called your name.”

She nodded, tucking some hair behind her ears, with one hand, and gripping the book to her chest with the other. She walked past the rows of chairs at the driving school her parents purchased her lessons from. The portly man who stood by the open door glared at her and held his hand out.

Sansa looked down at his cracked palm and then back up to his bloodshot eyes, and shrugged her shoulders nervously, not understanding. “You can’t take the book into your test. And you can’t do the field work, until you’ve passed the written part.” He sounded like he had something caught in his throat as he talked.

Reluctantly, she let go of the book, and gave it to him before walking through the archway to the exam room. It was empty, but for a paper exam and a number two pencil on the desk. Sansa looked around in disbelief before sitting down and picking up the pencil. Surely, there were other people who needed to pass this test? Sansa had been studying for weeks for this. Where was the moderator?

Occasionally, she was distracted from her work by the movement outside the open back door that lead towards the parking lot. She filled out line after line about various traffic codes and what different signs meant, all the while listening to a muffled conversation outside. As the men neared the door, she was able to hear it more clearly. “…just take the job.”

Another voice sounded less than pleased. “I don’t owe you anything!”

“Yeah? Not twelve grand, then? No, that’s what I thought.” Sansa heard the original man retort. A set of keys jingled in the air, and Sansa looked up to see a man backing up past the door to catch them. He stood in her line of sight as he stared at the person he’d been talking to. “Nice. You know, I could make you back twice that if you’d just quit stepping on my dick.”

He was a thin man, older, some grey dusting his temples. Flecks of that same shade of grey sprinkled throughout his goatee. He wore beat up jeans and a black sweater with a silver chain around his neck, a nice watch to match. He glanced through the doorway at her and then did a double-take, smiling as he brought his hand up to rub at his mouth. She recognized that gesture as something men did when they were quickly evaluating things, she’d seen her father do it a thousand times. Her father, did it, but also never changed his stance. This man, on the other hand, seemed to be. He turned quickly, “You know what? I’ll do it. It’s not a problem.”

Sansa had just folded the test over and was rising from her seat to turn it in, to where, she didn’t know, when the man sauntered through the door. He extended his hand to shake hers, but she thought it was to collect her test, and she thrust it towards him. He chuckled and set it on a nearby desk, and held his hand out again, “I’m Petyr, I’m your instructor today, what’s your name?”

“Sansa,” she spoke barely above a whisper, uncomfortable by all the inside information she had concerning his recent acceptance of the role of her instructor.

His smile was inappropriate, and nothing she hadn’t seen before from any of the boys at school.
She slid her hand in his, allowing it to grip her as she considered him. While she was no stranger to leering, there was something about the way this man looked at her that told her she would be in over her head with him. The boys at school could check her out all they wanted, and smile as they pictured screwing her in their backseat. This man however, looked like he would do a lot more than that, offer her more than that. He emanated experience and she wondered if she could keep up with a man like that.

As soon as the thought entered her mind, she shook it from her head. It was just a look. How full of herself was she to think that one look meant so much? He licked his lips and flashed her a grin, “Well, Sansa. Right this way.”

She followed him out to the parking lot, to the car with the driving school sign attached to the roof. Her cheeks reddened, feeling embarrassed over the prospect of driving the vehicle that all other cars on the road would make superficial lane changes to avoid. He waved his hand for her to get in, and he hopped in the passenger side.

Sansa took a deep breath and looked over all the controls of the car. It was not one of her parent’s vehicles and therefore she needed to acclimate herself to it. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw him looking at her, her lap in particular. She turned to face him and his head shot up quickly, “Alright, Sansa. Go ahead and start the car.”

She glanced down noticing how high her mini skirt sat, and how her legs had to part to reach the pedals. Had he seen anything? No, he couldn’t have. She looked on the dash for the button to start the car, finding nothing. “Um, I’m sorry. I don’t see the button.”

He moved next to her, laying one arm around the back of her seat, and chuckled as he handed her the keys. Amusement filled his voice, “Apologies, I forgot to pass you the keys.”

Sansa took them from him and found the keyhole on the steering column, silently scolding herself. She knew the car took a key, she’d seen them get thrown at him before they left. She was simply nervous to officially be behind the wheel of a vehicle. She glanced over at him, startled to see how close his face was to hers. He hadn’t moved back, his arm still draped around the back of her seat.

His cologne filled her nostrils and she’d be lying if she said her body didn’t respond to it, shifting in her seat. Clearing her throat, she reached forward and turned the key, listening to the engine roar to life. “Where to?” She tried to sound casual, as she tucked some hair behind her ear again.

He caught her hand, so close to his face, and brought it to his nose, closing his eyes as he inhaled. “You smell absolutely delicious.”

Her eyes bulged and her mouth went dry. She panicked not knowing what to say, staring at him. Luckily, he kept talking. “It’s light and sweet, almost edible…it’s a fruit isn’t it?”

“Pomegranate,” Sansa answered, with the single word she could manage.

His grin grew as he repeated, “Pomegranate, you don’t say?” He dragged his nose over her knuckles again. “It’s not a common scent, is it? I mean most girls–women, choose things like vanilla, strawberry, coconut. All the shit you can find in a car freshener, really.” He inhaled again, letting her see his eyes light as he leaned further in, “And, if we’re being honest here, coconut makes me gag. It reminds me of all the fake-and-bakes women tan in at laundromats, and the last thing I want to think about when I’m smelling a woman, is fucking a leather couch.”

“What?!” A shocked laugh slipped out, leaving her jaw open, hanging in disbelief.

He chuckled, “Sorry. I probably shouldn’t have said that.” He let go of her hand, and let his eyes
travel her as he said, “I only meant that you’re miles ahead of women many years older than you.”

“It’s alright.” She knew she shouldn’t feel so complimented by that, but she did. It was with this new confidence that she put the car in reverse and backed out of the parking space, looking in all directions before traveling to the end of the parking lot. His words swirled around her head, smelling a woman, fucking…

She took a deep breath and asked again, “Where to?”

He smiled like there was something he knew that she didn’t. “Take a right up here.”

She followed his instructions, her movements more jerky in this foreign vehicle, but adequate all the same. As they drove, she noticed the traffic and businesses were getting further and further away. “Where are we going?”

“Docks,” he answered simply, popping a mint in his mouth before turning around and asking her a question. “How old are you?”

She laughed uncomfortably, “Old enough.”

“Oh?” That got his attention. His eyebrow raised, “For what?”

Sansa made a show of glancing around her and shrugging her shoulders. “For driving. I assume that’s what you’re referring to.”

He chuckled, “Sure.” He leaned over her shoulder again, mint filling her nostrils as he covered her hand on the steering wheel with his. “I need to correct your positioning, Sansa.”

She felt her heart speed up, a million butterflies taking flight in her stomach. “What?”

“Your hands aren’t where they’re supposed to be.” She couldn’t help glancing at his groin when he said that. Instantly, she clamped her eyes shut tight and refocused on the road, cursing herself for looking. As if he didn’t notice, though she was sure he did, he brought one hand down lower on the steering wheel, rubbing her thumb with his.

“Yes, they were,” She disagreed, a slight tremble to her voice, that she hoped he didn’t notice. “They were at ten and two.”

He leaned further over her, his breath hot on her breast as he brought her other hand down lower on the steering wheel. “I’m sorry, Sansa, but that’s incorrect. Here, park over there.”

They had, arrived at the docks and there was plenty of parking spots. When she put the car in park, he explained, “If you get into an accident, and the airbag goes off, what do you think will happen at ten and two?”

“Uh, I don’t know. My arms will fly up,” Sansa shrugged.

“Exactly.” Again he reached for her hands, lifting them above her head, not bothering to hide the way he ogled her breasts as he did. “This hand will hit your window, and this hand will hit the roof. It will happen at such speed that it could shatter your knuckles if not simply just break your hand altogether.”

Sansa stared into his eyes, her hands still held up in the air as she pictured it. Hovering inches from her face, his minty breath brought her out of the imagery. “You’re going to need your hands working. If you’ve been in an accident, you need to get out of the car immediate. Before it sinks, before it blows. You will have to cut your seat belt, bash through your window and climb or swim
out. You can’t do any of those things with broken hands.” He brought them back down, and rubbed his thumbs over them again. “These are what are going to save your life.”

The seat belt and her bra became restraints as her chest heaved at the intensity of his words, and the picture they painted. She swallowed a couple of times, trying to get the saliva in her mouth moving as he brought her hands back to the wheel. “You want your hands on five and seven.”

Feeling too rattled to ask, she tilted her head in question. He smiled and said, “Because, when the airbag sets off, they will fall back into your lap.” He tugged her hands from the steering wheel, and pressed them down against her thighs.

Her eyes fluttered when he let his fingers brush against her skin. He licked his lips as he smiled, “See? Your legs are much softer to land against than the car. No broken bones.”

Sansa opened her eyes, and glanced at the chain dangling around his neck. A wicked thought popped in her head and she imagined yanking him down by it to kiss him. She knew he’d be minty, but wondered about the taste beneath it. Boys tasted differently, she’d learned. As she took in the grey at his temples, she wondered how men tasted.

He dragged his fingertips slowly off of her thighs, and opened the passenger door. “I’ll be right back.”

She watched him through the windshield as he walked down a dock, to a couple of men standing on a boat named, “The Dornish Man’s Wife.”

Sansa spread her legs further, and brought her fingertips down to confirm that she had soaked through her panties. “Fuck,” she sighed. She chided herself as she watched him pass something to one of the guys. “He touched your hand, Sansa. That was it. You complete and utter horn-dog.”

She closed her legs and sat up straight when she saw him walking back up towards the car, a self-satisfied smile on his lips. She wondered for a moment if the man was ever not happy. She watched him tuck something in his belt behind his back and fix his sweater over it before he got in the car.

When he opened the door and got in, another waft of his cologne filled her nostrils and she smiled as if on reflex. He rested his arm around the back of her seat again, “Ready to head back, Sansa?”

She nodded, feeling like if she spoke aloud, he might somehow know what was going on between her legs. It was a silly thought, and she knew it, but couldn’t make herself respond any differently.

They drove back towards the city, traffic increasing and stores popping up everywhere. Occasionally, he would lean over and tell her to change lanes, or use her signal. A couple of times she forgot to, and waited for him to say something. When he didn’t, and she glanced over, she would catch him leering at her. Part of her wanted to tug at her skirt, and pull the neckline of her shirt up. Another part of her wanted to shift in her seat to allow more flesh to peek out. She told herself that was wrong, that she was just flattered by the attention, like she would be with any guy checking her out. However, she couldn’t deny that there was a big difference between the smile she got from their attention, and the tingling she felt to be free of her constraints at his.

When they pulled into a parking spot and turned off the ignition, she reached for her belt buckle. He was quicker, “Let me.”

She inhaled, her eyes wide at the sudden ache low in her belly as she stared back into his dilated pupils, hovering so close to hers. His lips must have been inches away, but they felt like mere millimeters, the gap between them easily closed with a shot of courage. He looked down at the
belt buckle in his grip, slowly retracting, letting the back of his hand slide against her belly, his thumb grazing the underside of her breast.

Her nipples stood at attention, fighting the weight of her shirt, to reach towards the man touching her. Again, her mouth went dry when stared down at his hand against her, and she shifted in her seat a little, arching her back for him. It was an unspoken request, a dare to cross the line. She knew she shouldn’t, but it felt so good to.

Her movement seemed to snap him out of his trance, because he flashed her a grin and said, “Next week, Sansa?”

A deep breath wouldn’t control the slight tremor through her hand as she gripped the handle, stalling. “You’re not really a driving instructor.”

“Why would you say that?” He asked, the picture of innocence and confusion.

She glanced down to his hands, and said nothing.

He leaned forward, and touched his hand to her leg. There was no pretense, nothing to hide behind in this contact. “Does it bother you?”

She laughed uncomfortably. “No. I mean–you shouldn’t say you’ll see me next week, when you won’t.”

His lips pouted playfully as he looked down at her lap, watching his thumb brush further under her skirt. “Sounds like you are bothered.” His fingers gripped her inner thigh more, the heat between her legs radiating as she spread her legs. “Mm, hot and bothered.”

“Sansa!” Her mother’s familiar voice called out from across the parking lot. “Sansa!”

“Looks like you’re mom’s looking for you.” He let the very tip of his middle finger just barely brush against the outside of her sodden panties.

Her body felt on fire, a deep blush consuming her as her tits ached and her clit tingled at his tease. She didn’t think it was possible to get any wetter than she already was, but wondered if when she got up, there might in fact, be a puddle on the seat.

As her mom approached the car, his hand withdrew from her skirt. He rested his elbow on the dash, letting his chin rest on his fist, and gave her a naughty grin.

Her mother rapped her knuckles against the window. “Sansa, let’s go! Stop taking up this poor man’s time. We have to pick up your brother from basketball, and your sister from archery. And then there’s all those lemon squares I have to bake for key club. Why did you pick lemon squares? I swear, sometimes you live to make things more difficult.”

Sansa’s blush deepened. Mothers dealt in mortification. She shouldn’t have been surprised, and yet she was completely sideswiped by the way her mother cock-blocked her. Well, that wasn’t exactly right… It wasn’t his cock that was teasing her, yet.

“How are you all flushed? Do you have a fever?” Her mother fussed over her. “Oh for pete’s sake, Sansa! Are you getting sick? I don’t have the energy to deal with you sick right now.”

“Sansa?” She heard his voice call to her, and she turned to look over her shoulder as her mother shuffled her away.

He turned to sniff his finger and sigh, “I’ll see you next week.”
“Of course you will! We paid for the whole eight week course!” Her mother answered for her.

“Eight weeks,” he grinned. “Perfect.”

A jolt of excitement and anxiety rolled through her as she realized the man who smiled at her as he inhaled her scent, would be the same man that took her virginity. If her parents had anything to say about it, it’d be within the next eight weeks, too.
“No, Petyr. Stop,” she giggled. His hand on the small of her back dipped lower. “Your meeting, remember? You’ll be late.”

“They’ll wait for me,” He smiled against her lips. “I’ve got important matters to see to here.”

Sansa shook her head, laughing. “No, Petyr. Go.”

“Don’t wanna,” he teased, flicking his tongue over her bottom lip.

She leaned back away from him, trying to school her face as she insisted, “You’ve really got to stop.”

His fingers traced the outline of her panties through her skirt. “Why?”

She caught his hand, and redirected it to her waist, explaining, “Because we have sex too much!”

His resulting smile, and the way his eyes landed on her cleavage, told her he was remembering the many, many times they’d been intimate. His voice was light as he asked, “What’s too much?”

Sansa lifted his chin so their eyes would meet. “People think we’re sex-addicts.”

“So?” He tilted his head in her hand and covered her thumb with his mouth, sucking it as he reached for the hem of her skirt.

Sansa’s eyes fluttered shut, a light moan escaping her. She felt her panties dampen, sitting wet against her womanhood, as his palm made contact with her bare flesh. She shook her head, regaining her senses, barely. “No, Petyr. There’s more to us than just sex.”

He nodded, his eyes still undressing her, as he worked her undergarment. “I agree.”

She pried his hand off her ass as she said, “But other people don’t know that! They think we’re just in it for the sex, no substance.”

Petyr shrugged with a boyish grin. “Jealous people that don’t matter. They wish they could feel your soft skin like I can, or be touched the way I touch you.”

His lips were on her again, and she felt her knees give a little when his teeth grazed the pulse point on her neck. She had to stay strong. “Petyr, I mean it.”

“Mm, I can tell,” he snickered against her breast.

That did it. A whole new determination settled over her and she pushed him away, crossing her arms. “Petyr Baelish! Take me seriously, because I mean it when I say this: We are not having sex for at least a month.”

“A month?” He eyed her skeptically.

“Fine, three weeks.” She pulled her hair back behind her ears.

He grinned, “Best make it two.”

“This is not a negotiation,” she laughed.
“Because you know I’ll win?” He baited her.

Sansa felt the dimples in her cheeks deepen. “Petyr, two weeks. That’s it.”

He ran his tongue under his lip and sucked his teeth, thinking, before he shrugged, “Alright. I accept your challenge.”

“What?” She chuckled, surprised he was agreeing.

He slid back a step, the warmth of his hands leaving her body. “I accept your challenge, just as I said.”

“Challenge?” Sansa eyed him. “Petyr, this isn’t a challenge. I think this would be good for our relationship.”

“Do you think we have a good relationship?” He asked, turning for his briefcase.

“Well, yes.” She tucked her hair back behind her ears again, with a forced sense of certainty. “Of course.”

He set some folders inside the case as he reasoned, “Then this will not necessarily be beneficial to our relationship, so much as cater to individuals outside of it. Individuals, that apparently like to burden your ears with their opinions.”

Sansa closed her eyes and took a breath to center herself. “You’re upset.”

“Oh the contrary, I’m motivated.” His eyes lit as he closed the case.

Oh shit. Sansa groaned, “Motivated?”

“Absolutely.” Petyr straightened his tie, smirking smugly as he explained. “We’re going to explore other aspects of our relationship for the onlookers. And you can’t have your way with me for two solid weeks.”

Sansa scoffed, “You’re kidding?” If he thought for a second that she was the one unable to control herself, he was sorely mistaken.

He leaned into her, his familiar cologne filling her nostrils. “Not in the slightest. I’m taking you very seriously, and I’m respecting your needs in our relationship. If we don’t make it the two weeks, it won’t be because of me.” Before she could retort, he kissed her thoroughly. It was slow and deep, and tasted entirely deliberate. Her eyes were still closed when he broke away from her lips and purred, “Sansa?”

“Oh?” She blinked her eyes open, slowly coming to her senses.

“Your hand,” he chuckled.

She glanced down, finding her palm on his chest, fingers curled, gripping. “Oh!” She yanked her hand away, as if it had touched a hot stove. A blush washed over her as she realized how she’d unconsciously attempted to escalate their intimacy.

Petyr’s laugh was diabolical. “Now, now Sansa. We’re supposed to be exploring other interests.” As he strode towards the door, he tossed over his shoulder, “My book club meets every Wednesday night. I’ll have a copy of the book we’re reading sent to you by lunchtime today.”

“Petyr—”
Completely ignoring her attempt to engage with him, he waggled his eyebrows at her suggestively. “We’re reading *Lolita.*”

She sighed, trying to get a word in edgewise. “*Petyr—*”

He cut her off again, this time raising a hand for emphasis. “I know, I know. I swore I wouldn’t read another Nabokov book, especially after the complete drivel that was *Pale Fire,* but it’s what the group wanted.” He made a show of letting his eyes rove her body as he stepped through the doorway. “It’s actually quite compelling. In some respects, even *relatable.*”

She opened her mouth to respond just as the door shut. Sansa blinked a few times, wondering what she had gotten herself into before it suddenly dawned on her, *Wait, Petyr’s in a book club?*
The board was out, the pieces already placed. Lord Baelish leaned back in his chair, one leg crossed over the other, his arms set to rest in his lap. He smiled with ease because it never had to reach his eyes. People avoided the eyes, *especially his.*

Who wouldn’t with the way one got caught up in them?

Or perhaps that was just her.

“Well?” The sound of his voice startled her. It was so different from other men. She expected that with the soldiers, gruff men often had gravel in their throats. The lords, however, were unexpected. They were so pampered in their castles, one would think their voices would be as soft as the soles of their feet.

Instead they ranged from the cracking pitches of pubescent boys responsible for more than they were ready for, to fat old men barking louder to be heard above each other at court. Neither young man or old, had held a sword in their hand that wasn’t decorative, yet they both tried to speak to the opposite. They puffed their chests out as though they had run through their fair share of enemies and wiped enough blood spray from their faces, to warrant their current status.

Sansa shifted in her seat, “Pardon?”

His cheek twitched. “I asked you a question, Lady Sansa.”

“I’m embarrassed to admit that I missed it,” she looked down at the restless hands in her lap, hoping that her body language would hide the fact that she hadn’t. She knew exactly what he’d asked, simply wanted more time to decide her answer. She wanted the opportunity to hear him repeat it, use the unique voice that didn’t pretend to be anyone other than who he was.

It sounded again, signalling every fine hair in her body to stand on end and fight the constraints of her dress. “Which are you sweetling? A player or a piece?”

The light chuckle that escaped her polite smile, gave recipients the illusion of her naivety. Though with Lord Baelish, it was becoming less of an illusion and more of a reality. The man was so much more than the others, and it was taking her much longer to learn his game. Just when she thought she understood one of his rules, an exception to it would arise. “I don’t understand your meaning.”

He adjusted the rings on his fingers, looking down at them as he spoke. She appreciated the reprieve from his gaze, so potent was its effect. “It’s about how one plays the game. Do they think with the piece, limited by its moves? Or do they think as a player, able to see around the rules the others are confined by?”

Sansa struggled to find the perfect response, fearing it would fall short of his expectations. Did he have expectations? Only those that were invested, bothered to form those. Was Petyr ever so imbued?

*Petyr*—when had she started to refer to him so casually? He was Lord Baelish, never more. He blinked, his eyes suddenly on her, waiting for her response.

She’d never felt so measured before, so calculated, as when their eyes met. She sounded much more nervous than she meant to. “I want to think as a player, but I often times feel as though I think more as a *piece.*”
He fingered the smallest token on the board, a slight rumble in his chest as he responded, “Pieces are without will. Helpless victims of the player’s might. Are you one to allow yourself be dashed across a board at a player’s discretion?”

The question was posed to challenge her, she could see that clear as day. What was not as clear, what took time to figure out, was the feeling that a sliver of hope seeped into his words. Was the idea of dominating her so desirous to him?

The way the sun caught the silver streaks at his temples, and emphasized the stubble that accumulated outside of his perfectly groomed goatee, reminded her of his masculinity. Underneath the rich fabrics, expensive jewelry, and heavy coin purse, was a man who dealt in women—something she was becoming quite fast. She smoothed her skirt over her thigh, wishing to draw his attention as she admitted, “At times.”

His cheek twitched and she was certain the smile on his lips would touch his eyes.

It hadn’t, and she had to stifle her frustrations over it. She didn’t know when she started to care so much for Lord Baelish’s approval, but she knew now that she’d never be satisfied without it. Trying desperately to attain it, she scrambled to keep his attention. “Everyone knows that the game is over once the king dies, but he’s not the most important piece.”

“Isn’t he?” He tilted his head, allowing himself to be lead down whatever path she was taking. Her stomach fluttered. No one ever allowed her the lead before. Not even in small things like these. But Petyr did.

Lord Baelish.

She cleared her throat. “The dragon piece that has all the power.”

“And why is that, sweetling?” His lips twitched, and she wondered what they would feel like against hers.

Her cheeks flushed at the thought. She picked at her gown, less purposefully this time as she glanced away. “He can fly.”

“Is it truly for flight alone that players covet that—” He paused, letting his eyes travel her. “Piece?”

The warmth that had started in her cheeks, traveled down her flesh, leaving everything aching in it’s wake. She feared he knew the changes taking place in her body, safely hidden in it’s dressing. She was right to.

He shifted in his seat, his jaw tight as he exhaled, audibly. Somehow he knew she burned for him, parts of her as hard as they’d ever been, while others liquified. Her newly developed body begged her to leave her seat and go to his. Surely he would allow her to sit in his lap and sling her arm around his neck. That was as far as her fantasy brought her, so ignorant to the ways of man and wife. There would be a kiss, of that she was certain. What would it be like to kiss a man as knowledgeable as him? A brothel owner. Where would she start? How would it occur?

Something inside her assured her that he would take the reigns, all she had to do was follow.

She slowly blinked, taking a breath. Sansa couldn’t let herself think that way. It would only lead towards disappointment, of all the suitors that had ever been discussed for her, Lord Baelish was never one of them. Regaining her senses, she leaned towards the table beside her, aware of her cleavage more prominently displayed in the motion as she reached for a piece of fruit. “It’s because the dragon has the most moves.”
Sansa wouldn’t let herself look up as she peeled the pomegranate, Petyr’s favorite fruit. For such a cleanly man, he seemed to indulge himself in the messiest ways. Though the anxiety that sang through her, prevented the change to verify it, she knew he was watching her. She could feel him tracking her movements.

It was with great care and no little amount of self-consciousness that she raised the fruit, taking it into her mouth, looking up as she took a bite. His hands gripped the arms of his chair as he watched. So startled was she by his intense focus that she bit down harder than she meant to and the little pods popped, juice pouring out of them and dribbling down her chin.

She felt it drip down to onto the bare flesh of her chest, and felt the blush return to her cheeks. The appropriate response would have been to apologize for looking so disheveled in the presence of a lord. Unfortunately, she could not, too arrested by the way his tongue wet his lips while he pulled a handkerchief from his sleeve.

He held it between them, silently asking permission. Something told her that if she didn’t give it he’d only find another way of getting what he wanted anyway. It was for that intuition alone that she nodded her approval, a deep desire to give him whatever she had to offer surfacing.

Overwhelmed by the predatory expression on his face, she flicked her gaze to the cotton cloth that hovered above her breast. The air caught in her lungs as his hand suspended there, mere centimeters from making contact. The scent of his soaped skin filled her nostrils and coaxed her to breathe to get a better whiff. A deep breath in, found her chest rising to meet cloth and ringed knuckle.

She shivered, goose pimples spreading. If he was inappropriate enough to comment, she would cite the cold metal of his rings, though in truth it was the feel of his knuckle on her breast, so freshly blossomed.

His hand came to rest on her, not dabbing as one of her lady’s maids would. Her chest heaved as she stared down at the contrast of his skin against her, accented by the small scrap of material that served to give license to the situation.

“Sweetling?”

The velvet of his voice gently roused her attention to him. “Hmm?”

She lifted her head, making the mistake of looking into the green pools of his eyes. His hand started to move, finally wiping the sticky red juice from her. As his thumb slipped free of the cloth, and lingered against her breast, she was certain she witnessed the smile that had been steadily gaining territory on his face, actually reach his eyes. “Some pieces are valuable enough to move their players.”

She swallowed, her palms sweating in her lap as his hand dragged down over her breast, slowly retreating. He tucked the cloth back in his sleeve, grinning as he did. “Whether you think like a player or a piece, it does not matter. Only that you know how you play the game. Then when you do play, you do so on your terms.”
When the dragon queen came to Westeros, it was rumored she stayed at Dragonstone and let her vast army alone, without the aid of her dragons, take the south for her.

Lies.

Perhaps she stopped at Dragonstone first, but she did not stay. Soon enough, the jawing of one queen provoked the force of the other. Wise coin would have bet on the lioness, gods knew she was vindictive enough to prevail, and one might argue that she had. In the end, it was not the honor of armies that defeated the capital, but instead the cheat of dragons and the catalyst of rage.

There were a few differences between dragon fire and wildfire, aside from the color. Where one was extinguishable by water, the other required sand, not something in abundance at King’s Landing. Where one burned hotter and longer, the other was by far more easily replenished. Both queens driven mad, cackled at each other amidst the flames, great monuments collapsing to ruin in a dance of orange and green light.

When fire touched Daenerys Stormborn Targaryen, and her skin did not blister, Qyburn warned his queen that they lacked any precaution that would mirror the ability. The self-proclaimed queen of the seven kingdoms dismissed her fallen maester for losing his faith in her cause. Petyr heard that when his body burned, it was not only rapid but that there was an almost purple tinge to the flame. He wondered if that was a result of the many years spent in his dark laboratory, his condemning experiments splashing up on him, giving him a much more flammable quality.

He laughed to himself, this was the thought of a small child. Too often, Petyr allowed himself such private amusement. He looked around what had been the throne room, staring at the broken trunks of the great pillars formerly used to brace the heavy ceiling. The same painted ceiling he would glance at whenever the person in front of him burdened his ears with their idiocy.

The iron throne remained, the swords only better fused, once they’d cooled again. Petyr pulled the crown from a pile of ash that had at once been Cersei Lannister’s skull. He blew the dust from the battered metal before he placed it on his head. The maesters would be arguing this for decades to come, who defeated whom. Petyr adjusted the crown, and leaned back in his seat. To him the answer was simple, I did.

Cersei burned alive in a mix of dragon and wildfire, her screams swallowed by the sound of the roof collapsing over her. That would have been a satisfying ending to anyone. Yet the kingdom sits unsettled. The Targaryen queen had armies and dragons at her disposal, but she too did not survive the war. Daenerys had the force but Cersei had the vehemence, and did not go out without dealing her final blow.

When both queens squared off in the throne room as it reduced to rubble, Daenerys stood proud in the heat, knowing she could withstand the fire as she had so many times before. Where Qyburn was correct in his declaration that Cersei could not live in the flames, he did not anticipate that there was someone at her disposal who could, for a while anyway.

The Mountain.

Petyr looked at the ground by his feet. The custom helm made for Qyburn’s notorious creature, sat on its side, blackened with a pile of ash inside. Petyr smirked at the knowledge that he was doing his queen’s bidding till the very end. Daenerys lifeless body darkened with soot sprawled out on the ground next to it. She didn’t burn, not even in death.
Petyr stared down at her breasts and deemed them unimpressive. He considered her castrated army and decided that perhaps she’d picked the best followers suited to her endowments. The inhuman way her neck was twisted and turned, proved the Mountain’s effectiveness at strangulation, as if there was any question.

Cersei must have known he would have a resistance no normal man would possess when she sent her brother away and demanded the undead Clegane stay with her in his stead. That wasn’t to say that the Mountain wasn’t affected at all, just that it seemed to take much longer to incapacitate and finish him. It was Daenerys that insisted the doors be locked to keep Cersei from escaping. In the end, it was she that could not break free from the very crushing grip of death.

A familiar voice pulled Petyr from his thoughts, “I didn’t mean literally.”

He looked up to see his oldest opponent approaching, in the very room they so often sparred in. “Varys.” He sifted through their many conversations in his mind, trying to determine his meaning. It hit him all at once, King of the Ashes. It wasn’t words Varys had spoken to him directly, though words he’d known Petyr learned of regardless. He made a point of looking around him as he grinned, “Ironic isn’t it?”

“Mm.” Varys brought his hands together, tucking them in his long sleeves as he tended to do. He raised his eyebrows at the crown Petyr wore. “Quite a feminine look for you.”

“I’m quite confident in my masculinity, Varys. Sorry you can’t say the same.” He let his gaze drop to where Varys’ legs met as he quipped, revelling in the nostalgia of their relationship.

“You’re supposed to be dead.”

Petyr waved his hand. “A performance. My queen would never kill me.”


“Queen Sansa is in Dragonstone, playing her part. She’ll send for me when it’s time.” Petyr saw no purpose in dishonesty in that moment.

Varys shook his head, “You won’t make to Dragonstone. Daenerys’ army is still strong, and quite loyal to Jon, both her soulmate and the last true Targaryen.”

“Guess who else Jon is,” Petyr’s cheek dimpled.

Varys’s expression remained neutral as he answered, “His love for Daenerys is stronger than his love for a mere cousin.”

“Is it?” Petyr took the crown from his head, twirling it in his fingers as he toyed with him. “She’s family. He may be Rhaegar Targaryen’s progeny, but he was raised by Ned Stark. He will do as she bids.”

“And what exactly is that, may I ask?”

“You may ask,” Petyr smirked.

Varys sighed in the silence that followed.

Petyr snickered at the inconvenience of it and then chose to explain. “Sansa will convince him to ride Drogon for her as she unites the kingdoms.” He tilted his head a little as he added, “In Daenerys’ memory, of course.”

Petyr took such pleasure in his old friend’s discomfort. “I will spare your life, Varys. Your skills are useful to me. If you bend the knee to my queen, that is.”

Cynicism poisoned Varys’ reply, “So it truly has come to this. Simpering and bowing before you.”

“Well, you do still have your head,” Petyr teased.

Varys shook his head, “This is madness.”

“Oh Varys! You’ve always looked quite darling on your knees, what does it matter who’s in front of you?” Petyr rose from his seat on the iron throne.

“I did what I did, for the good of the realm.”

Not missing the chance to twist the proverbial blade, Petyr smiled. “The realm. Do you know what the realm is?”

Varys stood silent.

“I’ll show you.” Petyr raised his hand to better emphasize the point he took such joy in making. “If I am the King of the Ashes, then it is only fitting I have an army of my own, isn’t it?”

Varys continued his vow of silence.

“Seize him,” Petyr called out to the ashes.

Varys chuckled, feeling safe and secure in the uninhabited wreckage.

That was, he did until the sound of feet crunching through the ash and grit sounded in his ears. Tattered and worn men of all ages shapes and sizes climbed out from behind the debris and closed in on him.

“It wasn’t just Robert that blessed my girls with bastards. How many baby boys do you think they bore faithful clients over the years? I’ve fostered them all, knowing they’d be of use later. My little army of bastards, waiting for my return to the capital, ever loyal to their surrogate.” Petyr roared with laughter as they captured Varys and forced him to the ground. Ashes blackening the knees of his fine purple robe.

Panic set in as Varys struggled against them, scratching and clawing at the nameless brunette bastards that held him in place. Petyr strolled in front of him, “Repeat after me: Sansa of the House Stark, first of her name, Queen of the Andals of the First Men, Protector of the Seven Kingdoms—”

“Long may she reign!” Varys quickly proclaimed, the instinct to survive took over.

Petyr’s cheek twitched in pleasure before he agreed, “Yes, long may she reign.”
The crisp autumn air was creeping into Petyr’s flat, seeping through the cracks of each window and door, freezing over the hardwood flooring as if it were an ice skating rink. She rather liked sweater weather, but even this was growing too cold for her. It would certainly be too cold for Petyr, a man who preferred a warm southern climate.

She stuck a bare foot out from under the covers to test the temperature. She quickly recoiled, feeling the stinging chill of an inhospitable atmosphere. She turned into the warm body next to her and pressed her face against the beating chest she knew quite well. “Petyr,” she whispered into the scar that trailed from nape to navel. “Hm?” He groaned.

She let her fingers play in the hair that sprinkled his chest, more pepper than salt, though she loved those bits too. She especially appreciated the dignified streaks of silver at each temple and the flecks of it in his facial hair. They were all signs that he was much older than her and she couldn’t have adore him more for it. What need did she have of some boy still trying to figure out his future, especially when she got herself a man? “I’m cold, can you turn the heat on?”

In an instant, his arm flopped over her, pulling her into a tight embrace. His voice was sleepy as he declared, “Then we’ll just have to use each other for warmth.”

“Petyr,” she smiled as she shoved him to let her go. “Come on! Get up.”

“Sorry, lost all motivation to move,” he yawned into her neck.

The hard lump against her belly grew and pushed into her as she wiggled in his arms. She pursed her lips in annoyance. “Really? All motivation? Because I’m feeling at least one part of you is up for moving.”

His hand reached down to the hem of her shirt and tugged it upwards. “If you’re really cold, you should take your clothes off.”

“Ha!” She rolled her eyes at him, struggling to pull her shirt down. “Petyr Baelish! Your future wife is freezing, will you do absolutely nothing about it?”

His goatee tickled her jaw as he nipped her ear. “I’m trying to. You refuse to get naked so that I can warm your body with mine.”

She slapped at his chest, biting her lip with joy at the impropriety of it. “Petyr, come on. I’m really cold. Stop thinking with your dick.”

He grabbed her by the waistband of her pajama shorts, yanking her closer to him, as he ground his pelvis against hers in one rough movement. She looked up quickly, her view eclipsed by warm grey-green eyes that stared back at her. He was awake, and by the bruise that was forming against her hip bone, she could tell he was wide awake. His lips spread into a naughty grin as he said, “I don’t have to think with my dick, Sansa. Where you’re concerned, it’s got a mind of its own.” His hand slid down her shorts, squeezing her ass.

She swallowed, her mouth watering, responding to a primal urge she hadn’t yet fully accepted at this time of the day with so many things to accomplish lying ahead. “Petyr, we shouldn’t.”

Not handling rejection well, he sighed, “I only meant body heat. You know, like when you’re
trying to survive out in the wilderness. It only really works with skin to skin contact.”

“Or you could just get out of bed and turn the heat on, like a gentleman,” Sansa scoffed, pulling his hands out of her shorts.

“Now, sweetling,” he grinned. “You didn’t accept my proposal because you wanted a gentleman.” His hand slid back under her shirt, holding the small of her back. “And besides, you don’t have class for another two hours, and I don’t have to go into work until I decide to–boss’s privilege.”

He wasn’t wrong. About any of it. She hadn’t wanted a gentleman at all, not after she met Petyr Baelish, the most accomplished man in the city. He ran many businesses, was on the board to so many more, and held the keys to the city itself. He stayed out of the papers, held no major political office, and would never be known by anyone casually observing. That was what she loved about him most, he preferred his life behind the scenes, pulling the strings, controlling the show. He didn’t need the attention of the spotlight, only the power that the staging controls gave. She didn’t want some pretty boy that would push her out of a picture to afford himself a better angle, but instead a man who would make her his focal point.

That was Petyr. To a tee. From the moment he’d seen her, he refused to see anyone else. She was with someone at the time and he was relentless in his pursuit of her, allowing nothing and no one to stand between them. Their first date was in the middle of her date with another. Petyr waited until her gentleman-friend went to the bar to get them drinks, before he swooped in. His words were smooth and they slid her legs apart long before she was cognizant of what moral code of conduct they were violating.

Her date blew up her phone with text messages from the table that he sat alone at, with only their drinks to keep him company. She didn’t notice the repeated vibration of her phone as she and Petyr got to know each other more intimately in the back of a cab on the way to his place. When she woke up the next morning, and read the messages, she felt the unbearable weight of guilt settle over her. Petyr held her close and gave her understanding and forgiveness for a crime they committed together. He offered her acceptance during a time when she was too distraught to find it in herself.

From that morning on, they were inseparable. He made sure of it and she allowed it. Encouraged it. Looked forward to it. Needed it. Him.

She sighed happily in his arms, her mind wandering to the past, and a time before then. “Do you think it’s always been like this?”

His fingers brushed strands of her bright red hair off of her forehead, tucking it behind her ear. “What do you mean?”

“Like, throughout time?” She blushed a little at how silly she might sound. “Like do you think couples like us were around in the dark ages, snuggling and arguing over who would turn the heat on?”

“Do you mean, do I think there were couples in the dark ages that had one person being cockblocked by the other’s education?” Petyr kissed her chin, his smug smirk downright devilish.

She groaned, “Petyr! You know what I mean. Like back in time, do you think there was a couple like us laying in a bed, in front of a fireplace, freezing in a bundle of furs teasing and arguing over who would get up and light the fire?”

“There would be no argument. As the man, I’d be expected to light the fire.” Petyr shrugged.
“Well that’s stupid,” she laughed. “I’m too independent for that.”

Petyr chuckled and kissed her jaw. “Indeed. However, you may not have been back then. You’d be Lady Stark.”

“If I’d be Lady Stark, then you’d be the great Lord Baelish,” she teased, rather liking the sound of that.

He paused for a moment, his cheek twitching as his eyes stared off in a distance over her shoulder. She wanted to turn around and see what he saw, but fought the urge. She didn’t want her movement to upset him. “Petyr?”

He shook his head, a forced smile. “Probably not.”

“Probably not, what?” When he didn’t answer, she leaned forward and kissed his cheek. “Hmm, Petyr? Probably not, what?”

He closed his eyes. “I didn’t grow up with money, like you.” He smiled, knowingly. “I’m not saying anything negative about your upbringing, so don’t get all offended.” He sighed, “I’m only saying that I had to work very hard to get to where I am, which some could argue isn’t exactly anywhere important. I’d probably be considered just another grasper from a minor house.”

She stared back into his eyes, recognizing the full extent of his vulnerability. It bothered her to see him so upset and she instantly wanted to soothe him, so she sat up and peeled her shirt off. He opened his mouth to flirt and she stifled him with a finger to his lips. “Skin to skin, Petyr. That’s all.”

He smiled as she shimmied closer to him, pressing her naked breasts against his chest. Her pebbled nipples ran across the soft scar that protruded, and the fine hair that tickled her goose pimpled flesh. His hand wandered down to her shorts and she gripped his wrist to stop him. “Don’t push your luck.”

He smirked. He loved to cross the line, moreso whenever she caught him. Incidentally, his pleasure turned her on so completely that she often lost her wits to the sensation. She cleared her throat, “So you wouldn’t be a lord?”

“Oh, no. I would be. I’m sure of that. Just perhaps, not necessarily a great and honorable one,” He shifted a little as if to get comfortable. She was not fooled, however, knowing his movement was only to allow her hardened nipples to better rub against his flesh.

Not very honorable, indeed. She smirked as she asked, “And how would the scoundrel Lord Grasper win the great Lady Stark?”

“By any means necessary, I’m sure,” he chuckled into her temple.

She bent her head and kissed his clavicle, letting her palm travel up his side. “How can you be so sure?”

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“Because, as you well know, given the proper incentive,” he let his hand move from the small of her back to her ribs. His eyes dilated with desire as his thumb brushed the side of her breast. “I can be quite ambitious.”

The resulting stir she felt deep in her belly, convinced her to shift her shorts down her thighs, over her knees, until she was able to kick them to the foot of the bed in a rumpled pile under the blankets that shielded them from the frosty air. She let her hand slide up his side as she pressed the entirety of her nudity to him, and smiled bashfully when she realized he’d been completely
naked all along. “You planned this.”

He smiled as his thumb found her nipple, his hand gaining more ground on her breast as he did. “I plan many things.” His eyes lit when she sighed in pleasure under his touch. “It’s what ambitious men do.” He lifted his head off the pillow to capture her lips in his, taking everything he could from her as he lifted her leg over his hip.
Lady Lysa and Lord Petyr had the third-story bedchamber to themselves, but the tower was small … and true to her word, her aunt screamed.

Something niggled at Sansa’s insides, making her stare off into the crowd living jovially into their cups. Sansa had spent so long trying to drive the emotion from herself, chase it off for her own survival. Like a loyal pup, it would sniff its way back to her, tugging at her skirts with its teeth, reminding her of its existence. Each time, she’d look down at it and nudge it away, it’s big sad wolf eyes pleading her to let it return to her side. Sorry, she’d apologize. There was simply no other way to live amongst the lion, but to cast her emotions out into the dark lonely weirwoods. Fear was always the strongest, and best at catching up to her before she’d have to steel herself to it and abandon it all over again. What she felt when her aunt screamed on her wedding night, however, was not fear that she felt deep in her belly, but it left it unsettled all the same.

It had begun to rain outside, driving the feasters into the hall one floor below, so they heard most every word. “Petyr,” her aunt moaned.

Sansa darted a glance to either side of her, looking for how the others responded. She’d been doing that a lot lately, waiting to learn the reaction of others, before she dared share a sentiment. He did that too, she noticed, Lord Petyr.

He acted so kindly towards her, at a time when it was unfavorable to do so. He risked much to pull her from the lion’s den, and tuck her away up high where only the birds could reach.

Birds.

She touched her hand to the tiny lump in the pocket of her skirt. It was hard and unbending, though it ought to be, being that it was made of silver. It was a beautiful thing, and Lord Petyr would own no less. He was older, though quite fashionable. It was a contrast to the men Sansa had the misfortune to be around, and not an unpleasant one. Her cheeks would tug a little, pulling her lips into a smile whenever she noticed him in a new robe or cloak, its fabric rich and smooth. She didn’t know why something as simple as a wardrobe could have such an effect on her, other than because it so prominently displayed his differences from other men.

She closed her eyes trying not to think of the many times she’d bruised at the hand of other men.

“Oh, Petyr, Petyr, sweet Petyr, oh oh oh. There, Petyr, there. That’s where you belong.”

Her aunt’s shameless chorus in the background called upon the image of Petyr’s eyes. They were unlike any other, green with a touch of grey in them, cooling them, calming them. They were not the bitter frost-blue of her family or the searing wildfire-green of the Lannisters that surrounded her, but instead neither extreme climate. They were a steady stasis one could actually thrive in.

And hadn’t she done just that?

In all the time she had looked into them, as much as she felt her hands fidget and her stomach jump, she felt the safest. It was while in his ever attentive line of sight that she’d survived so many times over. He brought her here, for her safekeeping. He told her she belonged with her family, and with his same smooth voice and entrancing eyes, told her aunt that she was not her family, but in fact, his. Did he mean to imply that she belonged with him? Lord Petyr and Alayne. Her body shivered at the idea that she was to be with him and him alone. Had she ever felt that way with anyone before, or was it simply the lure of his eyes that made her feel thusly?
Lady Lysa’s singer launched into a bawdy version of “Milady’s Supper,” but even his singing and playing could not drown out Lysa’s cries.

Sansa squeezed the hard lump once more before she worked the pleats of her skirts aside, feeling for the gap to her pocket. She needed the reality of the metal again, as she had when he gave it to her to hold.

The wedding was rushed, Petyr scarcely had a chance to object. Not that he would. Sansa’s lips tightened and she wondered why she would have such a reaction to the circumstances of Lord Petyr’s matrimony. He was the one tying himself to Lady Lysa, why should she care how he went about it?

It was so different from her own wedding to Tyrion. Almost savage. Yet, Lord Petyr, of the soft silks and polished rings, embraced it. He chuckled as he was shuffled up the stairs towards his bride.

“Come, Alayne! Help us with your father!” The ignorant ladies beseeched her, tugging at his tunic. His clothes were not the kind to carelessly pluck and grab at. Did they not know that? They were lady’s maids, surely they understood the value of the material they gripped. She felt irritation bubble beneath her skin, threatening to surface.

His eyes found hers, and again she was caught. They laughed and pushed him towards his bride, peeling at the wrapping of his clothing. She followed along to appear more helpful than she had the courage to be. The second lady nudged her freely as one would a bastard, and exclaimed, “Help us!” They plead her as Lysa plead him.

“Make me a baby, Petyr,” she screamed, “make me another sweet little baby. Oh, Petyr, my precious, my precious, PEEEEETYR!”

Sansa remembered laying a tentative palm on his shoulder, applying absolutely no pressure. She would not truly insist him to her aunt, a woman so disappointing in comparison to her mother, a woman she knew he loved.

He felt warm and solid under her palm and a familiar ache developed low in her belly. She had grown accustomed to the sensation whenever they made contact. She had felt it when Joffrey kissed her, before she knew better. She felt it when Ser Loras asked her to walk with him in the gardens. Where Lord Petyr was concerned, however, she felt it often and indiscriminately. Whether it was a polite kiss on the back of her hand, or when he brushed her hair over her shoulder, her breathing hitched in response. Whenever he whispered to her and let his lip accidentally graze her ear, she felt it the most, a warmth growing in her most intimate places.

Sansa was no babe. She understood what that feeling meant, having discerned it in her time as a lady. What left her confused and rubbing the pads of her fingers over the bumps and divots of the finely crafted jewelry, was how she could feel that way with a man so many years older than her. A man that had loved her mother, had married her aunt. It was absurd of her to allow a blush to color her cheeks at the private smiles he gave her.

He watched over her in a fatherly way, that was made clear enough when he picked their roles so distinctly. He may have traveled with her, but he settled with another. Aunt Lysa.

Her last shriek was so loud that it set the dogs to barking, and two of her aunt’s ladies could scarce contain their mirth.

As if they had when they were peeling his tunic down, exposing more of him than Sansa had ever
since before. She knew what a man looked like without his shirt on, having seen the fighters in the yard strip and wring the sweat from their clothes before putting them on. Fight practice under Ned Stark’s insistence was grueling at times and often times required men to shrug free of the linen that heated them.

Lord Petyr lacked the barbaric traits of military men, and though society told her to value those strengths, Sansa had only ever wanted to shy from them. Lord Petyr appeared unperturbed by the way the women giggled and exposed him with each step up the stairs. Was he not embarrassed by his thin and pampered frame? Perhaps not in front of a daughter.

Sansa felt her teeth grind as she looked out at the feast. The ladies had pulled so much of his clothing free, carelessly in their levity over delivering him to Lysa. Care had not been taken to relieve him of the silver Mockingbird Pin that he’d used to fasten his clothing. The competent man he presented himself as, Lord Petyr pulled it from the tunic that lay hanging around his waist.

“Alayne,” he requested specifically.

She moved to be seen by him. “Yes, father?”

His hand outstretched to give her something. Without thinking, she accepted what he offered, unsure of what it may have been. The weight of his small mockingbird pin landed in her palm and she stared back at him in question.

His smile was for the ladies that surrounded them, of that she was sure, because his eyes were for her alone as he said, “Look after this for me, will you?”

She nodded absently, too caught up in his gaze, trying not to allow her eyes to wander down his exposed flesh. The scar was not as frightful as she feared it would be and the smattering of greying chest hair only tended to minimize it. Sansa squeezed the pin in her hand, mindful of how it could prick her, if handled incorrectly. Out of everyone there, he made sure to give it to her specifically, his eyes soothing as he did. She wondered if he ever looked at anyone else similarly, and then instantly wondered why her muscles tensed over the idea of it, should he.

Her fingers touched to metal and she felt some small relief in verifying the existence of it. Lord Petyr would be pleased to see that she’d taken so well to the task he’d assigned her.
Petyr stood behind the curtain, eyeing the soon-to-be brides of Christ, all in an orderly line. Each year they got younger and younger, and though he knew he couldn’t take notice of that obvious fact, it was often the very first thing he did.

“The one all the way to the left is Jeyne Poole,” Mordane whispered.

*Plain in appearance and only moderately bred,* Petyr thought to himself.

“The one next to her is Mya Stone.”

*Stone? Common name. Clearly a nobody.* Petyr flicked his gaze to the third in line to say as much.

“Sansa Stark,” Mordane quickly supplied.

He glanced back to the trusted sister, letting his eyebrows raise in question. Stark was a name of consequence. No Stark would devastate a lineage by vowing chastity. He squinted his eyes through the gauzy divider, inspecting her more closely.

“Yara Greyjoy,” Mordane continued on to the last girl, ignoring his cue for information.

*Very funny,* he sighed before lifting his hand to stop her. Mordane never liked the way he looked at the girls, desperately wishing to forget the ugly truth that under the cloth there still very much breathed a man.

“Yara?” Mordane asked.

Rather than answer the asinine question entirely meant to distract, he parted the curtain and stepped forward, his slippered feet silent against the stone floor. A row of bright eyes widened at his sudden presence, proper ladies too conditioned to hold their gasps.

It would have been smarter to drag it out a bit, let his gaze rove over them. They would squirm at such attention from an older man—a man of great influence. For some reason, however, he simply couldn’t. The Stark girl compelled him towards her, as a siren calls a ship to wreck.

He was sure should she stand accused of those wiles, she’d feign ignorance and bat her luscious lashes out of the situation. Even so modest in her habit, no judge or jury would stand a chance caught in her startling gaze. “Have you sinned?”

“No, Sir–Father.”

The answer came from his right. He eyed the pout of Sansa Stark’s lips as he replied, “I wasn’t asking you, Miss Stone.”

Sansa glanced down, riddled with anxiety under his scrutiny. A small red tendril of hair came loose and dangled free by her eyes. She gasped in mortification and reached for it, only to be stopped. “Father, I—”

He brushed her hand aside and held the lock in his fingers, rubbing it with his thumb as it shone in
the cathedral lights. “I asked you a question. Obedience is paramount.”

She glanced to either side of her, no doubt, reminding him of their audience. “I…I…”

Petyr smiled and brushed the hair back under the linen, letting his fingertips trace the outline of her face and catch under her chin. “People often forget the purpose of sin, Miss Stark.”

“Sin turns us to Christ,” Mordane spoke from behind him, ever-protective of the girls in her charge.

He bit the inside of his cheek. It was much easier to chastise a girl in training than it was a woman so saved by favor. Appreciating her maneuver, he refused to be fazed by it and used her knowledge to his gain. “Correct, Sister.”

Though he never let his eyes leave the intriguing girl before him, he could feel Mordane shift confidently behind him. He took great pleasure in the simple gesture, knowing his next words would disrupt the ease in it. “How can one turn to Christ, without ever knowing the sin meant to drive them so entirely in his embrace?”

He pictured her mouth gaping behind him in the silence that followed his question and smirked as he insisted, “I can not in good conscience, condone the vows of a woman who’s never known sin.”

“Father-”

Petyr raised his hand to stifle Mordane’s poorly tempered outrage. “How else, Dear Sister, am I to truly trust in the devotion of betrothal to Christ?”

Something akin to a low growl emanated behind him and it took no little amount of effort to refrain from an outright chuckle at it. The old woman was caught, twisted up in the spin of his tongue. Petyr drew a deep breath, hoping to catch even the faintest trace of scent from the budding woman in front of him. The messy drop of hair had told him much more than he was ever supposed to know about the girl.

His lecherous mind considered all the other places he might spy the same shade of red, and even some deeper. Her ivory skin so soft and clean would prove the perfect backdrop to each rosy point of pleasure. “Now that we recognize the importance of sin to one’s piety, I must ask,” Petyr shamelessly adjusted the knotted rope around his robe. “Are you to be trusted, Miss Stark?”

“Yyy-,” she stuttered, before clearing her throat. “Yes.” Obviously embarrassed to have her honor (or lack of it) questioned, she admitted to her imperfection.

_Fascinating._

He hadn’t realized a grin had traveled so far as to touch his eyes until his view of her was affected. Odd. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d ever smiled that honestly before. Licking his lips at the various misdeeds such a girl could have involved herself in, he took a step back and gestured to the confessional booth some twenty-yards away. “Care to confess these sins?”
They say a man sees stars if knocked squarely enough in the skull, his brain rattled to another plain of existence. Though that’s never been my experience, finding only an isolating dim to wrestle myself in until reawakening to the world and it’s many demands of my name.

Lannister.

Kingslayer.

Brother.

Lover.

No. Stars never came to me when faced with a fight, however severe. Neither did they fill my eyes when the prettiest of ladies lifted their skirts and welcomed me into the Kingsguard. I smiled at my brothers beside me and waved the women off, gently rejecting their paid-for advances by feigning too worse for drink. Not quite criminals forced into frost-bitten celibacy like our cousins on the wall, we weren’t meant to be that far off. We were to own no lands or titles, take no wives, and father no children–that we could admit claim to, anyway.

It was the noblest of sentences given, though the majority of us far from deserved it. We put our best foot forward, however. Determined to give our disapproving fathers something to endorse: a story to tell, a feat to boast about, a token or two of recognition to decorate with. Some families bought into it. Forced themselves to feel pride for their condemned namesakes. Not my father, of course. His disdain for the fate of things emanating to all those with the misery of standing too near.

I’d bear it all a thousand times over to keep cherishing the stars I was destined to know. Fortune found so very close to home.

You see, I’d been a child, and she the same when we snuck away from sight and discovered them together. Our septa had shown us the stars on so many occasions, naming all the common configurations, always leaving out the furthest one away.

Despite our many inquiries.

Where I had learned early on to choose the path of least resistance–she welcomed the challenge. She pointed to the cluster of stars that night and asked, “Do you yet know what that one is called, Jaime?”

I smiled at her, not wanting to admit my ignorance, but still wanting her to tell me all the same. Judging by the self-satisfied expression she wore, I was certain she’d figured it out and had probably pulled me into the forest with the intention of lording it above me. To my surprise, she’d taught herself the constellation, but she hadn’t called me close to gloat that fact. She used her knowledge instead to strike a bargain. “Kiss me for it?”

I blinked back at her, laughing incredulously. And for the very first time in her presence, _nervously_. Though I’d loathed myself for it, it hadn’t escaped my notice that her body had been growing as many of the girls around me had. There was no stopping the inevitability of development. It was wrong of me to look. Though strangely, my eyes always landed on her endowments before they ever had another’s. I couldn’t explain it then and I still can’t now. Just that they had–whether or not I willed them to.
The books father made me sit and read in his presence for no less than four grueling hours a day (on top of our regular tutelage, mind you), spoke of valiant knights. Men who rescued maidens and married them to live happily ever after, binding the foreign with the familiar in respected treaty.

But I already was, you see.

Happy, that is. And ‘ever after’ seemed like it might naturally follow. What did I care for racing off to some distant land to fight a war I wasn’t vested in, only to plunder the body of someone who knew so little of me and held none of my interest?

Like a coward, I kissed her cheek, regretting it as I pulled away. She would live with no regrets—love with none, either. Her warm palms gripped my face and held it still as she turned to press her lips to mine.

That was the first time I saw stars.

Her forehead drove into mine, noses nuzzling as she pulled her lips free and whispered, “Ophiuchus.”

Not understanding, and refusing to lose the tingle I’d only just discovered tight in my breeches, I ignored the word. I leaned forward to capture her lips as she’d done mine. Tit for tat—and all that we knew to do at the time.

It wasn’t until later that I learned the meaning behind the name she breathed against my mouth. The stars I saw that night were fate. They brought me here with their premonition. She believes in her fortune-telling frog, but I—I believe in the stars. They only show themselves at the most important of times.

Shining bright on the night she spoke her oaths to another, they lit her beautifully as she loosened her corset for me. Each well-studied star sparkled, promising me the words she uttered in the Sept of Balor were just that—words, while the curve of her body against mine, and the heat she wrapped me with were the only truth that mattered.

I stood on balconies and watched them shoot through the sky on each and every night she bore me a child. I could not care for them under any roof, having none to call my own. I was only able to love them in the night’s open sky, where all secrets are kept.

It was a while before I learned that Ophiuchus is the depiction of man fighting a great serpent. Don’t you see? The match to her necklace dangled from the mouth of a snake.

It was not propriety or expectation that brought me a woman so a part of myself and so unlike any other, but instead the stars. And just as they pushed me towards her, so too did they long ago lead me to this place. I tell you now, my friend—the stars have always, in their way, guided me.

Bronn wiped the beer that dripped down his chin with back of his sleeve. “I’m not your mate. I don’t mix business and pleasure. Unless you’re a pretty lass—” He leaned back, reaching for the barmaid’s skirts, as he injected a bit of melody to the rest of his thought. “With a nice round ass!”

Jaime chuckled into his mug, enjoying the way she swatted at the sellsword and refilled his drink. He had no idea why he suddenly felt so open, and eyed the murky beverage sloshing in front of him suspiciously.

“Don’t suppose I need guess who this bird is?” Bronn looked away as he asked.

Sobering rather quickly at the lazy inquiry, Jaime felt himself tense, his teeth gritting and grinding
behind his pursed lips.

Bronn closed his eyes and sighed. “Right. It’s as I thought.”

Jaime slid the mug to the side and peered at him closely. Completely unaffected by Jaime’s change in demeanor, Bronn chugged the rest of his mug and stood up. “Glad we cleared that up. We’ll free your lovely niece in the morning. And so you know-”

Jaime held his breath at Bronn’s pause. The man leaned forward and grabbed the abandoned mug off the table. “Men with secrets like yours should know when to stop their drink.”
“B. O. D. A. C. I. O. U. S.” Petyr read each letter aloud, taking a moment longer than necessary to line each tile up perfectly in the squares evenly printed on the game board.

Brune’s slight inhale spoke volumes of his disapproval. Oswell stifled his own snort of annoyance.

“What?” Petyr shrugged.

Silence followed, filled only by the suck of Sansa’s lemon lollipop. It was made irritating by the lingering implication that he may have done something wrong.

“You’re all just jealous because I used the ‘C.’” Petyr ran his tongue over his front teeth to stop himself from rising in provocation.

“And landed on a triple word score tile…”

“Well, Oswell, if you don’t like me racking up points, don’t put down words like: Yeti and Dojo so close to the edge!” Petyr defended.

There was a resigned sigh and a loud pop from across the board as Sansa pulled her sucker free and pointed at the latest play. “That’s not a word.”

“It most certainly is,” Petyr replied, ready for any issue she might have taken with his stroke of game-playing genius. She leveled him with a look that had him leaning in to further inspect, as if the word had somehow magically changed since he laid the letters down. Surely, it had to be something as surreal as that, why else would she be debating this?

Having verified that the word was exactly as he’d placed it, he ordered, “Confirm that it’s a word.” He rest his elbows on his lap, refusing to give the ground gained and smirked to taunt. “Let’s help Sansa improve her vocabulary.”

Both men hesitated. Brune looking down at his feet, Oswell pursing his lips as he turned away. “What’s this?” Petyr furrowed his brow. “Must I do it myself?”

“I think it’s only right you do,” Sansa quipped.

He couldn’t believe she was taking this so hard. He knew she loathed to lose, but the game was hardly far from over. If this was how she was going to be after every word… And what of his men? Disobeying his direction. For what purpose? To follow her lead?

He took a deep breath and told himself to find the good in the situation. That’s what at least two of his counselors had advised in the past. Petyr eyed everyone at the table, all looking particularly put out—Sansa the cutest about it, of course. Deciding it was right his men follow the lady of the house while actually in the house, and he while out in the world, he opted to humor her by asking, “And
just why is that?”

Sansa gave both men a glance and then leaned forward quickly to hiss quietly, “You know it hurts their feelings when you mix them up.”

“Mix them up? Hurt their feelings?” What?” Petyr blinked in bewilderment.

Brune’s expression was unreadable, while Oswell offered a little harrumph to himself. Sansa gestured to both men. “You implied Oswell put down both: Yetti and Dojo.”

“Didn’t he?” Petyr asked, trying to understand why this was even an issue.

“See? This is what I’m talking about.” Sansa shook her head in mild disgust. “Brune was the one who laid down: Dojo. It’s insulting to both of them that you couldn’t be bothered to treat them as individuals.”

“Insulting? Individuals?” Petyr gaped at her. “Are you serious?”

“Very.”

He drew another breath to calm himself and then attempted a strengths-based approach. “Sansa, it’s sweet of you to assume so much on their behalf. It really demonstrates your ability to look outside yourself and empathize with people.” He was finding the good, god dammit. Thousands of dollars spent on CBT would not be wasted! “And-,” He was careful not to use the word, but, knowing it was a hot button. “I feel I should remind you that they are hired men. I pay them to do things—not feel things.” To drive the point home, he added, “They’re goons.”

Sansa gasped in outrage and ejected herself from her seat. “Goons?!”

“What did I say?”

Oswell waved her down and shrugged his shoulders. “It’s fine.”

“No, it’s not,” she insisted.

Petyr wished she’d listen to the man, at least he was being reasonable about his lot in life. Besides, it wasn’t as if Petyr was a terrible employer. He paid handsomely and always sent a girl or two to their room whenever they needed to be hospitalized from a job.

“We’re used to it. Really. It’s fine,” Oswell repeated.

Used to it.

Well, what in the fuck was that supposed to mean? Petyr glanced between both men. “Are you unhappy in my employ? Care to call a union about it?”

Brune looked back at him for the first time since the dreaded yetti-dojo mix up. His eyes softened and Petyr knew he was conceding. Well, at least there was one level-headed person left in the room. Oswell followed suit. “We are satisfied, Mr. Baelish.”

“Don’t lie to assuage his ego,” Sansa advised. “He needs to know the impact his words have on people.”

Petyr knew that fact more than most, his whispers bringing about the decline of many adversaries. “He needs to be more careful,” she insisted.
Oh, but he was. Exceedingly so. It was with the greatest of care that Petyr chose the tone and volume to pair with the perfect word to match the ear he’d bent to hear it. She’d know that if she saw him work past the bloody bone-crushing tasks he took home. It wasn’t her fault. He hadn’t shown her that side of himself, the world he ran in. Keeping their underage romance all to himself, he would bring her out on his arm when she was of age.

Perhaps then, after they’d had enough time together, her love for Petyr wouldn’t waiver when she saw just how devious Littlefinger was. The first hurdle had been to get her to accept the gruesome reality of his crimes, which took no little effort. It was easier, however, to accept blood and guts because at least that was honest. The maneuvers, manipulations, calculations—it was the exact opposite of their pure love and devotion. He lived in this contradiction, but would she?

He would give her this, hoping on some ridiculous level she would remember the slew of moments like these they’d come to share before she was faced with his entirety. She would yet again have to decide if she still loved him enough. “You are right, my love.”

“Don’t placate me.”

God, she was perfect. He couldn’t resist the urge to tease. “Ahh, you’ve been expanding your vocabulary independently, I see. Is it the Kindle App I got you? I’ve noticed a lot of purchases lately. Got yourself caught up in a series? Reading really is the best way to learn new words.”

“Or patronize me.”

The urge to pounce and fuck her to exhaustion slithered through him. He adored her lack of fear, had from the moment he met her. Shifting in his chair, he felt his Captain America boxers stick to his dick. (He’d bought her some Red Menace briefs to match but instructed her to only wear them when she was on her period. One, for the irony, and two, so he’d know what was off limits.) The slight shift did little to test the forces that impeded him, gravity and will. Brune cleared his throat, reminding him of their presence, as if somehow knowing the direction of his thoughts.

He bit the inside of his lip to control his amusement. “I apologize. To you, and both Oswell and Brune—individually.” He then spoke solemnly, “It is a luxury that I hadn’t known before you. To live so care-free, in my home, at least.” Petyr glanced to the door, knowing exactly what he was doing. “And without any need for defense.”

Any other woman would have bought it hook, line, and sinker. Sansa, on the other hand, eyed him suspiciously before looking to either man. Apparently choosing to let her grievance go, she lowered herself down to her seat. “Alright, then.”

He swallowed to again stifle a smile. It was important to appear serious, even though she was was too adorable to provoke much more than a pleasure-filled grin. “Brune, I think you were next.” He said, hoping to move on.

“Oh no.” Sansa shook her finger at him. “We’re not finished yet.”

“We aren’t?”

“No. That is not a word.”

Petyr held his hands out. “You know what? Fine. Now that no one’s suffering such grave offense, will someone please look it up?” He would be damned if he did so himself. There was a hierarchy to maintain.

Oswell reached for his phone, a small book appearing from out of nowhere in Brune’s hands. Thumbs flew, typing text and flipping pages. Irritation wrinkled Sansa’s brow as she growled
around the candy, first to one, “Put that pocket dictionary away right now,” and then to the other, “App too!”

Both men gave Petyr a cursory glance. He chuckled, raising a hand to wave them off before he reached across the table between he and Sansa and plucked the pop from her mouth. “You know I’m right.”

Her lips thinned in pure scorn—she hated being wrong, and sank back into her seat, crossing her arms. She looked away at first, as if to be anywhere but there, and gave an indignant huff. Then a slight tug to one side of her mouth told Petyr she was willing to be a better sport about it. Though she tried to hide her smile, it peeked out as she declared, “Bodacious is only a word if you’re Keanu Reeves.”

“You like Keanu Reeves.” He sucked on the lolli, letting his tongue cradle the candy.

Sansa turned to face him. Smirking as she agreed, “I do.”

He liked it when she was agreeable, so her reply should have pleased him. However, she seemed to take a bit too much pleasure at admitting her feelings regarding the actor. Her smile was lacking in innocence and it gave Petyr the notion to take at least minimal action.

He would instruct Oswell to search Mr. Reeves on the internet for his most current details. IMDB was bookmarked on his browser; Petyr had made sure of that the last time he wanted information. Not knowing the name of the funny fat man in *We’re No Angels* was literally keeping him up at night, so at 2:45 in the AM, Petyr bellowed for Oswell and grew rather impatient with how long a simple internet search was taking. Luckily, Sansa bettered the situation entirely by installing an IMDB app for any future insomnia-driven inquiry to come.

It would be so easy to hunt the man down, do with him what was fit. If it weren’t for the simple fact that it would be such a waste of work if she were only fucking with him. He cocked his head to the side, not self-aware enough to smooth his wrinkled brow as he insisted, “Not too much.”

There was more question to that statement, order, demand. And the vulnerability in it made him squirm uncomfortably. He was losing the upper hand, if he’d had it in the first place. He still wasn’t quite sure. Sansa was confusing, tipping his sense of just on its side. She hadn’t answered right away and he was starting to sweat over it.

Just when he was about to ask, “What?” (Not because he didn’t know, but because he felt he needed to say something in order to remind her to do so as well.) she slowly leaned forward, her arm extending towards him. Petyr watched as she pulled the pop from his mouth, her grin mischievous, stealing her sucker back.

He didn’t trust that grin. Or the silence that surrounded it. “Sansa?”

Rather than reply, she turned her focus down to the board. Avoiding his gaze, she fixed some tiles, adjusting them to sit better in their box.

“Sansa? Not too much, right?” He scowled, his fingers reaching for the clasp on his watch. If he unclipped and then re-clipped at least four times, he would feel better. He just knew it.

People had crushes on celebrities. *One snap.*

Everyone always wanted who they admired but couldn’t have. That was fact. *Two snap.*

It didn’t mean they’d ever act on those desires given the opportunity. And they rarely ever got the opportunity anyway. *Three snap.*
Besides, Petyr was her soulmate, they were fated. *Four.*

She glanced up at him, blinking a couple of times before she finally cracked a smile. “Of course not too much, Silly.”

Brune cleared his throat to return their attention to the game before setting tiles down on the board. Unwilling to suffer the man’s sloppy placement, Petyr caught his hand. “Each tile fits into each square, Brune. You know there’s no overlapping. We’re not heathens.”

Brune nodded and then instantly attempted to rectify it, his fingers fumbling.

“Why don’t we just get the board that has the little plastic partitions so the tiles don’t keep slipping?” Sansa asked, taking pity on the personal guard beside her.

She was too soft on him.

Petyr tried not to notice the small look of hope on Brune’s face before he dashed it away. “For the same reason why we don’t have children, Sansa.”

She furrowed her brow in mock confusion. “All those PSAs about the perils of teen pregnancy?”

He gave her a sideways glance. “Funny.” Using their age difference to poke at him wouldn’t deter him from an explanation. “It’s because we haven’t given up on life.”

“That’s extreme,” she deflected—or tried to, anyway.

He didn’t really think it was. In fact, he felt his reasoning what quite rational. Her dismissiveness got the wheels in his head spinning. Did she not take him seriously? Or was she just distracted with thoughts of another? Perhaps she was still stuck fantasizing about that idiot actor. Steeling himself to the very real possibility, he asked, “Which film was it, Sansa?”

“What?”

“Point Break? Devil’s Advocate?” He shrugged in exaggeration, his smile sick. “Tell me it wasn’t Bill and Ted.” He lifted a finger for emphasis as he judged, “The second one was complete garbage.”

“Oh my god. We’re still on this?” She sighed. “Petyr, I was messing with you.”

“No, no!” He exclaimed, closing himself off. “It seems it’s not me you’d rather be ‘messing’ with.”

“Allright boys,” Sansa said, with a frustrating amount of exasperation. “Game’s over. Leave us.”

“No. The game definitely isn’t over,” Petyr growled. There were still plenty of tiles left in the bag. Regardless, he was the one who made the decisions.

She looked at both men and flicked her gaze to the door, silently telling them to go.

Her defiance could be charming at times. The rest of the time, it was grating. “Peel your asses from those seats and I’ll scalp you in your sleep,” Petyr threatened.

Unhelpful as she was being, Sansa pointed out, “That’s hardly something someone could sleep through. Can we just give up and get along now?”

Succumbing to the irritation, Petyr threw himself back against his chair. He was sure to cross his
arms over his chest to show he wasn’t so ready to be walked on. Or disregarded.

“Fine.” Her voice had an eerie resolution to it. “I didn’t want to have to do this. But I will.”

Petyr peered at her curiously.

Sansa rose from her seat and in one swift motion, pulled her t-shirt off, revealing her perky breasts tucked in pale pink cups. The lace transparent enough to let him see the rosy tips of her nipples teasing him. Appreciating the sudden view, he realized, if he could see them, so could—“OUT!”

He bellowed and both Brune and Oswell were out the door before he’d even seen them leave their seats.

She moved a little, letting the light catch her at slightly different angles, her scars silvered now so they were barely noticeable. That didn’t stop him from finding them with his lips and tracing them with his tongue.

“What are you doing?” He asked, sitting at attention.

Sansa avoided his question with a statement. “You’re such a ball of insecurity today.”

He shook his head to deny it, only to have her ask, “How come? Is it your man cycle?”

“No!” He exclaimed and then thought about it, counting days. He didn’t think it was anyway. Honestly, he wasn’t sure. He’d never had a man cycle until Sansa read a Cosmo article a few months back and decided he had them. He wanted to think her silly for it, but that particular magazine was so very often right about things in his experience.

“Then what is it? Hmm?” She crawled on the table on all fours, lollipop in her mouth as she came towards him. He winced a little when he noticed her knees dragging through the pieces, so much disorder. Before he could comment on it, she was in his lap. His arms wrapped around her automatically, holding her close. She pulled the sucker from her mouth and painted his lips with it as she purred, “What’s got my boyfriend so jelly?”

He started to protest that assessment of himself—and the word jelly, when she shushed him by sticking the lolli in his mouth. “I don’t care about Keanu Reeves.” Sherocked her hips a little and snuggled her core against him. “I’m not dry humping him in his study right now, am I?”

It was good that she loved him enough to put such effort into his esteem. Proud of his amore, he shook his head because he couldn’t speak around the candy, and mumbled enough to tell her so. She kissed his forehead before retrieving it. It was then that, rather than offer her praise, Petyr took the opportunity to ask in as serious of a voice as he could force, “Are you sure? What about in John Wick?”

“Oh my god!” She screeched and started to stand. He tightened his grip, keeping her from leaving as he chuckled, ducking his head to avoid her slaps, and better burrow his face into her breasts.

He continued to wrestle her on the couch, pinning her beneath him as she exclaimed, “You’re such an asshole!”

“I’m such a what?” He mumbled against her chest, right before he pulled the cup back, covering her perky nipple with his mouth.

The words were stolen from her as she gasped, squirming into the pleasure. “Pete–ungh…”

He released her just long enough to offer a smug smile. “Hey, Sansa?”
She lifted her head to look at him, her eyes a beautiful black dilation. “Yeah?”

“Your body is…” He paused, lowering his tongue back to flick the sensitive flesh.

The anticipation was killing her. “Yeah?”

“Bodacious.”

“Oh my fucking god, Petyr!” She groaned and covered her face.
Abandon (BxS)

Mole’s Town disappointed. Seeing him yielded very little gain, just more lies uttered from the lips of a liar. The supposed remorse on his face so theatrical that Brienne squinted her eyes to better see if perhaps he wore powder on his face—made up for the stage he alone stood on.

His attempt to avoid Lady Sansa’s unsavory questions only gave more evidence to his guilt. As if that weren’t insult enough, he spoke of the Blackfish, reminding her of his army, as if it were so easily at her disposal. She spurned his counsel, brandishing Jon’s army as her own—assuming he had the men to spare. The seed was planted regardless, and Brienne knew she’d be sent to the rebellious uncle holed up in his family home. She was no great negotiator to be coaxing stodgy old men into offering aid, and the prospect of being asked to do so disquieted her.

Lady Sansa would task her with a letter to be hand delivered, of that she was sure. With luck it would wait until tomorrow. Mole’s Town hadn’t been easy on either of them, and because of it, a hot meal and warm bath were most certainly in order.

Sadly, both would have to wait. Lady Sansa had called for her in her chambers. Her maids had drawn her a bath she dare not enter without Brienne standing guard. Since their reuniting and Brienne’s vows of protection, Lady Sansa had required her presence outside the door to her chamber, her vigilance a comfort. Tonight, however, she was requested inside.

The manner in which she guarded her was altered, and though it may have allowed Lady Sansa feel more secure, it made protecting her so much more difficult. How was Brienne to recognize a threat cloistered away, unable to see it coming? She could listen at the door, hoping to to catch the sound of suspicious footsteps down the hall, but that would only have her whipping the door open in accusation on any innocent passerby. It was a silly thought, but one Brienne was willing to consider if it meant she felt useful.

“Lady?”

Brienne stared at the wooden door in front of her, knowing the soft servant voice couldn’t have been addressing her. No one outside of Tarth and Jaime Lannister (when in the mood to mock) called her Lady.

“Your stays.”

Shifting uncomfortably in her own layers, Brienne appreciated the women’s persistence. The sooner Lady Sansa bathed, the sooner she could seek her own accommodations.

The sound of water pouring and some light sloshing indicated Lady Sansa’s compliance. Though, only for so long. “No.” Her voice was was heavy and hard, much harder than a bath would warrant. “Go. Leave me now.”

Surprised by the command, Brienne glanced over her shoulder. The urge to whip back around in embarrassment was stifled only by the foreign feeling that snuck inside, encouraging her to eye her lady’s nude form through the tulle that separated them. Her gaze lingered longer than was proper, recognizing the beauty of each softened curve and color. It was a proper lady’s body, at least what one would expect. The picture of femininity, priceless artwork (for, no money could buy Brienne a similar form) hidden beneath the muslin. It was with a reluctance she couldn’t explain that she tore her eyes from her lady and returned to rather close examination of the door’s
wood grain.

Time passed slowly in the silence that followed the servants departure. Had Brienne not seen her lady alive and breathing with her own eyes, she’d wonder if she were there at all. She questioned the still, wondering whether her doubt was warranted. Putting aside her curiosity for the second time, she counted bolts in the door, determined to discover the necessary stoicism implied for her current assignment.

It was the third time she considered whether or not she should check on her lady, that she finally released all hesitation and turned to see a fiery red mane (bone-dry), hovering above the water.

Had she bathed at all?

Obviously not.

Brienne began to voice her irritation, “Lady-” but stopped when her head turned. Tully traits were legendary, and Lady Sansa looked the mirror image of the great Catelyn Stark. She carried her mother’s righteous strength with her wherever she went, but this hereditary trait had somehow separated itself from her while she sat vulnerable in the tub. Sansa Stark stared deeply into Brienne’s eyes, nothing but a ghost of herself.

She’d been all frost and fire when she forced a stutter from Littlefinger himself in Mole’s Town, her heart turned entirely to stone. Now, with no danger to guard herself against, she lost all extremes and merely existed, adrift. It was difficult to be around her when she was like this, but leaving her to herself felt cruel.

Clearing her throat and looking down at her own boots, Brienne offered gently, “Do you require my assistance?”

She didn’t know what possessed her, the proposition so strange on her tongue. Teeth clenching, prepared for the rejection, Brienne told herself it was a question born of necessity. The woman needed bathing, had turned away aid and wasn’t doing so herself. It was perfectly natural and acceptable for Brienne to volunteer. In the silence that followed, she took steps forward, feeling herself shrink should she stand too long in her place.

“Uh-” Sansa started, cut off by her own startle as Brienne pulled the transparent fabric aside.

“Yes?” Brienne asked, expecting to be impeded, and oddly hoping she wouldn’t be.

Sansa ducked her head, averting her gaze as she answered weakly, “Nothing.”

A lump grew unbearably large in Brienne’s throat, and a tear threatened to roll down her cheek. She’d seen scars before--what men did to one another. She wore her fair share. It was different, however. Seeing a lady marked as thus...it was barbarous.

She was absolutely littered with poorly healed cuts and bruises.

From collar to wrist and ankle.

The savage knew no reservation!

The torment that riddled her lady’s pristine body sent a tremor of rage through her, each muscle flexing to sing it’s own unique plea for vengeance. Knees rose in the water, the movement distracting her from murder, calling her back to the needs of the present.

Holding the sodding-wet cloth in her hand, Brienne hesitated, unsure of whether or not to pursue.
A small voice within herself reasoned she’d have been stopped long before this moment if she was out of turn. And so it was with great trepidation, that Brienne brought the rag to her chest, her fingers pressing gently against her clavicle. She stopped there, waiting for the ever-so inevitable upbraision. When Sansa failed to chastise her for her actions, Brienne drew a small circle with the cloth balled in her fist.

She did it a couple of times, suddenly too timid to soap and scrub any lower. With much more question in her tone than she assumed Sansa meant, she stated a well-known fact. “You’re a lady.”

“So they’ve told me,” Brienne answered, instantly regretting the honesty of her response. Her hand lowered to her own lady’s full breasts still-burgeoning, determined to move on quickly. Brienne would have been mortified by her own audacity if she weren’t suddenly consumed by memories of young boys with wooden practice swords mocking her.

Ripping her from the memory, Sansa asked, “Ever wonder why men are known by their family name, and we’re to be introduced so much more informally?”

Brienne let the rag slip down to her stomach and tried to discern her meaning. She supposed she was right. It was always: Lord Stark, Lord Bolton, Lord Baelish—the sniveling disgusting man. Women however, were always referred to with their given games: Lady Sansa, Lady Brienne, Lady Catelyn …

“Do you think it makes it easier for them when they hurt us?”

Shaken from her musings, Brienne blinked bewilderment at the question.

With the harshest of points, Sansa clarified, “To feel like we’re already so familiar?”

Swallowing, more to ensure her mouth was closed than anything else, Brienne bought time to find a response. None coming readily, she confessed, “I’m not sure, my lady.”

Setting her focus on the work before her, Brienne prayed the subject would rest. She had no answer, and loathed to face such inquiry again.

The horror of it…

Her hands moved of their own accord, fulfilling the task indiscriminately, dropping lower. She was at her navel, and ever-so mindful of it, when Sansa changed tactics. “Is it true you’ve never been with a man?”

Caught by the question, Brienne ducked her head in the flood of anxiety that overcame her. “Why would you assume that?”

Sansa was slow to respond, her wet hand raising from the water to cover hers on the ledge of the large brass tub. “I’m told in some circles you’re referred to as, The Maiden of Tarth.”

Yes.

That was exactly what they called her; the nasty boys in the yard. Astounded by her size, envious of her proficiency, and resentful of her chastity. She was meant to express gratitude for their interest, spread her long legs and bury her face in the straw as they roughly took her only gift to give, in any conveniently empty stall the stable offered.

No.
She would not-- did not.

Gratitude was a sentiment shown at the end of a blade, not so dull as for practice, but instead sharpened for principle. Father smoothed it over, much as he dressed her wounds, swiftly and with no little amount of consideration. She missed him. If for no other reason, than for that. He loved her, though he didn’t understand her, and he protected her to the best of his ability. Rather than impede her, he released her.

Would Lady Sansa release her, if her answer were undesirable? She lifted her hand from the water, from the soft curve of flesh it had been resting on. “Would you think less of me were that true?”

“No!” The single-syllable response was uttered so urgent--desperate. Delicate fingers wrapped around her wrist, stopping her. “I'd envy you.”

Frozen in the sparkle of Sansa’s eyes--filled with conviction, Brienne scarcely knew to wet her lips before she was leaning forward. Pulled by some unknown force, she prayed for acceptance. She hadn’t given Sansa’s petite mouth a thought before then, daring not to. Neither had she considered the feeling behind a kiss.

To a lady.

Her insides screamed to be free of the confines of propriety and all that she’d been raised to know. How was this possible? Lady Sansa Stark, daughter to the great Lady Catelyn Stark, was tilting her head and sliding her tongue along the side of her own--a taste and texture so foreign.

Was that how a lady tasted?

Dainty and soft--slippery and obscene.

Not only had she accepted this; but she went so far as to encourage it, a slight moan rising from her throat.

No. That couldn’t be. No one--not anyone, encouraged such indecency. Tearing herself free from the full lips that gave her such consent, Brienne lowered her head in a crimson-colored shame. “I apologize, my lady.” Searching for any excuse she could muster, Brienne’s eyes focused on the curl of her fist beneath the water. “I seem to have lost my senses.”

Silence followed, and compelled Brienne to glance up. Sansa’s eyes had closed, a slow and heavy exhale to follow. Her heart sinking in the finality of it, Brienne rallied what was left of her dignity.

“Or abandoned them.” The words that slipped past Lady Sansa lips were gentle and despite the weight of their implication, they managed to hang in the air, weightless in their demand for attention.

Feeling the rebuke, however cordially delivered, Brienne’s eyes widened, releasing the cloth from her grip to retreat from the water. Her head shook vehemently as she protested, “No. It’s not...I”

Again, Sansa’s hand stilled her. She offered her no words, no opportunity to further protest, only brought her hand back to her soft belly. With no soaped scrap to scrub her clean, Brienne felt her palm flatten across her abdomen. Her long fingers stretched, landing each tip in various places of indecency. Her longest finger touched her hip bone, her thumb resting over the small inverted button of her navel, her ring and smallest finger threading in the soft thatch of hair that covered Lady Sansa’s womanhood.

As soon as she realized her mistake, she was trying to correct it, sucking air through her teeth as
she lifted her hand. Sansa clamped down on her arm, her small fingers threading through hers and pressing her hand back down. Brienne furrowed her brow, confusion and guilt warred for dominance within before settling for an uncomfortable mixture of both.

“Don’t leave me, Brienne,” Sansa appealed.

Cowardice would have her avoid her gaze, but honor would have her stare straight in the line of fire, unwavering. Brienne frowned, hating herself for acting so inappropriately, more for taking pleasure in it. She cleared her throat to speak as she dragged her gaze up to hers. “I won’t.”

Sansa lifted her hips, her hands pushing Brienne’s down between her legs. “You won’t hurt me,” she breathed. Her long lashes fluttered for lazy eyelids. “Will you?”

Brienne’s fingers fumbled through the underwater blaze of curls, seeking her seam. It would have been easier–safer, to pretend she didn’t know what she was doing. She’d explored her own womanhood enough since before receiving her first moon’s blood to know exactly what she was doing. It was blasphemy to admit it, of course. Perhaps if she kept herself from sinking any deeper, she could still feign an ignorance no one would believe.

A soft moan sounded from behind bitten lip.

Any restraint she thought she possessed disappeared, her fingers finding the seam that stood barrier between purity and vice. A shiver of excitement ran through her body, pooling in each peak of pleasure her flesh puckered in. Doing this for her, seeing the effect of her touch created a growing ache she wasn’t sure she alone could manage.

Another soft moan slipped from Sansa’s needy pout. “Please, Brienne. Please.”

A smile curled across Brienne’s lips, intuitive to her lady’s needs, her fingers sliding along the slick pearl hidden deep beyond the part of her flesh. She’d done this for herself before, but never for another. A sliver of insecurity imposed itself upon her as she wondered if she could bring Sansa to her end, or if she might fail her.

Her head flew back, resting on the tub as she arched herself upward into the hand that cupped and teased her. “Gods, Brienne!” Sansa exclaimed.

She bit the inside of her cheek, her head filling with pride. Brienne was watching the breasts before her lift out of the water when Sansa’s forehead nudged hers. Nose nuzzling against her face, she found her lips again.

Her kiss was sublime, more now than before because it was no longer experimental in nature, but instead deliberate. Brienne’s other hand left the side of the tub and caught the back of her neck, cradling her. Their tongues ventured, tasting further. Sansa was so lush beneath Brienne’s fingers, cracked and calloused from fight, and she couldn’t stop herself from running them the length of her slippery cleft. She swallowed Sansa’s groan of pleasure, taking it for the permission that it was.

She bottomed out, her fingers massaging the opening she knew would be sensitive and wanting, when her lady tore her lips free. Expecting her to push her away, deciding they’d gone too far in whatever it was they were doing, Brienne braced herself for the rejection that was sure to follow.

Their breaths were heavy, their chests heaving as they held each other’s gaze, silently daring the other to speak. “Remove your armor,” Sansa breathed barely above a whisper.

Brienne let go of her, bringing her hands to the tied straps of her plates. The question of what they were doing had long since abandoned them, and now the only question left was, “But, how will
Sansa rose from the tub, water dripping from her as she stepped over the ledge. She didn’t bother drying herself before she began tugging at any strap she could see. “We’ll figure it out together.”

“Have you ever done this before?” Brienne loathed to ask. “With a…” Metal clanked down on the stone floor, her hands flying to the leather ties of her gambeson, as she forced herself to say it aloud however hushed, “A woman .”

“No,” she promised. Her delicate hands worked to unfasten whatever restrained. Brienne was so much taller than her, something she’d been used to, but hadn’t truly considered before this moment.

Doubt crept in, the heavy padded garment falling down by her feet. Her linen tunic so light and revealing, was the only barrier between her battered flesh and her lady’s. “Then how-”

Sansa reached up and pressed her finger to Brienne’s lips. “Shh.”

Brienne obediently quietted, killing any protest before it was voiced. She held her tongue even when her tunic was pulled from her breeches and stripped from her. Her breast hovered before her lady’s face and she started to bring her arms up to cover them, only to watch Sansa lean forward, her lips parting to circle the nearest nipple.

Stars shown bright behind her eyes at the persistant succle, interrupted only by the swirl of her tongue. Sansa’s hands gripped her hips, holding her in place as she kissed a trail to the other breast. “We’ll only do what brings us pleasure,” she murmured against the sensitive nipple before taking it back in her mouth.

No hurting.

No pain and degradation.

Only what felt good. What felt right .

It was a tempting offer, to be sure.

Sansa’s hands reached for the laces on her breeches and Brienne allowed it, her womanhood aching to bask in the attention. Completely giving into the abandonment of civility, she dug her fingers into the infamous red mane and held it lovingly as it painted her abdomen with passionate kisses.

The heavy leather of her pants were halfway down her thighs when Brienne closed her eyes, allowing the tangible sensation of such anticipation to wash over her. What use was man if they could give each other such pleasure without all the pain and pretense men insisted upon?
“Please tell him I accept his invitation,” Sansa whispered from behind her cup of tea, eyeing the potential target before her.

Margaery ignored the fine specimen of man standing by the fireplace. “Shall I tell him now? Grandmama says it’s important to remain elusive. Perhaps I should prolong your response?”

“Prolong it?” Sansa asked, her stomach upsetting over the thought of missed opportunity. Renly Baratheon, handsome and rich, had taken notice of her. Enough notice to extend a secret invitation, passed through the hands of her nearest friend. It was to join him in one of the lesser used libraries of Highgarden. For what purpose, it did not say. Her mother’s voice in her head warned her not to accept, True gentlemen have no honorable reason to meet a lady apart from society. Her father’s agreed, Lords looking to marry understand they do so to the whole family, not only the Lady they fancy.

He turned to face her, his elbow resting on the mantle with as little care as any other man of leisure. His smile was radiant as he spoke with his dearest friend, Loras Tyrell, and returned her look of subtle admiration. A quick glance to Lord Tyrell and then back at her own friend beside her reminded of their close relations. Sansa Stark was a lady of the north, new to this city and without the support of her more extravagant connections would never garner such attention.

The original hope had been to gain favor with Margaery’s brother Loras, though word was that he was acquainted with many men— who took no ladies. It was shameful, and only his fortune would protect his place in society. It was a scandal Sansa couldn’t afford to be caught in, facing too much of it in her own family. She was lucky Loras showed her no inclination.

She’d been orphaned the year she was brought out, and spent most of the time shrouded in various shades of black dress. At the time she scarcely considered what it meant to have such a slow start in her hunt for a husband, too consumed with her sadness. She’d come out the other side of it now, and found herself floundering at each party, still pitied, still persona non grata. Sansa could not afford to miss such an opportunity, regardless of reserve. “No. Please, don’t. I will meet him.”

Margaery responded with a noncommittal shrug of her shoulders before rising from her seat and sauntering toward the fireplace. She looped her arm in her brother as she grinned and spoke so easily to Renly. Sansa averted her gaze, feeling their eyes on her. He took leave of the room, clasping Lord Tyrell’s shoulder as he did. Margaery made her way back to her, perching on the edge of her seat as she brought her cup to her lips and whispered, “It’s been arranged.”

There it was.

No going back now.

The minutes that passed felt much like hours as Sansa fought a fidget, listening to the click of the grand mahogany clock sitting in the corner of the room. Milliseconds before it’s official chime, she was rising to excuse herself. There could have been any number of acceptable reasons behind her departure, all very innocent, and she prayed all in company would assume any one of them.

Scurrying down the corridor, her velveted shoes knew more air than marble, practically taking flight. As she neared the door, she glanced around her, only then thinking to concoct some last
minute excuse for entering the private library. Should she brandish the secret message from Lord Renly Baratheon, himself?

No. Of course not.

It had all been very hush-hush, and her presence here was meant to be quite covert. Saving her from bumbling through some slapdash explanation, the servant stationed by the entrance gave her a polite bow and turned to open the door for her. Sansa hesitated, unnerved by the welcome, having not expected her presence to be so planned by anyone but Lord Renly.

She took a careful step forward, staring down at her skirts, ensuring they were all out of door before it closed. Her hands flattened against her dress, wiping away the anxious perspiration that clammed her palms. Rallying herself to face her secret suitor, she drew a deep breath and raised her chin.

To her surprise, it was not Renly Baratheon—dashing and debonair, that greeted her. Instead it was another, a much older man. The famous Baratheon blue-eyes and few other similarities lead her to believe it may be one of his older brothers. The shock must have been prevalent in her expression, because he offered her a rueful smile. “Not who you were expecting?”

“Oh,” she gasped. “Uh…” Caught and unsure what to say, she knew anything she did would only incriminate her further. “I apologize, I was looking for the powder room.”

He poured a glass of wine and handed it to her. “I appreciate your dedication to subterfuge, but you may cease your efforts. It was I that extended you the invitation to meet, not my brother.”

No. That couldn’t be. Renly had signed it himself. She pulled the small paper from the folds of her skirt and opened it to verify that fact. Her gaze landed on the signature at the bottom. Lord Baratheon.

Not Renly.

Drat.

There were three of them—Lord Baratheons.

She chided herself for assuming so eagerly that it was the youngest most desireable one that called upon her. Scanning the man up and down, she more closely took in his features. Tall and lean, his chest broad and proud. High cheekbones and a formidable chin, he was handsome in his own right—for a man of his age. Not waife-thin by any means, as some of the lords in this province, he hadn’t a stitch of fat on him.

Stannis.

This one had to be Stannis.

Robert was rumored to be a fat lech; a friend her own father enjoyed in his youth, though had stopped corresponding with as the lessons of time changed him. Stannis was the middle brother, made his name in the military as most in his position would. He was said to be a commander or brigadier, or some other title that only mattered to other men in uniform and the ladies that hung on their arms. She’d meant to avoid men like that, knowing their particular prospects were better appreciated by women of lesser standing.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she asked the obvious question that hung in the air between them. “Why?”
He raised the glass in his hand, gesturing for her to accept it. She did, watching him closely as he explained, “I presume you knew the purpose behind the invitation when you believed it was Renly’s hand that penned it.”

“Courtship.” The word fell from her lips, the weight of it suddenly too heavy to keep inside.

Something that an hour before sent butterflies flying in her stomach, now had it churning. She pictured herself riding in carriages with the man before her, sharing a box at the opera house, standing before witnesses in church. Conscious of the silence that ate at her last nerve, she asked, “You’ve only just now met me, may I ask what has so inclined you?”

The question was moronic and she knew it. She was a lady with a strong name, young and beautiful. That was enough for most men. Why would Lord Stannis Baratheon be any different? The vast majority of his time had probably been spent on the open sea and he hadn’t ever truly had occasion to think of a woman past the symmetry of her features.

“I’m not.”

Her head shot up at that. “Excuse me?” She asked, taking a grain of offense to his simple admission.

He quickly cleared his throat. “It’s not that I don’t appreciate your…” Nodding forward and raising his glass at her, he closed his eyes and sighed. “I mean to say, your beauty is very…”

She took some small amount of relief in his struggle. It was nice to see him jarred, served the man right for his original deception and any further insinuation that she wasn’t worth wanting.

Sighing at his own fluster, he regrouped. “My wife passed, and when she did-”

“Bless her soul,” she cut him off, hoping to end the conversation with cordiality. “You have my condolences.”

“Don’t mourn her. She was a frigid witch.”

Sansa whirled around, surprised by a familiar feminine voice.

Margaery.

Betrayal warmed her blood to boil.

“Don’t be mad, Sansa.” Margaery leaned back against the door, grinning. “I merely saw an opportunity. Stannis needs a wife and you a husband.”

Not so indiscriminately.

“Lord Baratheon is a fine man, in name, character, and wealth. I am certain he doesn’t require the use of a matchmaker, Margaery,” Sansa all but growled.

There was a flicker of amusement in the man’s brilliant blue eyes.

“Alas,” Margaery sighed, dramatically. “Circumstances have ravaged his prospects.”

Sansa glanced to the man of hour. He took a long sip of his drink, avoiding reply. “What circumstances?”

Margaery spoke for him. “Military men need so little, Sansa. Second sons are given less still.”
Realization dawned on her as she turned to Stannis in accusation, “You were financed by your wife.”

He downed the rest of the alcohol in his glass and set it down on the table beside him. “I was.”

As in, he was no longer.

Sansa turned back to Margaery. “You lied to bring me here with the sole intention of negotiating a marriage to a man many years my senior with no means of providing for me?” Rage got the better of her as she advanced on her. “You claim to be my friend?”

“I am!” Margaery assured her. ”That's why I'm here. To help you see the potential.”

“I have resources, Lady Sansa,” Lord Stannis Baratheon interjected. “I have means of providing for you.” He glanced away. “They just haven’t been released to me.”

Pausing as she attempted to better understand, Sansa glanced at him. “Please explain yourself, Sir.”

“She was a spiteful woman,” Margaery spoke to his defense.

“Her father’s lawyers suspended all the accounts until certain conditions are met,” Stannis answered.

“Unreasonable conditions,” Margaery added, as if to add to his credibility.

Sansa found herself in need of a sip of her own. “What unreasonable conditions?”

“I have-- had a daughter.”

“Had?”

“Yes, it’s tragic,” Margaery frowned as deeply as she did whenever a shopkeep was out of a choice fabric. “Fever took her, poor girl.”

“My late wife only wanted a wholesome woman to raise her daughter in the event of her passing,” Stannis explained. “Her father’s connections ran deep, and their family attorney had the utmost respect for her wishes, and wrote her will specifically to ensure the character of any future bride I may take.”

“I don’t understand.” Sansa shook her head. “Your daughter has passed--may God rest her soul.” She frowned both in sorrow and confusion. “Surely that would nullify whatever documents impeded you from marrying as you wish.”

Margaery sighed, propelling herself up off the door behind her. “Unfortunately not. Stannis must marry, and he must do so well.”

Sansa looked between them, distrust slithering through her. “Of what interest is this to you, Margaery?”

"Did you not come to me but two months ago and explain your own need for marriage?” Her voice was gentle, but Sansa felt the sting of her words regardless.

Unable to sit with the feeling, Sansa stared at her friend as she spat back, "Since my friend is so willing to be of assistance, the solution is simple, Lord Baratheon.”

Stannis furrowed his brow at her, staring quizzically.
“Marry Lady Margaery.”

Margaery glanced away, apparently feeling the strike.

“Lady Margaery, is erm…” Stannis began to explain, but fell short.

Taking a joy she’d be ashamed of later, she watched him struggle to find a delicate way of putting things while standing in front of the lady in question. “What was it you said? ‘Wholesome woman.’ It is a shame Lady Margaery couldn’t possibly meet that requirement.”

“Lady Margaery’s virtue has come into question,” Stannis admitted.

Though her look soured for a moment, Margaery stood firm, refusing to buckle under a shame she was meant to feel. Her expression of forced amusement was her only armor and it began to grate. Sansa closed her eyes and drew as deep a breath as her corset would allow. “I assume that’s problematic for you.”

”To varying degrees.” Stannis fought to keep from fidgeting with the coin in his pocket. He was not a perfect man, but he always placed all his effort into being as close to. Marrying the Whore of Babylon would have only taken him further from his aspirations, despite her dowry and connections. She was a dear friend to Renly and when she suggested Lady Sansa, offering to make such a match, he allowed her to bend his ear. Lady Sansa's pedigree was without question, and due to tragedy, she was left without much familial support in the world. Young and innocent, tasked with finding a husband to provide and protect--both things he was confident he could do. Convincing her to accept his hand should not have been so difficult. “The documentation was quite specific. No room for interpretation, I’m afraid.”

“Allow your lawyer to decide such things,” she quipped.

He bit the inside of his cheek at that. Her eyes were piercing as she glared back at him, and he felt the oddest urge to reach for her, brush his fingertips over her brow to smooth the wrinkle in it.

“Maidenhead!”

Margaery. He sighed at her exasperating impulsivity. Perhaps it was important in reaching Lady Sansa’s reason, surely she knew her friend better than he.

“Excuse me?” Sansa asked.

“That’s what it says. Exactly.” She leaned in to better disrupt his thoughts of Lady Stark. “Stannis must marry a woman with her ‘maidenhead’ intact.”

“Maidenhead?” She gasped in disbelief.

Stannis found himself blanching a little at her shock. The word was definitely old-world, dated and undignified, but brooked no room for misinterpretation. He cursed his late wife her thorough counsel. Rubbing the back of his neck, Stannis stood strong, determined not to back down. “I apologize for the crass nature of the word, it is what was written in the will.”

“I see,” Sansa replied, listlessly.

Margaery cocked her head, her voice more gentle now. “Do you?”

“I do.” Sansa lifted her chin. “You’re asking for my hand in matrimony because you feel I meet the requirements necessary to collect your inheritance.”
“You do,” Margaery confirmed.

“Do I?” Having a taste of the upper hand, Sansa attempted to instill some degree of doubt.

Stannis snatched the bait and pursed his lips. “Are you confessing a stain on your character?”

It would have been so easy to lie, to say that she was. She would have been expelled from the private library, and this clandestine meeting. Gone would be the conundrum of whether or not to accept such an immoral proposal.

Her mind wouldn’t allow her to live so in the moment, however. Her parents’ passing had taught her life was more than what lay in the forefront. “No more than either of you,” she spat because surrender needn’t be without struggle.

Sansa turned to face Stannis, catching his eye and noticing—not for the first time, the depth of blue that colored them. For some reason unknown to her, she suddenly very much disliked the idea of his disapproval. It shouldn't have mattered, or if anything, it should have pleased her. Instead, she felt as if she wore the stain he'd inquired about, and couldn't rid herself of it without confessing the truth. Her jaw clenched as she promised with resentment, “I assure you, Sir, that I am most chaste.”

Relief washed over him at the confirmation. He'd had such high hopes for her before he'd ever even met her, hopes that only grew exponentially upon introduction and closer inspection of her many assets.

“What, may I ask, is my due?”

The question shook him from his thoughts. Margaery answered before he could. “You’ll be married well, be the recipient of all society’s invitations and favor, and carry the title: Lady Baratheon.”

That much was obvious.

“Which, considering the various impediments you’ve faced since coming out, it is quite an accomplishment.” Margaery leaned into her. “He is not like his brothers. Either of them.” She gripped her friend’s arm and held his gaze as she attested, “It is a match your parents would be proud of, Sansa. He is a good man.”

He wasn’t who she’d dreamed of in her youth, filling her hope chest.

Stannis tried his hand at humor in the growing disquiet of things. “You look as though you’ve met with the executioner to decide noose or guillotine.”

“Noose,” she whispered and then must have realized she’d paired voice to thought because her head shot up, her eyes wide with alarm.

Unable to hold back his amusement, he chuckled and then quickly cleared his throat. “Lady Sansa Stark, since learning of you, I’ve paid you close attention. I can honestly say, this is quite possibly the best arrangement for the both of us combined.”

“Arrangement,” she huffed.

He looked to Margaery for support. She straightened the pendant on Sansa’s necklace, as if to make amends for her earlier duplicity, “What is it about this proposal that upsets you the most?”

“Perhaps the fact that this proposal—meant to be more romantic in nature, is quite professional, ”
Sansa answered honestly. This was not as she envisioned things. Was he so old he lacked the ability to bend his knee for her?

“Love is a sentiment developed over time,” Margaery assured her. Then, grasping for more, she held his gaze as she lied, “Lord Baratheon has already grown an affection for you, hasn’t he?”

Stannis eyed her suspiciously, uncomfortable with open discussion of his affections, less comfortable still with the likes of Margaery Tyrell sharing them. Lady Sansa looked to him. Was that a glimmer of hope in her eyes? Was it the same hope he’d been fostering? He gulped, feeling his starched collar close in on his throat as he followed her lead. “Yes, of course.”

“Perhaps in time, you’ll find it in your heart to return his affection,” Margaery added.

Sansa pulled free from Margaery and stepped forward, her eyes never leaving his as she dared ask, “Then this is meant to be a real marriage?”

“In all senses of the word,” he confirmed, feeling anxiety prickle his flesh.

“Children,” she breathed.

“It’s not a matter to be rushed,” he promised, feeling himself stir in places he hadn’t expected. Not on first meeting, anyway.

Refusing to be put off, she asked, “How many?”

He wanted an heir. Losing Shireen hurt him so severely he wasn’t sure he’d ever recover. One child would do, boy or girl. He ached for a babe to carry his name, and his features. It wouldn’t replace Shireen, but it would do much to ease the heartache of a father without his daughter.

He opened his mouth to say so, when Lady Sansa turned a little in place and afforded him a perfect profile view. She was well proportioned to say the least. Her curves though much more modestly covered than other ladies—especially ones looking to court, advertised ample beauty to explore. The idea that no other man had yet known them, only added to their appeal. The words were out of his mouth before he could stop them. “As many as you’ll give me.”

Apparently unappreciative of his lingering gaze, Sansa shook her head and spoke more to herself than anyone else in the room. “It wasn’t supposed to be this way.”

“Did you think because you are not a pauper, you are somehow exempt from the business of matrimony?” Margaery asked, her challenge meant to motivate.

Rallying her strength Sansa countered, “I assumed—as many proper ladies do, that my station would allow more feeling than finance with the decision.”

In the silence that followed, Stannis felt himself moving forward, slowly approaching her. He lowered his voice, allowing a tone of vulnerability that he reserved only for moments of solitude, hoping it might touch her in a way he could not. “It’s not romantic, I know.” His hand reached for hers and he prayed she wouldn’t flinch away. When she didn’t, he added, “But it is honest.”

“Hmm,” she answered, glancing down.

His fingers roved hers, separating one from the rest. “I am not a young man, Lady Sansa.” He lamented the blemishes age and hard work brought his cracked and weathered hands. Her skin was so smooth against his, so without worry or hardship.

He knew she’d lost her parents, and the loss of anyone loved would smart a person to the realities
of life. Perhaps she truly was as pure as her reputation boasted, though that didn’t mean she
couldn’t recognize the vulgarity of loss and need. Might they meet there to start?

Sansa watched him place the ring on her finger, finding satisfaction in seeing such decoration
there. His words were a gentle overlay to the glimmer of promise before her. “But I am not so old
that I can not afford you some time after we are wed to grow more comfortable with…”

He trailed off and she was left with the thoughts that had been tormenting her moments before.
This was not simply a marriage to release funds, but one with the expectation of heirs--and all that
meant. She let her eyes travel up over his proud chest, to his strong jaw and the set of his face.
There was a kindness in his eyes she hadn’t allowed herself to see before.

Her mother’s sensibility reminded her, Ardent inspection, often offers results regardless of whether
there are any.

Her father’s assessment echoed in her brain, Stannis is an honorable man, rose in his ranks
rightfully, through skill.

At odds again, as they so often were, Sansa turned away from the opinions of the dead. “With
what?”

Stannis said nothing, only stared back at her, beseeching her not to make him say it aloud.

This was false. All of it. The proposal, the ring, the affection he claimed. “Comfortable with
allowing myself to be so kept? With offering you my virtue?” Her breathing hitched as she
insisted further for impact, “My maidenhead?”

He said nothing, only held her hand as if relinquishing his hold would release her altogether.
Stannis felt his insides call out, Coward.

“Kiss her.”

Margaery’s command ripped them from their moment alone together. Surely, she was jesting, as
that was often her way. There was a sincerity to her words, however. “She wants romance,
Stannis. Give it to her.”

Sansa shook her head in protest. “Lord Baratheon, I-”

Her words were stopped short by his lips pressed to hers. His actions were impulsive and
imbalanced and downright fiendish for a man who prided himself a gentleman. He didn’t know
what came over him, the permission an opportunity he couldn’t allow himself to miss.

Her mouth was closed to his, lips firm and unyielding.

Virgin, though she may have been, her failure to accept him in even the clumsiest and
inexperienced of ways, only confirmed his impropriety. Stannis resigned himself to the distance
they’d had before and prepared himself for recovery from such rejection.

To his amazement, she stalled his retreat, her own mouth opening, no longer so stunned. Her lips,
so set before, softened and held to his. Her tongue had been still, residing in her mouth, ignoring at
first the way his swiped over it, begging it to come out and play. It had to be the fourth time he ran
his over hers, that it finally stirred, darting out to timidly touch to his. It was clear she knew not
what she was doing, but her willingness to bother at all encouraged the growth in his breeches.

Reason was fast leaving him, as he stepped further into her. She leaned to accommodate the
imposition of his body against hers, eventually having to stagger back at his insistence. Feeling her
move, he followed, guiding her to the wall behind them, his lips never leaving her. She tasted so sweet and true and he twisted his head to better catch her every move however slight, swallowing each little mewl of pleasure that escaped her. The rings of her bustle snapped between the insistent press of his pelvis and the wood-paneled wall behind her.

The sound startled her and she broke free of his kiss. Heavy-lidded and single-minded, Stannis struggled to respect the limit she’d set. The flush of her cheeks had flowed down her throat to the porcelain chest that rose to touch his with each labored breath. Her lips were swollen and the perfect shade of abuse, beckoning his return to place healing kisses upon them.

He took a step back, knowing if he didn’t then, he’d lack the ability to later. “Apologies, my lady.”

Sansa smoothed her hands over the front of her dress, righting each ruffle. She averted her gaze, whispering, “It’s quite alright.”

Stannis knew it would have been proper to school his expression, but couldn’t bring himself to. A genuine grin grew, and pride welled in his chest. She was most definitely affected by his advances.

“Time has escaped us and I must excuse myself,” she turned for the door.

He held his hand out to stop her, his grip light, careful not to injure. “Your answer?”

She played with the ring on her finger, twisting and turning it around her nimble digit. Drawing a deep breath, Lady Sansa Stark lifted her gaze to meet his. A deeper shade of red colored her features, her voice warbling as she conceded, “Yes.”

Before he could rejoice in the victory, she had slipped out of his grasp and was pulling the door open. There was so much fire in her embrace, so much beneath the delicate surface. He watched her leave, her skirts swaying with each determined step forward, Lady Margaery following close behind her.

Stannis stood still, staring down the hall long after they’d gone. He was no stranger to weathering the storm that often raged in his head. This time the winds blew from a different direction, and Stannis touched his fingers to his lips, wondering at how strangely things felt when they came from the heart.

Chapter End Notes

I struggled with this prompt: Maidenhead_SansaxStannis_Historical. I assumed I was struggling because I’ve never written anything historical at all. I had to google bustle... But that was not it. It didn't feel right to me and I couldn't put my finger on it. After talking with the lovely lady that gave me the prompt, she explained it was because I had too much Margaery. I don't know much about Stannis, or the Stansa ship and therefore I had no idea how out of place Margaery was in regards to Stannis. I originally had them as having an affair -- wrong. All wrong. So, for those of you reading through this again and feeling like it's different, that's because it is. I went through and I changed his relationship with Margaery. Sorry for the confusion, it's
now more true to his character and also allows more focus to be placed on the Stansa ship. I apologize for the mistake, my intentions were good, I was simply ignorant.

To offer recompense I am currently writing their wedding night -- there will be absolutely no Margaery in it--or mention of, and it will most definitely have smut.
Stannis carried the oil lamp down the hall to his chamber, still wearing a grin he couldn’t seem to straighten. He’d been to many weddings, suffering the various festivities and innocuous conversations, and had always spent the majority of his time wondering how soon to excuse himself. His own first wedding had been no exception, though some would say it was due to a new wife awaiting him at the end of the night.

Hardly.

His intended was plain but well-matched, an arrangement his family anticipated more than he. Stannis simply wished escape from the pomp and circumstance of it all, that he might run off and make a name for himself. A man couldn’t do that without a wife at home, birthing heirs and keeping affairs in order.

Where his first wedding was lackluster, his second wedding had been it’s polar opposite. It should have garnered the same response. He was a man of one and forty years; he knew himself well, much of the world too. There was no joy to be had in marital formalities--especially for a wedding that promised no consummatory ending to it.

He had assured Lady Sansa Stark that he was a patient man, and honor demanded he keep his word. Stannis would show the young lady a kindness she may not have received wearing another man’s ring. There was plenty to distract as it was. The party had gone well into the evening, the piano keys never cooling with the jovial tunes excitedly played by every marketable young lady in attendance. The wine flowed freely and Stannis had declined the first few glasses, not wanting his lady to think him a man easy to grow worse for drink.

His lady.

It was upon realization of such internalized possessiveness toward the beautiful bride sitting next to him, that he accepted his first drink. He glanced to the side, still wary of any impression she may be forming, but comforted all the same by the alcohol’s burn in the center of his chest. She threw her bouquet and he actually bothered to watch. The cake was cut and he was careful to feed her the piece without any mess to be embarrassed over.

She looked happy.

Truly.

Either she was an amazing actress, or betrothal to him hadn’t been quite the walk towards the hangman she’d originally thought. Wanting her mirth to continue, he gave her a look of acceptance and approval when she pardon herself with her lady’s maid, not a half hour past. It wasn’t the wedding most men felt entitled to, but it had been the best he’d ever attended by far.

Taking notice of her leave, the crowd cheered him on, thinking he would surely follow. He smiled and raised his glass to them, maintaining the facade. Waiting as long as etiquette would dictate, he
allowed the more perceptive ones to begin calling upon their carriages. After the first few left, he
bid the rest goodnight and allowed his butler to assist them. Travelers to their rooms, and
neighbors to their coats by the entryway.

His fingers worked the buttons of his vest as he walked, starting to rid himself of the constricting
layers. Stannis had given Davos, his valet, the night off. It was expected in normal circumstances
as a means of respecting the timid nature of new wives. Fortunately, it had been single-handed
work to that point, and he’d even been able to loosen his tie before needing his hand free to open
the door to his chambers.

Stannis set the lamp on the antique bureau, older than even he. The lamp clanged into a small
platter of cheeses, crackers, and fruit.

_Davos you old goat._

Apparently his trusted valet felt he and his new lady wife may need nourishment throughout the
night, having exhausted themselves upon each other. Her beautiful face came to mind, the sway of
her skirts as she danced, the warmth of her hands held in his as they pledged before the priest.

He wished such strenuous activity was in his future.

The thought of it alone had him growing hard in his trousers, threatening to pop any button that
dared impede him. He let his hand press down against the lump, giving himself a moment of relief
before he glanced over at the wash basin to ensure it had been refilled with fresh water and that
clean towels had been left. Lord Baratheon was not primitive enough to ravage some poor
innocent girl terrified on her wedding night, but not quite so refined that he wasn’t willing to take
matters into his own hands.

Resolving to do just that, he released himself and shrugged out of his coat and vest, kicking his
boots off. He was quick to yank his shirt over his head rather than work each button and stood
shirtless in the open air for a moment before grabbing a piece of cheese off the platter. There really
was no need for the food to go to waste, and he didn’t dare leave it untouched--lest he admit his
lady hadn’t been with him to share it.

Chewing two cubes, he began to unfasten his pants. His cock had been suffocated against the
front of his trousers, the head reaching the top button, barely hindered from peeking above the
waistband. It was uncomfortable, to say the least, but it was a state of torture he’d grown
accustomed to since receiving his first notable pubic hair.

The smallest drip of seed pooled in the tip, beet-red with blood flow and purpose. He worked a
few more buttons to let it fly freely and began shucking his trousers. A loud gasp startled him
suddenly. Any haziness brought on by drink cleared and he was alert to any potential threat that
awaited him in the shadows. Using one hand to cover his vulnerability, he reached for the lamp
with his other and raised it to better scan the darkened room.

There was nothing to be found, no invader lurking in a far off corner, burglar hanging from the
window sill, nor even a demonic spirit hovering an arms length away. Stannis had begun to
wonder if he’d imagined the sound when he noticed something quite peculiar. There appeared to
be a lump in his bed. A rather large lump. He raised the lamp higher and took a tentative step
forward, narrowing his gaze.

He stifled his own exclamation when a pair of eyes at the head of the bed blinked. It was Lady
Sansa Stark--Baratheon. Lady Sansa Baratheon. His new bride. The chaste woman who’d
required his understanding and patience to wait a year’s time before they were to engage in marital
congress and conceive of a child.
What in the bloody hell was the woman doing in his bed? Did she not know the temptation she was to him? The depravity her pouty lips and rounded hips brought about in him. Hells bells, he was ready to tear through his own breeches a moment before at just the thought of her. Now she was here—in the flesh. In his bed.

No woman came to a man’s bed without understanding what it meant. She was young, though. Without a mother to guide her.

“Lady Sansa.” His voice broke and he cleared his throat to sound more congenial. “You are not expected to—” He drew a deep breath. “That is to say, it is quite alright if—” Again he stalled before finally asking, “I trust you know where your bedchamber is?”

“Yyyes, my lord,” she replied in a shrill only nerves could create.

Realizing quickly that he was still very much naked, Stannis whirled around and set the lamp back on the bureau, pulling the top drawer open to grab the nearest dressing gown. He turned quickly to better conceal his manhood from her and throw the garment on, needing not to scare the virgin any further with the vulgar reality of the male form. Speaking away from her and instead into the darkness he found the courage to ask, “Would you like me to escort you to it?”

As soon as he uttered the offer he wanted to smash his forehead against the wardrobe beside him. She was gorgeous and pure and all his. He’d given her the freedom to choose and here she was, under the covers of his bed. Her sweet voice interrupted his personal berating. “I’m here for you, my lord husband.”

That should have been enough.

Any other man would have feasted upon her willingness, regardless of the reasoning behind it. Consent wasn’t always considered necessary, especially between husband and wife. When actually given, it was meant to be more than enough. Yet, honor required explanation and not just consent but also a certain degree of desire. She was young and virtuous, but still a woman, and women were meant to want men on a deeper level than polite society would ever admit.

Stannis brought the lamp with him as he stepped carefully towards his bed. “For me?” He asked, doubtfully.

Her grip on the blankets tightened as she raised them to her chin. Setting the lamp down, he moved to sit on the edge of his bed, taking her in. She drew a deep breath and insisted, “Yes.”

“May I ask for what purpose?” The purpose was clear enough, though he hoped perhaps to offer her an escape, despite the growing throb between his legs.

She eyed him, finding her voice. “I understand the duty of a wife, my lord.”

It was as expected. She felt forced. “And I’ve told you that it isn’t expected,” he said with disgust for the situation he found himself in. Realizing his harsh tone, he worked to soften it. “We have time. We need not hurry these things.”

“Our vows will be in question they are not consummated,” she reasoned.

There was a bravery to her that he couldn’t help but admire. A better man would have ignored the courage she mustered and sent her back to her chamber, knowing she wasn’t ready to lay herself before him as she was. Stannis bit the inside of his cheek, steeling himself against the disappointment of falling so short of such better men. He reached to pull back the covers, noting her automatic flinch. “I am merely climbing into my own bed, my lady.” The lamp lit her nervous
features beautifully and held his heart for a beat before releasing him to ask, “Do you take issue?”

“Of course not,” she denied, shaking her head vehemently as she clutched the blankets to her.

Stannis pulled the covers up to hips and turned on his side to better spy her so close by. Her eyes grew wide at his encroaching proximity, compelling him to offer her another escape. “No one will question, my lady. We may sleep, if you wish, and they will assume more.”

As if sleep were a possibility.

The blood in his veins sang with the knowledge that she was inches from him. Even at this distance he could smell her flower perfume and feel the warmth that radiated from her soft body.

Again, her voice was as sweet as her scent as she insisted, “I understood when I agreed, that a woman’s duty is to allow her husband passage on the night they are wed and every night he desires thereafter.”

Stannis pursed his lips, disliking the idea that she was acting out of duty, but knowing there was no other possible reason why she’d lounge so freely in his chamber. “And I’ve already absolved you of that duty, but for the subject of children, to be pursued at a later time.”

“I understand the terms to which I accepted your hand,” she insisted, swallowing as he shifted on the bed, reclining further into the mattress. “That fact does not negate my own respect for the sanctity of marriage.”

**Sanctity of marriage?**

What was the girl on about? If he didn’t know better, Stannis would wonder if she were making a clumsy attempt at seduction. The very idea of it had him reaching for the woman next to him. As quickly as he’d laid palm on her arm, she jumped, trembling in her anxiety. “You’re shivering, my dear.”

If she objected to the term of endearment, she didn’t say so. Instead, she lied. “I’m cold.”

A chill in the month of August? Doubtful.

He was kind enough not to say say. “Come here, I’ll warm you,” he offered, holding his arms out for her. While he wouldn’t have at all minded a moment of wicked wiles, his offer was unfortunately with more noble intent.

“I’m quite alright,” she again lied. “There are plenty of blankets.”

He knew it was polite to feign ignorance to her transparency, but the absurdity of the situation had him uttering a soft chuckle. Caught, and feeling as though he should explain himself, Stannis tried to think of the appropriate thing to say. A quick glance around him reminded that there was absolutely nothing appropriate about the situation, so he spoke frankly. “You’ve come to my bed, offering me your chastity and you can not even tolerate a simple embrace.”

She gasped, “Oh!” The offense taken was obvious and he wished he could eat the words already uttered. “Tolerate?” She repeated. “I’ll show you what I’m capable of tolerating, my lord!”

Before he could attempt to soothe her injured ego, she’d lunged forward, laying herself against his side. Her arm reached around his chest, her leg lay over his, allowing her hot little core to cozy against his hip. Excitement over the unexpected rippled through him, and he kept quiet to hide whatever stutter he’d suffer because of it. Without any direction from his greater mind, his arm lowered and lay across her back, his hand clutching her side to keep her close. “Well, alright,
then,’’ he responded awkwardly and then immediately closed his eyes and cursed to himself.

“Indeed!”

Indeed, he repeated her exclamation, and again bit the inside of his cheek in the slightest amusement.

They lay together like that for a moment before his other hand rose of its own accord and rubbed small circles over her back, only the thin material of her shift acting as barrier between their flesh.

“What are you doing?” She inquired.

Seducing you.

Poorly.

“Warming you, my lady,” he responded quickly.

She sounded almost forlorn as she spoke into his chest, her voice vibrating through is own dressing gown. “You called me ‘dear’ before…”

“Did I?” He asked, smiling at her astute observation.

As his hand lowered, so too did her voice rise. “You did.”

“Hmm,” he responded to maintain the momentum, his palm moving from her lower back to her hip. So real in his hands--if this were a dream, he needn't wake from it. The rewards of sleep were far outweighing those of wake.

She shifted against him and he felt bold enough to whisper into the crown of her head. “Do you prefer, my dear? Or perhaps, darling?”

Sansa picked nervously at his dressing gown, her voice light as she deflected. “Terms of endearment are created to appease women, are they not?”

“I don’t care about appeasing women,” he responded, his fingertips dancing dangerously close to the curve of her backside.

Her eyes widened, fighting the urge to protest his handling. What was unacceptable hours before, was now ordained by God. “Is that so?” She asked, stalling.

“I’m now a married man,” he explained, letting his hand smooth over her. Touching his nose to hers, he closed his eyes and confessed, “I care only about my wife.”

“Truly?” she breathed against his lips, her question so naive and vulnerable.

There was a beauty in her purity he’d not found anywhere else in all his years, in all the godforsaken places he’d been stationed. “Truly,” he promised, his fingers curling over as much plump flesh as he could grip.

Her eyes fluttered shut as she clutched his bare chest. Surprised by the feel of her palm uninhibited, he glanced down to see she’d pulled the neck down to expose part of his chest. His own hold on her tightened and she flirted, “You’re fresh.”

She flirted.

Stannis looked back to her eyes. Ladies like Sansa Stark-- Baratheon now, didn’t flirt. She was
above that sort of thing. Wasn’t she? He thought she was, anyway. He glanced back around his
darkened room, seeing no witness to any games they may play, feeling the heat between her legs
nestle against him. He closed his eyes and shifted his own hips against the blanket still covering
him, letting his fingertips dig into her. “You inspire that quality in me,” he flirted back.

Silence followed, her heat turning as she looked away.

Was it shame?

He wouldn’t blame her if it was. Not that she had anything to be ashamed of. She was just so new
to cravings like these. Truth be told, he was too. His late wife had never brought about his desire
so severely. Stannis began to pry his fingers from her as he asked reluctantly, “Shall I stop?”

“Please don’t,” she protested, snuggling closer to him.

She’d been so nervous at first, and now she was practically begging him for his attention. Stannis
started to wonder if perhaps she’d been sneaking some cups of her own throughout the course of
their wedding. Again, he wouldn’t have faulted her. Matrimony always cost a woman more at the
onset; only a fool would think otherwise. A gentleman would have realized her compromised state
and peeled her willing body from his.

“May I kiss you?”

Blast it all to hell! What was he thinking? With that question, went any ounce of chivalry he’d
previously prided himself on.

Sansa lifted her face to look at his, her lips pouting up and waiting for his. Her words were soft
and tempting. “If you want me, my lord. Have me. I am yours.”

Stannis stared down at her, bewildered. Had he heard her right? Was there a modicum of
possession in her words, as there’d been in his thoughts?

My lord.

My.

Though her words were passive, the emphasis was anything but. She was scared, yes—as any
virgin would be. But she was bold in her advances, regardless. From where did she pull such
strength? Did she share his feelings, even in the slightest?

Before he could ponder her too long, her lips were on his. They were a uncertain whisper, soft
and unimposing. It was obvious she hadn’t ever initiated such a gesture, though as their kiss
progressed, that fact mattered less and less. Wrapped up in the taste of her tongue against his, he
began bunching the fabric of her shift under the covers. He touched his palm to her naked thigh,
sucking her bottom lip in the event she may protest.

She didn’t, only played her fingers in the sprinkle of hair on his chest, twisting and tilting her neck
to better receive the affection he poured into her.

He had expected her to skin to be soft, but he hadn’t been prepared for exactly how soft it would
be, protected from time and shielded from the elements. His ran his hand over the outline of her
body, taking advantage of the opportunity to touch her in a way he hadn’t imagined so soon. Her
hips were full and round, the dip of her waist perfect, the ridges of her ribcage shallow. Her
stomach was mostly flat and as he ran his hand over it, he was tempted to let his fingers drop
down to the thatch of fiery-red hair he’d yet to lay eyes on, but knew without doubt would be
heavenly.
Sliding his tongue against hers, he thought better of it and forced his hand up to the soft mound of her breast, wrapping his fingers around it to give a gentle squeeze.

She groaned into his mouth and reached further into his gown to run her hands over him. He rather liked that. Not simply laying there, soaking up his affection to return none of it, Sansa may not have understood the way her body moved but she allowed it to anyway.

With the blankets still gathered at his waist, concealing an appendage so foreign to her, he decided to free himself of his dressing gown and pulled from her just long enough to do so. Her eyes sparkled up at him, her mouth wet and open, surprised by the sudden separation. Stannis caught his breath, staring down at her, watching her gaze rake over him. He knew she could see each bump and ridge of lean muscle, each scarred over wound, and blemish, and he would give her this chance to resist him.

She wouldn’t take it. Her own hands sought the hem of her gown, now rucked up below her breasts, and sat up long enough to pull it over her head and toss it aside. Stannis’ gaze dropped down to the ample breasts before him, appreciating her pebbled nipples in the lamplight. Obviously growing self-conscious over such inspection, she started to shift in place, as if trying to find cover.

“Beautiful,” he admired.

Sansa bit her lip and laid her palm back on his chest. He appreciated that. Rather than backing down--away, she was touching him, trying to strengthen their fragile connection. He would return the favor. Stannis turned on his side, and grasped her breast again, this time paying closer attention to the hardened peaks that accented her so perfectly. His fingers gently plucked as he leaned in, kissing and nipping her neck. She gasped and groaned, the hand on his chest finding his shoulder to hold onto.

Her responsiveness was intoxicating and he rolled over enough to grind his painful erection against her thigh, needing the momentary relief it gave. Her grip on his shoulder tightened and he glanced up at her, knowing she wouldn’t know what to expect--how hard a man could grow when so enticed. She peered down at him, her eyes turned black holes in the darkness. He ground himself against her leg again, watching her mouth open in awe as he took her nipple in his mouth and succled it.

Sansa sucked air through her teeth, and it only made him swirl his tongue around her delicious little peak more for it. So different from his past experiences in bed, the girl splayed out before him gave him a confidence he’d always lacked, simply by enjoying his touch so obviously--so thoroughly. With the unrelenting pulse of his cock down-right demanding to be inside her, he continued his steady grind against her and brought his free hand to her other breast, needing more.

He told himself to slow down, keep from scaring the girl with the passion she stirred in him. He was a grown man, not some savage boy without any self-restraint, pawing at a pretty lady. All good things came with time and tending. And he felt she deserved such tending.

Kissing a trail back up to her lips, he cupped and fondled the new-found breast and abandoned the other to discover her other assets. She hadn’t noticed him release her, too caught up in experiencing the same pleasure all over again. He ghosted his fingers down her ribs, over the slight indent of her navel and the soft curve of her abdomen, to brush over the intimate curls below.

She sighed in his mouth as his fingers played over her seam, noting the dampness that already matted them. It had been a long time since Stannis had cause to touch a lady in that particular
place, but he remembered well enough to question such sudden readiness. He pulled his lips from hers and brought his hand up, inspecting the glossy sheen that coated his fingertips. The subtle scent of lavender and pheromones filled his nostrils. “Sansa, what-”

“Lavender oil,” she answered quickly.

“What?” His brow furrowed. “Why?”

She chewed her lip nervously before explaining, “Some ladies say it helps the man, to…” Too mortified to continue, she buried her face in his neck.

_Helps the man…_

Oh dear lord.

He wanted to take offense, unable to hide his scowl. What did it say about him that she felt he needed such aid? It was all he had in him not to pin her down and show her just how little assistance he needed in properly preparing her to take every last inch of him.

“Please don’t be cross with me,” she mumbled into his neck, still too humiliated to face him.

Stannis closed his eyes and drew a deep breath. They’d come so far together. She’d opened herself up and now she was curling into him, trying to hide. No. He couldn’t allow that. He’d had a marriage like that already before, and he wouldn’t accept that in this one--one he truly wanted.

Wrapping his arms around her, he hugged her to him. “Of course I’m not cross,” he promised. He brushed hair from her forehead. “How could I be cross?” He asked, peppering her with kisses. “With a wife so thoughtful, so prepared?”

“Truly?” She asked, slowly lifting her head to peer at him, determining his sincerity.

Her caution was smart and endearing, and adorable, and, and, and--

He was falling in love with her.

More than lust, but in fact, actual love.

A lump grew in his throat over the revelation and he smiled through it, unable to speak, lest his cover be completely blown.

She had no idea what was in his head, how could she? If she had, she wouldn’t have so naively asked, “Do you still want me?”

He wanted no one more.

Stannis hadn’t really wanted anyone else before he loved her, and now that he did, he couldn’t imagine being anywhere but right there.

In that bed.

In that moment.

With that woman--his dear, his _darling_.

His fingers dropped back down to the oiled curls, rubbing and pressing over them at first. She groaned at the sensation and his mouth covered hers, wanting to catch each exclamation as he parted her folds and danced in the slippery path to her pearl. Sansa bucked against his hand when
he found it and he worked only too feverishly to please. Breaking from her lips, he nuzzled and
nipped her neck while she tensed in his arms. So aroused by her muted movements, Stannis took
himself in hand to give a little squeeze while he maintained the pressure she flourished in.

Flesh slick with impending release sounded lush and wet beneath his digits and he could tell by
the way she held her breath and arched her back she would soon realize the wonder of
womanhood. Her cry was quiet and understated, but rampaged through him regardless.

She was ready now.

She had to be.

He needed her to be.

Stannis rolled over and up onto his knees, parting her legs as he did. She was still trying to catch
her breath as he spread her open to him and leaned down, propping himself on his forearm. He
didn’t rest his full weight on her, afraid he might crush her, but let her feel his solid frame against
hers. His rock-hard shaft rest atop her tender flesh, still sensitive from such adoration.

She shivered beneath him, overstimulated, and he smiled warmly back at her, searching his brain
for the appropriate thing to say. It would only intimidate her if he told her to prepare herself, that it
would only hurt the first time, though hopefully due to the pleasure he’d just given her, not too
horribly.

Oh god, he was losing his nerve.

Worry started to take him when he felt her lips on his chin. “It’s alright,” she whispered
permission.

After everything he’d shown her, did she realize was she was now agreeing to?

She had to.

What else was there?

Before thought robbed him of feeling, he rubbed the head of his erection over her. He would
show her that his cock could be gentle and sensual before it claimed her forever his. She shifted
under him, smiling and mewing her approval of such a massage. Watching her closely, he
lowered himself to press against her opening, the very tip of him venturing as far inside as he
could before encountering resistance.

Her eyes snapped open at the pressure and he pecked kisses to the side of her face as he held
himself still, not wanting to go too far too fast. “We can stop,” he whispered, not sure if he
actually could. “If it’s too much.”

She shook her head, and wrapped her arms around him. “It’s alright,” she breathed, anxiety filling
her voice.

“I’ll go slow,” he offered consolation.

She nodded against him and closed her eyes. Feeling a right ass for it, he persisted forward a little,
imposing himself a bit before stopping to inspect her. Her features gave away her discomfort.
There was still so much further to go, retreating now would only mean she’d suffer this all over
again.

He could give her nothing but choice. “Let me know when you are ready for more,” he
whispered, kissing the jaw she clenched so tightly.

Sansa nodded and drew a deep breath before she forced a brave face. “More.”

Stannis rest his forehead against hers and pressed himself deeper into her, this time getting several inches in before he met the next point of resistance and stopped. “Breathe, darling,” he coached her, smoothing the hair away from her face.

She took another deep breath and then kissed his cheek. “It’s alright--more.”

He moved slowly, sinking a couple more inches in when she brought her hand down to his backside and held it. “All, Stannis.”

He stared back into her eyes, uncertain she knew what she was asking for. Before he could decide whether or not to give her all of himself, she pulled him forward and he allowed himself to fall so completely inside of her.

Careful not to irritate the injury his love had caused, he resisted the call for friction. She was quiet under him and he knew her body was acclimating to his. Unable to bear the idea of causing her any pain, he closed his eyes and pressed his lips to hers. Though, they remained still, she accepted his kiss. Slowly, after a few seconds time, she began to return it, licking and sucking his lips as amorously as he did hers.

To his surprise, she lifted her knees and draped one leg over his hips. It changed their positioning and opened herself more for him. Completely bottomed out and wanting, Stannis lifted his hips a little and rocked into her, testing the waters, seeing what she could handle.

A quiet moan slipped her lips and he smiled proudly as he rocked into her again. She had pushed past the pain and found the pleasure again, her hands running down his back and clutching him close as he rolled his hips into her again and again.

Her legs wrapped around him, tightly pulling him down onto her. At first, he didn’t understand why she would restrict his movement so, but then noticed he little yelp of excitement and the flex of her intimate muscles when his pelvis crushed against her--rhythmically.

That had him grinning, and he picked up the pace, no longer worried for the way he invaded her, but instead focused on bringing her to end before he reached his own. The wait was not long, for her back arched under him and she bit his bicep through the shout her second orgasm.

He loved this woman.

Bucking with reckless abandon, he wasn’t far behind her, gripping her hips as he filled her so completely with his seed, coughing his exasperation over her shoulder into the pillows that surrounded them. His heart felt as though it might burst from his chest, the pounding between his ears so intense, the stars behind his eyes so bright.

They both lay there, completely exhausted and wrecked, all strength sapped from them. The hand that had rested on his back started to move, petting him gently. He sighed into the pillow again, trying to rally the fortitude necessary to pry himself off of her. So much younger, and filled with more energy and vigor, she turned her head on her pillow and nuzzled into his neck, kissing him as she whispered, “You’re heavy.”

“Apologies,” he mumbled and rolled off her.

He looked down at the mess they’d made together and forced himself to stand and seek out the wash basin. She hissed a little on the bed behind him and a pang of guilt struck him. He poured
the cool water over one of the washrags and rung the excess from it.

No longer so modest, he crossed his room nude, and touched the damp cloth to her womanhood.
“Here, it will help.”

Her fingers brushed over his as she held it to herself. “Thank you,” she murmured, looking away. Inhibition had returned to her, and she began to rise up.

His hand shot out, catching her arm. “Don’t go.”

She glanced back at him.

“If you don’t want to, that is.” He cleared his throat, trying not to sound as excitable.

“But my chamber?” She asked, more confused than resistant.

“Will be there tomorrow.” Stannis fluffed some pillows beside himself. “You are welcome in my chambers.”

Sansa glanced down at his naked form and then hid her smile.

“For more than that.” He hid a smirk of his own.

“For sleep?” She raised a skeptical eyebrow at him. “Is that done?”

He reached for her, pulling her down next to him. “It can be.” Stannis tugged the covers up over them and wrapped an arm around her.

“What will the servants say?” She asked.

Not wanting to think about it, he yawned and closed his eyes. “Plenty of things I shouldn’t concern myself with.”

A few seconds passed in silence and then she asked, “Stannis?”

His eyes opened, suddenly insecure. This was where she left him, wasn’t it? For any one of the very valid reasons she may have had. His subconscious tightened his grip around her. He held his own breath as he asked, “Yes?”

“Good night.”

Releasing the air caught in his lungs, he answered, “Good night, darling.”

_I love you._
“You put her in a straitjacket?” Jaime growled, hating the doctor for his barbaric practices. Despite the fury that compelled his palms to fists, he found himself unable to look at him, not wanting to turn his gaze away from the observation window. His sister Cersei, sat crouched in the corner, pressing her face into the wall as she hummed a tune he didn’t recognize. Occasional verses sounded, *Greasing palms and setting bombs…*

The doctor flinched under his harsh judgement. “It’s what she requested.”

“Requested?”

“Yes,” he confirmed and then pointed through the glass as he explained. “She said she’d been in one in the past and enjoyed it--actually likened it to being *swaddled*."

*My brother loves me, as only we can see*, She raised her voice into the wall.

Jaime smiled at that. Even in her tattered state she was beautiful; his other half. Nothing could lessen or tarnish the bond they shared since the womb. “Did she say why she bombed the federal building?”

The doctor frowned. “I’m afraid your sister suffers from delusions of grandeur. She believes in a fantasy world wherein she is a queen and her act of terrorism was not on a modern day federal building filled with innocent bystanders, but instead a large religious monument where an enemy resided.”

“Delusions?” Caught on the offensive word, Jaime’s eye twitched.

“Yes. Many.” He flipped some pages in his folio, clearly missing the transgression.

*We’re only whole when he’s in my hole!* She cackled maniacally.

“Some more unsavory than others…”

Jaime finally turned to face him, his glare boring into him. “What do you mean by *unsavory*?”

The doctor cleared his throat and drew a deep breath. “Unfortunately, she had mistaken your familial affection for something a bit more…” He fidgeted in place for a moment before averting his gaze and admitting, “*Intimate*.”

“You know that we are twins, correct?” Jaime asked, taking some odd sense of pleasure in the the way the man squirmed. “Of course, we’re close.”

“Yes, I understand that. The fact remains, however, that in your sister’s delusional state, she has romanticized that bond to mean something-” He licked his lips and leaned in to whisper at the scandal of it, “*Sexual* in nature.”

“I see.” Jaime schooled his face, keeping his tone as even as he possibly could.

“I understand how upsetting it must be to hear,” the doctor said as he pulled a pen from his pocket and marked the bottom line of the top page in his folio. “And I do regret having to report it to you.”

In a lighter voice, Jaime observed, “That’s a nice pen.”
“What?” The doctor glanced up at him, surprised by the change in subject. “Oh.” He realized the pen in his hand. “Thank you. It was a gift.”

“May I see it?”

“Uhh, sure.”

Jaime made a show of looking it over and appreciating it, running his thumb over the gild embossing on it and twisting it back and forth to see the ballpoint retract. He grinned as he asked, “When you say that my sister is delusional, are you implying that she is a liar?”

“Excuse me?” The doctor asked with furrowed brow.

“Delusions are beliefs that aren’t real, aren’t they? Testimonies that are all made up. Lies,” Jaime clarified.

The doctor shook his head at the misunderstanding. “Not quite. It’s-”

His words were cut short by the involuntary screech that tore through his throat and reverberated off the walls in an unhuman echo. Jaime was sure to jiggle his grip on the pen he’d jabbed into the doctor’s eye, ensuring the most irreparable destruction.

With great satisfaction, he watched the man sink to the tile floor, twitching his certain death. “I won’t stand for someone calling my sister a liar.” He bent down and grabbed the keycard that had been clipped under the doctor’s identification badge and scanned it on the panel beside the door. So caught up in song, she hadn’t turned to notice him when he entered. Deciding to get her attention, he leaned against the wall and purred, “I do love to hear you sing.”

His voice filling her ears lifted her chin to look at him. “My love!” She exclaimed and braced herself against the wall to stand and run for him. He caught her up and held her close, working the buckles of her restraint behind her back. “What took you so long?” She asked between kisses, her tongue twirling away at his response.

He managed to pull from her lips long enough to answer, “So many people to kill to get here.”

As soon as she was free, her palm rose and she slapped him hard across his face. “Excuses!”

He grabbed her arm before she could do it again and growled back at her, “This one was harder to get into than the last one.”

Guilty, she glanced away and he dropped her arm before reaching for her cheek to soothe her. “But it didn’t stop me, did it?”

“No,” she admitted, biting her bottom lip through a shy smile.

“I told you I’d kill anyone that stood between us, and I have. Haven’t I? The whole bloody lot of them.” His thumb pulled her lip free from her teeth and ran back and forth over it a few times. “To get to you.”

Cersei took his playful digit in her mouth, sucking it as she blinked up at him. His eyes fluttered shut at the sensation, opening when she released him to say, “I missed you.”

He drew a resentful breath and quipped, “Then stop getting yourself caught and taken away from me.”

“I thought you liked playing knight?” She pouted.
Jaime couldn’t argue with that, so he sighed and agreed, “I missed you too.”

She jumped up into his arms, wrapping her legs around his hips and slinging her arms over his shoulders as she dug her fingers into the back of his scalp and exclaimed, “Fuck me!”

“Not here,” he chuckled, cupping and rubbing her ass. “We have limited time before the good doctor is found.”

“Dead doctor,” she snickered, grinding herself against his belt buckle.

“Mm,” he agreed, enjoying another criminal kiss before he set her down. “Come on. Let’s go.”

“Wait.” She crouched down to retrieve the fallen jacket. “We’re taking this.”

“Why?”

“For sex,” she answered plainly as she made for the door. “I think I look good in it.”

Jaime smiled, feeling his love for her bloom deep in his chest. He’d been separated from her for too long. “You do. Though, I think I prefer the rope. Your tits look great in the rope.”

She flashed him some dimples as she stepped over the doctor’s body. “Thanks baby, that makes me feel special.”

He rushed ahead to open the door for her, giving her ass a good smack as she passed through it. She laughed over her shoulder. “But I’m still keeping the jacket.”

“Of course you are.” He gave a martyred sigh as he lead her by the arm down the hall towards the bright red exit sign.

“They gave me a new diagnosis this trip.”

“Oh?” He asked, sliding the keycard over the panel by the exit. “What is it this time?”

She glanced at him before answering. “Narcissistic Personality Disorder.”

Down the first flight of stairs, he turned to give her a sympathetic grin. “Oh babe, we already knew that one, didn’t we?”

Cersei clucked her teeth and sighed. “We did. But it’s different thinking it from hearing it confirmed.”

“Are you alright?” He asked with genuine concern as he looked to see how many more stairs they would have to descend.

“Yes. But we’re going to need to grab a couple of bottles of wine on the way home.”

Jaime extended the card again, swiping out of the final exit. The fresh air hitting them. “You know you can’t drink alcohol. It interacts poorly with your medications.”

“God dammit, Jaime!” She growled, stomping off towards the parking lot. “I already told you! That’s only on Wednesdays and Sundays.”

She looked absolutely stunning, standing there with the sun spinning her blonde hair to gold. The lips that had been pulling at his moments before were now pursed in a show of indignation that was beyond adorable. The woman was simply a vision too beautiful to argue with, so he
conceded. “My mistake.”

“Alright then,” she replied, visibly calming. Glancing around her, she asked, “Which car is ours?”

Jaime took her arm again and lead her to the porsche he paid for in cash that morning and opened the door for her, waiting until she was situated before he closed it. He almost ran around to his side, the skip in his step hard to tame. Her hand found his over the console, threading their fingers together as she leaned back and sighed. “You’re the best brother a girl could ever ask for.”
Inappropriate (pxs)

Chapter Summary

Lemon Lolli AU

Even caught up in conversation, he’d noticed the way they were looking at her. Fidgeting and leering at the hot redhead in booty shorts, doing what horny teenage boys did. He shouldn’t call them boys. They were her age, after all, and he definitely didn’t want to think of her as any less developed than she was. That didn’t mean he viewed them as anymore men than they really were.

He’d moved to block her from view numerous times only to be thwarted by her curious eye wanting to spy all the movie posters that surrounded them. The motion had pained him, his leg still healing, but it had been worth it. They hadn’t been together long yet, their love still so new, and already he was as protective of her as if she’d been his girl for years. So completely committed.

Petyr knew she’d been locked away for a while, but did she really not see them gawking at her? Perhaps she simply didn’t care. Curse her sudden desire to wear such short-shorts in public, god dammit!

He never should have brought her out of the house. That was his mistake. He could have stalled her some more. At the very least told her it was cold outside, thus ensuring she was covered from wrist to ankle. “Tell me you love me?” He said suddenly beside her.

She stopped mid-sentence and smiled. “I love you. You know I do.”

Petyr glanced back to Oswell and Brune standing in line behind them. He gave them a boyish grin, silently--proudly boasting her validation. Brune kept his eyes trained forward, ever the professional henchman. Petyr appreciated that about him, though at times he wished the man would emote a little.

No, he didn’t. That was a lie.

Brune had been in his employ for so long because he kept his mouth shut and was the textbook definition of loyalty. Oswell was good for a muted opinion. He tipped his head in acknowledgement of Sansa’s response.

She interrupted his insecurity. “I was thinking we could go to the grocery store after the movie.”

He nodded his head, eyeing the ticket counter as they approached.

“What do you think we should pick up?”

Her words filled his ears, but the ticket salesman’s wandering eyes stole all of his attention. Petyr dug his wallet out as she added, “Milk, for sure. Probably more bread…”

“You going shopping?”

Petyr watched the pimply-faced brat’s lips waggle to ask the question, and heard it squeak obnoxiously through the air, but didn’t understand it to mean anything other than: You’re so hot, I
just came a little in my pants.

“Yeah.” Sansa smiled innocently back at him.

“Condoms,” Petyr growled.

“Uh,” the kid startled, the ticket stubs suspended awkwardly in the air.

He knew Sansa had turned to face him, her curious and disapproving—mostly disapproving—face hovering in his periphery. His eyes stayed trained on the little shit who coveted his woman, daring him to say something. An entirely dominate grin spread across his face as his wrapped his arm around Sansa and explained, “We’re all out.” Licking his lips, he winked at the kid. “This morning was our last couple.” He’d appreciated her sexual appetite from the start, but even more so for the bragging rights that blowing through a box of condoms in the week since she gave her virginity to him created.

That’s right fucker, she’s mine. Go rescue your own girl from a sadistic sexual predator!

Before either Sansa or her special admirer could comment, Petyr grabbed the stubs and turned her away from the booth, whistling for Oswell and Brune to follow. He’d taken great pains to bring Sansa to a cinemas in the next city over, not wanting to be recognized, hating his night to be ruined with grovelling. Everywhere he went, people fell over themselves, and gave him everything they owned, begging not to be murdered. As if it would ever work out that way. People who saw him rarely expired. It was usually the people that never saw him coming.

Enroute to the counter for concessions, Petyr did his best to hide his limp as she chided him, “That was inappropriate.”

Petyr didn’t hear her at first, too busy snickering to himself to notice the red flush of her cheeks or the way she ducked her head in embarrassment. His self-satisfaction ebbed enough, however, for him to glance over. Instantly disappointed by her bashfulness—a bashfulness that teetered on shame. Petyr fumed, “Inappropriate?”

“Yes.” Her voice was small, but quite resolved.

He whirled on her, stifling a wince before threading his fingers through hers to hold her hand and keep her in place as he explained. “No, Sansa. Inappropriate is wearing argyle with stripes and thinking you’ve made a statement. Inappropriate is the fact that all the best television characters are off screen: Vera from Cheers, Maris from Frasier. Fuck, even Honey from The Incredibles—if you’re in that kind of mood.” He drew a breath before he added, “Inappropriate is having to wait in line to pay for absolutely anything at all.” He shrugged his shoulders and cracked a smile as he asked, “I mean why are we as a society expected to line up like cattle to give our cash away? If they want it, they should come and get it. It’s completely and utterly moronic.”

Shaking her head, Sansa sighed, “Shut up, Petyr.”

“What?”

“You’re trying to distract me with your quirks and it’s not going to work. You were inappropriate. It was uncalled for and you should apologize.” Her meaning was made so much more serious by the way she crossed her arms...under her breasts, he couldn’t help but notice.

Her stalling created a large gap between them and the people in front of them. It was uncomfortable and the urge to take a painful step forward and equally space them was growing unbearable. “I’m not distracting you,” he groaned, nudging her forward.
She wouldn’t budge. People were starting to notice.

“Fine.” He gave an apologetic smile and waved to the people around him before he turned back to her and hissed, “I’m sorry, okay.”

Sansa glanced at the concession stand. They were next in line, the girl behind the counter looking at them curiously. “Okay.”

Relief cooled the back of his neck, hot and sweaty in the anxiety of her misbehavior. Deciding not to dwell on it, he wrapped his arm around her and kissed her on the forehead in a silent amends as they approached the counter. Sansa was quick to order, “Medium coke and a box of LemonHeads.”

Petyr smiled at that. She was obsessed with the bitter flavor, and he’d become just as much so with tasting it from her lips. She smiled pleasantly. “I’m going to go ask Oswell and Brune if they want anything.”

“Why?” He had already paid their entrance into the movie. Buying them sweet and salty treats would only blur the boundaries of their professional working relationship.

She squeezed his hand and her blue eyes sparkled at him as she insisted, “It’s just nice.”

Groaning his acquiescence, he gave her hand a return squeeze and let her go. She turned around to address them and he let his gaze linger on the curve of her ass.

“Did your daughter say if she wanted the single or the sharing size LemonHead?”

Petyr froze, looking to either side of him before he turned to see it was the girl behind the counter that had asked the question. Of him, no less! Absolutely scandalized, Petyr’s mouth opened a little as he tried to find a response that didn’t require the use of firearms.

“Sharing, please.”

He blinked at the sound of his girlfriend’s voice, so innocent beside him. When had she turned around? Had she heard all of what the girl asked? A large box of sour candy slid across the counter and Sansa snatched it up quickly before turning to give him a peck on the cheek. Her voice dripped with sin as she batted her eyelashes at him. “Thank you, Daddy.”

Blood rushed, heating his face and stiffening his cock—the line between embarrassment and arousal growing thinner than he’d like to admit. Muscle memory for the simple act of walking turned him away from the counter to hobble after Sansa down the dark corridor lit only by movie titles above each door. Closing his mouth, and swallowing a couple of times to cure the sudden dry mouth he suffered from such shock, he uttered a strangled, “Sansa!”

“Hmm?” She asked over her shoulder. As if she didn’t know!

“That was…just…” Words would not form. “It was…”

“Inappropriate?” She giggled, climbing towards the back row.

“Beyond.” Not appreciating her sense of humor one bit, Petyr waited for her to pick her seat, and then sat two seats away, allowing the empty spot between them to prove his point. Grateful for the rest on his wounded thigh. It wasn’t until he tried to cross his arms over his chest to better fume, that he realized he carried their drink. He gave her a sideways glance and made a show of putting it in the cup holder to his other side, far away from her. That would teach her to pull stunts like that.
LemonHeads were bound to make her thirsty at some point, and she’d be left wanting. Before he could dive too deep into a fantasy where Sansa paid for her crimes--Les Mis style--he felt his armrest raise out from under his arm. Startled, he looked to see that she’d scooted over to the seat next to him, and was lifting the armrest up and out of the way. Without any pretense of permission, she snuggled her cheek into his chest. His arm dropped down around her, as there was no other comfortable place to put it.

Yes, that was why.

“Sansa.”

“Yes?” She asked, reaching over him to take the drink from its cupholder, winking at him playfully as she took a sip. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to grab her shoulders and snog the hell out of her, or return her to the seat next to him, finding her laying across his lap too enticing. One would be more fun, the other more righteous. Scanning the darkened theater, he found Oswell and Brune sitting to either side of them all the way in the last seats, serving as the perfect human barriers.

Petyr huffed, “Are you going to crowd me all movie?”

Knowing him too well now, Sansa replaced the drink and sat back, refused to take the bait or stop cuddling against him. “Are you going to be grumpy all movie?”

Yes. Maybe. So what if he was?

Her head rest just under his chin, the scent of her shampoo made more pleasant by the familiarity of it. Her body against his was warm and comforting. Dammit. He guessed not. He wanted her to tell him she loved him again, hating that he needed that validation, but craving it regardless. A quick glance around made sure no one was peeping when he asked for a compromise, “Kiss me?”

Obviously surprised by the request, she lifted her chin to grin at him and offer her lips. They were so pouty and soft, waiting for him, drawing him to them. Images of her ass peeking out the bottom of her shorts as she walked away from him, came persistently to mind with each swipe of her tongue against his. Her hand pressed into his good thigh, gaining leverage as she turned to capture more of his kiss. It was becoming much more than a measure of reassurance, but instead quite the seductive suggestion. Raising herself up higher into their kiss, her hand moved to brace herself, accidentally pressing on his groin.

He groaned at the pressure and she smirked against his mouth, disabusing him of any notion that she might not have noticed his growing interest. Slowly, she pulled away, her eyes glittering in the darkness as she teased, “That was my candy, Daddy.”

Again her words touched him in places he knew would land him on a list somewhere. They also made him realize that she’d left her hard candy in his mouth. His tongue twirled the lemon flavored lump from one side of his mouth to the other. “Sansa,” he warned.

“What?” She leaned forward and bit his bottom lip. “Am I being inappropriate again?”

“Quite.”

She gripped his erection through his pants, her voice husky as she tempted, “I could show you inappropriate…”

His teeth crunched the candy, chewing it desperately as he throbbed through boxers and jeans, into the warmth of her palm. She bent to press kisses to his neck, allowing him to see over her and
out into the theater (now past the previews) scattered with potential witnesses. The concession stand clerk’s words rang in his head, *Your daughter.*

In a flash he could see all the headlines reading: *Littlefinger caught in underage sexcapades at Cinema!* The tagline below would read something to the effect of: *Petyr “Littlefinger” Baelish engaged in sexual congress with an underage girl in the back of a movie theater, adding pedophilia to his list of alleged crimes.*

Wise to the danger of such illicit activities, Petyr decided it best to let her down gently, so she may still be willing to fuck him later in the night. “Sansa, we’re in public. It’s risky. If we’re caught—”

“Can’t you get out of it?” She pouted up to him, working his zipper as she did, draping herself over the good leg, careful not to nudge or disrupt the injured one.

Hating to have his power questioned, as much as he loathed for her to stop something already begun, he snapped his fingers at both Oswell and Brune a couple of times before they turned their attention away from the feature. He flicked his fingers forward and they rose from their seats in unison, finding new ones the next aisle down. Sansa hadn’t bothered to watch him work, pulling him free from his pants whether they were there to witness or not.

Petyr bit his fist to fight back the natural exclamation her mouth melting around him created. It had only been a few weeks since she proclaimed her love for him. She’d only had to stab him twice in the leg before she felt comfortable giving herself completely to him! He’d sustain whatever injury necessary to keep the woman so utterly devoted to their love that she would fight her trauma for him. Once freed from her fear and apprehension, it was as if a door had been opened and she was curious to passion, wanting to learn and experience everything. He was only happy to oblige, and yet he also very much wanted to avoid possible conviction.

Sansa picked her head up and he couldn’t stifle the scowl that resulted, the disappointment so automatic. What could possibly make her stop? After all, he was the one with everything on the line and he was still obviously rearing to go. Her brow furrowed as she insisted, “Don’t help me this time. I’m serious. I want to get better.”

“You’re fine,” he assured her, hoping she’d just take him back in her mouth already. A wet dick left in the open air was as uncomfortable as being rubbed backwards.

She shook her head in denial. “No. You always take over after a while to get us to the finish, and I want to be the one to get us there for a change.”

So determined to improve her blowing skills. He should have appreciated her desire to master him and the acts of depravity they shared in, but instead he was leery of it. Her need to achieve was best utilized in the safety and sanctity of their home, where he could be more patient with her. As usual, he’d thoughtfully stroke himself to save her jaw after a prolonged session of sucking. It wasn’t to say she wasn’t capable, only that he wouldn’t have his woman suffer any pain or discomfort. Petyr had waited too long to find his match, and once discovered he would treat her right.

Her expression, a mixture of frustration and embarrassment, told him he hadn’t considered what his gentlemanly behavior may have done to her ego. Digging his fingertips into the back of her scalp, he drew a deep breath, damning the media, and nudged her back toward his cock.

“Alright.”

Dimples framed the smile she devoured him with and he was left with little choice but to lean back and close his eyes, fully embracing the lascivious nature of his beautiful love and her need for perfection. Petting her head in appreciation, he thought not for the first time just how grateful he
was to be collecting a debt in Ramsay’s love nest on the same night Sansa Stark lay shackled within.
“So Sansa, tell me, how are you finding university?” Cersei asked, scooping peas from the serving bowl onto Rhaegar's plate.

Her husband leaned back, thanking her without words, as was his way.

Cersei smiled wide, placing the spoon back in the bowl and nudging it toward the girl, who cocked a curious eyebrow at the offering.

Jaime sighed and looked away, embarrassed.

“It’s so you can serve him,” Cersei whispered, taking an obnoxious degree of pity on her. There was pleasure to be had in how uncomfortable she made her brother’s new piece of ass. Cersei forked a slice of roast beef and placed it on her husband’s plate to demonstrate. The girl watched her, realization dawning on her.

“Uni is alright,” she answered, hastily reaching for the spoon to pile a mountain of peas on Jaime’s plate.

His eyes narrowed on Cersei.

Rhaegar’s phone rang and he gave them an apologetic look before saying, “I have to take this.”

Quick to recognize their loveless marriage, a small smile teased the corners of Jaime’s mouth. Cersei took a sip of her drink, refusing to look away—to back down in shame. She had nothing to be ashamed about. Her marriage was one out of obligation and nothing more. What did it matter if her husband disappointed? Didn’t all husbands disappoint?

Not brothers, though.

Jaime had always been there for her, and he always would be. Regardless of whatever stupid school girl he dipped his dick in. He was just letting out a little frustration and she knew that. It was hard to sit on the sidelines while the person you loved grew a family with another. She wouldn’t say, ‘shared her life with another,’ because she didn’t share much of anything at all with Rhaegar if she could help it.

Sansa cleared her throat, drawing Cersei’s attention away from her brother’s handsome face. “You must be so proud of your husband.”

Cersei paused, smile in place. Her mind sorted through the many things the girl could have been referencing: Rhaegar’s humanitarian award, his appointment to office, his latest interview for Forbes? It was likely any one of those things, or a combination of them all. It certainly wasn’t his limp dick, supposed asexuality, or emotional distance. No--those aspects of a man so great were reserved for private. They were the silent truths she lived with as she closed her eyes and pet her pussy to the memory of her brother’s embrace. Clearing her throat she lied, “He gives me a lot to be proud of.”

Jaime brought his napkin to his mouth, poorly concealing his distaste for the subject at hand. Rhaegar had always been a thorn in his side, from the day their father announced the arranged marriage. In truth, her twin’s jealousy was the only thing that made her feel beautiful anymore.

“Oh, I saw you in that Vanity Fair article.” Desperately trying to maintain a conversation, Sansa found something to say.
Cersei took another sip of her glass before asking, “Which one?”

She stumbled for a moment, trying to remember what it was about. Either she’d been so on edge that she’d forgotten, or she hadn’t read any article at all, only saw Cersei’s picture on the cover and tried to make a talking point of it.

“Aren’t they all the same?” Jaime asked, resting his arm on the back of Sansa’s chair.

“Jaime!” Her jaw dropped, as she reflexively slapped the back of her hand on his chest. “That’s rude.”

Cersei smirked. “That’s how brothers and sisters are. You understand--I’m told you have a lot of siblings.”

Jaime rubbed at his chest, feigning injury as he eyed Cersei across the table. Feeling her clothing melt away under his gaze, she had missed what the girl had said. “Excuse me?”

“I said,” Sansa repeated. “I would have thought it would be different with twins. They say twins are quite close.”

“We used to be,” Jaime replied before Cersei could. He never had taken her marriage well.

Movement out of the corner of her eye had her turning her head to see Rhaegar approaching. He held his phone to his chest as he leaned in, his platinum blonde hair unhooking from behind his ears as he gave her a cordial kiss on her forehead. “I have to run--for work. My apologies.”

“Oh no!” Sansa exclaimed. “That sucks. Sorry you have to go.”

Jaime said nothing, only smiled across the table.

Cersei took a deep breath, wishing it were a cigarette she was inhaling instead. She’d had to give up that little vice when she was pregnant, and had by the skin of her teeth managed not to pick it back up. “I understand,” she promised.

Rhaegar’s brow wrinkled, traces of guilt troubling him. Clasping her shoulder, he offered, “Stay. We have the babysitter all night.” Glancing over to Jaime, he gave her a weak smile, “Enjoy some time with your family.”

She had expected him to say that, and she knew it was expected of her to decline it. “No, it’s alright.”

Luckily, she’d learned over the years that he would insist. “No. Please.” He brushed the hair over her shoulder. His eyes, so blue they looked almost purple stared into hers, in what had to be the closest he ever came to actually loving her. “Take a break from motherhood for a few extra hours.”

Ahh.

It was because he was mentioning the child.

While Rhaegar never loved her, he warmed to her a great deal after she bore him an heir. She had been bothered by it when she first realized, until she learned how to use it to her advantage.

She returned his smile, her eyes closing as she nodded her head in acquiescence. When she opened her eyes, he was gone, leaving her with Jaime and his idiot girlfriend. Sansa babbled on
about inconsequential things for at least another hour while Jaime silently disrobed Cersei with his
eyes, and she cherished the covert attention.

Seeing Sansa yawn was the perfect opportunity for Cersei to rise. “You look exhausted.”

“It was a long day,” Sansa admitted.

“You should get some rest,” Jaime advised.

Sansa smiled, shaking her head. “Let me help pick up first.’

“Nonsense!” Cersei swatted at her hand. “I’ve got it. You go on back to bed.”

“Uh…”

Cersei flashed Jaime a look as she reached for the flatware. He rose from his seat and explained,
“We haven’t moved in together yet.”

“My place is across town,” Sansa admitted, sheepishly.

“Well, then,” Cersei smiled back at her. “Best get going now so you’re home at a reasonable
time.”

Sansa glanced between the two of them.

Jaime wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close to peck a kiss to her forehead much as
Rhaegar had Cersei. It was a lazy affection men who weren’t in love could give to pretend. He
soothed the girl, telling her, “You’re no good to anyone if you’re tired. You know that.”

Not wanting to see Jaime kiss her goodbye, Cersei stepped into the kitchen under the pretense of
cleaning up. Unable to stop herself, she spied them from around the corner. Sansa nodded against
his cheek, begrudgingly agreeing with him.

Cersei quickly turned back for the sink when she heard Sansa call out, “It was nice meeting you
Cersei!”

Not leaving her station in front of the sink, Cersei made herself grin so that they would hear it in
her voice as she called back, “We’ll have to do this again sometime.”

“That would be so nice!” Sansa responded before the door closed.

A couple of minutes passed, only the sound of the running water spraying food off of dirty plates
sounded. For a moment she wondered if he meant to join her or not. It would have been quite the
prank to leave her there acting as his maid and simply go to bed. Something he definitely would
have done when they were little.

His hands on her hips rid her of that notion. She smiled at his touch, knowing it was so much
more intimate than any other love in the world, romantic or familial--seeing as it was both. “Are
the blinds closed?” She asked, because she was used to hiding his affection.

Driving his nose into the back of her head, hot air blew into her scalp as he answered, “Yes.”

“I have forty-five minutes left.”

He drew one hand back to rub and cup her ass. “Call the babysitter and tell her you’ll be late.”

“That’s not a good idea,” she warned.
“Oh yeah?” He asked, sidling up behind her more, boxing her in against the counter. “And what is a good idea, Cersei?”

“Dating a toddler, apparently,” she bit back.

“And who would you have me date?” He asked, nipping her ear.

Cersei said nothing, only closed her eyes and let her head fall back against his shoulder. His palms moved up her sides, his lips sweeping her neck as he teased, “Someone who fixes my plate for me just like Mom used to?”

“Jealous?” She moaned, arching her breasts into his hands. The edge of the counter was a hard line against her pelvis, bruising her hips as he pressed into her.

“It was excessive,” he chided, peeling back the sides of her wrap dress with little effort. Cersei had worn that particular style of dress for just such reason.

She stared at the reflection in the window of her breasts spilling out of her black lace demi cups, her brother’s golden mane buried deep in her neck as his strong arms flexed and held her. Turning her head to catch his lips, she kissed him, encouraging this depraved moment of adoration.

His hips grinding against her ass only grew more persistent until he broke from her lips to growl, “I need it.”

She bit her lip, grinning at the sound of him feverishly working his belt behind her. It had been quite a while since they had such an opportunity, so it was not surprising that there wasn’t much preamble. While the idea of sliding her panties down and bending over so her brother could drill her against the counter sent her insides a flutter, she knew she had to regain some control.

Jaime was dating again. More than that, he was dating someone younger. Did he find her more attractive?

Cersei whipped around, her hands landing on his over his belt. “Let me help you,” she purred to his confused expression.

He let go, allowing her to unzip his fly and push the waistband of his pants down over his hips. She loved to watch him shiver whenever his boxers scraped over his erection. Jaime cupped her cheek and stared deeply into her eyes, as she massaged the throb between them. His other hand came down to grip her ass, his fingers digging into her as he insisted on a low whisper, “Cers, I-”

“Shh,” she cut him off, pressing a finger to his lips. When he stifled himself, she slowly sank down to her knees, holding his gaze for the descent. He was the sexiest man alive looking down from above, concentrating so intently on her, wondering if she was really going to do what he thought she might.

Of course she was.

Wetting her lips before she wrapped them around the head of his cock, Cersei watched his head loll back. His moans of pleasure were music to her ears, telling her how perfect she was, how great she felt. Jaime liked to stroke her hair, or hold it out of the way, never pull it unless agreed upon ahead of time. It was during those tender moments where she sat on her knees and sucked the seed from her twin that he cooed down to her how unbreakable their bond was, how no one else on the planet could ever be to them what they were to each other.

Most men just grunted, gasped, and moaned while in the throes of passion. Leave it to Jaime to
grow sentimental in the sack. Cersei smiled around his cock, silently admitting to herself that there were times his predilection was contagious. After all, why else would she feel so much more fulfilled from sex with him than with anyone else?

Had he felt this way fucking that ginger whore in her dorm room between her bullshit classes?

His hand tangled in her hair, gently pulling to tell her he was ready. She knew that already, could feel the way he cock swelled in her mouth, the pre-emptive twitch to either side of his shaft. He always told her, incase she didn’t want to swallow, but she always did, feeling somehow oddly closer to him for it.

With a loud grunt, hot jizz painted the insides of her mouth and slid down the back of her throat. He held her to him through each blissful spasm of his release. She waited, breathing through her nostrils, while he reveled in what she gave him.

Slowly, catching his breath, he untangled his fingers from her hair and looked down at her. Cersei accepted his hand and rose, wiping the corners of her mouth and moving her jaw--sore now. She began to tuck her breasts back in her dress when he pulled her to him, hugging her close. “Let’s go to bed.”

Wouldn’t that have been the perfect ending to the evening?

Perfect endings were meant for perfect worlds. A world that didn’t understand the all encompassing love they shared, was far from perfect. Pulling away from him, she stared at his lips, remembering the first time she’d ever been kissed. How little they had changed over the years, and yet how much more they could do now.

Before she took him up on his offer, she turned away from him, grabbing her purse off the counter. She cleared her throat and tried not to look at him as she said, “Ditch the girlfriend.”

He knew enough not to insist on any sort of tit for tat, not bothering to ask her to divorce Rhaegar. Her ears had long since deafened to that request, having declined it over and over again. Cersei’s steps grew quicker, determined not to hear him should he now refuse her dictate.

“Cersei!” He was hot on her heels and she couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

She had just opened the door when his arm came up above her head, closing it. Her vision blurred as she blinked back tears. It wasn’t fair. She would have loved to spend the night in his bed, waking up the next morning in his arms, carefree. Pressing her forehead against the door, she sighed. “Jaime.”

He kissed the back of her head, his free arm coming down to wrap around her waist. “I’ll drop the girl, on one condition.”

“Condition?” She asked, her heart beating faster. What could he possibly ask of her that was worth him posing it as a condition? And here she thought he wouldn’t play quid pro quo.

“Answer me honestly.”

She felt like she was going to hurl. Eyeing the familiar hand that laid flat against the door, trapping her there, her heart sank, knowing just what truth he was trying to extort.

Drawing a deep breath, she turned to face him--to lie to him. His eyes glittered and his voice softened as he asked, “Is he mine? Joffrey. Is Joffrey mine?”

The words were so much more damning spoken aloud. The abominable truth stole her footing and
she struggled to stay upright under the assault of that dreaded question. She swallowed, her mouth going dry as she searched for a voice to lie.

In this particular instance, the truth was no friend to anyone. What would he do with it? No. She couldn’t tell the truth--couldn’t lose her place in society, all that she’d worked for. Modern day lynch mobs at their door was a reality she couldn’t bear her son to face. She had to lie.

Had to.

Except that she couldn’t seem to. Her fingers traced his face, running along the concerned wrinkle in his brow, over the beating temple, and down around the stubble of his chiseled jaw. If there was anyone she could be honest with, it was her twin, and yet, in this she couldn’t shoulder his feelings on top of hers.

She would have to let him go. Give him up. Pursing her lips, she dropped her hand and growled, “You two make a cute couple.”

“Cersei-”

He tried to stop her, but she was too swift to be caught and slipped out the door before he could grip her. She ran down the path to the car Rhaegar had sent to wait for her, thankful that the driver had gotten out to open her door. Jaime wouldn’t say anything in front of a witness. She hopped in the car and looked up the path, expecting to see him standing there, trying to conceal his frustration. Instead, she didn’t see him at all. Had he even bothered to chase her?
He’d had plenty of time to turn mourning for the loss of one into pining for the familiarity of another. Against his better judgement, he allowed his feet to take him to her room. Allowed his head to nod acknowledgement of the guards who granted him passage into her chamber. His heart stalled him just inside her door, however, caught on her form, reclining comfortably in her chair. She moved only to sip her wine.

How easily she drank, when she never need fear her cup compromised. If only others could say the same. Brienne’s puffy purple face flashed before his eyes, her drink left laying spilled on the floor beside her head. Such a disgusting death for her to bear, no chance to fight.

“What will you linger by the door all day, dear brother?” Cersei called over her shoulder. “Or will you finally grace me with your presence?”

“I’ve been asking myself the same question,” Jaime admitted. Even as he spoke the doubtful words, his legs decided, carrying him deeper inside her chamber in long traitorous strides. Despising the natural draw he felt to her, he shot venom her way. “You’ll have to forgive my indecisiveness. I’ve been surrounded by death since returning to King’s Landing.”

Cersei smirked and set her goblet on the table beside her. “Are you still pouting over that bohemouth’s passing?”

“Murder,” he corrected, lest she think it any less of a crime than it was. When she said nothing but quirked her lips to patronize, his growing frustration bloomed. “Someday all of your deeds are going to catch up with you, and I won’t be there to protect you—”

“You’ll always be there, Jaime.” Cersei interrupted, rising from her seat to meet him face to face. She was standing closer than she had in months, her verdant eyes a mirror image of his own, revealing an unrivaled intimacy. Almost majestic in her makeup, Cersei was equal parts beauty and spite. Men underestimated his sister because she was a woman—her attraction used for bargaining. Those same lords underestimated Jaime too, for the decisions he made and the secrets he carried from the cradle.

Her fingertips ghosting over the back of his hand said, *Fuck them all.*

Her deadly sweet Oleander perfume filling his nostrils agreed, *We’ll kill them all.*

The last shred of reason left in his brain had him finishing his thought—protesting her silent promises. “And you’ll die for it.”

Her smile was recalcitrant. “Of course I’ll die—someday. That’s not in question.”

Jaime closed his eyes as she leaned in, basking in the warmth of her lips purring over his. “The only question that I care for is: How many little deaths will you give me before then?”

Her flirt was defiant, and blasphemous, and exactly what he craved. He couldn’t suffer a woman’s kindness or virtue any more than he could the useless gold-gilded hand he was burdened with. A heavy lump of metal tied onto the stump of his arm, was his reward for dallying with an honorable woman.

Jaime cautiously flicked his gaze around them, searching for prying eyes before he dared reach for her. He ignored the curves of her body, going straight for the back of her neck, holding her to him.
as he growled, “As many as it takes to finish you off.”

“And see,” she chuckled into his neck. “I still can’t quite tell if you mean to fuck or kill me.”

Her arms wrapped around him, her palms splayed flat over each shoulder blade pulled him closer to her as she nuzzled. Jaime kept his hold, allowing his other arm to rest on her back, the fashioned hand hovering fruitlessly above her ass. He’d feel self conscious about that, if he allowed himself to think about it too much. Quickly he replied, “Must you limit me to simply one or the other?”

Her teeth sank into the crook of his neck, sending shivers down his spine and tingles to his cock. She felt it pressed against her, he was sure. Why else would she roll her hips into his, shimmy and shifting. “Sure you have the stamina for both?”

His arm tightened around her, anchoring her to him, his hand sliding to her throat. Jaime almost didn’t recognize his own voice as he admitted, “I’m determined.”

It was then that he noticed him. Off in the corner, standing still as a statue. Jaime wondered what more there was left to Sir Gregor ‘the Mountain’ Clegane, but the basic meat and bone for an alchemist to manipulate. His heart stopped beating weeks before as he lay on the arena floor, the poison of the Viper’s spear seizing his arteries and constricting his capillaries.

Of course he’d be there. He was Cersei’s protector.

Jaime remembered when he’d been her protector.

When she wanted him.

When he was whole.

Ignoring his hold, she bent her neck against it. The tip of her tongue traced his collarbone down to the divot at the base of his throat. Her words playful as she teased, “Oh, Jaime. Remember: once you’ve broken a toy, you can’t play with it anymore.”

He leaned back enough to allow her to pick her head up. Her eyes were dark and dilated, proving her lust for him true. Her lips curled back into a seductive grin, baring teeth gently stained by the wine she indulged at all hours. Jaime made a show of glancing at her man as he answered, “Not with Qyburn around.”

If only he’d helped Brienne.

His sister would never allow it—even if it wasn’t her doing.

Jaime felt the blood boil in his veins. Only his sister, his lover—the queen regent, could so expertly play the part of judge and jury. He barely heard her say, “Touche,” before his fingers dug in.

Always sparring.

Her man never moved.

Her flesh bruised and her windpipe closed. Clegane never stirred. A panicked hand raised and waved would have sufficed to call him to her aid, yet she ignored that lifeline. She was calling his bluff.

“You just had to kill her, didn’t you?” It was idiotic to ask, and Jaime didn’t know what possessed him to phrase it as a question. Nevertheless, he did.
She lifted her chin, allowing even more chance to choke. Jaime felt her pulse rap hard against the heel of his hand, protesting the brush with mortality. She coughed in his clutch. “Yes.”

“Why?” His head tilted to examine her more closely. There were times he pretended he could discern her honesty.

A tinge of blue tinted her lips. Spider veins floated to the surface of her scleras, tears gathering at the red rims of her lids and filling her lashes. Were these the only tears she’d ever shed for him?

No.

It would be too late. He knew it would be. If he kept control just a second longer, his grief would return to him anew. Then he truly would be alone in this world.

Jaime released her, each of his knuckles cracking at the sudden movement. So consumed by his need to master her, he hadn’t noticed his own breath catch. It wasn’t until he watched her cough and rub her throat, that he realized he too needed air in his lungs.

She glared at him as she croaked, “I’ll have all of you and share you with no one.”

Petty jealousy provoked her murderous intent. That was to be expected from his twin, his other half. After all, it had been envy that gave him fantasies of slashing through Robert to claim her. Robert was poor comparison, however. Brienne meant more to Jaime than Robert ever could to Cersei.

That wasn’t to say that Jaime hadn’t harbored hatred for Robert—for many reasons. In addition to the carnal knowledge the bumbling Baratheon had of Cersei, he was allowed to advertise it. He knew her as a husband knows a wife, and had no need to hide it. He could hold her hand as he walked, sit at her side, offer parting kisses and never worry or care for the audience. That fat fucking king could make her moan through the walls of their chamber while men stood outside—aching. He was free to do what he will with her, and he squandered it all!

Oh how Jaime abhorred him for that.

Rhaegar, on the other hand, held a place in her heart. He was a love never realized, and therefore could never disappoint. Jaime knew his twin had constructed many lives with the legend in her mindscape over the years. Had there been any future for him, real or otherwise? In any of the times Jaime drove himself deep inside her, listening to her pant his name, had she wanted the same life with him? It was doubtful that she’d ever pined for him the way she had Rhaegar Targaryen, the Last Dragon.

It was with a deep seeded resentment, he had always tried not to pay mind, that Jaime answered, “I never killed Rhaegar.”

Her eyes snapped to his, startled to hear such confession. So many emotions swirled around her lush irises, glittering in the candlelight, over a dream that had died. “No.” She straightened, smoothing the wrinkle of her gown, hissing, “You didn’t.”

“Should I have?” Jaime asked, confused.

“A real man would!” Cersei balled her fist as she grit through her teeth. “A real man would eliminate the competition.”

Jaime blinked. “Competition?” He had feared, and she had just confirmed...

She dismissed Rhaegar’s importance to her as she chided him further, “Instead, it was Robert that
put an end to that little crush.”

“Oh, a real man!” He scoffed, still reeling over Rhaegar.

Cersei turned back to her goblet, bringing it to her lips.

Finding the voice to crucify her, he asked, “A little crush?”

Setting her empty glass down, she sighed. “Did you think it was any more than a young girl’s infatuation?”

Jaime knew his sister better than that. She couldn’t take back what was said. He wouldn’t let her. “You were scribbling your name with his on every spare piece of parchment.”

She laughed, lying, “Perhaps I was merely trying it on for size.”

As if a name was so easy to don and discard. His jaw tightened. “So eager to rid yourself of our name— my name.”

Cersei rolled her eyes, all the tears dried from them. “It seems I was much smarter in my youth than I am now.” She leaned in, explaining, “I’ve kept only space in my heart for you, dear brother. And I am rewarded only with your wavering devotion.”

“Wavering devotion?” Jaime was fast finding he missed those tears. They were much better than this contempt. She needn’t slap him across the face, her words had the same effect.

The weight of his invisible hand grew too heavy and his arms fell. How could she say such a thing? Had he not endured the worst to reach her? And this was his reward?! To be insulted so.

“If your interest in the ogre you brought home was only a passing one,” she interrupted his thoughts. “You wouldn’t be so upset by her demise.”

How similarly they thought. Too affronted to appreciate that fact, he insisted, “She deserved an honorable death.”

“Oh, please. A gentle death is a kindness,” she condescended.

How powerful she must have felt when she could so readily dismiss whatever mattered to him. Refusing to allow her any power, he barked, “She was a knight!”

His jaw snapped shut at the sound of his lost temper. It seemed no matter what move he made she found a way to gain the upper hand. Seconds passed as he regained his composure. “It was a disgrace.”

“Disgrace? Was she so honorable to suffer disgrace?” Cersei touched his chest and craned her abused neck to look him in the eyes, her own wide with incredulity. “Have you the impression she was still in-tact?”

Her hand was a hot brand over his heart reminding him who he belonged to. He said nothing, working to control the rebellion that brewed inside. Cersei seized her opportunity to taunt. “She was, wasn’t she? That’s why you’re so riled.”

“Cersei,” he warned.

She cackled, her fingers spreading further apart, gaining more purchase. “You’re bothered I took her before you could!”
It had been too much.

All he could take.

Any man would have snapped sooner.

Was he really to blame when his hand closed over her wrist and he twisted her around in the blink of an eye? She gasped in surprise, “Jaime!”

He didn’t hesitate, shoving her down on the table, her cup and decanter crashing to the floor and splashing red wine at their feet. Jaime began rucking her skirts up as he snarled, “I’ve only ever taken you—in my whole life.”

He wanted to say that he couldn’t say the same for her, throw that fact in her face. Make her think of Robert fat and greasy between her legs giving her babies to miscarry. He would be a beast to her, punish her.

If only he had the strength. If only he wasn’t so singularly focused on having her. The feel of her trapped beneath him, the sound of her labored breath, the scent of her arousal as he parted more fabric…

She turned her head, her cheeks warm and her grin toothy, reveling in her victory. Cersei reached behind her, grabbing at her skirts to help bare her backside to him. Pushing herself up off the table, just enough to look over her shoulder and catch his eye, she said, “And I refused to be replaced.”

He wanted to tell her that she could never be replaced, that she should know that. But he couldn’t. Upon seeing her so exposed with such possessiveness in her eyes, the words would not come. His hand worked the laces on his breeches feverishly. “Where are your small clothes?” He asked, expecting to have to rip them away.

She licked her lips. “I took them off when I heard you were upset.”

She was truly evil.

She was every terrible thought he never spoke aloud. Each dirty deed he tried to wipe from his blade. Every ounce of guilt he wallowed in. The secret pleasure that only came with shame. Together they were condemned.

He held his breath, his heart thrumming loudly against his ribs, as he probed for entrance. Wasting no time once he found passage, he sank himself so entirely inside her. Blood flowed fast to where they joined, the desire to plunder undeniable. His hips thrust hard against her, his cock delving deeper into her heat. She mewled under him, picking herself up off the table more to squirm against his rutting. “Jaime, yes, ” she breathed.

It was only after he tended his need with a few more thrusts to calm the throb, that he could slow his pace enough to savor the sin. Her long golden locks flowed down her back and over her shoulders, and he bent to drive his nose into them. Inhaling her unique scent, he admitted, “No one could ever replace you.”

“Then why did you bother with her at all?” The edge had left her voice, leaving only the vulnerable query.

It was a side to her that she showed no one else, and rarely even him. The power of it arrested him each time she brandished it. He brought his hand down to caress the curve of her ass while he slowly rocked into her. “One might say it’s because she saw something in me,” he tried to explain. “I think it’s more what she didn’t see in me.”
“What didn’t she see?”

When he didn’t answer, she looked back over her shoulder and asked again. “Jaime?”

A smart man would have kept it to himself, but she was his other half and he needed her to know. He locked eyes with her and admitted, “Herself.”

It was her turn to stare speechless. For so long they had cherished their similarities, seeing each other in everything they did, only feeling whole when they were together. To even suggest it was wrong, was a grievous offense. It picked at the foundation of their entire relationship—identity.

Though she never looked away, her hand moved in his periphery. Her ringed fingers gripped the edge of the table, the muscles in her arms flexing as she threw herself back on his cock. Jaime fought for the lead, resetting the grueling pace of their mutual need. “I need you,” he growled, hating himself the admission.

“Yes,” she moaned, nodding her head. Taking him back.

That she would go to such lengths to have him… His heart swelled as he declared, “Fuck the gods! I love you!”

Her eyes fluttered shut as she panted.

Movement out of the corner of his eye reminded him of the Mountain’s presence. He glanced back down at Cersei, snickering at the realization herself. Irritated by the intrusion, and her lack of modesty over it, he bucked harder into her, “I hate you so much.”

Her knuckles turned white, her ass lifting and dropping back against him faster. “I need you,” she mocked. “I love you,” she teased. “I hate you.” She let go of the table long enough to toss hair back over her shoulder, slapping it against his chest as if it were a whip. “I choose all of the above, dear brother.”

No sooner had the scandalous word filled his ears, had he reached his threshold, overwhelmed by pleasure that slowly dissipated with each pulse of seed planted. He had no idea if she’d allow them to take root, or whether he wanted her to. Joffrey’s passing left a large hole in their family that a bastard baby would hardly fix.

When he pulled away and righted himself, he watched her straighten her skirts, satisfied to see her legs shaking. They said nothing as she preened in the mirror. He waited for her to make a move, to determine his own. She called for more wine and took a seat, as if they hadn’t just shared such intimacy.

How many times had they enacted this same exact play? Disheartened to see that not a thing had changed, he said, “After all these years, I don’t know if you fuck me because you love fucking me, or if I’m simply the closest you can get to fucking yourself.”

She opened her mouth to answer, but stopped when a servant came in. The silence was deafening as the girl worked, mopping up the mess on the floor. Neither of them bothered to explain it, as that would have been more suspicious. What did Lannisters have to explain to anyone? Jaime cast a wary glance back to Sir Gregor. It was inhuman how still the man could stand.

When the girl scuttled through the door, carrying her tray of discarded cups with her, Cersei turned to him. “It’s strange,” she said, taking a sip of her freshly filled drink. “Many times I spread my legs for you and wonder the same thing…”
The morning light shining through a crack in the dark navy blue drapes gently woke Sansa from her slumber. Not since before her parents had passed, had she ever slept so soundly through the night. Finally feeling secure in her surroundings and the man she was meant to share them with, she allowed herself the respite she’d been denying herself since Winterfell.

Shifting a little in the bed, she felt her naked body slide against her gown. It had rucked up in the night and her bare thighs rubbed against the sheets. It had happened countless times in her life, and yet it felt different now. Sansa took a deep breath, her nipples pebbled in the morning chill, stood hard against the material of her gown. Suddenly so much more aware of her body than she’d been the day before, a shy smile dimpled her cheeks.

Regardless of Margaery’s experienced guidance prior to the exchange of vows, Sansa hadn’t been prepared for all aspects of her wifely duties. Contrary to expectation, her anxiety hadn’t been due to the pain that came with the loss of her purity. In fact, judging by how minimal the injury had been, she’d braced herself quite well for that.

It was the overwhelming emotion of it all. There was no readying herself for all the feelings that accompanied their intimate act. What was meant to be a duty—a chore—carried out without complacency, had been something so surreal in practical application.

It was all nothing short of pagan. What he had wanted… What she had allowed… What they had done!

Their bodies moved of their own volition in a primitive dance that cared nothing for the sophistication and grace of any other step she’d ever been taught since before coming out in society. He held her close, their naked forms rubbing and sliding against each other, the covers obscuring their view. Sansa smiled then in the excitement of such tease, his palm riding up her thigh. She felt much like a naughty child sneaking biscuits out of Septa’s jar. Her offense great enough to turn heads in disapproval, but not so far as to cross the line into criminal. Not yet then, anyway.

If she thought his body was warm, his mouth was hot. She’d never imagined his kisses would extend past her lips. When they had, gone was the guilty feeling of scandal, replaced by the surprise of her body’s innate response. Stannis had taken her beyond flirt and play to something deeper. Their bodies flexed, sweat beading between them. The scent of her arousal surrounded them while the sound of their rhythmic motion filled the air.

Suddenly, Sansa was overcome with it all and began to fall from the sky, though she’d not left her bed. Clinging tightly to Stannis, she cried out against the sensation, fighting it at first. It was too strong and she was left with no choice but to surrender, allow it to take her over.

Stannis somehow knew. He had to have. The way he held her close to him, his lips curling into a deep smile against her cheek and neck as he drove himself harder and faster inside—testing what she knew her body could accommodate. Yes, he was aware. When she heard him groan and gasp for breath, she knew that he too must have given into whatever it was that possessed them.

It was in that vulnerable moment when she looked most unladylike, that she felt more womanly than she had since she’d received her courses and was enlightened as to her purpose in life. It was
startling how suddenly and severely her heart beat for someone other than she. In his late night embrace, everything felt all so…natural.

Was it always like that? Judging by the martyred look on Lady Merryweather’s face whenever her husband returned home, Sansa very greatly doubted that. It must have had do with the man. With Stannis.

Were all men like he? Warm and gentle in the privacy of lamplight and linen.

Sansa found that hard to believe.

She knew all too well the leering and snickering lords were wont to do when clustered together, standing off in the corners of parties. The way their gaze lingered on her, falling to her figure. Their words whispered behind their libations always made her feel as if they knew something she didn’t, about her own body. Perhaps they did, men being so much more experienced in relations than any respectable woman ever dare. Still, it was vulgar of them to flaunt that fact.

They were nothing at all like her husband behind closed doors, she was sure of it. Closing her eyes and breathing deeply, Sansa started to feel quite fortunate in her match.

She stilled then, replaying her last thought, Husband. Unable to stop herself, she whispered it low under her breath, “Husband.” It was odd to even think the word, let alone hear it aloud, her own lips moving to speak it.

And he was beside her now…with no one around to chaperone them…in a state of undress. What would have been disgraceful yesterday was somehow meant to feel normal today. Unnerved by it all, Sansa bit the inside of her cheek and clapped her hands over her mouth to stifle a stray giggle. She was sure the silent amusement that quivered through her would stir him from his sleep. When she felt no movement beside her, she dared crack one eye open to spy whether or not he was still asleep or if he had shifted to sit upright, posed to judge her the silliest girl ever created.

He hadn’t stirred. Instead, a motionless lump of blankets and pillows lay beside her, and she wondered how many layers covered the man that lay beneath them. Her arm reached out, hovering above the linen, gaining the courage to land on the solid form concealed within. Closing her eyes again, she cringed as she let her hand drop. Wincing at the point of impact, her eyes snapped open to the discovery.

There was no one beneath the covers. No husband beside her in bed. No Stannis. Ripping the blankets back, Sansa stared at the bare mattress. An emptiness gripped her as she glanced frantically about the room. He had left.

The slight shift in position called her attention to the tenderness of her womanhood.

Her gaze dropped to her lap. Timidly, she lifted the covers further back. She held her breath as she slid her nightgown up over her thighs to inspect the damage done to her. More than a little surprised to see no wound, she shifted slightly, curious as to how much discomfort the movement would produce. It had only been slight.

She smiled to herself, remembering the scent of Stannis’ spiced soap as she burrowed her face in his neck, clinging to him with all her might, fighting his ever-so patient invasion. Her purpose had been served. She had been shown what her body was capable of--what it was meant for--and it changed everything. Sansa was a woman now, despite the lack of any visible evidence to that fact--aside from soiled linens. And she was a woman left alone.

Sadness filled her, threatening tears. Mother had warned her that melodramatics often made
women intolerable, and that controlling that particular impulse often rendered more desirable
results. Men often woke before women, hunting and other male-driven activities often requiring
the early hours of the morning. She would stop this childish nonsense and wake for the day.
Perhaps she might see her new husband to break his fast, back from some lordly duty.

It was impertinent for her to immediately assume abandonment.

She rose quickly after that, barely touching toes to cold stone before she was half in her skirts. A
fresh cloth and basin had been left for her and Sansa smiled at her husband’s kindness, or her
maid’s attentiveness. Thoroughly scrubbing herself clean before she allowed the dress be laced,
Sansa asked, “Shall I expect Lord Baratheon at breakfast?”

“No, ma’am,” was the brisk reply as the woman pinned her hair up. Beneath the cap, the woman--
older than she, yet still youthful enough to be noticed--had sunkissed hair.

A terrible thought sank into Sansa’s bones as she identified their similar trait. Men often had their
way with the staff on hand to quickly sate a need too sinful to be met by a wife. It was difficult to
see Stannis as one of those men, but she’d been advised that it was the way of things and to not
pay the practice much mind. In truth, whenever musing on the subject of marriage, she had
thought it might be a relief to have a husband distracted from time to time.

That was before...

Her fingers played with the beading on the front of her bodice as she allowed her mind to wander.
Would Stannis handle this woman the same as he had her? Or would he treat her differently? She
didn’t know what would be better or worse, finding any ounce of his attention spent on anyone
else such a violation, despite society’s expectations.

“That will be all,” Sansa growled.

The woman’s eyes widened as she looked up at her, startled by her sudden change in mood.
“Ma’am?”

Reaching for her hand, she pushed it away. “Leave me. Do not return.”

When the woman didn’t move, only stood in shock, Sansa turned for the door. “On your way out,
please alert Davos to my need for a new lady’s maid.”

Refusing to look back, to rethink her decision, Sansa sought the dining room. Passing by the
breakfast buffet, she took her seat opposite the head of the table. Stannis’ chair was empty, no
place setting to indicate his impending arrival. Sansa glanced around her, only then noticing all the
vacant place settings.

Most people had gone home the night of their wedding, though some who had travelled far to
witness the nuptials had lodged there the night before. Where were they? Within minutes of
wondering, a server curtseyed to her before offering her a hard boiled egg, a strip of bacon, and a
piece lightly buttered toast.

The young fair-haired girl was quite visibly anxious to be serving the new lady of the house.
Sansa offered her a warm smile, finding her much less perturbing than she had the lady’s maid she
pardoned from employ. “What has become of our party? And Lord Baratheon? Has he gone to
hunt with all the men this morning?”

Confusion wrinkled the girl’s brow as she stared back at her. “No, Ma’am...I thought you
knew...”
Sansa felt her insides tumble. What did this girl know that she did not? Mind racing, she considered his empty side of the bed... Had he not found her pleasing?

No. That couldn’t be it. He had asked her to remain with him, despite whatever opinion others may have formed over it. He enjoyed her company, she was sure of it.

Why then did he leave? What information had been kept from her?

There was a steel to her voice that rendered it hardly recognizable at first as she ordered, “Enlighten me.”

The girl clutched the silver tray to herself. “Your guests left at first light.”

“And why would they do that?” Before she had the opportunity to bid them a proper adeu.

“They left after Lord Baratheon’s announcement, ma’am.” She took a subconscious step backwards. Whether it was her station that intimidated the girl so, or her determined demeanor, she couldn’t be sure, caring only about answers.

Loathing to admit she was not apprised to what everyone under her roof seemed to be, Sansa kept her question to one tightly clipped word, “Announcement?”

Glancing around the room before she dared to speak her answer aloud, the girl lowered her voice. “My lord thanked everyone’s attendance but explained that he was called to duty overseas and that he must end the festivities early so that he may travel-- alone.”

Ashamed that she wasn’t aware, and horrified to believe that she truly was being abandoned, Sansa forced a smile on her face to mask. “Of course. He had explained that we would need to excuse our guests earlier than planned due to his--” She swallowed the growing lump in her throat as she finished, “Travel.” Sansa blinked a few times to stop the tears from escaping her eyes, cursing the emotion that refused to be tamed. “Though, I believe he isn’t due to depart until…” She trailed off, waiting for the girl to finish for her.

“Within the hour, Ma’am.”

Within the hour!

It was utterly preposterous to think that he was required to leave within the hour. Men of Stannis’ office were called to duty, that much was true. They were also, however, afforded a few days notice to put their affairs in order before they left their estates in the hands of their ladies and trusted staff. This rushed exit had been a choice on his part, plain and simple. An escape from the doe-eyed bride and all the regrets she brought him the morning after.

He didn’t seem regretful while he held himself inside her, awaiting her word to surround himself with her further. No. He certainly wouldn’t be repenting that. He definitely wouldn’t bemoan the money paid him upon her signature of their marriage license either. Another stray tear teetered on her eyelid as she swore he would have appreciated her companionship--if he’d only stay put long enough to enjoy the benefit of it.

Sansa rallied her strength and asked, “And where is he presently?”

“My lord is in his study, gathering his necessities, my lady.” It was Davos’ voice behind her that answered.

Wasting no time with greetings, Sansa set her fork down a rose. “Very well,” she said to no one in particular. She would take the time to meet Davos later, during one of the many days she was left
alone with him while Stannis sailed a sea to avoid her.

Storming across the marble floor, wearing the placid smile of propriety, taught to her as early as age three, Sansa set off to find her husband. The man in question had his head down, packing various items in a leather satchel, when she pushed the door to his private room open. At the quiet intrusion, he glanced up and then ducked his head back down to hide any reaction she might have spied. “Lady Sansa,” he acknowledged down into his bag.

Lady Sansa? How quickly things had turned in the witching hours between dusk and dawn.

Taking a deep breath to settle her stomach, Sansa fought the urge to beg him tell her what she had done to warrant such a change in his affection. It would have been dramatic and a man like Stannis would have loathed such hysterical energy brandied about in his face. She had told herself that was the case earlier and she needed to stay the course.

Lords left their ladies all the time. The only real oddity to the situation was the attachment she’d so suddenly grown for him. “Lord Baratheon,” she replied, her tone careful.

“Stannis,” he corrected, shuffling more papers from his desk and into his bag. “Surely, we can dispense with such formalities? I’d prefer it.”

What was his game? He addressed her properly, then declined to look at her as he offered a degree of intimacy he was in the process of ripping from her altogether. He was infuriating and her tongue quipped before she could catch it. “It was my impression that you preferred darling.”

His head shot up, his brows furrowing as he inspected her closely. Lifting her chin to better hold his gaze, she refused to back down. Sansa would not allow herself to become a sobbing mess seeking a fainting couch. It would have been wise to feign indifference, though she’d never in her years perfected such a facade. Her father’s voice in her head told her not to mince her words, to get to the point. “I heard you are leaving.”

“Mm,” he admitted. Lifting the bag out of his chair, he came around from behind his desk. “I am bound by my honor to answer the call of duty. Apologies for how abrupt this may seem, but I assure you, it needn’t disrupt your schedule any.”

“Disrupt my schedule…?” Sansa all but gasped out the words in disbelief.

He nodded easily. “Of course. The staff are well equipped to assist you in whatever functions you’d like to hold at the estate during my absence. I understand the importance of social calling to ladies, and the nature of my career shall not hinder you.”

Words poured from his mouth, so cold and practical. Sansa took a step towards him, watching his eyes drop down to recognize the distance between them shortening. Though he didn’t move, he appeared ready to bolt at the next given opportunity.

He would not respond to her disappointment, of that she felt certain. She needed to change tactics to help him see. Everything had become so sterile, but it hadn’t always been. They had laughed and smiled together, flirting in each other’s ears. If only she could bring them back to that. Taking a risk, she smiled as she asked, “You’re concerned for my calendar?”

He said nothing, looking suddenly so out of place in his own home.

Unsure how best to manage his discomfort, she attempted to tease as she took yet another step forward. “One might say that ending a wedding celebration early and evicting a house full of guests doesn’t inspire much favor in society.”
“Right,” he agreed, dropping his head in shame. “I shall endeavor to be better.”

Her ribbing had incurred the opposite of the desired effect. Words were failing them, all twisted, their meanings confused. As a last resort, Sansa relied on action to speak to her feelings. With no little amount of courage mustered, she placed a palm on his chest.

Melting at the feel of it hard and warm, rising and falling beneath her hand, Sansa’s lips parted in pleasure over the sensation and familiarity. Stannis’ rough hand covered hers, stalling for only a fraction of a second before it peeled hers away. His voice was rough as he said, “That’s not necessary.”

“Necessary?” She asked bewildered, feeling the chill of such rejection.

He shook his head, as if deciding not to bother with explanation, and then turned away from her. She stumbled to find the words to match her heart’s protest, staring at the back of him as he took long strides for the door. He didn’t bother look back, his words hurried as he said, “I’ll send word of when to expect my return, once I’ve been briefed.” The sound of the door clicking shut behind him served as harsh punctuation to a statement so final.

Sansa stood in the center of the room, beside herself—both literally and figuratively. He didn’t want her. There was no making that fact any clearer. How could she be so fooled as to think he desired anything more than the inheritance that resulted from their vows? It had, after all, been his soul reason for arranging their match in the first place.

Hugging her arms tight against her chest, Sansa faced the crushing realization that Margaery had been devastatingly correct in her assertion that no one was exempt from the business of matrimony.

Chapter End Notes

I was in the mood for some regency period miscommunication and angst. At some point I'll probably write a drabble from his pov. I can already imagine his feelings and motivations and it'll irritate me until I eventually get them out.
The captain called for harbor and the steady methodical movements of a working ship turned to frenzied flurry. Boys the ocean had shaped into young men, were anxious to reach land and all the family it offered. Older, more seasoned men quickened their step to reach the rest a bed not as likely to eject them on the crest of a harsh wave would give.

Stannis stood stuck in the middle between his heart and his head. It was a conflict he’d grown accustomed to over the past seven months at sea, and always left him feeling as though he were tiptoeing between enemy lines, regardless of whichever way he was leaning.

Men whispered as he passed by. “Where’s he going? Why doesn’t he look happy?” Said one.

“About to face the Missus’,” said another.

“If that’s how he choose to do it! Could always do facin’ the back of er head!” The hearty moronic laugh filled Stannis’ ears.

About to whirl on the man, he was saved the effort when he heard the other explain, “Shut up, ya right git! Show some respect to yer admiral. Man left ‘is wife day after the nuptials. She’s gotta have the hate in ‘er for that.”

“At least he got ‘is night,” the man bellowed. An obnoxious laugh followed.

It was cut short--mid-chuckle--at the end of Stannis’ punishing fist. A particularly loose tooth fell out and clinked on the floor. The deck stilled, every man halting his work to stare at the spectacle before them. Stannis glanced around, refusing to feel embarrassed. Sansa was his wife and no man but he could make even the faintest reference to her indecency.

The more reasonable man of the two must have seen the rage that flushed Stannis’ cheeks and pin pricked the pupils of his eyes before flexing every muscle tightly under his uniform, because he submitted instantly. “He’s green, sir. He aint ever been away from home before. Too taken with excitement. Doesn’t know what he’s sayin’, sir.”

Stannis wanted to sock him again, the power raging through his veins, begging he keep using it. They had an audience, however, and he wasn’t a cruel man. He could tell as easy as anyone, once was enough. Turning to the abused man in question, he asked, “And what say you?”

He’d been holding his mouth, as if it would help him any. Looking around to see all the eyes on them, he cleared his throat and straightened his posture. “I say, Sir. I say I need eat more oranges. Spit that tooth out too easy, I did.”

Stannis stilled, not entirely sure how to take the response. Could he be jesting?

His friend jumped in quickly, plastering an ear-to-ear grin on his mug and exclaiming, “That’s right! Should be thanking Admiral, you should! Savin’ your scurvyed ass a trip to the barber.”

Stannis glanced between the men, relaxing his stance. Too cautious to smile in return, he eyed the man he’d corrected.

A slow smile spread under the swelling, a cracked and blistered hand came out to clasp his.
“Florent, sir. Alester Florent.”

Reluctantly, Stannis accepted his arm. Though he knew who Alester was, from spending many months at sea with the man, he wasn’t surprised by the introduction. Hardly a word had passed between them in all that time in close quarters, their stations not encouraging it. In truth, it was surprising that the man would be so bold at all to comment on Stannis’ personal life in the first place, though the sea had been known to blur the lines of rank. The promise of land ahead only added to that effect. Florent could be forgiven easily enough, too caught up in high spirits.

“Best get yourself to the main deck,” Stannis said, gruffly. “Don’t want to miss your chance to touch foot to land again.” As if the ship would have taken off so quickly. Vessels like these took time to unload and pack up. It would be docked for at least a couple of days before it set sail again.

Both men nodded agreement and excused themselves. Stannis straightened his coat, finding himself only slightly ruffled at the minor altercation. The hustle and bustle of a ship docking had carried on, and once again Stannis stood alone in the excitement, wondering whether or not he was prepared to face his wife.

Part of him longed to, further falling for her as he watched her sleep beside him. He smirked to himself at how sated she looked, laying there bundled beneath the covers, her leg hooked carelessly over his. He pushed himself up to sitting and leaned back against the headboard, testing how heavily she slept. Her eyes never cracked open, though she felt the absence of his warmth and sought it out, wrapping her arms around him to nuzzle against his thigh.

Unable to resist the urge, he stroked her hair. Smoothing the locks away from her face, he let them splay across the pillow behind her in long tendrils. The contrast between ivory flesh and fiery tresses was sharp, the whole picture so striking as to rouse his interest all over again. Stannis pressed a hand over himself as he considered waking her to dispel any notion her innocent mind may have that such activities need only occur after dark. His gaze followed the curve of her hip under the covers, memories of the night before overcoming him. She was lush and supple, soft and accommodating. She lacked a whore’s confidence, but she was neither so fraught with anxiety that she was frozen in fear. Hell, if she didn’t give herself over to him completely, despite her inexperience.

His smirk turned full, unabashed grin as he decided that he would control himself. She was brave enough on their wedding night, taking all he had to offer with no prior knowledge of the relations between man and wife. Spending his career on a ship, surrounded by men, afforded him plenty of occasions for unintentional observation. He knew most men had been blessed with less and that any woman that opened herself to him would suffer the burden of his abundance. He brushed another wisp of hair back behind her ear as he silently promised her the time to rest and heal before he entertained the idea of taking her again.

It was then that the thought struck, chilling him as surely as an ice bath thrown over his head, Again . There wouldn’t be an again… Not for a long time, a year at least, possibly longer. All because he was ‘a patient man.’ How he cursed himself that proclamation!

As if reading his thoughts in her sleep, Sansa shifted in the bed before rolling over. Away from him. She sighed into her pillow and he felt abandoned for it. It was absurd for him to feel as such, but he could hardly stop the feeling once it had set in. He rose from the bed and paced around it a few times, gazing down at her.

He told himself that what he’d said before was no longer of consequence. She had given herself to him and he had certainly taken her. They could continue on, each night spent in his bed, waking every morning together. It wasn’t conventional, but that hardly mattered. No man in his right
might would hold it against him. They need only look at her to understand the enchantment she unknowingly held him with.

Glancing over at the food platter on his wardrobe, Stannis remembered the way he discovered her in his chambers. The determination in her words as she said, I understand the duty of a wife, my lord.

Duty. That’s what drew her to his room. Nothing more. Nothing except perhaps for fear of vows questioned if not consummated. He’d been so driven by lust, his mouth watering with thirst for her as she lay in his bed, offering herself up to him. Not a fortnight prior, he would have thought himself mad to even consider such a possibility. Yet there she was, touting her belief in the sanctity of marriage and allowing a husband passage.

Of course he allowed himself be so easily convinced that her interest may be anything more than what it was, taking each moan and gasp for proof of shared feelings. He knew better than that. Congress gave couples warm feelings—temporarily. Her affection for him would fade shortly after waking as she remembered how little she truly felt for him.

Only an imbecile would take her sense of honor and duty for love returned, and only an imbecile would fall in love with a woman who had only been meant as a means to an end. He’d be nothing short of brutish if he insisted on her continued attentions. His brows furrowed in consternation, no, he wouldn’t do that to her. Or himself. He was a grown man, capable of controlling his impulses and infatuations. More than that, Stannis was an honorable man, and he would prove that fact to her by making good on his word. He would give her the year to grow comfortable with him, and then they would produce heirs as agreed. If his interest continued, then he’d know it to be true.

Movement out of the corner of his eye drew his attention back to her unconscious form. The blanket slid down further exposing her breast, concealed only by the thin gossamer material of her night rail. The morning chill in the air hardened her nipple into a proud peak fighting against her gown. Two large steps had him across the room, about to descend on the eager appendage and cover it with his mouth—fabric be damned. A quiet sigh, passed over her sleeping lips, stopped him, hovering above her. Dragging his gaze up to her unsuspecting face, he knew he needed reign himself in.

This was torture.

Knowing what it could be like between them, and choosing not to pursue it. It was then that the rising sun, peeking through a part in the curtains, shone on one of the golden buttons decorating his uniform.

Stannis eyed the high ranking embroidery, accenting each bend and line of his coat, sparkling in golden ropes. They had been given at first because of his family, and earned early after. Each time he donned the coat he did his best to live up to what it symbolized, honor and valor. A strict sense of—duty.

That was it!

He would survive this year yet. Even if the only way to do so was to send himself from her side. Surely, his departure couldn’t be considered cowardly if it was in service of the crown. Sansa would understand more than anyone the importance of fulfilling one’s duty.

It was what was best for them both. She would settle herself into his home and make her peace with their marriage, and perhaps develop true feelings for him. Feelings that extended past the responsibility of their situation, and the euphoria of their shared carnal knowledge. In turn, he would survive his own promised patience by spending it on the open sea where he’d have no
He’d scarcely given thought to how he’d be received upon his return before he was bustling himself out of his room and away from the nymph in his bed. Davos had been surprised by Stannis’ demand that they send all the guests away and that he be packed and ready to leave as soon as was humanly possible. It was a tall order, but Stannis could trust Davos to manage it. He need only worry about packing away his private documents.

It was dishonest to say that he’d been called to duty, and he felt poorly for it, but he knew once he met his superior ranking officers in town, he could make his lie true enough. For the past two tours, they’d been angling to call him to water, though hadn’t pressed him when he refused to bite. Serving himself up to them so easily would keep them pleased for quite some time.

Men moved in a large crowd towards the exits, rushing and bumping into him as they scanned the dock for their loved ones. The crowd gathered on land was larger than the crowd of men on the ship, filled with proud fathers and mothers, siblings and wives. And so many children, mostly infants.

Stannis glanced around him, smirking. His men had been busy on their long leave. There were always babies awaiting their return, though the most always came with the longer tours. This one had only been seven months—not the four months he’d originally planned, but still not the nine that was requisite for this degree of populace.

The first man to step foot on land had a child thrust in his arms, his wife reaching for him to squish the babe between them. It had been quite the spectacle and Stannis wondered if Sansa would be as boisterous in her welcome as this lady had been, or if she’d be simmering with renewed outrage at his presence. Worse yet, what if she hadn’t come to greet him at all?

A sick sinking feeling in his stomach had him glancing nervously around for her. By the second time he scanned the crowd he was able to see Davos stood back by a carriage. Stannis’ feet carried him further toward the gangplank as he looked to either side of his trusted manservant. She was nowhere to be seen.

His grip on his satchel tightened as he bottled his frustration. She was petty if she thought to deny him a welcome as retribution for his hasty escape. If anything, she should be thanking him. After all, he’d saved her the unnecessary pageantry of an obliged affection. Did she feel that exempt her from all appropriate displays? Society still had expectations.

Stannis hadn’t meant for her to happen upon him as he was leaving. When she had, he said what he could to distance himself from her. He would force himself to stay the course, lest he dishonor them both and let his lust break him before the year was up. It hadn’t been meant to hurt her, though if she had been even the slightest bit affected by his words, it would have given him some hope that she would one day warm to him—truly. Unfortunately, she seemed less disquieted by the prospect of being on her own and more so over the fact that he’d sent all her guests away.

Had a room filled with strangers meant more to her than he?

It hurt to feel she had no use for him. More than it would have a mere twenty-four hours prior. When she placed her hand on his chest, he pulled it away, allowing her the freedom of honesty while they were alone.

Surely, she could see the importance of her presence with so many onlookers curious to see the admiral and his new bride. Sansa hadn’t struck him as dim-witted. She knew well what she was doing to him, and with each step further onto land and toward Davos and his carriage, Stannis felt a righteous fury rise up in his insides. Gone was the anxiety of their awkward reunion.
If she could so easily wound him, he had a few choice words to fill her ears with. Davos’ broad smile filled his vision as he approached, still vibrating in rage. “Welcome home, my lord!”

“Davos,” he acknowledged in more of a growl than he meant.

“Is he here?” A soft familiar voice sounded through the window.

Davos reached for Stannis’ satchel, answering over his shoulder. “Yes, my lady. You may wish to come out now.”

The look in Davos’ eye as he watched Stannis’s anger drain, hinted that he knew all too well what Stannis had been thinking, and just exactly how he felt about it. Shock encouraged his silence as he wondered why she hadn’t been standing out waiting for him, waving to him as he docked? Was she too good to leave her cushioned seat in the carriage?

The latch clicked and the door swung open. Immediately his view was obscured by a parasol, seeing only a gloved hand reach out for him to hold and a petite boot land on each step leading to ground. He hadn’t seen her yet, but just the warm feel of her hand so small and feminine in his stirred a hunger he’d been ignoring.

He bit the inside of his cheek reminding himself he was no pubescent boy lacking self-respect. Besides, this woman didn’t share his heart, and while she hadn’t jilted him at his return, she couldn’t be bothered to greet him properly. She cared more for the state of marriage, than she did for marriage to him.

Both feet on the ground, she lifted the parasol to reveal a stunning set of blue sapphire eyes, a warm welcoming smile, ample bosom tucked attractively in her spencer jacket, and a great round belly.

His eyes threatened to jump from their sockets, his heart galloping in his chest at the sight. Eyeing the prominent pregnancy before him, Stannis’ hand tightened on hers to keep him steady.

“I must look quite shocking to you.” Her hand came down to rest on the bulge. “Though, I confess, I’ve had some time to get used to it, myself.”

Only then did he tear his eyes from her pregnancy to look again upon her face. Her cheeks had flushed with embarrassment as she explained, “The doctor says it will grow larger still, if you can believe it. He says he believes it will only be another month’s time, but we know better.” She bit her bottom lip, her eyes looking up at his, so large and tempting. “Don’t we?”

Another man would have questioned.

Another man would have denied.

This child was his. He knew it with every atom of his being. Logic and reason only adding to his convictions. If she’d lain with another man after him, the pregnancy wouldn’t have been as far along as she clearly was. After the night they shared, the knowledge he’d gained of her body, he knew she couldn’t have given herself to another before him.

“We do,” he agreed in a choked voice.

She looked out at the crowd, only then seeming to notice how large it was. Moving his hand to her belly, she promised, “We’re glad to see you home, husband.”

Movement, ever so faint, fluttered under his palm and he felt uneasy on his feet. Clenching his teeth, he reminded himself that war had shown him much more to faint over, and he hadn’t given
in then, he wouldn’t over this miracle either. After all, Florent was out there somewhere, possibly watching the reception his admiral was receiving. Swooning would be most undignified by any man, let alone one of his station.

Davos moved around him, loading his footlocker and various other cases onto the carriage. Stannis helped Sansa step back into the carriage and settled himself across from her because he didn’t think he had the mettle to sit beside her at the moment. Soft floral scents filled the cabin, alerting his body to the woman before him—his woman. No matter what their feelings were for one another, she carried his seed, nurtured it and willed it to blossom inside her. He claimed her on their wedding night and every pair of eyes that landed on her burgeoning bump knew it.

Pride allowed a small smirk to creep across his lips. The carriage took off and he stared into the bright blue eyes that promised him an heir. Her mouth moved and he had to focus to hear her say, “You must be exhausted.”

“Mm,” he agreed.

“I had the servants air out your chamber and refresh the linens upon word of your return. They were heating the waters to draw you a bath before we left.” She explained, her smile never diminishing.

How thoughtful of her. He could do with a bath, and had been planning to order one himself. It was good to see her suddenly so attentive to his needs.

She raised her hand as if in solemn oath. “And I swear I will not take offense if I shan’t see you again by week’s end.”

Week’s end? That was two days away. His brows furrowed as he wondered what she was on about. “Week’s end? I’ve only just returned, why wouldn’t I be present in the next couple of days?”

Sansa sighed lightly, then offered him some degree of patience. “I understand it’s the way of military men.”

Now that was curious. “Is it?” He asked, cocking his head at her.

Nodding seriously, she explained. “Father was always sequestered in his rooms for the first few days after he’d returned from mission. Mother always said he needed the time to acclimate himself to civilian life again, and she’d spend the majority of the time with him, save for the instances we children needed her.”

Stannis blinked back at her, making sense of her reasoning. Realization suddenly dawned on him, and hilarity tickled at his cheeks, threatening laughter.

“What is it?” She asked, clearly noticing his poorly concealed amusement.

“Days, you say?” He asked, his eyes alight. “Alone in his chambers, with only his good lady wife to keep him company…”

Sansa gasped suddenly. “No!”

Chuckling, he asked, “How long after your father’s returns were you blessed with each sibling?”

Completely scandalized by it, Sansa’s face turned such a deep crimson that it grew almost darker than her copper locks. “That’s awful! And all this time, I believed her to be tending to him.”
“It sounds as though she was,” Stannis said before he thought better of it.

One glance to her horrified expression had him wishing he could swallow the words down before they’d ever been uttered. Silence filled the cabin as she stared out the window and held her hands together over her belly. Did she think he’d expect the same from her? Not that he would have declined the offer, but he certainly hadn’t supposed it. Especially not now in her condition, which was a shame really, because he’d often wondered what a pregnant woman looked like nude. Noting how her bosom had seemed to grow in his absence, made him want to divest her of her clothing so he could catalogue every change. He’d spent many nights at sea, reliving their encounter and he felt he could map her body perfectly.

It was then that the awful reality of the situation had finally occurred to him. Lady Sansa Stark had agreed to marry him in order to offer herself security and release the inheritance owed him. She’d only been amiable to relations for the purpose of producing an heir at his request. He had said that he’d desire as many as she’d allow him, but what if one was all she had a mind to? Had she now felt satisfied that she’d done her duty by him? It wasn’t as if she’d yet fallen in love with him. What other hold would he have on her?

Stannis gulped back the rising panic in his throat as he wondered if he had experienced his first and last time with her all in one on that night seven long months ago. She said that she’d made his room up for him, with no mention of herself. When he explained the mystery of her father’s convalescence, she hadn’t exactly appeared eager to offer him the same degree of care.

The urge to stop the carriage and run back to the dock struck him and he willed it away, telling himself he would stay for the child. He would see it birthed safely before he agreed to set sail again. The time in between would be difficult, but he would see things through.

Chapter End Notes

Due to a number of comments and messages asking me to take these 4 Stansa drabbles out and make them their own fic, I have stopped adding drabbles in this au to here, and have instead outlined a plot and started a fic. Chapter 5 is the start of content you won't find in Stray Thoughts. The stand-alone fic can be found here: https://archiveofourown.org/works/16993464/chapters/39947529
Hotel California (1/3)

Chapter Summary

This 3 part drabble is a Stansa Creepyship I've had in my head. Each part is in a different person's pov. Back away now if you aren't interested in reading about Sansa having feelings for BOTH Petyr and Stannis.

“Oh no, set a limit with me, please. I love it when people try to do that,” Jeyne teased as she stuffed another couple of complimentary mouthwashes in her apron.

Sansa eyed the dwindling supply of tiny hotel freebees in the cleaning cart they pushed down the hall. “You know people can still smell Captain Morgan on your breath. This shit’s not covering anything up.”

“Oh no, is perfect Sansa feeling guilty over my pilfering?” Jeyne slid a keycard into the slot and threw the door open. “No one will miss them, and it’s an endless supply. Besides, you’re just jelly you’re too goody-two-shoe to take a nip from time to time.”

Gripping one side of the cart, Sansa reached down for the little portable caddy filled with various paper goods and sanitizers. “You definitely have one from time to time--to time, to time …” Sansa emphasized as she sprayed down the kitchen table. It was one of the larger suites with a kitchen and loft for entertaining.

“Oh! You are in a mood!” Jeyne chirped as she replaced all the trash bags. “What’s got up your ass?”

Heaving a heavy sigh, Sansa decided it best to just rip the damn band-aid off already. “Joffrey kicked me out.”

“Wait, what now?” Jeyne’s head spun around, her teeth crunching one of the mints meant for the pillows.

Not wanting to say it again, Sansa stared back at her, hoping the dark luggage she was sporting under her eyes would serve testimony enough.

“You’re not kidding.”

“I wish I was,” Sansa sighed, and then strangely wondered if she really did wish she was. Joffrey had proven to be quite the prick, throwing her clothes out their third story window on the snow-covered front lawn. “No I don’t.”

Plopping down on the sofa, Jeyne offered her full attention, eyes wide in rapt attention. The girl looked like she was watching a telenovela as she asked, “What happened?”

The image of Margaery Tyrell buck-naked and spread eagle on their bed while Joffrey groped himself and dripped candle wax on her tits would be seared in Sansa’s brain for the rest of her life. Certainly every time she looked at a candle. “I caught him cheating.”
"No!" Jeyne may as well have had a bucket of popcorn in her lap. “He threw you out for that? He should be on his damn hands and knees groveling for your forgiveness. He should have been the one to move out!”

Sansa sighed, exhausted. She’d already run through these emotions some four hours before, when she was trying to coerce her rejected self into her uniform for work. Cleaning hotel rooms hadn’t been her idea of a dream job, but it was hers and had absolutely nothing to do with her family.

They had disapproved of Joffrey, and her decision to take a year off before going to college, and the fact that she had stopped going to church, and that she frosted the tips of her hair once, and that she always forgot and put her elbows on the table, and, and, and… There really was no end to the things her parents were disappointed in her for. Her father would always give her a sad martyred expression, silently telling her his life was harder because of her poor choices. Her mother would scowl and nag her to death, the hot air she blustered with, the only warmth she emanated.

When Jeyne pulled some strings to get her a job with her, Sansa couldn’t have been more grateful. She didn’t need her family’s approval and moving in with Joffrey and paying her own way (well, mostly) had been the perfect way to show them that. Having to turn around and grovel on their doorstep was the last thing she wanted, and she’d give damn near almost anything to avoid it, even if it meant she had to crash on Jeyne’s couch for a bit—which was what she was building up to. “He was the one who paid the rent.”

“Still.”

“I’ve got nowhere to go.” Here it was—the prime moment to lay her pathetic plight at her friend’s feet. “I don’t know what to do.”

Jeyne rose from the bed and wrapped an arm around her. “Aww, you’ll figure it out.”

Sansa allowed her to hug her, and couldn’t help but notice she hadn’t been given the obligatory invitation she’d been expecting. Wow. Jeyne was really going to make her work for it. “Jeyne,” she spoke muffled into her shoulder. “Could I maybe crash with you for a bit?”

Jeyne said nothing for a moment and then suddenly laughed. “You don’t want to stay with me! So many people have slept on my couch, I’m gonna need to get it tested.”

Sansa feigned a laugh. “Funny. But seriously.”

“Seriously,” she carried the joke on, avoiding more.

Bristling at the realization her best friend in the whole world definitely didn’t have her back, Sansa shoved her off and took a step back. “Jeyne! What the hell?”

Jeyne’s smile evaporated, no longer able to pretend. “Ramsay’s back in town,” she said turning for her bag.

“So?” Sansa didn’t care, and Jeyne shouldn’t have either. “You said you were done with him.”

Rifling through the contents until she pulled a plastic travel bottle of rum out, she admitted, “Ramsay’s not the type of guy you leave.”

“Then get a restraining order and let me crash on your couch!”

Jeyne shook her head at Sansa, her haunted gaze averted to her feet. “It’s not that easy,” she whispered before taking a pull off the bottle and holding it out to her.
Sansa looked down at the bottle and then back up at Jeyne. There was a tinge of fear in her boisterous friend’s eyes and not for the first time, Sansa wondered if there were things her friend hadn’t been sharing with her. Considering she was homeless and Jeyne was begrudging her a worn out couch that had seen more sex than Sansa had in her whole life, she suddenly didn’t care. Taking the bottle with a yank, Sansa growled, “Screw you.”

There.

She was officially drinking on the job.

Not so damn perfect now, was she?

“Look, I’m sorry.” Jeyne frowned and fished her phone out of the pocket of her apron. Her thumbs tapped the screen at the speed of light.

“Yeah, you seem it.” Sansa took another gulp, feeling the heat of it roll down her chest.

“Ugh. Laying it on a bit thick, aren’t we?” Jeyne rolled her eyes at her. She’d never been one to wallow too long in guilt.

Before Sansa could remind her that her crime wasn’t borrowing her favorite jacket without asking, but in fact leaving her out in the cold (winter had arrived and judging by the hard start her car had this morning, it was too cold to sleep in the backseat of her car), Jeyne held her hand up. “I got you, my five-o-la.” Jeyne rated the people in her life on a scale of 1-10, ten being Mariah Carey, and no one else ever rating past four. Her own parents were a two and that’s only because they let her get her belly button pierced when she was eleven. The fact that she called Sansa her ‘five’ meant she was easily the most important person in her life. At least that is the beautiful lie she’d have her believe and Sansa would eat it up if it got her some couch space.

Only once, heavily under the extremely dire influence of Triple Sec straight from the bottle she’d clutched fiercely to herself at a house party she severely regretted attending, did Sansa dare ask where Ramsay ranked. Jeyne stared back at her, blinking for a second as she thought, and then she leaned forward as if to whisper the answer. As soon as Sansa bent her head, she was shocked to find Jeyne’s lips on hers, her tongue in her mouth. It was messy and unexpected and not awful… Sansa didn’t remember much after that, only that she hadn’t taken her pants off, and that was important. The things her friend would do to avoid the subject of Ramsay. Jeyne interrupted the memory by saying, “One way or another, you know I always come through.”

Well that gave her pause.

“Here, look.” Jeyne held her phone out. “This very room is booked for the next four days by some rich mucky-muck attending the conference downstairs.”

Sansa shrugged. Of course it was. They all were. This place catered to rich business men, as evidenced by the many conference halls downstairs, the upscale restaurant attached, and work visas weren’t accepted—even for bellhops. They’d have homegrown, native speakers only, whether it was to open a door or wash a dish. The rampant discrimination was nothing short of shitty, but that was sadly the reality of catering to that clientele.

“That means he’s tied up all day in meetings,” Jeyne explained, as if it was obvious. “Chill here for the day. I’ll cover for you. Get a shower in, let the steam relax your muscles.” She gave her a playful wink as she added, “And let the hand-held help you forget fuck-face.”

Sansa laughed. Jeyne’s suggestion, while amusing and actually a little appealing, solved absolutely nothing. “That doesn’t give me a place to sleep.”
“Not that I’m saying you should rock a nocturnal existence, but…”

Sansa grabbed the bottle from her and took another swig. “Yeah sleep on the clock, brill.”

Jeyne grinned. “Didn’t think it was your speed.”

“You know me so well,” Sansa sighed. She took another drink before she handed the bottle over again.

Watching her gulp it down, Jeyne laughed. “Apparently not.”

Sansa glared back, too annoyed and now buzzed to tell her to shut up.

“Look, you’re right.” Jeyne tapped the silver ring on her thumb against the neck of the bottle as she thought. “Stay and relax, you deserve it. I’ll get you a room for tonight.”

“What?”

“You heard me.” Jeyne drew a deep breath. “I’ll call in a couple favors.”

Theon.

“No.”

“It’s fine,” she lied.

“He’s a dink.”

Jeyne said nothing.

Despite the very real possibility that she was facing a very cold night in her car until she swallowed her pride and drove to her parents, Sansa couldn’t let her fall on that particular sword—again. “He’s a creep.”

“Yeah, and Ramsay will make him pay once he finds out,” Jeyne smiled. It wasn’t sincere, but she was at least trying.

Sansa shook her head. “I’m not pimping you out for one night in a warm bed.”

“But you would for many?” Jeyne asked, cocking a brow.

Her playful smile told Sansa she didn’t have to answer.

“It’s fine. You’re not pimping me out.” Jeyne ran her fingers through her hair and looked away as she admitted, “It’s kinda fucked, but knowing Ramsay’s in town and planning on coming home…it kinda makes me wanna fuck someone else.”

“What?” Sansa gasped out, shocked.

“I think he’s serious this time, Sans.” Jeyne worried her lip. “He’s going to propose.”

Sansa had never liked the guy, got a weird vibe from him from the moment she walked in on him jerking it to some rape porn. Everyone had their kink and she wasn’t one to hate, but the screen revealed far more than a fantasy to overpower and take, and instead delved into straight up torture. He’d been polite and controlled, the picture-perfect boyfriend from day one and she wished she could say she’d been put off to him upon introduction, but she fell into the fantasy for her friend.
After she witnessed his particular fantasy, she approached Jeyne. She smiled uncomfortably and said, “Everything’s consensual, so it’s totally fine.” She laughed as she said, “Don’t judge.”

A better friend would have dug further. A better friend would have asked her why she was consenting to it. A better friend would have helped her see that she deserved more than a stack of late night regrets to keep her company. Instead she bit the inside of her cheek and decided that their kinks just weren’t the same.

“You could say no,” she said quickly.

Jeyne smiled a sad smile and took another drink. A couple of seconds passed in silence before she laughed and said, “Theon’s an asshole, but he’s decent in the sack. I’ll just shove his tie in his mouth to shut him up.”

“Oh my god.”

“Seriously. His dick is big enough to get it done but not too big that he’s forgot how to use his hands.”

Sansa closed her eyes, the rum warming her cheeks as she said, “I don’t want to know.”

“Or his mouth,” Jeyne laughed. “So fucking filthy. The things he says-”

“Shut up!” Sansa laughed louder than she meant to and then covered her mouth. She spoke from behind her fingers, “You’re horrible.”

Jeyne winked at her as she stood up. “I’ve been told I’m quite good.”

She was almost to the door before Sansa realized. “Hey, where are you going?”

“I told you,” Jeyne reminded her, setting the bottle of rum down on the table by the door. She fished in her pocket for a bottle of mouthwash to gargle. Turning quick to spits it out in the kitchenette sink before she opened the door. “Stay here and rest. I’ll text you when I’ve found your accommodations for the night.”

The door was shut before she could protest and Sansa was left alone. In a swank hotel. With a bottle of rum. With a lot of regrets.

Tears poured down her cheeks, and she allowed it for a total of three solid minutes before she stood up and grabbed the bottle. *Fuck it.*

Scrolling through her phone she deleted each forced photo with Joffrey swiping from most recent all the way back to when the smiles were genuine. Sansa grimaced at her happiness--so stupid and naive. Nice girls finished last, and the fact that she was currently destitute and drunk at her place of employment, in a stranger’s room definitely proved it.

Maybe Jeyne had the right idea. Don’t hold out for a good guy, just take what you can get when you can, and fuck all the rest.

She smiled a little, feeling light-headed as she repeated her thoughts aloud, “Fuck it.” Kicking her shoes off, and dropping her phone on the couch, she went to the bathroom and turned all three shower heads on, swaying as she adjusted each one to a different massaging setting. Setting the bottle of rum on the counter and shucking her clothes, she slipped into the shower and closed her eyes as the spray beat against her skull, dashing away the self-deprecation.
She wasn’t sure how long she’d been in there, but judging by the way her fingertips had wrinkled into tiny raisin drops at the ends of her fingers, she figured it was time to get out. Turning the knobs off, she squeezed her long red hair out before stepping her barefoot to the floor. Damn. She’d forgotten to lay a towel down, or grab one to set closer to the shower. That’s what spontaneity got her.

The sound of movement outside the door froze her where she stood, panic making its way through her hazy brain. Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Was it Jeyne? Please say it was Jeyne.

“Leave it to fucking Baelish to plan a pre-game!” A voice boomed through the drywall. It was deep and heavy and somehow...fat. It was the last voice she wanted discovering her in such a precarious position.

Another softer voice sounded, “Just a couple during break, Robert. Can’t get too sloppy for the last presentation.”

“Couple of drinks--yeah right,” the first voice undermined, chuckling as he did.

They didn’t seem to realize she was in there, and why would they? It was just a couple of drinks, a quick pre-game--hell, the guy sounded like Jeyne. She took careful steps toward the shelf with the folded towels on it, holding her breath as she moved. They would hear the fan on in the bathroom, but cleaning staff always left the fans on to cut down on the humidity after they’d scrubbed down the showers in scalding hot water. Well, the hard-workers, anyway. Jeyne usually just sprayed the walls of the shower with the handheld in one hand and scrolled through her phone in the other.

A third voice cleared his throat and spoke abrupt, “I’m taking a leak.”

Jumping out of her own skin, Sansa bounded for the towel, uncoordinated in her step, and singularly focused. She hardly noticed the knob turning as she reached too soon for the towel. The door swung open and a man who had to be in his early fifties, clean shaven, with only a fringe of black hair and the most brilliant blue eyes she’d ever seen stood flabbergasted in front of her.

“Uh,” she gasped out as he eyed her up and down. His gaze had hardly risen above her chin, letting her know just how much he appreciated his view, even if he seemed too polite to say so. Finally finding the words, she scowled back. “Do you mind?”

“Uh,” he fumbled. “Very sorry. Carry on!” He turned back out to the living space and closed the door quickly before she could ask just what in the hell he meant by, Carry on.

Scurrying for the towel, she wrapped it protectively around herself as she listened through the door, too mortified to step out. The obnoxious man laughed loud and said, “Sounds like Baelish brought one of his girls over to help us take the edge off between meetings. Good man.”

“Good is the last descriptor I’d use in regards to Baelish,” the man who’d walked in on her said. He wasn’t this disgusting Robert, or this unsavory Baelish that Robert seemed to take a liking to. It was odd, he seemed almost more embarrassed than she was to see her standing there in her birthday suit.

Tucking the end of the towel in on her wrap tighter she listened to Baelish’s soft voice reply, “She’s not one of mine.”

One of mine? Who the hell was this guy?

“So what?” Robert boomed. “Toss her some cash, I could do with a quicky before the roundtable
Sansa cringed to think of time spent with this Robert character. It seemed as though Baelish would be saving her from the nightmare, as she heard him say, “Take it easy. Have a drink.”

Yeah, buddy. Take it easy. Have a drink. And fuck right off. She glanced around her for her clothes. They were balled up and bunched, and scattered wherever she flung them. His soft voice was much closer, speaking into the door as he said, “Hello?”

“Go away, Baelish,” she commanded, trying to sound much fiercer than she was.

Her phone! She needed her phone. She would text Jeyne and get the fuck out of dodge.

“I don’t think we’ve met,” he soothed through the door. “Call me Petyr.”

“Go away, Petyr.”

“I would, only…”

Only what? She stilled, waiting for an explanation.

The door cracked open and a dark goatee and cool grey-green eyes hovered above, looking at her. Slowly, his serious expression turned smirk. “It’s my room.”

“So what?” She growled back, hating that she hadn’t had the most obvious thought in the world to lock the goddamned door. “That entitles you to absolutely nothing.”

His head pushed further in the door, revealing silver streaks at his temples. He had to be in his forties, not as aged as Stannis, but not so far off in age as to be thought any less established. He glanced down at the half-finished bottle of rum on the counter and closed the door behind him. “Rough day?”

She gawked at him, surprised both by the nonchalant way he spoke to her, and the fact that she somehow didn’t feel the least bit trapped, despite the fact that he stood between her and the door. That was actually the definition of trapped. “The worst.”

“Tell me about it?”

Sansa blinked back at him, trying to figure his game. “But your friends?”

“My business associates,” he corrected. “Stannis is probably already halfway down the hall chastising himself for catching a peek, and Robert will eventually get the hint and follow.” He reached for the bottle and tilted it towards her. “Mind if I?”

She shook her head. It felt strange to have him request a drink of Jeyne’s bottom-shelf spring break leg spreader. One look at his suit told her he’d probably never heard of the brand in his hand, let alone ever imagined imbibing it. Oh god. It was in a plastic bottle too. How horribly tacky.

Shit, she was sobering up too much for this situation. “Go ahead,” she allowed, knowing he’d offer it to her next. Stannis—that was the man’s name, didn’t seem to think Petyr was a good guy. Though he hadn’t explained why, Sansa felt somewhat compelled to believe his hushed earnest. Allowing herself to see Petyr through distrusting lenses, she decided that of course he would hang with a drunk girl in his bathroom. “What about your conference?”

“Been looking for a reason to get out of it.” He smirked, handing her the bottle back. Had he even
taken a drink? He’d been so quick and she’d been so in her own head.

“I bet,” she said because he looked like trouble and she knew no eloquent way of drawing attention to that fact, or whether or not it warranted mentioning in the first place.

“So, pretty redhead, half naked in my bathroom--what does ‘the worst’ day look like to a girl like you?” He asked bluntly.

She almost spit her drink out laughing. “You’re smooth.”

“And here I thought asking your name would have been awkward,” he teased.

A name. Hell no. She leaned against the counter, folding her arms protectively over her chest as she recognized some opportunistic instincts when she saw them. “I’m not fucking you.”

“Of course not,” he agreed. “It’s a two week wait to fuck me, Sweetling. I require fine dining and STD testing first.”

She laughed, her cheeks starting to hurt. “God, that was appalling!”

“It was pretty terrible, wasn’t it?” He chuckled back. “Your day getting any better?”

Her eyes fell to his smile, dimples hiding behind his facial hair. Wetting her lips before she realized she was doing it, she confessed, “It’s not getting any worse.”

“Oh!” He teased. “Now that was smooth.”

“Shut up.” She ducked her head away to hide her embarrassment.

He was within inches from her now, tucking her hair behind her ear as he pulled her chin up to look at him. It was forward and ballsy and a stupid move to make—on any other day. She closed her eyes, waiting for him to cross that line, to kiss the stranger in his bathroom and take her on the counter of his vanity.

Instead he asked, “Are you hungry?”

“Uh…”

He ran his thumb over her chin as he smiled. “I could go for some pancakes.”

Pancakes? What the hell.

“Here,” he said, holding her rumpled uniform up to her. When had he grabbed that? Fuck, she really wasn’t herself. In fairness, she’d had the equivalent of five or six shots in the past couple of hours, and she’d always been a lightweight. “Get dressed and I’ll take you.”

He stepped back, the cold air rushing over her damp scantily clad self in his absence. Sansa watched him walk away, not looking back to her until he opened the door. His gaze lingered for a moment longer than was proper and any idea she had that he may not have wanted to fuck her, was quickly dispelled. The man had restrained himself.

For pancakes.

At 3:30 in the afternoon.

Seriously, what was her life right now?
“Come on!” Robert bellowed from the car. “Get in.”

“No,” Stannis replied briskly.

The car rolled on, keeping up with his power walk. “Just get in the fucking car already.”

“Good night, Robert.” Stannis pursed his lips and thought silently, Sleep it off.

The engine revved and Robert’s driver pulled up onto the curve to cut him off. Stannis stopped, closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath. If it hadn’t been for family and money, he would have blocked his brother’s number a long time ago. Unfortunately, there was no way to amputate the part of him Robert leeched off of without financially flatlining.

“It’s for business. Get in.”

Stannis kept his head down, letting his eyes roll up to glare at him. Neither of them could conduct business—the important kind, anyway—without each other, as partners for their company Baratheon Bros. There were days Stannis fantasized about signing it all away to buy a houseboat and leave the scheming and backbiting of successful business in the city. Then he thought of what Robert would do with total control, and he knew that staying on to help manage him was a service to the public.

The car door shut behind him, the driver all too quick to get him in and the car back on the road. Robert poured himself another drink, pulling a shaker he’d left in one of the cupholders. Stannis barely hid his disgust as he asked, “What sort of business?”

“Baelish business.”

Stannis shook his head. If he’d told him once, he’d told him a million times. “No. We’ve discussed this.”

“No.” Robert gulped back his drink and lifted a persecutory finger at him. “You yammered on about illegitimate business this and legal ramifications that, and I can’t keep turning away good money because your balls tighten for his girl.”

His --Baelish’s.

Sansa.

Every nerve in his body sung, suddenly raw. The jig was up, he was caught. If blundering Robert saw his affection for the girl, then surely Baelish did too. Stannis wanted to jump out of the car at the red light ahead and grab the next taxi he could find.

Denial was his only defense.
Fixing his face into a scowl, he growled back, “My balls don’t tighten for the girl.” It was odd to use his brother’s phrase (even if it was against him), though he felt it might actually get the message across.

“What are you, gay?”

No such luck.

Stannis leveled him with a glare that spoke to just exactly what he thought of that.

Robert held his hands up in surrender, a smile pushing his fat cheeks up into his eyes. “Okay, okay. I’ll leave it. I just have one thing to say.”

What was one more thing?

Shrugging his shoulders, Robert winked. “Make a move.”

Why would he say that? Stannis answered before he had the chance to think better of it. “She’s Ned Stark’s daughter, and I’m twice her age.”

Denial had been safer.

Seeming not to notice the quick flash of panic that passed over Stannis’ face, Robert laughed. “Ned would be so lucky to have you put it to his daughter for a bit—”

“Put it to her? Jesus!” Stannis cut him off, offended. For her, for him, for Ned Stark.

Robert laughed. “I’m serious. You wouldn’t get too rough with her while you had her. Not like some young pup with little-man syndrome.” The solemn expression on his face told Stannis that Robert really felt he was imparting wisdom. Which only made it harder for Stannis to listen to him add, “And you’d make sure she got her cookies most of the time.”

Dumbfounded by his brother’s moment of kindness—however crude, Stannis swallowed before quietly saying, “Be that as it may, you know as well as I do that she isn’t available.”

Robert grabbed his drink and dismissed it. “Screw Baelish. He’s slimey as fuck and I only bother with him because no one moves money like he does. If it takes a sweet little firecrotch nibbling your taint to finally take the pucker from your face, then I’ll find another guy.”

Stannis glowered back at him. There was no reason for him to degrade Sansa as he was. Then again, Robert never needed a reason to be a prick. He tossed his opinions around, not caring who felt the slap of them, be it his own brother or best friend.

It had been a little while before they knew who the naked girl in the bathroom really was, Stannis not having been to Ned’s in years. Robert had always been closer to the Starks than Stannis ever was. If he had been the Baratheon brother to walk in on her, he’d have known that day and things might have turned out very differently. He’d have placed a call and Ned would have shown up and taken her out of there. There was no way he could have possibly known she had been working so far below their tax bracket. He would have appreciated them saving him the embarrassment of the world discovering his daughter donned a uniform for menial labor and she definitely wouldn’t have been left prey to the likes of Baelish.

Most importantly, Stannis wouldn’t have caught sight of her in such a compromising position. He wouldn’t have grown an admiration for her slowly over time with each Baelish-business interaction, and discovered that beneath the beauty lay a brain. Hardly seeing Ned, except for at various functions, he would have completely missed out on his family, never able to fall for
Sansa’s natural charm.

Instead, it had been some time before Baelish introduced them to his new girlfriend--weeks. By then, she’d fallen so far into his manipulations that she refused to return to her family. Like a proud peacock, Baelish strutted around with her on his arm, callous to the family connections he was severing. So selfish was he, that he’d completely ignored her age--she was much too young to entangle herself with a man of his age and history.

Entanglement, yes. An out of hand infatuation.

It definitely wasn’t love.

It couldn’t have been.

In the seedier parts of town--where no one owned a suit of any quality, he was known as ‘Littlefinger’ for crying out loud!

For two years, Stannis watched him skink his greedy claws deeper and deeper into her. She was too young to understand the difference between love and lust and Baelish was capitalizing on that. Despite how much his head would have him think his own growing admiration for the girl was true, he knew it had been his libedo talking instead. It had to be. That was logical. Emotional attachment to the wrong person could hardly be considered valid.

Stannis quietly chewed the inside of his cheek as he stared out his window. Regardless of how many times he took himself through all the arguments for why Sansa Stark was simply a beautiful girl he found intriguing and absolutely nothing more, his head could not deny the sparks that flew between them.

Robert had told him to ‘make a move,’ ignorant to the fact that he already had…

It wasn’t what he’d meant to do, but it had happened all the same. Well, she had been the one to kiss him first, but he’d definitely taken up the reins once he was given license to hold them in the first place. It was secret they’d both shared for the last month, and he felt a small part of himself breaking each time he saw her since. It was hard not to reach out to her and gather her close in his arms, knowing now what it felt like to fit her against him.

Sometimes the memory blurred. As if it had worn out from being replayed too many nights left alone in his bed, he’d begun to forget the fine details. The exact words they’d spoken, whether she’d fallen back into the counter or if he’d pushed her there, if the soft sounds she made were more of a mewl or whimper…

He was hard just thinking about it and had to adjust himself in his seat, praying Robert hadn’t noticed. Luckily, he hadn’t--too focused on his phone. Stannis closed his eyes, fighting the memory of a mistake he’d have made a thousand times if only to keep carrying him through his long days and even longer nights. Sleep was a blessing he’d been bereft of.

That night Baelish had been in rare form--playfully mocking and poking at his betters. His jovial mood was quickly explained as he beamed, announcing that he’d planned an anniversary party for himself and Sansa. They weren’t married, or even engaged--thank god. Like the showboat he could be, Baelish had decided to book the same suit he had the day they discovered Sansa showering in their suite, declaring that day to be the day they became a couple.

Stannis eyed Sansa at Baelish’s side to see if she agreed with that assessment, finding it absurd himself. Relationships--true ones, took time. People didn’t find love on day one. It was a sentiment that had to be nurtured, fostered into development. Private glances turned to insightful comments,
caring gestures tentatively made, an interest increasingly undeniable. Any commitment offered so immediately was a farce.

Expecting to see the doe-eyed adoration of a girl with little to no worldly experience and an appreciation for Baelish’s spoiling, Stannis was surprised to see a veiled reaction. Sansa harbored something a bit deeper instead. Judging by her tight smile, it was darker too.

There was still warmth to her eyes as she seemed to ignore the crowd around them to zero in on him. Stannis glanced around, doubtful it could be he that she was so intent on. When he turned back, her eyebrows lifted at him, her grin deepening. It was a silent confirmation that unsettled him, and Stannis found himself looking for an exit. Ducking his head down and edging back away helped him feel as though he may have found one.

He hid away in the kitchen, clearing his head as he pretended to freshen his drink. For far too long, he hunched over the counter, his mind warring. Baelish and Sansa were an item whether he liked it or not, and who was he not to like it? Or even care? She seemed fine--no visible bruising or signs of coercion. If anything, appearances lead everyone to believe she was all-in with Baelish.

That fact only seemed to nettle him more.

Deciding he couldn’t stand idle anymore, he turned around and crashed into someone smaller and softer than he. When he opened his eyes, he saw a crown of bright red hair hovering beneath his nose and a sudden sense of dread sank into him like cold mud fusing him in place and giving him a shiver. His saliva had gone tacky and gunked his throat, choking him before he could even consider words.

As her head lifted, bright blue eyes stared back wide into his. Her cheeks were flushed, and her smile nervous. Her lips parted and he prepared himself for the berating he deserved. Instead, she laughed.

He blinked, slightly disquieted by her response. All the women he’d ever known would have slapped him, or thrown their drink in his face in retribution. They would have then added some severe scolding the situation for good measure.

They certainly would not have laughed.

“Well, this is awkward,” Sansa said, still amused. She glanced down to her chest, drenched with his club soda. And a dash of lemon. The outline of her purple lace bra stood prominently out under the white silk, now transparent. While Sansa had never dressed as inappropriately as many young women her age, the cut of her dresses had often been on the lower side. He’d seen the swell of her breasts before, though somehow seeing the supple flesh trapped and straining against the wet confines of the fabric made it much more indecent. Her lips moved but he could make no sense of the sound coming from them at first. Delayed, he was able to piece the words together into her question, “What was that look for?”

Stannis gulped, forcing down the lump of anxiety lodged in his throat as he searched his brain for anything to say other than, “I can see your bra.”

“Obviously,” she sighed.

He said that out loud?!

His eyes bulged and his stomach jumped into his chest, frantic to find his throat and escape.

Much less affected than he was, Sansa rolled her eyes and said, “I meant the one in the other room.”
He deflected, “One what?”

“Look.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” he lied.

She eyed him closely, detecting his lie. “Yes, you do.”

Silence passed between them. He took comfort in the familiarity of the unspoken, knowing it was all that they could ever really share. Aside from the fact that she was half his age, she was Ned Stark’s daughter. Beyond that, she was Baelish’s girl.

There really was nothing to say.

Setting her drink on the counter, she asked again, “How come when everyone was smiling and raising their glasses, you gave me this look…” She stepped closer to him. “Like you were disappointed.”

Stannis forced his gaze to stay above her shoulders, not down to the gap she was closing between them, and certainly not to the see-through button up before him. This was ludicrous. He was a grown man carrying on as if it had been the first and only time he’d ever been in the presence of a woman. Not liking this feeling one bit, he opted for a strong offense, “Why would I be disappointed?”

Her head tilted, the hair on her shoulder sliding down to obscure the line of lace he’d been trying not to notice. Sapphires sparkled back at him as she admitted, “Not sure. You tell me.”

He said nothing, praying his stoicism would deter her from any further questioning. Or at the very least, that if forced to answer, he’d be able to adequately evade. Quick thinking had never been his strong suit. Stannis had always been one to take his time, thoroughly processing all the facts of every situation before making any decision. Grasping at straws, he pursed his lips. “I’m disappointed by a lot of things in life, don’t take it personally.”

Another step forward had her voice lowering, “But I do. Because that look that you gave…” She blinked, her gaze somehow growing wider as she stared back him. “That look of disappointment…” She was closer, though he hadn’t heard the foot fall to warn him of her maneuver. “It was directed at me.”

She bit her bottom lip and he wanted to reach for her chin and use his thumb to pull her lip free from her teeth, saving it from her self-abuse. Seeing her so anxious in his presence calmed him, reminded him who the adult was. For as out of his league as she often left him feeling, he realized then how susceptible her youth left her.

He had to rise above. Be the man she hadn’t yet lived long enough to encounter.

If she couldn’t manage her nerves to maintain a mature presentation, he’d help her with some delicate but firm instruction. Feeling his zipper impose and scrape against him unexpectedly, Stannis realized he was doing it again--imagining her in a bawdy light. Wearing nothing but a blindfold and silk ropes, she’d follow his sensual directives to the best of her range of motion.

He’d lived life so carefully, diplomatically. Reckless moments behind closed doors were a fantasy that gave him excitement in his dullest of days. She may have been Baelish’s girl (subjected to all sorts of depravity) but that didn’t mean she was prepared for the wishful thinking that too often made Stannis’ cock weep against his boxers.
Searching for something to say--anything even remotely convenient, he scraped the bottom of the barrel. “You’re young.”

A soft chuckle filled his ears. The gentle press of her palm had every muscle in his body primed to pounce. “For what, exactly?”

Unable to stop himself, he looked down at her hand, and the attached arm, finding her breasts nestled between the crooks of her elbows. His mind stated the obvious, Not much. His lips were tighter, allowing him to deflect. “You should be in school.”

“Says who?” She’d cocked an eyebrow, but he’d hardly seen it, noticing the hardened peaks standing proudly against the silky material that covered them. “You been talking to my Dad again?”

“I’d want my daughter to be in school.”

Her thumb picked at the nearest button on his shirt. “Good thing you don’t think of me as a daughter.”

“Stop,” he said, weakly. She was surprisingly forward, not the nervous girl caught naked in a bathroom two years prior.

The tip of her tongue peeked out, darting over her lips. “What if I don’t want to?”

“You’re not yourself,” he excused. “Drank your drink too fast.”

So close now, she had to tilt her head back to maintain eye contact, she smirked. “Yes. Seltzer is notorious for going to people’s heads.”

Seltzer. God, they were so much alike. A quick glance around her to the neglected glass told him she took hers with lemon too.

Her lips brushed against his and though he gravitated towards her, he willed himself to lean back and peer down at her. “What are you doing?”

“Giving in,” she breathed.

Before he could ask to what, he was caught in a kiss. It was one he’d only dared dream about long before he’d ever kissed a sweetheart only to have his expectations severely lowered. The will to run from it was fast failing. He tilted his head as if to break away, but stalled, allowing her to corral him back in place. Her palm was hot on his neck, fingers threading in his hair. Sansa’s lips explored his, familiarizing herself with him. Her tongue swiped over his, melting his resistance away to nothing. He swayed when her teeth scraped against his bottom lip, daring him to place his hands on her.

Accepting the challenge, they moved of their own volition. Starting on her arms, his palms slid down over her elbows, hovering over the dip of her waist.

She’d pressed herself so fully against him when he held her hips, that his fingers tightened, reflexively. Her moan in his mouth approved and he couldn’t have been more grateful for the grip. Sansa had started this, but the painful throbbing between his legs begged him to finish it. Pressing harder into her with his erection caught between them, he spun her around, letting the counter she’d stumbled back into hold her steady against his lewd audacity.

The day he’d walked in on her, his eyes drank in the pert nipples that puckered a proud rose color against the creamy backdrop of breasts he could palm and nuzzle for days. He had appreciated the
firm tone of her belly, disciplined and flat, and the round of her hips--the epitome of femininity.

It was her pussy that stole the spotlight, however, so exposed and vulnerable. Her copper curls, close-cropped to her seam had teased and taunted him for almost two years. He twitched and tingled each time he let the memory of it invade his mind, wondering how lush she’d feel surrounding him. So neat and petite on the outside, he imagined she was tight and wet on the inside. With enough preparation, he could see her taking every inch of him. She would bite his neck through the pressure, overwhelmed at first by the close fit. Once she adjusted, she’d relax and enjoy the friction with him.

Her lips suddenly tore from his and he was caught mid-kiss, his eyes still heavy as she pushed him off her, hissing, “People are coming!”

Stannis stood rigid, disheveled and entirely unsure of what to do next, aside from taking two large steps back. The sound of people walking behind him, confirmed her suspicion. Forcing himself to open his eyes, he watched her squirm in front of him, fixing herself and offering fake smiles. They were far enough apart to avoid suspicion, but his lack of acknowledgement would garner gossip. He turned, thankful the island blocked his tented pants from view, and nodded his head to the party goers. Sansa moved beside him, her hand covering his. It was warm and comforting against the cold granite. “You’re full of surprises.”

He could say the same for her. Though, instead, only a single syllable sounded. “Why?”

Why did she do that?

Why didn’t she run off to school to avoid her parents the way other girls her age did?

Why did she have to date a crook to do it?

Why Baelish?

“Because you see me.” Her voice was quiet and he wondered what she meant.

Before he could ask, Baelish himself appeared in the doorway. “There you are!”

In the blink of an eye she was at his side, Stannis’ hand left feeling the absence of hers. She smiled as she pointed down at the damp front of her shirt. "Yes, I had a bit of spill."

Baelish’s arm locked around her, his face in her neck as he whispered something private. She giggled at the attention and for the first time Stannis wondered whether or not it was genuine.

Shaking himself from the memory, Stannis glanced back over to Robert beside him. Stifling the urge to smack the stupid smile off his face, he reached up and massaged one temple. Thinking too long about that night always gave him a headache. It provoked too many emotions and uncertainty. He had to clear his mind, focus on the present. Inhaling deeply, he felt another twinge of pain as he wondered what terrible business deal awaited them at Baelish’s...and whether or not Sansa would be there.
Chapter Summary

Part 3 of the Stannis x Sansa x Petyr drabble

It had taken time to usher everyone out of their suite, though that’s often how celebrations went, clueless people lingering long past the close of things. Sansa squeezed his hand and kissed his cheek, whispering her intention to draw a bath for them.

Petyr smiled back at her, approving of the way she returned his affection. “I’m just going to check a couple of messages and I’ll be in,” he assured her.

It had become a sort of self-flagellation to keep watching the saved video on his phone of Sansa’s indiscretion. It had been with Stannis Baratheon, of all people. Though, he shouldn’t have been that surprised by it. They’d both been giving each other doe-eyes, during the last two parties and four business meetings.

Of all the people to attract her, why Stannis? What did he have that Petyr didn’t? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Petyr hadn’t worked so hard and come so far to lose out to some parrot-faced prick who held such little influence in the world, he couldn’t even manage his own embarrassment of a brother.

The video had been taken a month prior by a surveillance camera in his very own kitchen--security was very important in his line of work. It featured Sansa and Stannis chatting each other up in the kitchen. That would have irritated him all on it’s own, but he could have forced himself to get past it. The video took a heartbreaking turn when she reached for Stannis’ chest, making the first contact. Her head tilted, her lips pressed…

Petyr’s jaw clenched as he watched Stannis spin her around and pin her against the counter. The man was a joke--nothing more than a snob who turned his nose up to the world around him. It was as if he thought himself cut so far above all the natural corruption that followed big bills. Where was his honor now? Had he thrown a lifetime of self-righteousness out the window in order to shove his tongue down Sansa’s throat, his weight bearing down on her, bruising a line into her back.

Petyr had pretended not to notice it later that night, wondering if she’d even bother to explain it. She hadn’t.

It had hurt. In the time they spent together, spurning past loves and family alike, he’d taught her a lot. She’d apparently been quite the apt pupil, keeping her secret infatuation from him.

If he were being fair--something he rarely claimed to be--he couldn’t have blamed her. Regardless of their agreement, this made them square.

He’d kept secrets from her too. At first.

The moment he’d laid eyes on her he realized a chance to rewrite history had presented itself bare in his bathroom. She wasn’t Cat, but she was as close to and he’d buried himself deep inside her
many times imagining she was. What was life really, but one’s perception? Why not alter it? He could live the perfect life in the fantasy of having his Cat and she could steer clear of her parents and all the hopes and aspirations they imposed upon her. It was a win-win, and all he had to do was make himself the ever-attentive boyfriend. That, and let her think that he’d actually choose the company of an eighteen year old cleaning lady—without an ulterior motive.

Deciding it was worth the long con, he pulled away from her offered lips before he took them too soon. He needed to get his young Cat sobered up so he could woo her into more than a casual encounter in his bathroom. He offered her pancakes and smiled at her bewildered expression.

She would prove the perfect chess piece to move around the board, should Ned or Cat ever decide to bother with him—not that they would, so wrapped up in their little world. She could be reserved for special occasions. Every time Sansa stayed with him, instead of going home, he put the fucks to his former love.

It had been fun at first, until he let her get too close and he saw how different she was from her mother. He’d been seeing the contrast more prevalently until he couldn’t deny it anymore. Much to his dismay.

Angry and bitter over a deal gone sour (though more so with his growing affection for Sansa as Sansa) he was rude and short with her. Rather than closing up and turning her back on him, as was Cat’s tough-love approach, Sansa held him close. “It’s alright,” she promised, soothing him in his feelings of disappointment and defeat. No one had ever promised him that things would be okay before. Such tenderness was uncomfortable to say the least, and yet once she pulled his head into her lap, stroking her fingers over the silver of his temples, he found himself wanting nothing more than to bask in it.

Cat was cold and beautiful, a statue of perfection, a lifelong goal he’d have gladly died trying to achieve. Sansa was warmth and acceptance, a fellow human being who could acknowledge flaws and not let them be her only focus. She wouldn’t cut her losses as quickly as her mother had been prone to. Both women looked deceptively the same, though one had rejected him and the other had offered him a chance. One he’d been taking advantage of for months before he finally gave in to his feelings for her.

His darkness didn’t disgust her, only forced her to think. Over time, he shared each dirty deed one at a time, confessing his character to her in pieces to give her the opportunity to adjust, to sink deeper into what they shared. Each revelation gave her pause while she considered the facts presented. Never walking away, she’d eventually snuggle further into his embrace and promise that it too would be alright. Her acceptance seemed to know no limits, and it only made him want to test it more and more, convinced each crime committed would be the one that lost her to him forever.

She didn’t care.

Not about the whores he employed. The money he laundered. The various passports in his safe. Any of the things that an upstanding member of society would have. Her brow wrinkled in concern only when discussing whether or not he was in any danger for the life he lead.

It was unnerving.

This level of transparency with someone.

This seemingly unconditional love.

He would find the condition, the confession that was too honest for her to tolerate.
“Admit it!” Hating the anxious feeling of waiting for the other shoe to drop, he picked a fight. “You’re only with me because you can’t stand your parents!”

She gaped at him and he felt victorious. He’d finally pushed the button. She’d weeded her way into his heart and doused his flame for Cat, so it served her right. No one should have ever been that important to him.

Unexpectedly, she shot back, “Sure you don’t have it backwards?”

His eyes flashed to hers. “Care to explain?”

“You hate them more than I ever could,” she hissed.

Omitting the fact that he knew Cat quite well, he focused on Ned. “I can count on one hand how many times I’ve met your father. How could I hate him?”

“Who knows!” She shook her head. “But I mostly meant my mother.”

“What about her?” He growled.

Her lips curling into a sneer, she mocked his simper. “Oh, Sansa!” Her smirk was vicious as she rolled her eyes and moaned, “Oh, Sansa, yes that’s it. Fuck, yeah! Right there.” Her fists balled as she mimicked his orgasm. “God! Cat!”

He stood stunned.

It had happened only the once, shortly after he’d taken her to bed for the first time. There was music playing and he’d said it lost in a fantasy, back when he had them still. She never said anything, so he hoped she hadn’t noticed. He prayed his pleasure had distorted the name enough that she wouldn’t recognize it as any more than a strange strangled sound coming from the back of his throat--rather than from deep in his heart where it usually resided.

“You only fuck me to get a glimpse of what it must feel like to fuck my mother!” She spat, her voice hoarse--pained even. He’d underestimated how much she felt for him, how well he’d conned her.

Conned himself.

Fuck, it was real.

So horribly, disgustingly, vulnerably real.

His heart beat fast in his chest and he knew what he had to say. He’d seen the script a thousand times, had it memorized for just when this occasion came. Abandoning his childish quest to push her away, he let the need to keep her grip him. If he followed the script, he would spin beautiful words and deny her claim, promise her that he hadn’t realized. That he had never wanted Cat. He’d recite that he had been nothing but a boy with a dumb crush and this was all a tragic coincidence.

Except, he couldn’t.

He’d stopped wanting Cat. That much had become true. It had started slowly with each returned affection, and only picked up speed every time Sansa proved herself better than her mother before her. For the first time ever, Petyr found it difficult to lie. So he didn’t. “Yes.”

Pain and hate flashed across her eyes, her entire body going rigid at the news. Not sure whether or
not she might bolt, he admitted it again. “Yes, I did.”

Tears rolled down her cheeks and she looked away. She sobbed, “I knew it.”

It had been a couple months since he’d misspoken and she’d stayed. Sitting on this, stewing in it.

Why?

Was there really nowhere else she could have gone? A trust fund kid like herself. She had parents, family connections, friends. Perhaps she wasn’t close to any of them, though that didn’t mean she couldn’t call in a favor.

Her ‘best friend’ Jeyne was out of the question, of course, but there were others. Other guest rooms to reside in, couches to crash on. He hadn’t meant to isolate her from everyone, but Jeyne had proven to be a shit person (he knew his own kind when he met them), and he was only too glad to wedge himself between them. Sansa was better for the absence of such a fair-weather friend.

Had home been that terrible of a place that she’d rather stay in his bed, even suspecting the truth about why he’d welcomed her there in the first place?

“At first,” he continued. “It seemed fair. You wanted to strike out on your own, stay out from under your parent’s roof, and I saw the opportunity to cherish the closest woman I could ever get to the one I’d loved since high school.”

She gripped her stomach and he knew she was queasy with his disclosure. She shook her head. Her voice was shallow as she denied it, “No. You idiot.”

He hadn’t been called that many times in his life, so he listened intently as she explained, “I fell for it. I fell for you, with your stupid pancakes and your smug smile--like you knew something the world didn’t.” Tears dripped from her chin. “Fuck my parents. They’re my problem. Not yours or anyone else’s. I crashed on your couch when you offered it those first couple of nights--playing gentleman, because I had nowhere else to go, and yeah, that was all them. I used you as I would any friend, even though you weren’t a friend, but instead a guy who was kind to me. But after we…” Her voice trailed off. Clearing her throat, she thinned her lips. “No. Don’t bring my parents into that. They don’t belong. I stayed at your place because you were there and I was into you.”

“Was?” He asked, feeling his heart squeeze and hating himself for the weakness of it.

She wiped her cheeks and looked away, either unable or unwilling to give him a reply.

“I fell for you too, Sansa. Truly.” He knew nothing he said would convince her. He wouldn’t have believed it of himself a few years back. Oh how things had changed. “There was a turning point, when I wanted you for you and only you.”

Sansa scoffed.

Struggling to provide any evidence he could, he reached for her hand. She pulled free from his grip, smacking his palm away in the process. “Don’t you fucking touch me.”

He laughed then. It was the wrong response, and he’d known it, but couldn’t seem to stop. Sweet Sansa who forgave him everything and accepted him and his darkness, was adorable when she cursed, her lips pursed and her cheeks red.

It was the very reason he loved her more than he could have ever loved Cat. Sansa stood before him, anger rolling off her in hot waves, her speech impassioned, loving him so much she couldn’t
bear his touch. That wasn’t picture perfect Catelyn. His childhood love would have stormed out at the first indication of conflict, shutting him out and herself off before anything ever started. She wouldn’t have had such a visceral response to his embrace, but instead a cold ire. A look alone from Catelyn could have bitten his fingertips with frost until he retracted his hand.

“Think back to September.” He prompted, hoping she could tame her emotions enough to remember.

Crossing her arms protectively over her chest, she shrugged her shoulders. “What of it?”

He hid his smile. She was listening and he was in. “Did you notice something different around that time? About the way I touched you…” He stopped himself from coming right out and saying that he’d even started fucking her differently then.

Again, she didn’t reply. The expression on her face as she sorted through memories, trying to recall, told him she wasn’t ignoring him. Helping her along, he explained, “That was when I stopped wanting Cat and started wanting you. Loving you.”

Because she was so goddamned warm and he had come to hate the cold.

She hesitated and he took advantage, wrapping her up in his arms and kissing her thoroughly before she had a chance to push him away. To his surprise, she didn’t bother trying, lifting her own hands to hold him to her, tilting and turning to accept more of him. He’d grown needy in their argument and started pulling his shirt off, tugging at hers. She didn’t argue or deny him, helping him unclasp her bra as they marked each other’s flesh with hot, messy kisses. He’d pressed his thigh between her legs, her resulting groan a shot of opium to his bloodstream. His eyelids fluttered as it sang through his veins. Petyr held her close, his tongue laving over her throat as she arched back, tasting her in frenzy. He was determined to show her how sincerely his feelings for her had grown. It wasn’t until he’d reached for her waistband, flicking the button open and tugging at her zipper that she breathed, “No, stop.”

It wasn’t something she’d ever said before and he wasn’t sure he heard her right. Ignoring the confusion, his hand reached in to cup her through the damp silk triangle of her panties, his fingertips digging at the elastic to push it aside.

She gripped his arm and shook her head, her breathing ragged as she repeated herself on a whine, “Stop it, Petyr!”

Defeated, he pulled his hand from her pants, the open air a cool contrast to the heat between her legs. He closed his eyes, too ashamed to look at her. “Sorry, I thought…you seemed...”

“I know,” she said quickly, reaching for his cheek. Her thumb ran over the stubble of his goatee. “I want it--you. Just not yet.”

He lifted his head, his eyes studying her solemn expression.

“I want a promise first.” She brought his hand back, holding it motionless over the open fly of her pants. “No more lies. Not to each other. Not anymore.”

There weren’t any secrets left. He’d told her early on how he made his money, what people called him behind his back. She knew why he’d wanted her before and why he needed her now. Sansa knew more about him than anyone else in the world, all there was to know. His fingers tightened over her, curling into the open zipper and soft panties as he gazed deeply into her eyes. “You too.”

Her breathing hitched.
“I promise,” he whispered. “I need you to promise too.” Every muscle in his body tensed, raw desire coursing through him, needing her to release him of the burden. “Fuck everyone else--but we stay real with each other. Always.”

She bit her lip and nodded.

“Say it,” he demanded.

Her voice was so small as she gasped, “Yes.”

It wasn’t an official declaration of love, but he cherished it the same as if it was. That one word was all it took to snap his restraint. He grabbed a wad of the silk in his palm and tore her panties open. Her pants still clung loosely around her hips, shifting down her thighs with their motion. Her mouth was on his and they’d stumbled back down to the floor, his fingers buried deep inside her as she pawed at his belt, whimpering frantic to free him.

Petyr inhaled, bringing himself back from the memory. It had been a monumental moment in their relationship and they’d lived in love well over the past year since, putting the misbegotten months they’d shared behind them.

Until now.

She was lying to him.

Dropping his phone on one of the end tables, he pulled his shirt off over his head and kicked his shoes off. He began unbuckling his belt as he pushed open the bathroom door. Sansa rest her head against the back of the tub, bubble bath surrounding her, candles set on the counter to light the room in a soft glow.

She said nothing when he came in, only opened her eyes and smiled. He let his pants drop to the floor and stepped out of them, checking to see that she’d placed the towels closer to the tub. Water sloshed as she raised her knees up out of the bath and parted her legs, inviting him to sit between them. In all the occasions they’d shared a bath, he took the back seat, holding and washing her. It was strange to see the role reversed, but if she wanted to pamper him, he’d allow it. Especially since he wasn’t sure how long she’d feel so inclined after they spoke.

He stepped carefully into the tub, letting her surround him and pull his head back to rest on her chest. Petyr closed his eyes as she whispered in his ear. “You’re quiet.”

“I’m thinking.”

She hooked one leg over his, letting her foot rest between his thighs. “About?”

Petyr let his finger connect one water droplet to the other on her knee, adoring a beauty mark on the inside of it. “Us.”

“Mm.” She smiled. “What about us?”

“Wondering whether or not you’re leaving me.”

She stilled, tensing around him.

“I know you’re interested in someone else,” he continued, unable to say Stannis’ name. He would take advantage of her momentary paralysis. “Have been for a little while now.”

“Petyr, I-”
“Shh,” he quieted her, plucking at the diamond he’d decorated her hand with. They’d announced their engagement tonight at their anniversary party. Flustered over her infatuation, moreso over the way she kept it from him, he’d bought a ring to play dirty. Unphased, she accepted. What was her game?

He wanted to pretend choosing to announce it was his way of calling her bluff, but the romantic in him had thought doing so in this particular location—so important to their history, would solidify it. Seeing the way she stared back at Stannis as Petyr held her hand up, sapped the hope from him, however. “Don’t lie. I saw.”

Too many times.

“The security cameras,” she realized aloud.

It was strange. He’d called her on her cheat, and she didn’t stir. Petyr had expected her to push him off her so she could get up and stomp off. Instead, she pecked a kiss to his ear and snaked a hand in the water around his ribs.

It somehow hurt him more, to have her remain by his side after such betrayal. “Have you fucked him yet?” A lot could have happened in the past month. His eyes only saw so much.

She shook her head against his. “No.”

Threading his fingers through hers, he was much calmer than he’d expected as he asked, “Will you?”

Her chest rose and fell a few times in the silence that followed. Finally, her voice sounding hollow, answered, “I don’t know.”

At least she loved him enough to remember her promise, finally giving him the truth.

“Why?” He breathed, a tear threatening to spill over his lashes.

She closed their fists and pulled their arms back to rest over his chest, hugging him close. “He sees me,” she confessed over his shoulder.

Thankful he was facing away from her, he felt a hot tear stream down his cheek. Keeping his voice steady, he asked, “And I don’t?”

“You do.” She kissed his head and he knew he should have hated the affection she gave—even now, but he couldn’t bring himself to. “He sees me differently.”

Drawing a deep breath, he found the courage to ask, “Tell me?”

She let go of him to reach for the soap and he discovered how much he hated being let go. She poured the soap on the loofa as she spoke. “I’m safe with you, Petyr.”

No one could ever claim that before.

“I could break every rule, and live my worst, and you’ll still love me.” Bringing the loofa down to his chest, she massaged it in circles, noticeably gentler over his scar. Had anyone ever been so careful with him?

“You’ll keep treating me like a princess, saving me from the uglier parts of your world.” Her other hand splayed across his chest, slicking the soap everywhere the loofa didn’t. "You let me know they’re there, but never allow me near them. You’ll get me anywhere I want to go, and pull any
string you have to in order to make it happen. Garden parties, business lunches, benefit dinners—anywhere.”

Was that a bad thing?

“Because your heart’s made up, Petyr.”

Her hand moved to his heart and pressed it. He covered her palm with his, feeling her ring cut into the heel of his hand as he answered flatly, “And yours isn’t.”

“No,” she corrected. “It is.”

Dread stuck in his throat.

“He sees potential in me,” she whispered.

It sounded like an excuse.

She pressed her nose into the back of his head. “He wants me to go to school.”

What did she want?

“It’s…” She trailed off, her hands moving, soaping him. He was about to ask her what she was going to say when she admitted, “Flattering.”

His lips thinned. “I didn’t realize you were interested in school.”

She shook her head. “That’s not the point.”

“Enlighten me,” he said harder than he meant to.

She sighed, her voice tentative as she said, “You accept all the bad and he accepts the good.”

“Do you think I can’t appreciate your potential?” He argued. She wasn’t thinking clearly. It had to be her age lending to some asinine flight of fancy. If he could love her at her worst then why didn’t she think he could love her at her best. There was no need for another person in the equation. No need for rejection. He pursed his lips as he asked, “Or support you?”

Sansa raised her hand out of the water, again holding her diamond into view. “You want me to marry you.”

“You said yes,” he reminded her. She had given her word. Had that meant nothing to her? Would Stannis want her if he knew how easily she went back on the things she said? Doubtful. Petyr was patient, however. That was important. One would think she would appreciate that.

“And I meant it,” she growled in his ear, growing irritated with his insecurity.

Too bad.

Didn’t he have every right to feel self-conscious? She was telling him he wasn’t enough and refusing to give him a chance to prove otherwise. He almost wished she’d leave him, instead of keep stringing him along like this.

Trying to calm himself, he reached for her hand and she allowed him to hold her. She spoke over his shoulder, “I need to explore this, or I’ll always wonder.”

Petyr gave a sick laugh, another tear blurring his vision. Refusing to let her hear his sadness, he
welcomed the edge instead. “So, let me guess, you want to take a break?”

“Don’t make me choose, Petyr.” She hugged him close. “It’s like cutting me in half, having to decide one side of myself over the other.”

“Funny,” he fumed. “I’m the one feeling torn apart right now.”

Silence passed between them for a while. The water cooled to room temperature, their fingertips wrinkling, though neither of them moved to leave. He raged inside himself, refusing to believe what was happening. A crush was one thing, ‘needing to explore’ was another.

There had been a time in his life when he had to suffer this sort of rejection. Those days had long passed and when he spoke, people listened now. She was making a mistake and he had the wherewithal to know that, even if she didn’t. “He and I aren’t the type of men to share.”

“It isn’t about either of you,” she answered, naïvely. “Just me. I need to sort my feelings out.”

This wasn’t one of her romance novels. Real live hearts were at stake, and Petyr had learned the importance of self-preservation. “It’s not that easy.”

“Why can’t it be?”

He sat up, peeling himself off her. Let her feel what it was like to be left for a change. He flicked the switch on the drain as he said, “Stannis would never carry on an affair. He doesn’t have it in his character.” Standing up, he let the water run down back into the tub. “Frankly, I’m surprised he allowed himself even just a kiss.” He glanced back at her, knowing it was cruel to say, but hoping it affected her regardless. “Though, it was you that initiated, wasn’t it? Are you even sure he wants you?”

Not one to take his attack laying down, she scowled, hissing, “I felt how much he wanted me.”

Petyr chuckled as he grabbed the towel. “Don’t confuse a hard-on for love.”

Gripping both sides of the tub, Sansa rose. Water fell from her perfect form, goosebumps spreading in the cool air. “You’re being mean.”

As if she hadn’t just been pulverizing his heart.

“I’m being honest,” he quipped, drying himself quickly before he reached for her. She was shivering and he couldn’t help old habits, needing to care for her. “Stannis aside, I won’t tolerate the rejection while you fuck someone else.”

“Petyr-”

“Don’t.” Anything less than her complete and utter devotion would only disappoint. “I feel like I’ve been run over, and I’m tired. I’m going to bed. You’ll either be joining me, or you won’t.” He pulled a bathrobe from the hanger by the door and met her gaze, letting her see the sincerity of his words. “I’m letting you choose now.”

She took a step forward, and he placed a finger to her lips, stopping her from speaking and holding her back. He’d been kicked around enough, and it was time to remind her that after the years they shared, he deserved better. “Make no mistake, sweetling. If you follow me into that bedroom and I find out later that you’ve decided to ‘explore’ your feelings for any other man but me, you’ll know first hand why they call me Littlefinger.”

Her eyes widened and then narrowed. If she was intimidated by his threat, she showed no
indication of it, glaring boldly back at him. He released her, expecting an onslaught of wrath.

Instead of yelling and screaming a slew of obscenities, she sucked her teeth before saying, “I can check out any time I like, huh? But it’s not as if I can ever leave.”

It was good she knew he couldn’t give her up that easily. He’d been nothing but transparent and it was nice to know she’d been listening to him all the times he told her he loved her and wanted her forever. “Decide.”

Petyr stormed into the bedroom and closed the door behind him, checking to make sure he hadn’t accidentally locked it as he did. Any minute now she would gather herself and turn the knob, her choice made. She would spurn Stannis and stay with him. What was a couple of looks and a kiss compared to what they had? Who wanted more for her than he? It was the obvious choice.

Hell, he’d enroll her in every goddamned online class offered if it meant she’d warm his bed each night. She’d be angry at first, but it would blow over, and she’d keep seeing the part of him that only she could. No one else had given him the benefit of the doubt, ever. Without her, no one else ever would. Sansa would walk in, snub him as she walked by, and huff as she threw the covers back. He’d lay down and she’d edge closer to her side of the bed. She'd slap his hand away if he reached for her, but she’d be there to reach for, and that was what mattered.

He stilled at the sound of movement on the other side of the door. She’d left the bathroom. This was it. Any minute now...
“And then what happens?” Sansa nervously chewed her lip. A quick glance around his office told her he wasn’t the sort of man who took no for an answer. Hell, the long elevator ride up to the top of the highrise was proof enough of that. Men didn’t get offices in buildings like these by making concessions.

His voice was smooth and soft, calming even as he said, “We go our separate ways.”

The answer was so matter-of-fact that she suddenly felt silly for asking the question in the first place. Though, she thought it reasonable enough. It wasn’t as if she’d ever done this sort of thing before, and his online profile said he didn’t have any children, so she had gathered he obviously hadn’t done this either. Was it meant to be that simple? An offer made, a contract signed, a baby birthed. Wham-bam, thank-you-ma’am! “Just like that?”

His fingers brushed idly over some papers on his desk, his eyes never leaving her as he asked in return, “Could there be any other way?”

Each nail was perfectly manicured, every ring on his finger insured through the teeth. The confident way he spoke, the attention to detail he had for every square inch of the office that surrounded them and ensemble he wore, the patient way he stroked his fingertips over his work as he waited for her. He could have applied pressure to get what he wanted, but he hadn’t, seeming to take pleasure even in just the negotiation that preceded. Mr. Petyr Baelish was the type of man who got off on the chase, and Sansa had had her fill of men like that.

This was about money. Cold hard cash. Life had shown her it was the only thing anyone could ever count on, and she’d be goddamned if she put her future on hold for another man who took more pleasure in divesting her of her panties than he did in having them off.

What had that ever left her? Piss-poor broke and hungry. She may have come from a prominent family, but when her parents had died, the vultures swarmed picking her little family apart. She knew were two of her brothers were, though lost the rest of her siblings in the shuffle. It had been many a cold night outside, eating in shelters and washing in public bathrooms, that made her lose faith in people. Men were always nice at first, but they always disappointed.

Cruising the classifieds, she’d ran a few small scams she’d been lucky enough not to get caught for. When times got desperate enough, she donated plasma for a couple hundred to get her by. She’d even sold some of her eggs once for a few grand, knowing she wouldn’t be needing them anytime soon.

Sansa had somehow managed to keep herself off the pole. Though, since Harry, she was starting to face the reality that it might be more of a viable option than she wanted to admit. Mr. Baelish’s advertisement looking for a surrogate seemed like the lesser evil. She could grow a kid for someone. It’s not like it would be hers anyway. Sure it would kill her figure, but if anything that would only help her keep her clothes on. Besides, the ad said she’d be housed, all her expenses paid leading up to and for the duration of the pregnancy.

He could look as sexy as hell and play with his hands all he wanted. She needed this, and she couldn’t let herself care whether or not he was like every other man she’d met. Giving a faint, bitter chuckle, Sansa spoke from experience, “Many other ways…”
His eyes sparkled back at her, alight at the prospect. What was once a poorly concealed smirk, quickly became a lascivious grin. His voice was low and heady as he leaned in over his desk.
“Any that you’d prefer?”

Sansa gulped, her voice breaking as she shook her head. “No.”

Hating herself for looking so panicked, she cleared her throat and lifted her chin, forcing a confidence she didn’t feel. “You?”

Mr. Baelish’s eyes pulled from hers, dropping down to rake over the length of her sitting awkwardly in the chair before him. His tongue moved in his mouth and she wondered if he was sucking his teeth or massaging the roof of his mouth with thoughts of her naked on his desk.

A slight flush rose in her cheeks as she realized the indecency of her thoughts. He was rich and from what she could tell with a desk in between them, he’d taken care of himself over the years. She could hardly be blamed the stray inappropriate fantasy. Besides, the man looked like he could teach her a thing or two. A damn sight more than the quick ‘four-pump wonder’ Harold gave her back when they were a thing, or the weird angry drilling she’d gotten from that creep at that costume party when she was rebounding. And however guilty she might feel letting Mr. Highrise bend her over the desk, she knew it would bother her less than the time that guy cried and showed her pictures of his kids as soon as he pulled his flaccid dick out. She couldn’t have crawled out from under that one fast enough.

“Plenty.”

His answer interrupted her memories, pulling her back to him and the situation at hand. Plenty. She ran the word over and over in her head, feeling her heart beat faster. “Oh?” She asked and then immediately regretted sounding so utterly moronic. What was wrong with her?

If he thought her stupid, he hid it well. Instead, he slowly rose from his seat, agreeing, “Mm.”

Sansa gulped, watching him come out from behind his desk. “And what would you prefer?”

His hand hovered above the finished wood trim, his fingers dragging over it as he approached. “Nothing that’s on the table.” His eyes flashed up to hers, soft green pools lighting as he added, “At the moment.”

Unnerved by his obvious interest, though more so by how responsive she was to it, Sansa blurted out, “I’m not a whore.”

He chuckled and reached for her hand to help her out of her seat. “Please,” he insisted, nodding his head toward his hand for her to accept it.

“Believe me, Miss Stark. I know a whore when I see one, and you are not one. You would not be considered for this proposal if you were. My child’s reputation must be impeccable.”

Sansa stood beside him, analyzing his words closely. Why wasn’t she put off by the fact that he so openly--brazenly--admitted to patronizing call girls? Rich men did it, but they weren’t ever supposed to admit it. She should have felt disgusted. But she didn’t. And what did he mean he
wouldn’t consider her?

Impeccable.

Oh no. That was something she was far from.

Would her parents dying and leaving their wealth to be fought over by many interested parties, only to leave their children orphaned and scattered in the wind, be considered impeccable? How about the many times she slept in a car and lived off of ketchup packets? Maybe the times she’d pick-pocketed people she stood too close to on the bus. Yes, all the makings of impeccable.

Steeling herself to the knowledge that if he ever found out, she’d be screwed out of this opportunity, she furrowed her brow at him. “It’s surrogacy only, Mr. Baelish. Who I am, and where I come from shouldn’t matter. You’re paying me to birth your child, not get it into Yale.”

“On the contrary, Miss Stark.” His hand never let go of hers as he turned them, allowing his other palm to land on her hip. “As you say, you’ll be carrying my child. I won’t allow the media to make a circus about it. That’s why I insisted on your consent to a background check before scheduling this meeting.”

A hot flash washed over her, flushing her face up to the roots of her hair and sweeping down past her cleavage. A background check. He knew. He had to have. Gulping, she found the words, however faint. “And I apparently passed?”

His thumb rubbed into her side and goosebumps spread over her at the such an intimate touch. She knew it would have been prudent to stop him, but she couldn’t muster the will to. So addled from their conversation, she wondered what he was doing to her.

“Yes.” He led them towards the door, slowly as if savoring each step with her. “Though, tell me: Have you finally finished with Mr. Hardyng?”

Her eyebrows rose in surprise, her mouth making a little o. Background checks were meant to identify any criminal activity, credit issues—maybe. She understood he’d be thorough and discover her family history, but she hadn’t anticipated her dating history. Or that he would be more interested in that, than all the rest. It felt much more personal than simply the basic: Sansa Stark, daughter to Ned and Catelyn Stark. Parents died in car crash. No inheritance issued. No identified place of residence. No criminal charges pressed. 460 credit score.

To know about Harry… Jesus, what else did he know? Her favorite brand of tampon?

“I hate to be so crass as to bring it up,” Mr. Baelish explained quickly, squeezing her hip as if to offer her a supportive hug. Or remind her that he still held her so closely. “It’s only that while you’re carrying my child, I’d rather you not expose yourself to possible infection. I know I sound old fashioned, but sex with others simply isn’t acceptable.” He shook his head almost apologetically as they neared the door. “It’s all in the contract, should you choose to sign it.”

Sansa gaped at him. No one got to decide who came between her legs but her. He may have been able to claim rights to her womb but not her love life. Not that Harry fell into that category anymore—or ever again, but that wasn’t the point. “Mr. Baelish—”

“Call me Petyr. Please,” he said, opening the door for her.

“Petyr.”

Sensing her outrage, he held out a folded piece of paper. “Take it and read it over. I’ve kept the guidelines simple, as I realize this is not a typical surrogacy agreement.”
Her gaze dropped down to the paper, her fingers already working the tri fold. Somehow he’d kept it to a single sheet. She’d question how legally binding the document was if she hadn’t already taken in the leather bound file sorter accessories on his solid Carpathian Elm wood desk, and walked across the antique oriental rug that accented the room, or spied the beautiful view of the bay from the highest point in the city. Men like Mr. Baelish, Petyr, could get away with single-page contracts. What was there to say really? You’re broke and I’m willing to pay you to do what I can’t: have a baby.

It came as no surprise that the page mainly consisted of rules for her to follow:

1. The surrogate will live onsite to ensure the child’s continued safety during gestation.
2. The surrogate will be issued a mobile phone that must be kept on and charged at all times, should the genetic parent wish to contact the surrogate.
3. The surrogate will refrain from engaging in sexual relations with other persons outside of this agreed upon contract while actively pregnant.
4. The surrogate will submit to regular health examinations and allow the genetic parent to accompany her to all prenatal appointments.
5. The surrogate will follow all prenatal care recommendations.
6. The surrogate will be issued a private expense card for use while under contract. Surrogate’s use will not exceed $15,000 per day.
7. In the event of a miscarriage, the surrogate will be allowed four weeks paid recovery. At which point, the terms of the contract will be redetermined, should both parties agree to attempt pregnancy again, or cease attempts.
8. Violation of any of the above listed conditions will be considered a breach of contract.
9. Prevention of pregnancy and/or termination of pregnancy will be considered a breach of contract.
10. Breach of contract will result in immediate legal action against the surrogate. All expenses incurred on the part of the genetic parent will be be repaid by the surrogate with 20% interest.

Fifteen thousand dollars. Per day.

Sansa swallowed back the excess saliva and tore her eyes away from a sum of money that was large enough to cover her basic needs for at least six months, nevermind one day. “Do you have—” She stopped to clear her throat. “Excuse me. Do you have a pen?”

Petyr cocked a brow at her. “There is no rush, Miss Stark.”

“Sansa, please.” She smiled, forcing herself to keep calm. Which was hard to do when she wanted to jump out of her own skin with excitement.

He licked his lips, dimples deepening. “Sansa,” he said, as if trying it on for the first time. “Allow yourself the opportunity to consider it more before you sign. Perhaps have an attorney review it for you first.”

And sleep in the backseat of a cold car for another night when she knew a warm bed and quick cash was just a signature away? Yeah, right. Besides, it’s not as if she had a lawyer on retainer just kicking around. “Petyr, I realize you don’t know me well yet, but I’m a very decisive person, and I can live with these terms.”

The pen she’d requested seemed to materialize out of thin air. While he insisted she not jump into anything, he offered her the pen so readily. She’d question the conflict between spoken word and
action, if fifteen thousand dollars a day wasn’t within reach. Sansa barely heard him promise her how serious he was in creating the guidelines for their contract, too eager was she to put her past behind her. She signed quickly and handed it back to him, her excitement mirrored in his eyes.

After a moment’s pause, Petyr said, “I’ll call Brune to take us home.”

Sansa ignored how that sounded, too keen to see the mansion she’d be pampered in for the next nine months. With any luck, it would require a couple of tries for Petyr’s wife’s egg to take, thus prolonging her stay.

Leaning forward, he caught her by surprise as he lifted the back of her hand to his lips. “You’ve made me a happy man, Sansa.”

She smiled, glad to see he felt the exchange fair, despite all the money he was practically throwing at her. There were plenty of commercials about infertility in couples and the heartache it involved. “I am happy to help you and your wife.”

“I apologize for the misunderstanding, Sansa. I am not married,” he corrected, his thumb brushing over her knuckles.

She glanced down at the rings on his fingers, one of them most certainly a wedding ring. “I don’t understand…”

“My wife passed,” he explained quickly, his eyes darkening. “I shouldn’t say that. It’s not true. She didn’t pass away from some illness or accident. She was severely depressed and took her own life.”

“Oh,” Sansa breathed, startled by the sudden admission. Unsure of what to say, she somehow managed to stifle, I guess money doesn’t make everyone happy.

“I only tell you now, so that you are not surprised should it come out later. She so dearly wanted a child, and simply couldn’t have one. She felt like a failure and ended her own suffering.”

“You poor man,” she said, because sympathy seemed the safest response. In truth, somewhere deep down, in her darkest most secret of thoughts, she took some relief in knowing there wasn’t a Mrs. Baelish lurking around.

Another brief moment of silence passed before Sansa tipped her head in curiosity and asked, “Did you freeze your wife’s eggs?”

He shook his head. “Sadly, I hadn’t the foresight at the time.”

“You’re wondering who’s child you’ll be carrying,” he finished for her, wearing a wry smile.

She didn’t respond, only watched him closely, waiting for an explanation.

“I’ve combed through many profiles and selected the mother based on various prerequisites.” He let his thumb run over the back of her hand again, his gaze sincere as he added, “Just as I had surrogates.”

Sansa would have asked him what he meant, but she knew from the level of background check he’d had conducted on her, she had passed many tests she wasn’t even aware of.

“The answer to your question,” he interrupted her thoughts. “Is that the child you’ll carry will be
mine, and mine alone.”

“Why?” Why would a rich widower go through so much trouble to have a child that he would then have to rear all on his own? Most men in his position would have moved on with a hot model and knocked her up. Or thanked his lucky stars he didn’t have a child to ship off to boarding school.

His arm came around her again, and again she didn’t bother to stop or redirect him. “Because, like you, Sansa. I desire a future, and I refuse to be held back by unhealthy relationships.”

As they passed through the large double doors of his office, he smiled at his secretary, a redhead with a gold name plate on her desk that read, Ros .

“Night, Mr. Baelish. Miss Stark.” She grinned back at him and added, “Safe drive home.”

His palm rest lazy on her hip, light enough not to seem forceful or intimidating, but heavy enough to make her wonder why it was still here—and why she hadn’t tried to move away before now. They stood in front of the elevator waiting for the doors to open and she stared at their reflection together in them. His happiness seemed somehow sinful, her own pensive expression contrasting his so severely. What had she just signed herself up for?

Fifteen thousand dollars a day, and a pair of wandering hands she wasn’t quick to shrug off.

Chapter End Notes

I triple-dog-dare GreedIsGreen to continue on from this drabble. I miss her writing and I'm hoping by calling her out like this it will be enough positive peer pressure to force her to find her keyboard once again ;-) (I'd say sorry sweetheart, but you know I'm shit at lying.)
That's Fashion, Baby (pxs)

Chapter Summary

My secret santa gift to @LeeJordan. I wanted to do something a little different and decided to play with first person present...as well as use a later season Sansa for inspiration on writing her with much more confidence. Also I couldn't seem to curb my sense of humor for this piece, so it's a little outside of the box lol. Fingers crossed that it pleases!

Varys sips a glass of wine as his free hand runs over the various fashions in front of him, feeling the different textures of fabric as he sorts through hangers. He offers an appreciative smile for some of the designers he’s eyeing, and sighs at the ones he deems less worthy. Without looking up, he says, “It’s impolite to stare. And so close to Christmas too. Given up trying to get on the ‘nice’ list?”

I’d like to pretend that he’s talking to someone else, but it’s just us. I closed the store an hour ago, needing a break from the hustle and bustle of down-to-the-wire shopping. It was all men who were buying gifts for their wives, but had no clue what their size was. With a side of women who decided that outfitting themselves during the season of giving was the optimum form of self-care after buying for everyone else in the house. Needless to say, profits have been substantial. Of course, it helps that my shop is so centrally located in the city, even people who have no knowledge of designer labels end up stopping by. I hand them a glass of wine (thank you ex-boyfriend who got me a liquor license) and they feel obligated to buy something.

Caught staring like a schoolgirl, I huff playfully. “I haven’t been on the ‘nice’ list in a very, very long time. That’s not where I live. Besides, you can’t blame me. It’s hard not to gape at the atrocity pawing the merchandise in my dressing room.”

“Atrocity?” He turns to face me and cocks a curious eyebrow. “Why Sansa, whatever do you mean?”

I flip a long copper lock over my shoulder and trail my eyes over him, quickly scanning for an excuse, something to pick apart. The truth of it is that I always stare at Varys. Not like how you think; he’s so not my type. He’s bald and fat and is the textbook definition of androgyny. I prefer my men a bit more like...well, men. Experience and confidence beat muscles and shoe-size every time, and there’s something to be said for good grooming, but I’m not interested in butterballs. I need a full head of hair to thread my fingers in and grip through every orgasm--so no baldies allowed. Money is a must, only because I refuse to pay for dinner out of necessity. Don’t get me wrong, I’ll swipe my card for the waitress if I’m playing your naughty little dutch girlfriend for the night, but if I get the impression that the bill wouldn’t get covered otherwise, I’m out.

I’m not trying to be a grinch here, just honest. Who has time for snowy white lies?

I give Varys so much attention, not out of lust, but instead intrigue. Even after all this time, I can’t quite figure the man out, or why our friendship works so well. It’s also worth mentioning that it’s
creepy as hell when he looks me in the eye, on account of his purple irises. He told me they were contacts he chose as his signature look, and despite the evolution of his style, his violet eyes would never change because of it.

Needless to say, he’s a bit of an Elizabeth Taylor fan.

It’s strange, though. The longer I’ve known him, the less they look like contacts to me. I know they can’t be real, but I also can’t stop looking at them wondering how that would even be possible. Talk about Christmas miracles…

“Your wardrobe,” I answer quickly.

His jaw drops.

“It’s completely uninspired,” I add with conviction.

Telling him that his wardrobe is anything less than absolutely spectacular is a punch in his gut. He prides himself on his fashion more than anyone else, and he’s been this way for longer than I’ve known him.

Probably since birth. I can picture him crying as an infant if his burp cloth didn’t coordinate with his onesie. Yeesh, what a picture. A glance at his bald head tells me I’m not that far off...

I met Varys a couple of years back at a fashion show, and we’ve been inseparable ever since. I was behind the curtain spritzing and fluffing and pinning flyaways back on my models, prepping them to showcase my designs to the best of their ability. One clumsy bitch caught her arm in a sleeve and tore a hole right through it.

It was still early in my career, so I wasn’t worth as much at the time. The dress was only valued at fifteen thousand dollars, but still. That hole alone was about seven hundred dollars! And let me tell you, judging by the cavernous nasal passages the model was sporting, she was in the habit of snorting her paycheck. She definitely wouldn’t be following the whole “break it--you bought it” adage, and I couldn’t afford for her not to go onstage.

Horrified, I stood there, watching the material flap open and hang in the breeze. There was no time to fix it and I’d begun to panic when out of nowhere Varys hurried to my side from two dressing tables over. He was calm and confident as he reached for the girl’s arm and hovered over her, blocking my view. Everyone fussed around them, her whimpering remorsefully and him cooing dispassionately. It was clear any nice thing he said was for the sole purpose of getting her to turn off the waterworks and shut up while he worked. When he stepped away, I saw that the sleeve had miraculously been fixed. Before I could inspect it, the girl jumped back and screeched, “I’m up!”

She ran toward the curtain and I drew a deep breath to calm my racing heart. Once I realized Varys was still there standing beside me, I introduced myself.

“I know who you are,” he smiled and flashed me those eerie purple eyes. “I’ve been tracking you since that stunning lemon-drop dress you put out last summer spread.”

Avoiding the compliment, as much as I was curiously inspecting his eyes, I asked, “How did you fix the tear so fast?”

He said nothing, only smirked and held a bottle of superglue in the palm of his hand. I glanced at the girl walking down the catwalk, two inches of fabric glued to her arm, and grimaced. “That poor girl.”
“Oh please.” He rolled his eyes. “She’s too focused on walking in her four-inch stilettos, praying not to trip or faint from her carb-fast to think about much else. Besides, if she has half a brain in her head—though that’s doubtful—what with all the blow in her nose, she’s too busy creaming her panties over her big break in an *S.Stark Original* to cry over how many layers of flesh she’ll lose taking that dress off.”

“Week.” The word fell from my mouth before my proper upbringing could kick in and stifle it.

“Not all fatties are sweet and bubbly,” he snickered. “Just think of me as your Ricki Lake—not in *Hairspray*, but in *Cry-baby*."

And it was right at that specific moment that I thought I just may have met my best friend.

Back in the present, I know I need to provide some proof to back my slander against his attire.

“You’ve worn those shoes twice in the same week.” In for a penny, in for a pound. “I can’t decide if your recent tendency towards mind-numbing repetition is due to a lazy lack of originality, or if you’ve finally hit the max on your last credit card. Talk about Santa’s naughty list...”

Turning his nose up to me, Varys sniffs. “Perhaps I just find them a bit easier on the feet. Santa’s fat—he understands.”

I gasp. Ignoring his St. Nick reference, I zero in on the word, *easier*. “Tell me you aren’t going to use the C-word!”

Alarm clear on his face, his voice rises in panic. “I would never!” Avidly shaking his head, he promises, “You know that I know that there is no room for the C-word in fashion!”

Perhaps now I should explain that the C-word is not what you think it is—a luscious garden located between a woman’s legs, ass adjacent, just waiting to get sowed by a randy gardener with a work visa about to expire...willing to do anything to keep his job so he can continue to send money back to his family...

Whoa, girl.

Time to shake ourselves out of that fantasy.

The C-word is, in fact, the word *comfort*. It goes against our fashionista religion to forego appearance for the sake of comfort. Do it once and it’s a downhill slope to ballet flats, infinity scarves, and drawstring *anything*.

Fuck that life.

And so help me, if you shake your head and tell me ‘Ugly Sweaters are cute ironically’ and try to give me a cup of hot cocoa, I will slap it out of your hand. Love yourself.

If the gods wanted me to give up on myself and wear Juicy Couture, they wouldn’t have given me endless legs or enough self discipline to maintain my flat tummy. I’m as serious about this sentiment as I am wearing skinny jeans on my period.

We stare back at each other for the count of three before we both erupt in laughter. “Oh god, I almost had you there.” He quotes himself to mock, “*Easier on the feet* --as if.”

I shake my head and say, “Smelled your lie a mile away, lovey. We both know those shoes hurt like hell, and they aren’t the pair you wore on Tuesday.”

“I always feel loved when you notice,” Varys chuckles.
“Mm,” I laugh and then suddenly need to show off because egos are only grown if you put in the effort. “The tips and color are the same but Tuesday’s had two accent buckles on the side, not one.”

“That’s quite the eye for detail.”

I freeze, startled to hear a voice that does not belong to either myself or Varys--the only two people in my shop right now. Strange that I hadn’t heard the door open.

I turn slowly, to verify that I haven’t gone schizophrenic, and that there actually is someone standing there with us. The customer keeps talking, unaware of my internal mental status exam. “Perhaps that’s what makes you such a remarkable designer.”

Glad that I’m not crazy, though quite annoyed to have time with my friend interrupted (Had he not seen the ‘Closed’ sign bordered in holly and garland hanging in the window?), I could care less whatever brown-nosing this stranger offers with his unsolicited compliments. Knowing I needed to at least pretend to want sales in the future, I stifle a sigh and force a smile.

“Welcome to-” I begin to say as I look him over, but my mouth stops working as soon as I lay eyes on his suit. The cut is flattering to say the least, but it is the material its made of that renders me speechless. Its Vanquish II--the most luxurious fabric in the world and made in a severely limited supply, only one hundred and fifty pieces in distribution. The untrained eye would have missed it, but I knew the qiviuk blend anywhere.

The owner to the suit I’m ogling is saying something, and I’m completely missing it, hardly able to keep from reaching out to run my palm over the lapel. It would be smoother than the softest bed of silk, I just know it. “Brioni,” I purr, forgetting myself entirely in the presence of a fifty thousand dollar suit.

“No,” the customer corrects.

No?

What does he mean, no?

I know my suits and there’s no way I am looking at a knock-off. Cutting my eyes up to his face, I finally care to see who this fool is.

That had been a mistake. I should have stuck to the suit because catching sight of the wearer does things to me--things I hadn’t anticipated. He’s older, looking quite refined with a touch of silver highlighting his temples. Cool grey-green eyes stare back at me, warming the longer I hold his gaze. They go from professional and distant--almost calculating--to flourishing, like life’s just been breathed back into them. Those eyes go from sterile lab setting to a hot summer day, which is quite the welcomed contrast to the winter wonderland outside. I suddenly want to stretch out and bask in those eyes. As if that weren’t enough, his pupils start to dilate and my heart beats faster as I watch them grow, eating away the lush green.

My terribly rotten mind wonders what else he would eat…

I bite my lip. The pinch of it caught between my teeth forces me to remember myself. To be good. This man is no gardener fantasy. He’s a customer and he corrected me and I, for whatever reason, am starting to seriously consider rubbing one out later.

Jesus, he’s a shot of puberty--all hormones and puddles of excitement.
His neatly trimmed goatee holds hints of salt to his pepper, and the slight pull of his lips to one side are melting my panties right off my body. Thank god I’d opted for a short skirt today; I find myself in dire need of the ventilation.

“It’s Dormeuil, isn’t it?” Varys asks beside me and I realize that I’d forgotten he was there.

I suck in a breath when the man tips his head in confirmation. That fifty thousand dollar suit just jumped up in price another 45K. I start playing with the top button on my blouse because it suddenly feels too confining. Needing to get control of myself, I ask, “How can I help you, Mr...?”

“Baelish,” Varys responds and I glance over at him in surprise. His eyes are locked on Mr. Baelish’s and I can’t help but feel like I may be missing something. He’s not crushing like I am. I’ve seen Varys turned on (we haven’t been invited to Lagerfeld’s since) and that’s not what’s going on here. I can’t place this look, only feel it radiating a strange sense of caution.

I’m about to ask, “You know him?” When Mr. Baelish says, “Call me Petyr, please.”

His voice is velvety-smooth and I’m as drawn to it as I am his eyes. It’s in the way he says, please at the end. It borders on obscene with how he draws the word out, lowering the volume of his voice as he does. I can’t take my eyes off his lips as I grin back at him.

I ignore every ounce of caution I was supposed to have.

“Okay, Petyr. Since you said, please. What brings you to my shop?” I don’t bother to pretend like I’m any other sales associate because he pegged me for a designer the minute he walked through the door. I play with the pendant on my necklace and tilt my head as I ask, “Looking for something for your wife? Or girlfriend?”

“No, I don’t have either,” he answers, his eyes dropping down to shamelessly leer at my chest. I know he notices my hardened nipples standing at attention because his nostrils flare and it pleases me to no end. Particularly when he adds as an afterthought, “Currently.”

He wants me. I win.

My rational brain asks me what I just won exactly, and my more primitive side threatens to throttle my frontal lobe if it doesn’t shut the hell up. This silly flirtation is a mating dance I can’t resist, despite my civilized self’s protests.

No man should have the effect on me that he seems to. I’m pursued--I do not chase. If it took me playing with my necklace to draw his attention where I wanted it and regain some control of the situation, so be it. He’s still staring at my breasts as he says, “I’m looking to partner myself with the right designer.”

If that’s not loaded with innuendo, I don’t have red hair, blue eyes, and a long-standing penchant for pomegranate smoothies.

“Partner?” I ask, inhaling to better present my chest. I know I don’t need to, but I like to.

Seeing through my sudden need for oxygen, he drags his gaze back up to mine. His look is so much less smug with his lips pressed so tight. That’s right baby, you’re all mine now, and you’ll look exactly where I want you to. I stifle a snicker at his expression.

Someone doesn’t like to be obvious.

I can hardly blame him. Petyr isn’t some hot and horny teenager pawing at me in the back of his
car--though his smile alone is enough to con a little roleplay out of me. He’s worldly--I can tell. I’d bet cold hard cash that man knows his way around a woman. He just needs to adjust his pants, clear his throat and get back in the game. I run my tongue over my teeth and wonder what he tastes like as he speaks, “I want to work with a designer who will pair their styles with my accessories.”

“Accessories?” I ask, realizing I probably sound stupid with all these one-word questions. Shit. Our age gap is showing. I hope it doesn’t give him second thoughts.

Then I immediately try not to wonder what he could be having second thoughts about. Nothing was going on. I’d only just met the man, and I certainly wasn’t fantasizing about sucking him off in one of my fitting rooms, the charcoal Vanquish II material of his pants pooled around his ankles.

Apparently deciding that actions speak louder than words, he pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and hands it to me, brushing my finger with his as he does. I stifle a shiver at the contact and clear my throat before I unfold the fabric to better inspect. It’s white with faint light grey birds sprinkled throughout it. In one of the corners the outline of a bird is embroidered above the letters, P.B.

“Nice stitching,” I compliment because it’s true. Then I decide it’s important to prove I’m more than just my looks. “I take it that these aren’t outsourced?”

“On the contrary, they are,” he disagreed.

I rub the handkerchief between my fingers, my eyes narrowing on it. “Then how are you maintaining the quality?”

He watches me for a moment, and I wonder if he’ll answer. Finally, he says, “Production here is not as superior as one would have you think. Just more expensive.” He touches his fingers to the breast pocket of his blazer, drawing my attention back to the fine garment that won my heart and says, “You just need to know where to look.”

Ha.

As if I had been able to look anywhere else since he walked in. If he were trying to impress me with his connections, he shouldn’t have come in here trying to make one. Seeing this fault of his does nothing to sponge up the lake between my legs. I say, “And you have those sort of hook-ups?” Because I know it’s what he wants to hear and because I’m an absolute sucker for double entendres.

“Mm.” The sound of his hummed agreement lingers in the air, caressing me everywhere my clothes fail to shield. My thighs clench together and I pray he doesn’t notice. Who is this man and how can he have such an effect on me?!

“And you came here to offer me a partnership?” I ask, finding it hard to believe the words coming out of my own mouth. The man is sexy, but he doesn’t strike me as stupid. He barely knows me! If I’m hearing him right, he’s proposing commitment akin to a marriage without the wedding--without the dress.

And just let me tell you: that is a waste! I look good in gowns. I know because I’ve tried them on enough. Getting drunk and trying on wedding gowns is my favorite pms-pastime. It helps me feel pretty even though I’m all puffy and bloated--don’t judge.

He smiles as he glances around him. The second his eyes break away from mine, I feel so exposed. It’s as if I’m standing buck-naked in the middle of my store, surrounded by clothes and
completely unable to cover up. “Sweetling, I’ve only just met you in the flesh. I haven’t made any
decisions, one way or the other.” His voice lets me know that I may be naked, but I’m definitely
not alone. If it was meant to be comforting it wouldn’t have made me shiver like it did. His eyes
sweep over me and I’m warm again, tips of me heating under his attention. The corner of his
mouth quirks as he says, “Though, I’ll admit, I like what I see.”

I swallow, needing (not for the first time in the past ten minutes) to pull myself together. “Very
well,” I say, as if I’m dismissing a servant. Who am I right now? God. Cursing my sudden burst of
awkward under my breath, I add, “I’ll consider your offer.”

“I’d point out that I haven’t made one yet, but your presumption happens to be spot-on,” he teases.
A glimmer in his eye tells me that he enjoys my nudity—however metaphorical.

“Well, you did say you liked what you saw,” I retort, unable to resist a good flirt. Is that what
we’re doing? Fuck, he’s making me squirm.

“Mm,” he agrees again and I’ve never hated my cock-blocking clothes more. “I could do with
seeing more...over dinner?”

“Are you asking me out?” I smirk because I got him to make the first move. I am victorious! Feel
free to erect a monument of me or paint my portrait profoundly. Keep in mind I look best in
lavender, it really works off the sunkissed highlights in my hair.

His dimples deepen as he asks, “Do you often confuse business dinners with dates?

It should have upset me that he tried to take the wind from my sails, but it doesn’t. I don’t know
why. Were it anyone else, I would have turned on my heel and thrown them from my shop. For
some reason I don’t know, him saying it is different. He’s giving me shit and it makes me
appreciate him more. He’s got a sense of humor—that’s important. “You’re cheeky. I like it.”

His eyes fan the flames consuming me and I can tell he wants to say something to my choice of
words—cheeky. But he doesn’t. He apparently has a much better filter than I do. Perhaps it’s his
age and experience and money and oh god! He’s my type. Exactly 100%. Men tick certain boxes,
some more than others, but none of them meet all of the requirements. It just isn’t humanly
possible.

And yet, he does.

I bite the inside of my cheek to keep my jaw from dropping as I stare at this other-worldly man.
And then a thought crosses my mind and I say, “Whatever you’re trying to arrange here, it’s too
late into the holiday to capitalize. Christmas is in four days.”

He laughs. “Are you always thinking about work?”

“Pretty sure you said this was a business dinner.” I wink.

“Then perhaps,” he says as he takes my free hand. His thumb brushes over my knuckles as he
holds it, and I can feel a flush spread over my chest and neck. “We should save such discussion
for dinner.”

I’m supposed to say something. Something witty and sexy. Unfortunately, my brain goes dead,
my mouth refuses to open, and sound has completely escaped me.

He takes my silence for acquiescence and I guess, I suppose it is. “Good.” He presses a chaste kiss
to the back of my hand, and waves of heat roll down my thighs. I swear I can smell my own sex
in the air, and when his eyes flash up to mine, I know he can too. Black orbs turn hungry, and his
smile grows smug as he says, “I’ll be here to pick you up at eight o’clock.”

That man is going to eat me alive.

If I’m lucky.

“It’s a date,” I say before I can stop myself.

He clicks his teeth and shakes his head at me. “Oh dear, she’s so confused,” he teases, his eyes glittering sinfully back to me. Somehow he’s found a way to subdue his craving, and play it cool. I hate him for it, and I want him for it even more.

I laugh and it isn’t until he’s made his way to the door, that he turns back around and points at his handkerchief in my hand. “You can keep that. You never know, it may prove useful.” And I swear he glances down to the front of my skirt—to my crotch—smirking before he leaves.

I blow out all the breath I’d been holding in and feel my knees shake and wobble in place. I’ve never been so riled by a man on the first meeting--before I know what he’s capable of. There was something positively magnetic between us, however, and I’m already aching for 8:00 to come.

It isn’t until I feel Varys take the handkerchief from my hand that I even remember he’s there. “You were quiet,” I comment, hoping to draw the attention away from the fact that somehow in the course of one encounter with Petyr Baelish, I’ve turned drippy-swoony virgin all over again.

Madonna’s ‘Like a Virgin’ chimes in my brain and I close my eyes at myself impatiently.

“I had nothing to say,” he responds, not looking at me. His voice pulls me out of myself and I couldn’t be more grateful for it. If he realizes how compromised I’ve become, he’s too polite to say so. Wait, no. That’s wrong. Varys isn’t polite…but he does get distracted.

I turn slowly and raise a brow in question. When he doesn’t volunteer any information, I push. “I get the impression you don’t like him.”

“I don’t hate him,” Varys says carefully, and it sounds like he’s trying to convince himself more than he is me. “You forget, I’ve been around longer than you.”

“And?” I challenge because all the hormones in my body make me suddenly want to either fight or fuck and if I’m stuck with the later, I know I’d have a better time with my own hand than Mr. My Contacts Are My Statement Piece. And five hours seems too long to wait for either.

Best to argue.

His lips purse and his gaze is far off in the distance. “And have learned some things.”

Oh hell. That doesn’t sound good. There goes all my fight…though strangely, not my fuck. Four hours and fifty-six minutes to go...

“Like what?” My mind races in a thousand different directions: he’s married, he’s bankrupt, got genital warts, six developmentally disabled kids at home???

It is none of these things, that I know of.

Varys looks down at the handkerchief, for some reason refusing to meet my eye. “Like not all birds sing...some just mock.”

Well that was cryptic. What the heck was that supposed to mean? “No.” I shake my head. “Not
good enough. Tell me everything you know about Petyr Baelish,” I demand. “If he’s been around, why am I only just hearing of him now?”

And why is he only just surfacing now? What does he want from me--really? How does he know just what to say and do to rev my engine?

Varys closes his eyes, sensing all my silent questions. He hands me the handkerchief back and sighs. “It’s a long story.”

I glance over to the clock on the wall, annoyed at how slowly the time was passing. I still had four hours and fifty-four minutes before my business-date. “I’ve got time. Spill.”

“Sadly, I don’t.” He sets his glass on an end table and turns away.

I reach out to catch him, but he’s too fast. I blink and he’s at the door--I don’t think I’ve ever seen him move so swiftly, not even for fresh macaroons. He turns just long enough to say, “Be careful.”

I’m left standing there dazed, horny, and feeling more than a little reckless. Drawing a deep breath, I turn to my designs to find the perfect dress. It will be one I don’t mind having torn from my body by the end of the night, because whatever the baggage or issue Petyr Baelish may have, I seriously don’t care. There’s no two ways about it--I’m going to fuck that man.

Merry Christmas to me.

If he’s as bad as Varys would have me believe, I don’t need to stick around. I know how to slip through men’s fingers. Besides, it’s not like that isn’t the plan anyway, as I’ve said I hardly know the guy. I’ve never exactly been the relationship type, either. My career taught me how to one-and-done a long time ago. Since my parents passed, the shop and my brand has been my entire world, and I’ve had to develop a mantra of, scratch your itch and get back to work.

Petyr would have to have quite the compelling argument for me to linger long enough for a round two. I press his handkerchief to my nose, and inhale his scent. God, he’s given me such an itch. I eye the clock again and see that it’s just four hours and fifty-one minutes to go...
The sun had just gone down and the bar was starting to fill. “Something just ain't sitting right,” Jaime said, taking another pull off the bottle. “I can feel it in the air. I don’t know how.”

Hellcat (a.k.a. Uncle Kev) grabbed the bottle from him and laughed, “Well, maybe something’s wrong with your other half.”

He didn’t mean Jaime’s old lady. There was no ‘old lady’ and Jaime didn’t fucking hope to have one. Women were complicated as fuck and Jaime had all he could just to keep his mind focused on club business as it was. Steering clear of bitches all together had always been his first choice.

No, Hellcat was referring to Jaime’s twin sister.

“Very fucking funny, asshole.”

Jaime hadn’t ever met her, only knew she lived and breathed out there. Shit, he wasn’t even sure about that after all these years. By rights, he wasn’t supposed to know one way or the other, either. His daddy had sworn his momma to secrecy the day she pushed them out. Said things amongst the different charters were too tense for twins. At that time, all the gangs were on hard times, barely enough buck to put in the tank of your bike back then, let alone claim any club dues for shit like food. When his momma popped out two babies instead of the one, the old man had planned for, he gave up the girl.

No one was supposed to know, except him and momma, and the big man above knew her heart never healed from it. It wasn’t until Jaime was about fourteen and had killed his first man (though, he’d been disposing of plenty more before then for practice) that his father Tywin (a.k.a Big T) let the truth slip over a bottle of Jack while they were digging the poor bastard’s grave together.

Said he didn’t have the money to feed too many mouths during that drought and she was just a chick anyway--extra. Girls weren’t good for much but dancing and cookin’, whorin’ and birthin’ and he didn’t have the time to worry about finding her an old man that treated her right when the time came. He sure as shit didn’t have the scratch to feed her until she got old enough to be some other brother’s problem.

Jaime’s momma didn’t have much to say about it, being dead and all. It happened in childbirth with his little brother Tyrion--who may have lived, but didn’t exactly come out a hundred percent from the whole thing. Big T hated him for killing momma, and hated him for being stunted on top of it, said if he couldn’t live on the bike like the rest of the family then he didn’t deserve to live. It was the first and last time Jaime ever dared raise a gun to his daddy.

It didn’t phase Big T none. He just laughed and walked away, saying only, “He lives--if he’s useful.”

From that moment on, it had been Jaime’s job to prove his little brother’s worth. He looked out for him, and cut his muscles on stupid fucks who pushed Tyrion around. He grew stronger and
Tyrion grew sharper. No one expected Tyrion to hold his own until one day he hopped the bartop and ran full speed at some mouthy prick from out of town. He was one of the Ragin’ Bucks, and very far from home, piping off about Tyrion being the right height for blowjobs. Jaime spit his drink, watching his brother fly by him in the blink of an eye and drive his switchblade into the fucker’s eye socket. He screamed, “YOLO!” and cackled as the Buck dropped. To everyone’s surprise Tyrion clung on, laughing and fucking his socket with the knife, chipping off bone as he made his damn point.

From that day forward, he was called “Yolo” as some cruel joke and a means of reminding everyone of the shit he pulled when provoked. People eased up after that, though. As much as they laughed, they saw he had claws too.

Big T wouldn’t have allowed anyone in the Rocky Mountain Lion Motorcycle Club to say a word against his flesh and blood--no matter how much he hated him too. After that day, no one in the MC wanted to.

It was strange not having to watch out for his own ass and his brother’s too, that being all Jaime knew to do with himself. Now that everyone was holding their own, and didn’t seem to need his looking out, his daddy’s truth was eating at him.

He had a twin out there.

A fucking sister!

Shit, if ever there was a time to know her, it was now. The club coffers were brimming, and Big T had his back turned, working on a treaty with some dumb-as-fuck Sand Snakes from down south. When it came to a face to face, he’d want him there. Big T was a lot of things, but stupid wasn’t one of them and he knew Jaime was his best champion to brandish in battle. He didn’t get his Enforcer patch for nothing.

“If you’re gonna leave, do it now before things get on and Big T calls on ya.” Hellcat spoke from behind his drink. “It’ll be another week at least of dick-measurin’ before we’re on our bikes again. I’ll keep him looking the other way.”

Jaime had some time before he was need, he knew that. Hearing his uncle say so too, helped him feel less torn about it. It definitely didn’t hurt to hear that he’d keep him from finding out he’d taken a short little walk-about. Lots of guys in the MC took off for days at a time, sowing their wild oats, so it wasn’t anything out of the ordinary. Except for Jaime, of course. He always stayed close to home, always at the ready incase family needed him.

“Go on now,” Hellcat nudged him. “Get!”

Never in a million years did he think he’d stand up from that table and walk out the door. But he did. Something strange in the air was driving him, and he couldn’t seem to take hold of the handlebars and steer himself away from it--from leaving like that.

And what got into Hellcat? Jawing like that? Sniffing him out, knowing what was gnawing on him. They’d been close, but not that close. Something in the goddamned air. Half drunk and buzzin’, Jaime hopped on his bike and let the wind keep him steady as he raced toward Deadly Dragon territory. He didn’t have much to go on, just a name and a county.

His twin would have been given to some middle class family with a white picket fence and a husband and wife who wanted the two-point-five kids required for the perfect picture, by any means necessary. Even if it meant buying a kid from the state--or worse, a biker gang.
He’d respect them more for reaching as far and as hard for a child to love if they came to his
daddy. But that wasn’t likely. Not with how hidden the truth was. Big T wasn’t expecting twins,
didn’t have time to line up a home. Chances were, he realized there was another baby comin’ and
dropped it off at a church or wherever and the cops called social services.

The thought of it made his blood boil. He’d never understand how his daddy could do something
like that. Though, knowing Big T, he would have kept telling himself, it was ‘for the good of the
family.’

Jaime would be lucky if his sister didn’t end up with some freak foster daddy who decided it
wasn’t sick to touch her cause she wasn’t his blood. Jaime cursed under his breath as he revved
his engine, hoping to hell that wasn’t the case. If Hellcat was right, he felt shit his twin felt. By
now she’d be too grown to be taken advantage of by any sort of daddy, so he thought back to his
childhood, trying to remember if he ever got that sick feeling in his gut like maybe she might have
been in trouble then.

If there were times, he couldn’t remember.

Thank fuck.

Maybe there was a chance the girl had gotten through a halfway decent childhood. The question
now was whether or not she was in trouble, or if the strange feeling he felt was his heart finally
telling him it was time to know her.

Speeding through the hills, Jaime felt the pocket of his cut. In it was a folded up paper holding his
sister’s name and it weighed heavy against his chest. He’d gotten someone who owed their MC a
debt to look her up. Man borrowed money from the wrong people to pay off his gambling before
his wife found out. Rocky Mountain Lions tended to keep a man long past he’d paid his dues--per
Big T.

Jaime swung by his place every two weeks to make sure the payments kept coming no matter
what, else he introduce himself to the missus. It was during one of those visits that the man
admitted to working for the state, had access to their database--could find shit. He pulled up all the
abandoned babies in the week Jaime was born and found only two girls. One girl also had a date
of death putting her at over-and-done-with last year, which left only the other.

Jaime’s long lost sister was either a dead school teacher or some chick by the name of Cersei
Baratheon, last known to be in Valeria County.

Deadly Dragon country.

Fuck it. If all the social workers in the great Province of Westeros had anything to say about it, she
would have been placed in a family far out of the life. She probably wouldn’t know a Deadly
Dragon from a Rocky Mountain Lion, and would see anyone in leathers and riding boots as
someone to steer clear of.

And as she should.

This life was hard and if she hadn’t been born to it like he was, her only chance of surviving was
to keep to the other side of the street of men like him. Jaime glanced down at the scars that criss-
crossed his knuckles and realized quickly that she just may do the same for him, should he
approach her.

That was more than fine.

She didn’t need to know him. He told himself that he didn’t need to know her either, just that she
was alright. It would help ease the twist in his gut if he knew she were settled into whatever life she’d been given, and not suffering any.

He was far into the Dragon border when he looked down at the gas gage on his bike. There was a watering hole ahead that he knew was safe enough for him to stop at. Dragons and Lions weren’t brothers by any stretch of the imagination, but his father had managed enough of an understanding so as to allow the occasional shared space without too many dust-ups.

Neon signs pointed to bitches and booze, while rusted out road signs all along the way promised gas and beds. Jaime’s stomach rumbled, reminding him that food was still a necessity. Groaning at the fact that he wasn’t as invincible as he’d like to pretend, he swerved off onto the next exit.

The Dragon’s Den was much like the Lion’s headquarters, The Stomping Ground. The music was loud, the women were loose, and the booze was free flowing. Keeping a low profile, Jaime sat to one end of the bar and ordered some grub, thankful the lady behind the bar with a “Property of Widowmaker” jacket on saw fit to still feed him at such a late hour. She was someone’s old lady--Widowmaker’s.

Jaime couldn’t say he’d ever met the guy, but his girl seemed decent enough. Maybe it came with the territory. She tied herself to one biker, tending his needs when he wasn’t on the road, and felt all the times in between she needed to do his brothers justice. Jaime wasn’t a Dragon, she had no call to care for him, but she did anyway. She was wise to respect the top rocker on his cut, knew best not to fuck with a Lion, regardless of how far from home he wandered. He imagined that wherever he was, Widowmaker was proud of his woman.

Jaime decided that he’d tip her well, that was for sure.

“What’s your name, baby?”

The question didn’t come from the old lady behind the bar, but instead from a woman beside him. A woman he didn’t bother to turn his head for. “It don’t concern you, woman. I’m eating,” he growled.

Last thing he needed was some Dragon’s favorite whore cuddling up on his dick. He didn’t need an altercation. Just wanted to eat, sleep, and speed on.

“I got eyes in my head. I can see that,” she laughed. “Wouldn’t mind you eating me as hungry as you are that burger.”

Jaime dropped the rest of his burger in the basket and reminded himself to swallow. Slowly, he turned to get a look at the woman who spoke to a stranger so brazen.

One good look at her and his heart stopped dead in his chest.

Fuck if she wasn’t a five alarm fire on a set of endless legs. She had long blonde hair--not that bottled shit, but real golden locks you had to be born with in order to get. Her eyes were a bright shade of green that caught him up like sugar water did flies. Damn if her lips weren’t the poutiest things ever made to wrap around a cock.

Lightning struck straight through his body, right down to his cock, a divining rod pointing straight at the girl. Jesus, he’d never felt so turned on, just looking at a chick before. And she’d been the one to hit on him!

If that wasn’t ‘all-systems-go,’ he didn’t know what was.

Except that it wasn’t.
Jaime hadn’t taken any whores in—well, never. Women were all kinds of trouble and he didn’t ever need it on top of all the shit his brother stirred up and his father doled out. No. He’d sworn long ago, he wasn’t going to put it to any woman that wasn’t his woman.

He didn’t consider himself a virgin or nothing, even though in the strictest sense, that was exactly what he was. He let chicks kiss up on him enough to keep his brother’s from suspecting and giving him shit for it, and he always made an appearance on Lipstick Night, but he never got further than that.

Jaime had his head screwed on much more than the rest of his brothers in the MC, and used whatever frustration he felt in his pants to work its way through his fists on someone’s face. It made him brutal whenever he needed to be, and that suited him just fine. As hot as this chick was, he had to remember himself. No way was he going to break his rule, and lose his cool over strange pussy—no matter how hard he got just looking at her. “Maybe you didn’t catch my meaning—I aint interested.”

She smiled, a real full-body smile that brightened everything about the girl til she glowed from head to toe. Flicking her gaze down to his fly she teased, “Liar.”

“Doesn’t matter,” he argued. “I don’t fuck whores.”

“A biker who doesn’t fuck around?” She eyed him skeptically, her gaze falling on his Enforcer patch. Yeah, he was someone. Enforcer was a solid rank, meant he was the Prez’s muscle. Women were always hungry for a piece of a titled man. She grinned, “Now that is a wonder right there.”

Jaime tapped his chest, right where she was covetting. “I live by this patch. Aint got no time for whores.”

She reached over to him to steal his drink. Lifting it to her lips, she said, “Good thing I aint a whore then.”

All whores thought they weren’t whores, didn’t change the fact that they changed beds more often than they did their panties. Her grabbing what was his would have pissed him off it weren’t for those damn eyes, so bright and beautiful, teasing him. Choosing to keep his temper, he asked, “No? Then why are you chasing my dick like one?”

She gulped the whiskey down, all the chuckle taken out of her smile, replaced with something deeper he couldn’t put his finger on. “Truth?” She asked.

“God’s honest,” he insisted.

“Cause something about you is callin’ to me. Saw you from across the room and my legs started moving before the wheels in my head could turn.” Her smile seemed a little unsure as she lowered her voice and said, “Aint no man ever did that to me before. And it’s like there’s something in the air, hanging there around us that says in my long list of early morning regrets, you just might be one of the smaller ones.”

Jaime blinked back at her, shocked at just how blunt she was. How everything she said, he was feeling, like she could read his damn mind. He’d heard women cozy up to his brothers before, all ‘yur the best,’ and ‘I need you,’ and not a one of them saying anything close to what he wanted to hear. Trying to regain some control, Jaime cleared his throat and promised, “Aint nothing small about me, sweetheart.”

She grabbed a fry off his plate and popped it in her mouth, sighing. “Wouldn’t I just love to find
that out for myself.”

If she was a whore, she was too real for it and wouldn’t last long because of it. The girl was too full of life. Which lead him to wonder just what she was doing in a place like this. “How’d you come to be here?”

“I dance here.”

A stripper. There went the ‘not a whore’ theory. His eyes roved over her again, taking in all the curves he’d tried to ignore before. Damn if she wasn’t an hourglass in a crop-top and low-rise jeans. There was no denying she had the body for the stage. “That your life’s ambition?”

“No, just payin’ a debt,” she answered plainly.

What kinda mess did this girl get herself into? Only idiots went to Deadly Dragons for loans. “Debt?” He asked and then kicked himself for it. This wasn’t his trouble.

“Mm-hm. My ex’s debt, if we’re still bothering with truth.” She smiled up at him and Jaime couldn’t help but hang on the word ‘ex.’

“Ex?”

“Mm-hm,” she agreed again, moving closer so her tits brushed against his elbow. “Boar--and wasn’t he ever one.”

He should have told her to back up, mind his space. Things would have ended right there if he did. Instead, he let her sidle up to him, picking at his fries and licking her lips. All the while he grew a hate in his heart for some fuckbag named Boar.

“He brand you?” Another question he shouldn’t have asked. It was none of his business whether or not the girl wore her ex’s name tattooed on her body--whether or not she’d been someone’s old lady once upon a time.

She didn’t have to answer, but she did anyway. Her head shook at the same time her hand landed on his shoulder. “He tried.”

“Tried?”

“Yes, he wanted to. But he was angry a lot and I don’t like being slapped anywhere but my ass in a raw moment between the sheets, so I wasn’t very keen on the idea of being his old lady, not that it mattered to him.” She kept smiling, but it seemed to lose its luster. It looked cheap and fake, and this chick seemed too real for any of that shit. “Luckily, the Dragons came to collect before he ever got that far and they saw I wasn’t willin’.”

That was decent at least. Not all clubs cared for a woman’s say in who she was tied to. This place just raised a couple notches in his eyes for keeping that loser’s ink off her flesh--even if they did make her dance her way out of his debt. Speaking of which, Jaime couldn’t help but wonder, “Where’s Boar now?”

“Dragons don’t take kindly to being owed anything. So, he’s six feet under and I’m up on stage. Sometimes I pretend I’m dancin’ on his grave, even if I’m really just dancin’ for my supper.” She glanced down at her hand on his plate and laughed. “But it looks like I’m stealin’ myself some of yours.”

Jaime glanced down at the half eaten meal, remembering he’d hardly had a bite. He enjoyed the feel of her arm brushing past his chest each time she reached much more than he wanted to admit.
It was because of that, that he forced himself to offer, “I’ll buy you dinner if you’re hungry.”

Her eyes glowed back at him as she lifted her fingers to her lips and sucked the grease and salt off each one. “No, I’m good.”

The twitch in his pants believed she’d be good at many things.

“What’s your name?” He asked because he’d only then realized he hadn’t before, and he hoped the small talk would help calm his cock.

“Majesty.”

Claiming royalty somehow suited her, even if it was just a stage name. “What’s your real name?” Jaime asked, taking a bite of his burger because he at least had that left. His hunger was transforming to something the burger wouldn’t help with, but it was worth a shot.

She tapped the bar and held up two fingers. “Who’s askin’?”

Jaime hated that shit. When girls tried to be mysterious. It was the quickest way to convince him to walk. He forced himself to resist big tits and round asses because he knew the shit brewing between their ears always ruined everything. This girl was different though. Something about her, the way she looked at him--spoke to him. If she was going to play games, he could too, so he gave her his riding name, “Kingslayer.”

“Kingslayer?” She repeated, turning to read it spelled out on his bottom rocker. The bartender left two shots of whiskey in front of them and Majesty didn’t hesitate to down hers, never coughing or wincing after. “How does a man get a name like that?”

Jaime glanced around to make sure no one was paying attention when he whispered, “Scuffle with the Latin Kings.”

“And I take it you won?” She asked, biting her lip. Would it make her hot if he did?

“Oh yeah.” His eyes glued to her mouth, wondering what she tasted like. He downed his drink, needing to take the edge of her off. “Took out about eight of them on my own before my brothers showed up.”

“Wow.” Her hand was on his arm, sliding up over the leather clad bulge of his bicep to his shoulder. It didn’t stay there long before it curled behind his neck, her fingers threading in his hair. “That how you earned your Enforcer patch?”

His eyelids grew heavy as she rubbed the base of his skull. Whores didn’t touch like this, didn’t take time to savor anything about a man but his dick and his wallet. “No. That came later.” Big T made sure he worked for everything he got, and apparently surviving an eight on one wasn’t enough.

“You’re a real badass, Kingslayer,” she purred, and his cock almost broke his zipper at the sensation of her hot breath against his ear. He imagined her cheek pressed against his, panting as he drove himself into her, over and over.

It was good she thought he was a badass. Chicks were much more likely to fuck a real man, one who didn’t flinch when the fists started flying. The more they talked, the more he rethought his ‘no pussy’ rule. Especially since he’d already fucked her at least fifty times in his head since she sat down next to him.

She smelled so damn good--not fruity like other strippers, but lighter. *Flagrant*, like a flower.
Shit, she was like some garden party stuck in the middle of a sweaty smelly biker bar. The urge to turn his head and nuzzle his nose against her throat was stifled when her finger traced his charter patch. “You’re a ways from home. What brings you all the way out here?”

“Looking for my sister,” he answered because he had no reason to lie about it. Mention of his sister had him remembering the folded up piece of paper in his pocket, his own chicken-scratch handwriting spelling out, Cersei Baratheon .

Her palm hot on his thigh made him forget the name on that paper, in favor of looking down to watch what she might do next. Her hand sat there not moving, not brushing over his dick, just holding him intimately, like her hand belonged there. Damn if he was about to tell her that it didn’t. He kept talking because the more he eyed her hand, the more he wished she’d hold something else with it. “Never met her--separated at birth sorta thing. Just checkin’ in on her, make sure she turned out alright, is all.”

“Aww that’s sweet.” She smiled back at him as she tapped the bar again and held up two fingers. “A badass with a heart of gold. Any girl would be lucky to be your old lady.” She downed the shot that came quicker this time. “Or hell, even just your kin.” Then she flashed him a wink and added, “But I doubt it’d be as fun as being your girl.”

She nudged the drink toward him and Jaime threw it back.

“Well, you’re lucky,” she smiled. “I’m in the mood to be helpful.” She turned to look around the bar. “What’s your sister look like?”

Shit. He’d never gotten a picture. Just a name. “Like me, I suspect.”

Majesty erupted in gales of laughter, slapping the bar as she did. “Of course she looks like you, silly!”

“No.” Jaime shook his head laughing back. “I mean we’re twins, so really like me.”

“Oh? What like blonde hair, green eyes, and fuckable lips?” She asked, downing the next drink that appeared, never taking her eyes off his mouth as she swallowed.

“Is that what you think of me?” Jaime snickered and wrapped an arm around her, accepting the drink she nudged in his free hand. Feeling her warm against him, he was also accepting the fact that he was going to throw all his rules out the window and nut this girl so hard it would make up for all the years of discipline he’d suffered.

She hung on him, smiling against his cheek. “Course. Though, in the right light I supposed I just described me too.” She scooted off her stool and onto his lap as she laughed. “Aint that funny? We’re like two peas in a pod.”

“Mm,” Jaime agreed, letting his hand slide up her thigh to keep her losing her balance. “They’d mistake us in a lineup for sure,” he chuckled into her neck.

She turned her head and laughed again, but this time it was slower, lower. Her eyes stared back into his, suddenly so dark and wanting. Her nose brushed against his, tickling and teasing. All humor left him as he dared to taste her lips. Her eyes snapped shut and her tongue slid out, accepting him.

After that, it was all a blur: the drinks, dancing, getting a room in that shitty motel, fucking her brains out, saying things he couldn’t take back--and wouldn’t.

The early morning sun had risen and shone through the crack of industrial grade motel curtains.
They weren’t dark enough to keep the light out and even if they were, they never seemed to shut far enough to cover the whole window. Didn’t matter what shithole roadside motel he landed in, mornings were always the same.

Jaime clutched his cup of coffee, sipping away the shakes of his hangover as he stared down at the naked woman in his bed. She had to have drugged him. There was no other possible explanation. They’d been pounding back the drinks and having a good time, but jesus christ, he’d never lost control like that.

He was practicing his speech of, ‘Look, I aint kickin’ you out, but I aint the type to be makin’ you breakfast neither,’ when he saw something dark on the bed. It was a stain of some sort, looked almost like blood on the off-white bedsheet. Setting his cup down on the wobbly end table, he leaned in to inspect. There was some more blood—but not much, and black smudges ground into the material. What the fuck had they gotten up to?

Judging by the state of things, maybe Jaime had waited too long to take a woman. Maybe years of keeping his dick in his pants while he listened to all his brothers make chicks scream and moan through the walls of the clubhouse, had finally taken its toll on him and he’d gone crazy. He’d never forgive himself if he hurt the poor girl. Careful not to wake her, Jaime peeled the sheet back so he could see more of her and maybe get a clue as to just how severely out of hand he’d gotten with this woman--Majesty.

His jaw dropped when he saw the fresh tramp stamp on her lower back that read: Property of Kingslayer.

Fuck. Oh fuck.

She was wearing his goddamned brand.

Like she was his. His old lady. For better or fucking worse, that brand fused them together more permanently than any preacher man or piece of paper ever could.

How in the hell had this happened?!

Images of her naked on her knees, twisting her neck and swallowing to take more of him down her throat, flashed before his eyes. As did the memory of her sitting on the edge of a bathroom sink, moaning and whimpering as he drove his face so far into her pussy, sucking her clit and lapping up all her cream.

She stirred a little and Jaime dropped the sheet as if it were made of lava, scalding his fingertips. He took a step back and ran a hand through his hair as he tried to calm himself, and the wood he was sprouting knowing what she looked like on all fours getting drilled hard and fast. His bare foot stepped in something wet and squishy on the floor and he lifted it quick to look. It was a used rubber.

Great.

Well, he’d been smart about that at least.

He rubbed the bottom of his foot on the carpet, only to find another one. Looking all around him, he counted four discarded condoms. Her voice, dry and raspy from all her screams of pleasure, sounded in his memory. Don’t ever stop fucking me, she moaned as he peeled a condom off. I’ll suck you hard again, baby.

Holy shit.
This woman was insatiable.

And she was his now.

Jaime grabbed his coffee and stared back out the window at the parking lot and cars passing by on the road ahead, his chest thumping loudly between his ears. He’d been holding out for an old lady, eventually one day, over the rainbow. It wasn’t like he’d ever planned on how he was gonna find one either. Maybe this was how it was meant to be.

She was pretty enough, and if memory served she was smart as a whip. Funny too. He remembered laughing like crazy, and the warm feeling he got holding her in his lap like she was his even when she wasn’t. The way he woke up with her leg hooked over his and her face pressed against his bare chest, was like that was how he was supposed to wake up. She held onto him tightly in her sleep, as if she was afraid to lose him. She hadn’t even had him, but she couldn’t seem to stand being without him. It was like she was melded to him, the both of them yin and yang making a whole new level of peace he’d never imagined.

He’d almost not gotten up, not wanting to tear what they’d made in two. But his head was pounding and he needed coffee to settle the churn in his gut. God that woman could drink. That wasn’t so bad either. An old lady had to be able to hold her drink, and party hard with her man.

She owed Dragons money, but he was sure he could settle that. He’d ask his Veep to have a talk with the Dragons, explain how it was. He couldn’t bring this to his father. Jaime wanted Big T to accept her, not resent her for bringing problems to their club.

Shit, it wasn’t even anything big. A favor would be carried out, and her debt would be wiped. They could stay in good standing, no need for Big T to lose his cool over it. Especially not since it’d be Jaime doing all the heavy lifting for his girl anyway. If it was a small amount of dough, he’d probably just have to do a little breaking and entering, or rough someone up. If it was a lot, he’d kill a man or two for them, help them ditch the bodies. That wasn’t a problem either; Jaime had been doing that shit since before he was the Kingslayer.

An old lady was worth it.

She was worth it.

He let his gaze land back to her on the bed, tracing over the curve of her hip under the sheet, part of her tattoo peeking out. Just the word, Property.

That word meant ‘back off’ to any man that dared near her. She was claimed and provided for by her man. And if there was any doubt as to who that man was, you just needed to keep reading to see his name. There you’d see who she served--who served her.

He was a fool if he thought they could go back now.

A thousand fireworks let off inside his chest as he remembered watching her take the ink for him. He kissed her so hard she squirmed on the table and the guy working growled for them to knock it off unless they wanted it to say, Kinkslayer etched on her instead.

Her bright green eyes, consuming him as she held still for the brand filled his memory and tightened his sack. She had wanted this.

He wanted this too.

Wanted her.
As much as he hated to admit it, Jaime hadn’t been drugged. He’d just been impulsive—much more than he’d ever been, being the Prez’s son. Something about this woman stripped him of all his sense and gave him license to do whatever the hell he wanted. She made him feel like he couldn’t fuck up, and that even though they barely knew each other, she’d tag along with him anywhere he went, for as long as he’d let her. He’d never felt so connected to someone in his life, except of course for his brother. But that was different, he was his blood.

Fuck, she was special—what they had between them was one of a kind. Jaime knew he had to make this work. No matter what. She was his now, and he’d take care of her, not just care to keep her.

Judging by the fact that his brand was the only man’s he’d seen on her body, she’d never done this before. No matter how wild the woman was, she’d never gotten this wrecked. Which meant, she might have second thoughts about things once she woke up. He’d have to think fast to convince her to keep calm and cool and give things a god’s honest try with him.

She’d have to get off the pole. No more stripping. That was for sure.

No woman of his was going to get up there and dance around with all the other whores, letting every brother look her over and jerk himself off to what she kept under her thong. Just imagining it made his blood boil. He’d break any man’s face that saw her indecent ever again. That body was his now, for his viewing pleasure only. Whether or not he got her to come around to the idea…

He hoped like hell she would.

She wasn’t a civilian, after all. She knew what life in the MC was, and however drunk she was, she was willing when she bent over and took the ink. Majesty knew she was signing up to be with a man who wouldn’t ever sit back and take his woman flashing her tits for horny prospects.

*Majesty.*

Fuck.

Jaime didn’t even know her real name! And here he was planning out this whole life with her hopping on the back of his bike and riding off into the sunset with him. That reminded him—he needed to get her a helmet and a leather of her own to wear.

He could wait until she woke up to ask her, but Jaime didn’t think it would do much to convince her to stay his old lady if he didn’t even know her goddamn name. Luckily, that was an easy fix. His eyes flicked over to her clothes on the floor and followed the trail all the way back to the discarded purse dropped on the floor by the door.

Bingo.

Jaime was rifling through it in a flash, pushing aside tampons, gum, a spare thong, cellphone, and tons of other junk he didn’t care about to get to the rhinestone encrusted wallet that held her ID. He snapped it open and fished her driver’s license out, squinting through his headache to read the tiny letters on it.

As soon as he read the name, he read it again. And then he read it again.

Shaking his head in disbelief, gravity became a suggestion and bile rose in his throat. No way could it be right. No way could it be reading in bold blue letters, *Cersei Baratheon.*

He had to be seeing it wrong. Searching for an excuse—a reason, he clung to his hangover. Maybe
he had double vision or was hallucinating. Hangovers fucked with a person’s eyes the next day. Sometimes...usually...oh, shit.

No. There was no way he had read that wrong. Desperately grasping at anything he could to make it his imagination, he shoved the wallet back in her purse and dropped it like he never touched it. He grabbed his cut off the chair in the corner and dug the paper out of it. Jaime closed his eyes and drew a deep breath. He was going to unfold that paper and find out that he’d remembered the name wrong. It wouldn’t match the one on her ID—it couldn’t. Please Jesus, don’t let it match.

When his prayer wasn’t answered and Jaime was staring down at the name, *Cersei Baratheon* on both pieces the puzzle, he felt his stomach lurch and a night of booze and apparent incest surge up the back of his throat.

The world was falling out from under his feet as he ran for the bathroom, sliding on his knees across the linoleum to reach the toilet. He wretched in the bowl a few times before he was able to stand on shaky legs and sip some water from the faucet. Jaime couldn’t look at his reflection in the mirror, hating himself for what he’d done. What he’d *enjoyed*.

Closing his eyes to the memory of her body sliding against his, her breasts filling his hands, her insides milking his cock, Jaime told himself that she certainly didn’t feel like his sister. As if that made any difference in the world. As if he even knew what a sister was supposed to feel like. Jesus he was one sick fuck, taking his long lost twin sister no less than four times in some seedy motel room after he had his name tattooed above her ass—the ass that he’d grabbed, spanked and bit all the while he pumped and stretched her insides...

Oh Jesus-H-Motherfucking-Christ!

Momma was crying in her grave at how depraved her boy had become.

“Baby?” Majesty’s-- *Cersei’s* voice sounded through the bathroom door. “You in there?”

“Yeah,” he hollered back, because he didn’t know what else to say. Thinking fast, Jaime reached for the knobs in the shower and turned them on full blast. She would hear the spray and stay away, maybe even find her clothes and slink off.

His heart stalled just thinking of it. Her shoving herself back in her jeans, shame filling her cheeks as she slid out his door and his life forever. Where would she go? Where did she live? It wasn’t as if he ever got her phone number. Oh hell, he’d made her his old lady and he knew nothing about her, and the things he did know, he wished he didn’t.

It was all so simple the night before, when neither of them knew the other. They just let their bodies take over and the rest fell into place. Kissing her hadn’t been wrong or disgusting then. No one would blame him for what happened when they didn’t know. Jaime crumpled the paper in his fist and silently cursed himself.

If only he could make it disappear. The name on the paper and the knowledge in his head. No one would ever found anything out if he hadn’t gotten curious. If only he could hijack a time machine and go back in time, wipe the slate clean.

His mind went back to his name branded across her back.

Shit.

It didn’t mean he’d ever leave her alone.
Jaime knew he’d find a reason to drive up this way again and let his past self meet her in the bar all over again. They’d relive their rowdy night, and he’d never ever let himself realize she was anyone other than the only girl that had ever made him turn his head and break all his rules.

The doorknob clicked as it turned and his eyes widened, panic jolting through him like he’d gotten caught in an electric fence. He threw the balled up piece of paper in the trash can next to the shower before he realized he was doing it. Ditching the evidence--guilt clear on his face.

“You alright?” She asked, peering at him curiously. “How come you aint in the shower?”

Jaime blinked in shock. She was ears to toes naked as a jaybird, her long blond hair hanging free down her back and swaying over her tits as she walked toward him. He tried not to notice the rosy buds that perked up in the cool morning air, just begging to be licked and sucked until she sighed her pleasure and rocked her hips against him. And he definitely tried not to notice the seam he’d licked all night, peeking out from behind the close-cropped hair, a shade of blond just a little darker than the golden mane on her head.

He was going to hell.

Dante would hook him up with a vacation home in each level.

Jaime listened to his own voice crack as he said, “Waitin’ on the water to warm.”

She pulled the curtain back and stuck her hand in. “It’s ready now,” she assured him and turned to step into the shower, giving him a delicious view of her perfect ass and the brand she wore above it.

When Jaime didn’t move, just stood there getting stiff over his name on his sister’s ass, she tugged him in after her. “I know it’s weird, okay?”

His head shot up, his eyes searching hers. Did she know? How could she? He had no idea what to say--how to not say too much. Playing it smart, he decided not to say anything at all, just stand caught in her eyes.

Her small hands worked the bar of soap she’d taken out of its wrapper and pressed to his chest, rubbing suds all over him. It felt good--too good, sinful. “We barely know each other, and we got pretty crazy last night, so I guess I don’t blame you for wanting to walk away if you do…but I gotta say…”

Say what?

Jaime felt every muscle in his body tense, every thought in his head hold off, all of himself straining to hear what she would say next.

She worked the soap up over his shoulders to the back of his neck, where she’d massaged him the night before. “I was right when I said I wouldn’t entirely regret you the next day.” She swallowed, her fingers sliding over one of his nipples. “What we’ve done.”

He’d let his gaze drop to her hands on him, but he snapped his eyes back up to hers after she said that.

“I mean this is going to sound strange, but I feel so good with you--comfortable. Like I’ve known you my whole life, and not just the past thirteen hours.” She pressed the soap in his hand and smiled back at him.

Innocently.
Naively.

He’d be having Sunday dinners with Lucifer if she kept smiling at him like that.

Jaime stared down at the water running in streams over her tits. She didn’t know what she was saying, why she felt so close to him. Creating a lather, he raised the bar to her chest, knowing that he would spare her the disgrace of such knowledge. It would be cruel to tell her just which man she’d allowed inside her body. Her eyes closed and she leaned into his touch.

Her voice was breathy as she said, “You’ll always protect me and I’ll always take care of you.”

Seeing her respond so easily to him, Jaime let himself loose in the act of washing his woman--his sister. No. Right now she was his woman still. She didn’t know any different, he’d disposed of the evidence, and he would drink himself stupid to forget what he knew if he had to. Satan would have to hold their dinner reservations until he bit the dust. Jaime’s soapy hands gliding down her thighs was right, no matter what the world said.

“Besides–” She turned around so he could see her backside. “It’s not like I’ll be washing this off any time soon.”

Jaime knew he should apologize for the permanent mark, but didn’t know how to without everything tumbling out and crucifying him. And he didn’t want to say sorry when he didn’t mean it. His name scrawled across her flesh felt right. He stared at it as he ran his hands down her back, careful to work around it. Jesus, she wore his name so well, the dot of the I inked into one of the tiny dimples in her lower back. He couldn’t help himself, soaping and over the rounds of her ass to down low, between her legs, giving her a thorough washing there.

“And I think you like seeing it there too,” she gasped when two of his fingers--with a mind of their own, slid inside her.

Jaime wondered what kind of sicko he was to finger-fuck his own flesh and blood in the shower. All question, however, left him when she clenched around his knuckles. The only thing he could do was keep working her pussy and rub his greedy dick against her hip. He’d work out all the wrongs and rights after. This was all that mattered right now.

Her words romanced his ears, telling him they should try it as a couple. Her body tempted him to her, telling him she wanted him to. Every fiber of his being promised him that if he tried hard enough, their sibling relationship would be wiped from his memory and he could set out to live the life he wanted with the girl he needed.

He could never bring her home.

Never let Big T see her.

And he didn’t give a damn.

He’d find a different crew. Strip his patches and start anew.

She was his--proved it each time she spread her legs for him.

When he bit the back of her neck, her knees buckled and he had to hold her up as she quaked around his fingers. Her cries echoed in the acoustics of the bathroom walls and she sounded so profoundly fucked that nothing else in the world mattered but being inside her.

“We never did learn our proper names, did we?” She chuckled into the shower wall, as if only
then realizing it. “I’m-

Jaime cut her off by covering her mouth. He couldn’t take hearing her say it aloud, confirm what he already had the misfortune of knowing. Right now they had her ignorance and his denial. Her introducing herself would rip that away, and then he’d really lose her. Glancing back down at his brand across her back, he couldn’t risk that, couldn’t risk having to go through life without her after he’d only just found her.

His other half.

He let go to explain, satisfied that she’d remain silent a moment, giving him the chance to explain himself. “We aint in church and I’m not in trouble with my momma so there isn’t much call for proper.” Placing a kiss on one shoulder, he gave the other a sweet squeeze. “The only name that should matter to you is the only one tattooed on your skin.” He dropped his hand to let his finger trace gently over the tender flesh. “Let’s just be who we came to be--Kingslayer and Majesty.”

Jaime pressed his erection against the slippery crack of her ass to give himself a little pressure and to emphasize his point. He prayed she’d accept it, allow them to stay together in every way that felt good.

“Okay,” she nodded into the tile.

That was all he needed to hear to break whatever chains that still held onto him. Her pouty lips and sexy voice saying, okay, went for everything. The way he looked at her, touched her, had to have her. Their secret. All of it was ‘okay.’

And boy didn’t he want to believe that to be true.

Jaime took his cock in his hand and without any preamble or warning, burrowed it deep between her legs and thrust up as high as he could go, bottoming out in her sweet slippery heat.

“Fuck me!” She exclaimed, slapping the wall.

“That’s the point,” he responded over her shoulder, leaning in to kiss her temple before he rammed into her again, not fully realizing his own strength and her ability to take it.

His fingers dug in her hips, throwing her back hard on his cock as much as he thrust forward, lifting her up on tip-toe as he pounded her bare.

His hand came around to let his fingers dance circles around her clit when he felt her squirming and clenching more on him. Smiling into her ear, he unleashed the devil inside. “You wanna be my old lady? You gotta come on my dick before I let you.”

With her eyes clenched shut, she nodded fiercely, accepting his terms. “Yeah, promise I will, baby. Just for you.”

“Say it again,” he growled, because hearing her say it the first time was addicting.

“I only come for you!” She moaned as he sped up, the hard slapping sound of his pelvis crashing into her ass under the water was loud and obnoxious and the perfect opening act to her convulsing cries as she came unraveled around his dick. “Oh! Baby! Fuck! Yes!”

His fingers bruised into her while he fought as hard as he could to hold every last ounce of cum back. Jaime couldn’t let loose, couldn’t unleash his load inside her. Old lady or not, she was still something else to him, and as drunk as he got off of her sweet and strangled cries of pleasure, he couldn’t breed her.
He may have been a disgusting piece of shit, destined to burn in all the fiery pits of hell for what he was doing—letting her do, but he wasn’t a complete monster. Jaime knew no kid ever came out right in head from their kinda love.

His release wasn’t long after, and he was just barely able to pull himself out and squirt hot ropes of cum all over her ass to drip down the drain. She gasped for breath against the shower wall, smiling as she did, and he couldn’t resist pulling her in for a kiss.

It was just what he needed, her silent vow to be his forever. No matter what. If she ever found out about them, she would remember that kiss, and the moments they shared. Maybe she would make her peace with their secret because of it and keep loving him regardless.

Jaime pulled his lips from her, catching her chin as he said, “I want you on the pill.”

The day would come when she wanted a kid, and he’d deal with it when it came. Until then, he’d keep her away from his daddy and save her from the truth and give her as many good days with him as he could. If she ever found out what that crumpled up piece of paper said, she’d remember the way he he took care of her, and the whole feeling they gave each other. She’d forgive him.

God willing.

Though, it didn’t seem like God had much to do with this...
They had been wandering the highway for over a week, crashing in roadside motels, living off of vending machine junk and diner grub. If Cersei didn’t know any better, she’d have wondered about her new man, Kingslayer’s bottomless pocket. The cash had to come from somewhere, but damned if it was from his club. For whatever reason, he said he wanted to run with a new crew. She didn’t ask about it, even though she knew club memberships were for life. He must have had a good reason for jumping ship—or a really rotten one, but Cersei learned long ago what to press a man about and what not to. If her own experiences had taught her anything, the truth would come out eventually, usually at the start of a long bloody night.

Her mind wandered to Boar.

What a goddamned fuck-suck retard.

No, she wouldn’t push Kingslayer, her ol’ man. The morning she woke up on those shitty motel sheets, feeling the burn of fresh ink on her, she thought to herself, fuck it. Why not buy a little security in the world and hitch herself to this particular wagon? She already wore his name; it wasn’t as if anyone else would want her now—not in the MC. Besides, he was young and sexy and would take her away. Love was something that—if it was going to come--always did later, anyway. What did it hurt to just lean into what they’d done and reap the rewards? In the meantime, if laying back and spreading her legs for the blonde badass with the roaring lion tattoo spanning his chest was part of the job--well, that was a hardship she’d bear.

Plus, he was actually kinda fun. Believe it or not, the guy had a sense of humor, and actually got hers. That in itself was fan-fucking-tastic, because everyone always took her wrong. Especially men, because as a rule, men were always guarded and easily offended--and that went double for bikers.

That wasn’t to say they couldn’t have their more tender moments, though those were few and far between and usually only when their pants were down around their ankles, hips bucking like it was the last fuck of their lives. Then all sorts of poetry came pouring from their lips, You got the best titties, baby. Yours is the tightest cunt I ever had. Oh fuck, you’re gonna make me blind commin’ so hard. Bikers sure did know how to make a girl feel special when they wanted to.

Kingslayer said the same stuff, just like any man, but there was more to it coming from him. His affections were quite possessive, and somehow nothing like how Boar was about it. Men fucked different when they wanted a hot hole to forget the world in--when they wanted pouty lips and soft slick skin for the night, than they did when they took to an old lady to count on for the rest of their lives. The men who gripped Cersei’s golden hair and palmed her breasts were already thinking of the next set of tits they planned to fuck--and if she was being entirely honest, it wasn’t as if she wasn’t thinking the same thing about new prospects coming in, either. Those boys were always desperate to prove themselves men worthy of their patches. So very eager to please.
When Boar took her, he told the world she was his because she was the shiniest new toy in the club, and he always took the best of everything for himself. He didn’t want her, so much as he didn’t want anyone else to have her. That was his kinda possessive.

Old ladies were their man’s property because a man--a real man, took care of the things that belonged to him. Claiming was a statement to any dog that came sniffing around, and it said that you were more than a pump-n-dump to your man. He wanted you on the regular, forever. More than marriage. He’d never let you be taken from him, not through the pain of the club, or the twist of a heart. And to prove it, he’d leave his mark on you, and murder anyone who dared try to smear or smudge it. Cersei had seen men downright driven crazy when their old ladies were fucked with in anyway--whether a little roughing up from a rival crew or a kiss blown down to their end of the bar.

Boar never went crazy over that shit--if anything, he liked the attention she got. He liked having the prettiest-pretty sitting on his lap for the rest of the MC to see. Whenever she opened her mouth, he crammed his cock in it because he was too stupid to comprehend the shit she said. She was thankful every goddamned day that he never got to brand her. Because he may have called her his property, but he sure as shit never treated her like she was.

Kingslayer on the other hand--that boy was an a whole other level. He owned her, and more than that, it was like he always had. His green eyes burned into hers, having her in every single way a man could ever have a woman. He never let up, either. Demanding her full attention in everything, he was on her from what they ate for breakfast to how far away she drifted in her sleep. The man permeated every square inch, rubbing his scent all over her, filling her field of view so thoroughly that he left no room for anyone else in her mind. They barely knew each other and already he loved her so severely that she wasn’t sure she could ever go back to the underwhelming life she had before she stole his fries that one night in Deadly Dragon territory.

When Kingslayer shoved his rough hand down her panties, skimming her folds with the back of his calloused knuckles, he told her that she was his, and she believed him. Like all the other fucks in the world didn't exist, and her pussy had never been touched by anyone ever before. Which was ridiculous, because of course it had been, but that was how he made her feel. As if that weren't enough, he’d push her for more, never letting his fingers inside until she agreed--out loud. “Say it, baby girl. Tell me you’re mine.”

It was like he needed her to decide to belong to him. Over and over, he demanded that decision, as if her making it the first time wasn’t enough. As if she might change her mind and pull the rug out from under him at any minute.

She wondered if it would seriously fuck him up if she ever scratched his brand and moved on. Cersei never knew a man to need a woman as much as he needed air to breathe and water to drink. And hell if he didn’t act like he was starvin’ for her every damn minute of the day, no matter how many times he shot off his rocket.

It was like he’d never banged a chick before her, always hot and hard. His constant groping and poking would have gotten irritating if he wasn’t so damn good at it, if they didn’t fit so perfect. He was the only man to make her sore since she lost her cherry, from how much fuckin’ they got into.

Her only break was when he took off on his bike for a few hours a day, checking into their surroundings. Kingslayer was determined to find a new club, or go nomad. She never protested when he tossed his cut on and started for the door, but he still always promised, “Hate leavin’ ya, baby. But I gotta provide.”

She supposed she should have be grateful to have a man in her life that thought of things like that, but the time he was away got boring. There was only so much entertainment each shitty motel
room with old tube-tvs and discount bibles had to give.

Good thing they weren’t too far from Lannisport.

Maggy lived there, and Maggy was always who Cersei went to see whenever things weren’t settling. This world-wind romance—or whatever you’d call it, definitely qualified. When they left Deadly Dragon territory, Kingslayer took his bike, and Cersei left her little Jetta behind to rust, not wanting to tail her man along the highway. Kingslayer wouldn’t have approved of it anyway, wanting his woman to press herself against his back and hang on as the wind whipped by. Truth of it was, she liked to sneak her hands under his shirt and trace those hard abs under her fingers, all the while feeling the horsepower revving between her legs.

With him gone, there was no way to get to the fairgrounds. She’d call a cab, but they didn’t exactly exist out here in the middle of West DryFuck. Luckily, she’d faced this particular predicament before and knew how to show a little leg and bat her eyelashes. Less than forty minutes later, she was trudging her way down to the big green tent with the high peaked roof she knew too well.

“There you are! I could feel you a mile away. You got the jitters justa ripplin’ offa you,” Maggy croaked from inside the tent.

It always unnerved Cersei when she said that shit, but she was never one to let that show. She stepped inside as she answered, “You sure that aint the funnel cake you scarfed down finally gettin’ around to digestin’?”

Maggy’s wry laugh came from under her messy mat of hair. “I’ve missed your sour tongue.”

“That’s cause you know I’m the only one who can pull you off your high horse.”

The cute college girls that had been surrounding the fortune teller’s table shifted uncomfortably in their seats, taking in Cersei head to toe. It was like they’d never seen an old lady before. Torn up jeans from rough riding, halter tops, and patched leather jackets were standard old lady attire. The makeup was because she had the time, and Kingslayer had complimented her on the glitter that one time. Who were they to judge with their preppy polos and mini skirts? Everyone knew the only difference between them and her was that Cersei at least found a real man to fuck her brains out. They were still parking with idiot frat boys, suffering through sloppy kisses and two left hands.

Not willing to waste another second on them, Cersei hissed in their general direction and laughed at the way they all got up and run. Girls—all of them. A real woman would have hissed back, stood her ground and told her she’d leave when she was good and ready to. They had a lot to learn in life if their biggest fear was a cuff upside the head.

“You’re costing me money, bitch,” Maggy cooed across the table. “Tell Maggy what you want. Is it about that handsome young man you’ve been laying with?”

“What do you know about him?” Cersei growled, not particularly liking what Maggy was insinuating.

Maggy picked up all the cards she’d had lain out for the sorority chicks. “You’re glowing. Of course it would be because of a cock. I don’t sense any money troubles, so with your bone structure, the cock does not belong to an ugly man.”

Cersei laughed because it was true, undeniably so. Ever since the Dragons freed her from Boar and gave her the pole, she found choice—in men, at least. The Dragons didn’t care who she
fucked, only that she earned them money. So anyone she welcomed to her bed was of her choosing, and they were always young, ripped, and for whatever reason—blonde. It was silly, but it seemed as though she had a type. Kingslayer fit that bill to a T, and added something to it—his smile. Fuck if he didn’t have a great smile. His canines, longer than some, reminded her of the great lion tattoo she faced each night they rumpled some sheets together.

Remembering that time was not on her side, Cersei decided not to mince words. “I got an old man now.”

“Oh.” Maggy smiled, knowingly. “And you’ve come to learn what you’ve gotten yourself into.”

Rather, who I’ve let get in me, Cersei thought to herself. “I like this one.”

“And the problem is?”

“Too much. I like him too much.”

Maggy raised and eyebrow as she handed the deck to Cersei, gesturing for her to shuffle. Cersei knew the drill, and shuffled it a few times before she cut the deck, and carefully turned one half up for her to see.

“Mm, he likes you too much, too.”

Cersei’s belly tightened at that. Of course he did, or he wouldn’t act like he did, but still—hearing Maggy confirming it only made her feel that fact even more. A warmth settled over her, knowing without question that the feeling was mutual.

“You talk better around him too,” Maggy added. “I can see it. Your words are cleaner.”

“What the fuck does that mean?” Cersei scowled.

Maggy chuckled and gestured for her to turn over the other side of the deck. “It means you try harder. Care what he thinks.”

“You know, you’d think that,” Cersei corrected, flipping the deck over. “But I don’t. It seems like no matter what I do, the fucking guy digs it.” One particular memory of him catching her peppering her pizza slice with pickle slices came to mind. He smiled and hugged her close, whispering that he liked putting pickles on his pizza too and thought they must be the only two people on the planet that did.

“All the more reason for you to push him away,” Maggy whispered as she waved her hand for Cersei to hand her the cards. She was flipping over a row of three before he said, “He’s the only man I see.”

Cersei chewed her lip. “I mean I tried fucking someone else the first chance I got, but it didn’t feel like it shoulda.”

“No.” Cersei shook her head. She didn’t know what Kingslayer would do if he ever found out about the horny husband from three doors down and fourteen small, hole-in-the-wall towns back, but she didn’t want to find out. It hadn’t meant anything—just an experiment. She’d never had a man own her so completely, and losing herself to someone else was scarier than she was willing to admit. When she bumped into him at the ice machine, she thought the man from room eight might be a good way to take her independence back. An hour later, as he was shimmying out her door and she stood alone in the shower, washing the smell of latex from between her legs, she didn’t
feel the independence she always craved before. Instead, she was filled with a guilt and shame she’d never felt before. In all the towns since, Cersei hadn’t bothered to try it again. “It just didn’t do it for me.”

Maggy smirked. “They call that monogamy.”

“Gross, make it stop,” Cersei half-teased.

“Sorry.” Her smile said she wasn't while her eyes widened over the cards. “This one’s special in many ways.”

Cersei’s brow wrinkled, knowing the woman saw more than that stupid picture of a set of match sticks on the last card she set down. “What the fuck does that mean?”

“Give me your hand,” Maggy commanded, an edge to her voice.

Cersei hesitated. “You don’t do palms no more, you said.”

“Now,” Maggy growled. “Let me see.”

Cersei lifted her hand, deciding it best not to refuse a gypsy woman that knew too many things when she shouldn’t. Inky black thumbs pressed into her hand, rubbing and smearing over each crease as Maggy drew it up inches from her face, her eyes wide. “Your lifeline is tied to his!”

For the second time, Cersei asked, “What the fuck does that mean?”

“He’s a part of you,” Maggy gasped. “No wonder you’re broken for other men.”

“Fuck you!” Cersei growled, ripping her hand free. She wasn’t broken, and fuck Maggy for saying she was. She just had preferences, was all. Her old man was good at what he did, and as long as he stayed that way, it made perfect fucking sense that Cersei didn’t feel the need to stray. She couldn’t explain the shitty feeling she got that one time she did, but that was water under the bridge.

Maggy flipped another card over and curiosity got the better of Cersei. “You think we’re tied because of the stamp I got for him?” She shifted in her chair, letting the hem of her shirt brush against it on her back, suddenly regretting it didn’t have any lions on it to match the one on his chest. He was done with that club, but he was still inked with them, and she wanted to match him in every way she could.

Maggy didn’t bother to ask what she was talking about, already knowing. “No. It’s deeper than words.”

“Hey, so is this,” Cersei gestured behind her. “This is ink and pain and forever.”

“Still, no.” Maggy’s brows drew together. “It’s even deeper than that. I can’t put my finger on it, but it’s like you’ve always been tied.”

“Always?” Cersei frowned. “I only just met the guy.”

Maggy held a hand up. “I see what I see.”

Cersei sighed. “And what else do you see?”

Another card flipped and Maggy drew a deep breath. “Stay away from his father.”

Easy done. She didn't know him, and figured she’d be saved the headache, on account of the fact
that bikers weren’t ones for family reunions. Feeling a touch more oppositional than necessary, and probably because she wanted Maggy to ask, she rolled her eyes and said, “Oh great. Another asshole father to deal with.”

Maggy smirked, quickly seeing through her rouse. “He contacted you lately?”

“Of course not,” Cersei answered quickly. “Not since I got rid of Boar.” Cersei’s father hadn’t been a fan of Boar, but he approved of her ditching him even less. “He's still pissed about that.” And fuck him for it. That deadbeat didn’t get much say in Cersei’s life, tossing her away as a baby, only checking in on her a couple times a year to make sure she wasn’t destitute. Though, she’d come close to enough times to think he might actually have forgotten about her. “But he still sends me cash here and there, so whatever.”

Desperately needing to change the subject, she added, “I'm off the pole--for now, at least.”

“Of course you are,” Maggy smirked. “Your Kingslayer won't share you. Wants all of you for himself--no trophy.”

Cersei swallowed. She’d never told Maggy his name.

As if sensing her unspoken question, Maggy chuckled. “It’s all in the cards, sweetheart. This deck is stacked with royalty.”

Another couple of cards flipped before Maggy shook her head. “Oh, girl. You gotta stop. You keep thinking you’re running game on him, but you’re not. It’s all real--realer than you ever had before. Give up your fight and fall into him.”

“It was my idea to stay together, you know,” Cersei said indignantly, because she didn’t need to be talked down to. Not in the short time she had before her old man got back.

“For your gain,” Maggy clarified, lifting a critical eye up from her cards. “You decided to wear his brand for your own gain, not for a love match.”

“Always,” Cersei snapped. “And I’ll never apologize for that.” She fist the necklace hanging between her breasts as she insisted, “I look out for me.”

Maggy wasn’t scared of her, and she proved it by not backing down, heaving an impatient sigh. “That was before.”

“Before what?” Cersei spat.

“Before you met your other half.” Maggy’s eyes glittered. “Very soon, you’ll protect this one like you would yourself.”

Time stopped--or at least, that’s how it felt in that stuffy green tent. Slowly the words started working their way out. “Other half?”

“Yes.”

Cersei eyed her skeptically, still feeling those words. “And just how much moonshine you been tossing back these days, Mags?”

Maggy’s arm came out from under the table, brandishing an old tin canteen with scarves tied around it. Taking a long pull, she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and offered it to Cersei as she confessed, “Not enough for the shit I see in your deck.”
“That doesn’t make me feel all warm and fuzzy,” Cersei said casually, forcing the anxiety out of her voice. “Maybe the drink will.”

Cersei tipped the canteen back and winced as the alcohol burned everything it touched, all the way down to her gut. Needing the attention off herself, she eyed the hickey on the fortune teller’s neck and chuckled. “Another Frenchman?”

There was a twinkle in her eyes as Maggy admitted, “They don’t call me Maggy the Frog for nothing.”

“Oh is that why they call you that?” Cersei teased.

Before Maggy could respond, Cersei’s phone buzzed loudly in her pocket.

Every ounce of humor left the fortune teller’s face as she gave a sharp order, “Don’t answer that.”

Cersei looked up at her, taken aback by her sudden intensity. “It could be my guy,” she explained as she pulled the phone from her pocket and looked down at the number.

“It’s not.” Maggy didn’t need to look to tell her that. “Don’t answer it.”

It was her father’s number, or at least the number he used whenever he felt like checking in on her. “It’s fine, it’s just my daddy,” she answered, her thumb hovering over the button.

“Who it is does not concern me,” Maggy growled, posturing more aggressively over her table. “Do not answer that call, not in my tent, and don’t ever answer it when you’re with your man.” She was like a cat hissing at the dark. Did she sense something? “Do you understand me?”

No.

Not really. What did Maggy care if Cersei talked to her father? Still, the warning in her voice was clear as day, and oddly eerie. “Yeah,” Cersei breathed, silencing the phone and pushing it back in her pocket. To break the sudden tension in the air, she said, “Fuck him. He can wait on me for a change.”

Maggy didn’t smile, only relaxed her shoulders a little. Cersei didn’t linger much longer after that, knowing she needed to get back to the motel before Kingslayer could miss her. Not wanting to deal with another horny truck driver insisting on head she had no desire to deliver, Cersei picked a few pockets on the fairgrounds to get the cash for a cab to take her as far as it would.

Once the driver reached his limits, she offered the man an extra fifty to turn off his gps and take her the eight extra miles back to the motel. He hesitated, eyeing her lips and she knew a month ago she wouldn’t have cared. Now, she seriously considered sucking. Squaring her shoulders, she glared at him through the rearview mirror and asked, “You wanna make fifty bucks or not?”

Luckily, that was enough to snap his dirty mind back to the task at hand. Maybe he hadn’t ever had a woman put him in his place before, and the novelty of it was enough to make him cooperate. A short ten minutes later, they were pulling into the motel parking lot. Cersei looked all over for Kingslayer’s bike and breathed easy when she didn’t see it.

It wasn’t as if she’d done anything wrong. That didn’t mean she particularly felt like explaining what she’d been up to, especially since she’d come back with more questions than she’d left with. In truth, it had been nice to see Maggy again, even if she could be a bit creepy. The gypsy was the closest thing to a friend she ever had. Cersei tried not to think what days of staring at peeling motel paper did to her social life.
A sharp pain shot through her skull when she reached for the light switch, and her knees gave out from under her. Sinking slowly to the ground, the bed in front of her kept going in and out of focus until she felt the carpet under her face and everything went black. She was scared but couldn’t scream, her mind going much too calm for the fact that though she hadn’t seen anyone, she knew she wasn’t alone anymore.

An hour could have passed or a whole day and she wouldn’t have known. When Cersei came to, she found herself bound to a chair in a dark room, a gag firmly in place, her bladder annoyingly full.

“Shut the fuck up, Hellcat!” A gravelly voice hollered. “It don’t matter it’s a chick.”

“The fuck it doesn’t! We don’t do this shit,” another voice answered.

“Look, I follow orders and Big T wants the bitch Kingslayer ditched his pappy for.”

Sounds like Maggy was right when she said not to talk to Kingslayer’s father. What was it with piss-poor excuses for daddies? Cersei would be more angry about that, if she wasn’t tied to a chair, her future in someone else’s hands.

“At least take the gag out of her mouth.” A tall blond man came into focus. Her eyes flew to the cut he wore--identical to Kingslayers. He was a Rocky Mountain Lion, a member of the MC her old man refused to return to, and looked a lot like her old man. Was he blood kin? “She’s not gonna scream,” he said with confidence.

“How do you know that?” The owner of the gravelly voice with a serious lack of moral code, edged in from the other side, wearing a matching cut. “Bitches get scared and scream.”

Because I’m not stupid, you shit for brains!

Hellcat walked forward and pulled the gag from her mouth, eyeing her as he answered, “Cause, Stupid, if she was gonna scream, she woulda tried that shit already. Aint that right sweetheart?”

Defiance roiled up through Cersei, begging her to spit in his face. Hellcat seemed a lot smarter than the other guy, but he was still holding her captive, so it wasn’t as if he was a saint. Survival forced her to swallow back the urge to bark, and she pressed her lips together, carefully nodding back her agreement.

Taking her compliance as evidence, Hellcat said over his shoulder, “See?”

“I-I-I,” she stuttered. Whispering real quiet, she promised, “I won’t tell no one anything. Let me go?”

There was a sadness in Hellcat’s eyes as he said, “Wish I could. Fuckin’ hate doin’ this to Jaime.”

Jaime?

Hellcat spoke evenly as he explained, “He’ll be along shortly-”

“And then it’ll all be over,” the asshole beside him cut him off to promise. If he thought he was offering her a kindness—trying to soothe her worries, he was sorely mistaken. He was the guy who said he didn’t care he had to steal a woman as leverage, so long as he was ordered to do it. What a waste of skin.

At least this Hellcat guy was conflicted about the matter. That didn’t mean he’d play white knight
for her—no, she supposed that role was reserved for her old man. And apparently whoever the fuck this Jaime guy was.

“Shut up, Torque,” Hellcat growled, not appreciating being cut off. “Big T wanted answers too. So let’s ask the lady some questions.”

“Lady,” Torque scoffed with his gravel pit voice. “Yeah, alright.” He turned to face Cersei and spat out, “Where’s Kingslayer been?”

Cersei was about to answer, when her chest suddenly tightened. She couldn’t roll on him, not after everything. If they killed her dead right here and now, that was alright. At least she got to know what it was like to be someone’s old lady at the end—*for real*, in every sense of the word. To be loved and kept the way Kingslayer showed her, it was worth whatever these fuckers would give her. Maggy’s voice sounded in her ears, *You’ll protect this one like you would yourself.*

The woman was always right. Cersei lifted her head to glare at him as she clenched her jaw shut.

“Answer me, bitch!” Torque screamed before hitting her.

Pain shot down her cheek and rattled her jaw, the warm burn of instant inflammation grew as her cheek swelled. Hellcat’s voice was softer as he asked, “Where did Kingslayer pick you up from? What’s he gotten himself into for you? Why won’t he come home?”

When she said nothing, Torque grabbed her hair and yanked her head back to bark down into her face, spit flying. “Better start talking, or I’ll find my own answers.” His grubby hand slid down her chest, over her belly and belt buckle to between her legs. She scowled at him as he cupped and squeezed through her jeans. His words were quieter and dipped in filth as he said, “Must be some prime pussy to steal our enforcer away. Wouldn’t mind a test drive myself.”

“That’s enough,” Hellcat growled.

“You think he’d want you after that?” Torque ignored his better, his hand moving to work her belt buckle free. “You’re fuckin’ hot, I’ll give ya that. But it won’t matter if you’re a goddamned ten once I’ve had you. No matter how pretty you are, no man wants spoiled goods.”

“Torque!”

“What?” He whined. “I was just tellin’ her the truth. We can solve this whole thing right now. I’ll fuck her and Kingslayer’ll go off her. Jaime’ll come home for good and Big T’ll finally calm the fuck down.”

Cersei started piecing two and two together: this Jaime and her Kingslayer were the same man. He’d said he didn’t want to share their god-given names, only wanted to be what they’d become. Yet, here these men were, tossing his name around like they’d known him since before he grew to be the biker that branded her as his. Maybe they did. Was this his family?

“The fuck I won’t!”

Her heart stalled in her chest, hearing her man’s voice thunder across the room. He was here! She’d been praying he’d come and save her, and there he was. Rage blazed through his eyes, his mouth curled into a snarl, and every muscle in his body flexed as he primed to pounce.
“Baby!” She screamed, because she needed to feel their connection and Torque’s words hit harder than they ought to have. The guy was a prick, but he was right. Men were territorial, maybe her old man really wouldn’t want her anymore if he thought she was worn and messy from another man.

The door flew open behind her and men in matching cuts started pouring in as Kingslayer rushed Torque. Cersei squirmed in her chair, watching his fists fly. He was beautiful in action, rage pumping raw throughout his body, muscles rippling, teeth clenched with each punch landed. His knuckles were unrelenting, and he had a speed about him that let him dance between targets, each one flying backwards. They kept recovering, staggering back up to throw themselves at him again, and he kept knocking them down, until there grew to be too many. Cersei wasn’t a fool, she knew this was a fight he wouldn’t win, as much as she needed him to. He was just one man against so many.

A pile of bodies pressed him to the wall (six total, that's what it took to keep him down) and the room quieted—all but his ragged breath and the sound of footsteps behind her. A familiar voice she couldn’t place said, “Had the pussy that took you away dragged back here. Knew you’d come for it.”

Cersei craned her head to get a look, unable to see the man that spoke over her and the MC brothers that held her old man down. The asshole stood just out of sight. Kingslayer growled, “Let her go. She’s my old lady, it’s my right!”

“No. You made the wrong choice, son. She took you away from your family--your responsibility,” the man insisted, pacing behind her, just out of eyesight. “You’ve been running the road like you could get away, but the club is forever. So isn’t family. Aint that right Hellcat?”

Hellcat’s head lowered. Cersei recognized the guilt in the gesture.

“You think I didn’t hear what you and Torque were jawing about before things got interesting?” The man snarled. “You stand with me or I’ll strip you of your patches myself!”

“Big T,” he quietly protested.

So this was Big T. Cersei had heard her old man talking about him on the phone from time to time, cigarette hanging out of his mouth as he paced outside their motel rooms. She hadn’t heard any details, just enough to know the man was bad juju, and it wasn’t surprising that he’d be the ringleader to their present circumstances.

“Dad, it don’t gotta be like this,” Kingslayer growled across the room.

Dad.

So Big T was his daddy.

No wonder Maggy warned her away from him. The son of a bitch was a real piece of work, kidnapping his son’s woman and threatening anyone around him who seemed even just a little decent.

“I think it might,” Big T replied easily. “Maybe if I let Torque and the boys fill your girl to the gills with Rocky Mountain Lion cum, you’ll move your ass along and get back to what’s important.”

Kingslayer--Jaime, gave inhuman growl and lunged forward. The crowd around him surged back in a wave, unprepared for the power behind his determination. Cersei looked on with pride
as they struggled to manage him again.

Big T continued to taunt, “Will you believe her when she tells you she hated it? With how many dicks your girl’s gonna take, she’s bound to take a liking to at least one of ‘em. Fuck, the back of her is pretty enough, maybe I’ll take her first.”

It was Cersei that growled that time, loathing even just the suggestion that she might take a shine to any member of her inevitable gang-bang. Heavy footsteps sounded behind her again, and she could hear the smile in Big T’s voice as he said, “Best get a better look at her, see if I’m gonna take her face up or face down.”

“Get fucked, you piece of shit!” She screamed at the boot that came into view, the rest of his body slow to follow.

“What the fuck?” His face dropped as he gaped at her, eyes as wide as saucers. “Cersei?”

And it all clicked into place—the voice, Maggy’s words. Her stomach lurched as she gasped, “Daddy?”

When Cersei was just eight years old, her parents took her to meet a man by the name of Tywin Lannister. He was rough around the edges, nothing like the clean cut suburban look of her parents—the Swyfts. He also didn’t look like anything ever scared him, and Cersei was drawn to that, on account of her own parents always shaking and shivering over any loud noise or sharp words. They were always looking over their shoulder, as if they were worried some asshole was gonna get the jump on their perfect vanilla lives at any moment. She couldn’t count how many times her mom left a shopping cart full of food behind because someone was walking too close at the grocers, or her father had run red lights because the car behind them had been the same one for miles.

At first she took their fear seriously, figuring they had good reason behind it. That was until her eighth birthday when they dropped her off with a complete stranger and told her she was supposed to obey, no matter what she was told to do. Luckily Tywin never wanted any of the stranger-danger things her teachers warned her about, just told her to play and watched before taking her out for a slice of pie. He was gruff and short with her, commenting on her appearance, or the things she said, never keeping her company more than an hour or so.

It wasn’t until she was twelve that she got the courage to stop him before he left, accusing, “You’re my daddy, aren’t you?” He stilled but didn’t deny it, and she smiled, “Good.”

That got him to raise his brow at her. “You think so?”

“Yeah,” she said, seriously. If she had a choice in father, Tywin was much more worthy of the job than the father she’d known all her life. “No way Harris could really be my daddy. Man can’t find his balls, even though they’re attached.”

Tywin chuckled. It was the only time she’d ever seen the man crack a smile, let alone laugh. Pulling himself together, he wiped a tear from his eye and asked, “And your momma?”

“If you’re my daddy, she doesn’t look much like your type,” she answered honestly. Cersei had never seen him with a woman, but doubted sweater sets and khakis were really his thing.

“Your eyes work. That’s good,” he complimented. “But you speak even when it’s best you not,” he admonished. “Learn how to pay attention without shooting off at the mouth, and you’ll do alright.”

He left before Cersei could do more than consider his words of wisdom, much less ask why he
threw her away. After that, he stopped coming once a month, and only showed up a handful of times a year. Sometimes, he didn’t even talk to her, only watched her walk home from school, or hang out on the playground after school shut down, smoking dope and tagging abandoned cars and abandoned buildings. He never interfered, probably deeming her shit typical for childish rebellion.

He was furious the first time he caught her on a bike with a boy. All the while he chewed her out, beating the piss out of her high school crush, she felt his love. It smelled like smoke and leather and motor oil. It was another year before she realized he hadn’t been upset because he wanted the best for her, so much as he didn’t respect any punk in an adidas windbreaker riding a Honda Supersport. After that he only called to check in.

Angry at the world, Cersei ran out on the Swyfts when she was fifteen and wondered for a hot minute if Tywin would show up on the doorstep of whatever couch she was crashing on to give her the what for. To her surprise—and disappointment, he hadn’t. Instead, his visits changed to phone calls. All of which were from the same number, that when she called, it never picked up. It had to be a burner phone, one she fantasized he might have gotten just for her. Money came after that. He made her write bank numbers down one night, told her if she needed anything to just make a withdrawal. It was the closest to an apology she ever got—whether for leaving her with her with the Swyfts or just leaving her in the first place, she wasn’t sure.

That was all then.

Back when there was nothing on the line.

He was just a shitty dad who gave her away, and couldn’t help himself from checking in.

She was just a thrown away kid, aching for her daddy to love her, despite the fact he wouldn’t.

And now...now they were face to face, surrounded by his men, deep in the heart of his MC. He wanted her dead. No—not dead, raped and dead. For what purpose? To keep his son—the child he kept, in line.

His son.

Which could only mean that Kingslayer—Jaime was…

No.

Fuck, no.

She turned her head and locked eyes with his. Green like hers, greedy like her fathers. “No,” she gasped, because she couldn’t seem to form any other word when she croaked a noise.

His eyes closed, confirming his guilt.

He knew.

He fucking knew.

Her old man—that piece of shit, motherfucking son of a bitch.

“Hellcat!” Tywin growled, obviously realizing the same thing.

Hellcat whipped his head back, at complete attention, awaiting orders.
“Teach this whelp some respect!”

Was it respect that Jaime really needed to learn? Or was that just something convenient that Tywin could say in front of his crew? It wasn’t as if the truth wasn’t out the minute she called him what he was: her daddy. They all knew her and Jaime had been fucking daily since he left them. Brother and sister...oh god.

“No,” a voice she didn’t recognize sounded from behind her. “I don’t think that’s called for.”

Whoever it was, he spared her the theatrics of standing behind her as long as her father had, and instead came around quickly. He was a little man, bearded and wielding a pistol in his tiny hand.

“Jesus, fuck, Yolo,” Torque growled from his place in front of Jaime. “Drop the heat.”

“You’re not going to shoot,” Tywin said with a confidence she didn’t particularly feel. “Not family.”

“Try me,” the small man named Yolo said. Then he glanced over to Kingslayer, “You okay, brother?”

Brother?

“Not especially,” Kingslayer hissed from under the wall of men that restrained him.

“Didn’t think so,” Yolo admitted. “Don’t worry, I got you.”

Tywin huffed. “Not quite, son.”

Son. He’d said that before and meant it as family relations, not just an expression. Was this another brother?

Cersei’s heart thumped in her chest. She listened to him say, “Guess again, old man.”

Thunder cracked through the musty air around them as she watched her father’s surprised expression, and the way he slowly sunk down to the floor. Yolo was little but his aim was true. She’d always hate him for murdering her fairweather father, and she’d always appreciate the way he saved her from him too. In a single moment, a stranger had become her brother and likewise an enemy and a savior.

Jaime roared from across the room, breaking through the wall of men that had held him. In the wake of losing their leader, they crumbled, unsure of what move to make next. Her man--brother, was on his knees clutching at his father, trying to press the blood back in the wound.

Yolo said nothing as he stood over him, watching his--their brother clutch him close. Ever so slowly, he turned his head to her. He didn’t speak a word as he looked at her, tilting his head to better inspect her features. She knew he must have heard what their father called her--what she called him. His tone was low, his voice controlled as he said, “My name is Tyrion.”

Unsure of how to respond to the introduction, she only said, “You killed Daddy.”

“Yes,” he breathed. “He was gonna kill Jaime, and I couldn’t let that happen.”

“No,” Jaime cried. His voice was hoarse, hovering over his father’s slack jaw and dead eyes as he said, “He wouldn’t of.”
Cersei had the very real feeling that he might have. Not just Jaime, but her too. Both of them, if for no other reason than his own disgust. Yolo--Tyrion shook his head, “Yes, he was.” He glanced over at Cersei as he added, “Cause of what you both did.”

“We didn’t know,” Cersei said, almost pleading. “He would have forgiven us,” she lied, hoping it was true and glad Tywin couldn’t exactly speak up to prove her wrong.

Tyrion looked between Jaime and her, and pain flashed over his face. “No. I’m afraid not. No one’s going to forgive you for this.”

Her stomach crashed into her heart. Surveying the room around them, people’s stares ranged from confusion to disgust. Only Hellcat’s seemed somehow sorry. Big T was done and the MC was without direction, staring straight into the eyes of blasphemy.

The little man was right.
“No one’s going to forgive you for this.”

Yolo’s words bored through Jaime’s skull, cutting straight through to what he’d been trying to squirrel away from the world. A quick glance down to his father’s lifeless body only seemed to confirmed things. Tyrion wouldn’t have taken things so far if he didn’t believe with all his heart that he had to.

Jaime drew a deep breath, and thought about Majesty, tied to the chair a few feet away. An hour ago she was his woman and he was on a mission to get her back from whatever stupid fuckface tried to take her in the first place. A minute ago, she was his long lost sister, and he was the pervert who took advantage. Now what were they?

Anything at all?

The idea that they might not be was too much to bear. Would she hide from him now? Change her name and run at the sound of a Harley?

The sheer fact that his father had just died and he was more worried about the girl he’d been coming inside each night--and happened to share his momma’s womb with, said it all right there. He was a piece of shit if he’d ever met one. Jaime should have been thinking about Big T first, his MC second, and then if he had anything left, he could worry about his dick and the woman tending it.

Was she alright? Or had what he’d done fucked her head up as much as he had her pussy? Did the poor girl even have a chance at a normal life, remembering all the things she let him do to her, not knowing any better? God, how she must hate him now.

Jaime lifted his chin, forcing himself to face her, to meet her eye. She had every right to hate his guts, and cause he couldn’t do anything to fix what he’d done, he’d at least let her better look at her betrayer. He would let her memorize his features so when someone asked her who ruined her life, she could describe him to a T.

Those gorgeous greens stared back at him and he felt everything all at once. Her pain and hate and--wait, was that love? Was that what that softness was? No. Couldn’t be. Unless it was for Big T, laying dead in his lap. He was her daddy too, after all. No way was she looking at him with any sort of warmth, only cold-blooded hate and disgust. Fuck, he looked at himself in the mirror the same half the time.

And the other half ...well, shit. He saw the happiest man alive. How could he possibly tell her that?

Something in her eyes promised she knew more than anyone else in her shoes might. Maybe the blood they shared would help her see that he hadn’t meant any harm. Then again, if she shared anything with him it was probably a mind for hate and vengeance rather than forgiveness.
“Jaime,” she breathed. Not ‘Kingslayer’ as he’d introduced himself to her, or ‘baby’ as she called him between sweaty sheets, but ‘Jaime’. What the fuck did that mean?

Before he could think on it too long, one of his steel horse-riding brothers hollered, “Sister-fucker!”

And then all hell broke loose.

Jaime peeled himself away from Big T just fast enough to avoid the crowd that had turned to pile on him. Yolo popping off shots above his head, sounded almost underwater as Jaime ignored the stray punches he took trying to get to Majesty. His or not, she was still tied to a chair, vulnerable to fuck-nuts like Torque and any other brother who decided to think with their dick.

With a shaky hand, Jaime reached for his blade, snapping it free from its sheath. Another gun’s shots rang through the air and he knew Yolo now lacked the advantage. He’d care about that in a minute—if it could wait so long. Right now his only reason for breathing was to free his woman—no, sister, fuck! It was hard to imagine her any other way than how he’d had her each and every night since he met her. Jaime cursed himself as he sliced through the zip ties that bound her, first her wrists and then her ankles.

The girl flew into action, jumping up out of the chair. For the briefest of seconds, she locked eyes with him. As expected, their shared look wasn’t exactly warm. To his surprise, her eyes weren’t exactly frosty either. Jaime’s brow wrinkled, trying to say all the things he couldn’t bring voice to—not in the middle of a firefight. I’m sorry. I know it’s wrong. I don’t want it to stop, even though I know it needs to.

What would she say to that last one?

Get lost sleaze-bucket, most likely. And who could blame her?

Yolo appeared in the corner of his eye, his small hands pushing a pistol into Majesty’s grip. He screamed at her, “Kill anyone who aint Jaime and me.”

And there it was.

Whatever his little brother thought of him, he was there. Tyrion stood at his side, heavily outnumbered, and severely in the wrong. A quick glance back to Majesty had her raising the gun and popping shots off. Jaime ducked as one of his former club brothers barrel-assed for him. Majesty’s aim wasn’t the best, the kickback throwing her arm all over the place, but at least she hadn’t turned the gun on him for defiling her perfect body.

The room was so small and the men were so few that this skirmish hadn’t lasted long. It helped that a lot of them hadn’t been packing, thinking a girl tied to a chair wasn’t much a threat before they barged in. Before Jaime knew it, he was caught in a standoff with Hellcat, however. Just the two of them left, Yolo and Majesty stood off to the side, their own guns raised. For how little they were trained he worried they might actually shoot him on accident if they had cause to fire. Jaime took careful steps toward Majesty, standing in front of her and backing up, obstructing her view. He wanted her to lower her gun, and didn’t want to give Hellcat any clear shots either.

He ignored the little grumbles of discontent behind him. What did he care if she was put out, if it meant she was safe? Yolo shifted beside him, turning more away from him as he kept his aim on their uncle—again, having his back in everything.

“Stand the fuck down!” Jaime barked at his uncle, the man who gave him his first condom and helped him fix up his first bike.
Hellcat flicked his gaze down to Big T’s body, his lip curling before he met Jaime’s eye again. He was in pain over his brother, no doubting it. Hellcat was Veep because Big T believed in treating his family right, graduating them up the ranks. Jaime’s uncle wasn’t a natural born leader and had always followed his brother’s lead, forgiving all his piss-poor decisions to avoid the responsibility of having to make similar ones. Jaime had been made Enforcer because Big T wouldn’t have his son in the club without a title, but he had earned it too. He killed the best and most, and cleaned his messes.

What no one seemed to see, was that Jaime had lead their men in each and every fight. Like Big T, he’d had to make hard decisions too. Probably more than Hellcat. Yet Jaime was an enforcer and his uncle got all the rewards of Veep with none of the responsibilities, so long as Jaime kept everyone in line.

On more than one occasion Hellcat drunkenly shared that it made him feel like a fraud. He was miserable, but things were how Big T wanted them. How Hellcat allowed. And how Kingslayer accepted. Yolo always did his own thing and didn’t pay anyone any mind cause he didn’t have any more patches to protect than what came on the club cut. No one would ever promote a man who couldn’t ride.


Hellcat glared at him, his jaw tightening over the barrel of his piece.

“Hell, I am too,” Jaime confessed. That didn’t mean he’d let him hurt Majesty for it.

As if sensing his weakness, Hellcat said nothing, only cocked his gun.

“I’m still your Enforcer,” Jaime growled, praying his uncle’s need for order and rank would take over at any minute. Hellcat was above him unless things got martial, like they were now. “And I’m telling you to stand the fuck down.”

“Yeah and I’m still Veep, you little shit,” Hellcat spat.

Well, ask and ye shall receive. Jaime wanted him to see rank again, and he had--pulling it.

“Are you?” Yolo asked, his gun trained on Hellcat. “Is anyone anything anymore?”

The Veep was caught, no answer to give. The quiet ate them all like hungry buzzards ignoring the corpses in favor of fresh meat. Majesty’s soft body pressed against Jaime, and he knew he’d backed up too far, pinning her between himself and the wall. He’d take a step forward if he were a better man, but the feel of her chest rising and falling against his back was heavenly. It was probably the last time he’d ever get to feel her again, so like a greedy selfish bastard he planted his feet firmly in the ground.

It seemed no one dare speak but Yolo. “I look around here and I only see family.”

“You know he was gonna do something real bad,” Tyrion argued, making it a point to glance over behind Jaime. “You know it, Uncle Kev.” Jaime knew he used his given name and relation to tug on his heartstrings. If anyone could feel such a pull, it was Hellcat. Big T had used his brother’s heart against him for years. “Family or not, he kidnapped a chick--you know that’s not how we ride.”

It wasn’t.
All growing up, Big T said they were a cut above the rest. Their club didn’t traffic people, only powder. They sure as shit didn’t rough up girls. All the club whores were there by choice, and Big T even had a deal with a nurse in town to make sure they got checked up regularly so they were clean for the boys when they needed to blow off a little steam. Kidnapping and gangbanging women wasn’t the kinda shit Rocky Mountain Lions were down for.

Kevan knew that.

He’d been around when Big T took over, made the rules. It was why taking Majesty hadn’t sat right with him, making Big T threaten to strip his patches if he didn’t obey. Hellcat rubbed the sweat off his brow with back of his hand. “Say I agree with you. Don’t mean I agree with what you done. People fuck up all the time, make bad calls. Don’t mean they need to be put down for it.”

“He was going to kill them,” Yolo insisted. With his free hand, he pointed behind Jaime. “And he would have done a damn sight worse to her.”

“No,” Hellcat argued. “She was his little girl. He loved her. Checked in on her.”

“He what?” Jaime hadn’t expected to hear that. His father gave his twin sister away, no way would he be ‘checking in’ on her after throwing her away like a fucking piece of trash. That wasn’t true. Couldn’t have been.

Any standard that man had set when he took over the club, it wasn’t cause he was a good samaritan, so much as he liked to look good. If he could bring himself to ditch a baby, then it wasn’t love that made him look at after it later.

“Big T had more brains than heart,” Yolo said rather diplomatically. “Aint nothing wrong with that—it’s what made him such a good Prez for so long. But fact is, he didn’t love her or he wouldn’t-a tossed her.” Yolo was speaking Jaime’s mind as he said, “He only checked in on her because he knew one day she’d be worth something to him.”

Her words rang in Jaime’s head, I wasn’t very keen on the idea of being his old lady, not that it mattered to him.

Boar.

That smelled of Pop for sure.

“You know I’m right.”

Hellcat sighed, his arm wavering as he said, “None of this is right.”

Another moment of silence passed before Hellcat squeezed his eyes shut and sucked in a hard breath. Jaime braced himself for the pull of a trigger, his heart galloping in his chest, every muscle drawn taut as if flexing alone could somehow stop a bullet from piercing through. Hellcat lowered his gun and stuffed it in the back of his pants. “None of this is right,” he repeated. “And there’s no one left to judge.”

Jaime released the breath he was holding in, letting his own arm drop as his uncle stormed past him. He’d ask where he was going, but it didn’t matter. Majesty was safe and sound, and his club was dead. Her small hands pressed against his shoulder blades and he knew she needed him to move. With no excuse to stay put, he ripped himself off her quickly, knowing if he went slow about it, he’d be tempted to turn. He couldn’t let himself do that–couldn’t look her in the eyes.

A sick cackle came from down below. Jaime glanced over at his little brother loosely clutching his
piece and laughing at the floor. Adrenaline affected everyone different and it seemed it made Yolo lose his head a bit once the hostilities ceased.

*Let him laugh,* Jaime thought to himself. He had done what he’d come to. He’d saved the girl. Now it was time to fuck off. Each foot charged ahead of the other as he made his way out of the back storage room. This had been his clubhouse, he knew the layout. Ten more steps and he’d be at the bar.

A bottle of whiskey sat warm on the counter and Jaime snatched it up as he stomped by, deeming now as good a time as any to get downright shit-housed. He’d kept a room on the second floor cause he was always single, never seeing the need to take on an apartment outside of the club like half the other guys. The clubhouse was as much a barracks as it was a club, and as enforcer he always stayed hunkered down there with his men. Being that he was gone less than a couple of weeks, he doubted Big T had given it away. Especially not since he wanted him back so bad.

Bad enough to do what he did.

Jaime was up the stairs in a second, taking his third swig straight from the bottle. The first one had puckered his lips and curled his tongue, but by the time he’d flung his door open, it didn’t taste half as bad. Jaime slammed the door shut as loud as he could because he wanted to break everything in sight and the door seemed like a good start. Taking another long drink, he kicked his boots off, telling himself he was less likely to fuck up some shit if he was barefoot. The world had fallen apart, and crashing a lamp into the wall or throwing his nightstand out the window wouldn’t fix it.

Jaime ripped his cut off and flung it on the floor. He had half a mind to flip his dick out and take a piss all over it. *Fuck this club. Fuck life before her.* Everything his father did had been for the club, and what had it done to him? Killed every ounce of father in him to make room for the Prez he was.

Suddenly feeling too confined, Jaime tugged his shirt off and stared at his chest in the mirror, meeting the great lion on it eye to eye. All his father’s lies had been inked deep in his flesh, and there was no getting away from that. Jaime took another swig as he pulled his knife free and brought it to his chest. He’d lifted the blade to mar the markings when there was a knock at his door.

He blinked, checking to see if he’d heard what he thought he heard. The knock came again and Jaime knew only Tyrion would dare intrude at a time like this. “Fuck off, brother.”

“Not your brother,” Majesty’s soft voice sounded from the other side.

Panic washed through him. He thought she’d be long gone first chance she got. Hell, that was half why he couldn’t look at her as he stomped away, couldn’t watch her leave. He startled when she spoke again, “But, apparently, I am your sister.”

“He scoffed, “You know why.”
“Cause you’re sad about Daddy?” Her question was innocent enough, a sister checking in on her brother. Fuck, it didn’t feel that way though. “Sad about your club?”

“Sure,” he said as he stood, wobbling to stay upright. Those comfort-shots of whiskey he’d taken on the way up the stairs added up fast. “Get on outta here, Majesty.”

“Cersei,” she corrected.

That was a punch in the gut if he’d ever felt one.

Jaime pursed his lips and looked away when she turned the doorknob and entered his room. She could stand in front of him, inches away and he wouldn’t look at her.

He hadn’t wanted to hear her name, but he knew he needed to. How fucked up was he that he could watch his own brother kill his father, take part in the bloodbath that ended his whole club, and at the end of it all, he was only really tore up about the pussy he’d never get to fuck again? He was a no-good piece of shit savage for it.

She deserved better.

Not that it mattered what either of them deserved. Everything was over now. Jaime brought the bottle to his lips again, his mouth dry with it all. He could see her moving closer to him out of the corner of his eye and he wished she wouldn’t.

“You knew.” Her words were soft accusation.

He pulled the bottle away and swallowed to say nothing in return. Her hand came up, candy apple red nail polish shimmering in the light that shone through the curtain over his window. Night had turned to day and the change brought no relief or fresh start. Jaime watched her fingers fall out of focus as she touched his face. “You let this happen between us,” she whispered.

Jaime felt the full weight of his shame. “I made it good for you,” he spat, refusing to throw himself at her feet or wallow in his wrongdoing. He’d save that for later when he’d hide behind the four walls of his mind and let them close up.

What had she come up here for? What did she even want--for him to cut his dick off as penance? Jesus, he just might. The one time he let it off it’s leash, it landed him in a world of hurt. Through gritted teeth Jaime fought back--against who, he wasn’t sure. “It’s not as if you didn’t want it neither.”

Her hand slid from his cheek to his throat, her thumb rubbing gently back and forth over his adam’s apple. Her eyes grew wide as she watched it bob, her lips parting.

“Don’t try to deny it,” he breathed.

“I’m not,” she admitted, and he believed her.

His pants tightened when her other hand came to rest on his ribs, and he wondered if he could ever be around her without his cock taking over. He’d have to learn, or he’d lose her, and he wasn’t sure which option he could live with better.

“Jesus, we’re so much alike,” she breathed. “I never saw it before, but you’re like me, ‘cept…” She trailed off, her eyes cataloguing all his features.

“With different parts,” he finished, knowing exactly what she’d say, cause he’d thought it too.
“Hey!” Her eyes went wide. “When’s your birthday?”

“Why?” He asked, not wanting her to know they came into this world together. It was dumb. It’s not like being twins was really any greater of an offense.

“Cause I don’t know nothing about you.” She glanced away and a shy smile spread over her lips. “Nothing a sister should know anyway…”

She looked so innocent—and guilty, wearing that embarrassed-for-knowing smile. Blood rushed south just looking at it. She was a witch—had to be. No other way she could have such an affect on him. Needing to get off the subject of her on him, Jaime coughed out his birthday.

“That’s my birthday!”

Jaime said nothing.

Quick on the uptake, her face dropped, resentment replacing her excitement. “But you knew that, didn’t you?”

Again he said nothing, only lifted the bottle back to his lips.

She snatched it out of his hand, frowning as she asked, “What else do you know I don’t?”

Jaime reached for the bottle and cursed when she held it away from him. She scowled as she took a swig herself and set it on the table by the door. He bit his tongue, holding back all the little similarities and differences he’d been noticing since he saw her license. Not letting his silence be the only answer, she pressed a hand to his chest, feeling his heart through his shirt. “Come on, Jaime. Tell me what I’ve been missin’.”

Maybe it was because she used his real name, or maybe it was because she insisted and had a right to know. He wasn’t sure exactly what it was that made him list off the handful of things he’d been keeping to himself, but figured it didn’t really matter. She looked surprised by some, chuckled at a few, and simply nodded at the rest.

When he couldn’t take it anymore, he growled, “Doesn’t that make you sick?”

She stood quiet, letting her eyes alone question his meaning.

Feeling like an ass for getting angry when all she wanted was answers, he lowered his voice and admitted, “Your smile--it’s love. The wrong kind…”

Cersei sounded sad as she asked, “You been dealing with this the whole time? Alone.”

Of course she would know he was suffering. She and he were two halves of a whole, just not the way he’d originally thought. Jaime was surprised when she leaned forward, and pecked a light kiss to his jaw. Not his forehead like a mother, or his cheek like a sister, but his jaw--like a lover. “You’re so strong,” she praised--actually praised him. “Do you know that?”

People had been telling him he was strong for years, it was the only thing he was good at. He’d cut his muscles on doughy pieces of shit he’d been pit against since before his balls dropped. Big T pushed him into fights, callusing his knuckles on the unworthy, all the while growling in his ear, “Let them hear you roar, boy!” Tywin would have the world know that his son wasn’t one to fuck with, and he would throw him in the pit to mould him into the badass he expected.

She wasn’t talking about that kinda strength, though. He knew that, so he wasn’t surprised when she kept talking, “Knowing all this shit, while feeling all the other…” Her words trailed off and he
looked up, driven from his memories. What was she going to say?

Jaime swallowed as his hand--with a mind of its own, went for the small of her back. The waist of her jeans and the hem of her tight crop-top didn’t meet, leaving her a little exposed. His fingers danced in the space between cotton and denim, relishing the warmth of that smooth skin. Excitement rippled through him when he felt goosebumps form under his fingertips. It was torture not to dip below her belt and take more, but feeling the tattoo--the inked skin a little rougher, stopped him. He’d put that there. Guilty, he cleared his throat and admitted, “I know a guy who can cover that up.”

She looked confused at first, then her eyes widened when his meaning clicked and she seemed sad over the idea of losing it because she said, “I don’t want it covered.”

He hadn’t expected that. She was supposed to hate him forever for doing that to her, making his mark. Didn’t she get what it meant to wear his name on her? Sure seemed like she did before, but the fact she still wanted it now made him wonder. Unless… Unless she was struggling too.

Like the beast he was, his dick twitched at the thought that she’d willingly keep that connection to him. If he wasn’t sure he heard her right the first time, she confirmed, “I don’t want it to go away.” They were standing so close now, and he could feel her breath against his lips. “What we did…”

Heat rolled over him, his blood pumping fast in his veins, watching her eyes grow heavy, her lips so goddamned close. Fighting the urge to snatch her up and pretend it was still yesterday, Jaime whispered, “Cersei…”

He couldn’t get another word in before her lips were on his. There was no resisting it either--he couldn’t even try. It was exactly what he’d wanted but was too chicken-shit to say. Her lips were soft and wet and she moved knowing exactly how he needed. His hips rolled into her, giving in almost as quick as his mouth. His hands were heavy on her hips, mashing her up onto him and holding her there.

It wasn’t until her hands reached for his belt that he was able to just barely say, “We can’t.”

She shook her head and his fingers tightened. His grip was hard enough to bruise and he regretted it, but he told himself it was to stop bigger regrets later. “No,” he growled, choking off the demanding pulse in the head of his dick.

Breathing just above a pant, she asked, “Do you love me?”

“What?”

“Do. You. Love. Me?”

Her hands went to his wrists and clamped down on them, refusing to let him go. Jaime was certain she was going to push him off her. It wasn’t like she shouldn’t have. Still, he couldn’t bring himself to lie to her. “Yes.”

“More than any other woman you’ve ever had?” She asked, her hands prying his off her hips.

He knew she would shake free, but that didn’t make it any easier. Jaime had never had another woman, but damned if he was gonna tell her that--not with his hands empty and his stomach churning. Walking the line, he admitted, “Yeah.”

She stared through him as she spoke, as if she was seeing all the men that had ever touched her before. Damn her for remembering what he’d worked too hard for her to forget. A wave of jealousy rippled down his spine and he wanted nothing more than to hunt each one of the
cocksoxskers down. Soft words, like a light melody sung through the rage and jolted his heart. “I love you too.”

Her words yanked him back to attention, leaving behind all the fistfights he hadn’t yet gotten to start. A wry smile played across her lips as she said, “Maybe we’re the only ones who can really love because of it.”

“Meanin’?”

Her eyes were bright, calling to him. He didn’t dare try reaching for her, wanting to respect the way she shook free--laid the lines. That respect was slipping right out the window, however, the minute he heard her work her own belt buckle between them. What the hell was she up to? Jaime didn’t dare look down as she said, “Meanin’ most people fuck, but that don’t mean they love each other.” Her hands went to one of his. No longer casting it aside, she held it tightly as she said, “Family loves each other.”

Not quite following her, he furrowed his brow, trying to understand.

“Maybe the only way to really love the person you fuck, is to share their blood.”

Her words were twisted and wrong, but the same kinda wrong as his. He prayed she was like him, ‘cause he could live with himself then. But thinking maybe she was just broken over what happened, destroyed any sense of hope he might have had that maybe he wasn’t.

“What are you saying?” He asked, knowing it was best he find out now if that was the case.

She pulled his hand back to her, and slid it under her panties as she confessed, “I don’t wanna stop being your old lady.”

Jaime gulped, his balls tightening as he held her pussy in the palm of his hand. “This is wrong.”

“It’s harder to be right,” she countered with an edge of determination in her voice.

“Aren’t you sick over this?” He couldn’t stop himself from stroking her, especially not since she was practically purring for him as he did.

“A little.” Her breath caught as he let his fingertips find her slick skin. This time, it was her hips that rolled, driving herself further into his touch. “Not as much as when I think about you doing this to some other piece of ass.”

Fuck.

He never wanted to do this to anyone else. Not as long as she kept making those sounds and saying those things. Jaime hadn’t had women before her, but seeing how easily she trembled in his hand he knew he was good at it--good at her. What was the point in fucking someone else, someone he didn’t know, someone who wouldn’t feel like she did?

“You can’t be saying you wanna keep fuckin’?” He doubted, and prayed she’d argue. “Knowing what we are.” Even then, with that disgusting question hanging in the air, he drove the heel of his hand hard against her clit. It was all just so fucking automatic.

She pulled her shirt off revealing her tangerine bra shimmering underneath. Amples breasted spilled over the demi-cups. Caught looking at them, Jaime hardly heard her ask, “What are we, Jaime?”

He couldn’t help it, couldn’t tear his gaze away. They looked so good, so full. He wanted nothing more than to squeeze them in his palms, and suck them deep in his mouth like he used to. Jaime
would bury his face between them and hide from the world if he could. He couldn’t stop his fingers from parting her folds to run the length of her seam. Hating himself for it, he said, “You know what we are.”

Cersei held his face as she said, “I know that I don't see you as a brother, only a man.”

She breathed fire across his lips and he drove two fingers inside, aching to replace his hand with his cock.

“Fuck me, Jaime,” she moaned into him. There was a desperation in her eyes that he knew all too well. Knuckle-deep inside the only woman he had ever wanted—and knew he only ever would, Jaime felt the last thread of his resolve tear apart. Her words pardoned all his crimes, “We’ll take this twin shit as it comes.”

Finding his voice, Jaime wet his lips to speak. He needed her to know what she was asking. “If we do this, right here right now, you're mine.” Neither of them could claim ignorance anymore. “Ain't no going back on this.”

Cersei was a smart girl; she got that. To prove it she clenched her pussy tight around his fingers in agreement. Jaime pictured them together on his bike, out in the open for the world to see. It was too good to be true and some fucknut would have a problem with it. Would she run when assholes had something to say? It was a floodgate he didn’t need open if she wasn’t gonna face the tidal wave with him. “I mean it. You let me have you like that again, and I can't deal with not having you anymore.”

Cersei kissed him deeply. He wasn’t a fool—he knew she was priming him for what she needed to say. “You came up here, and left me downstairs without you.” He hung his head guilty. “We were both so alone and that was wrong. Even for a minute, it felt wrong. We're not supposed to be apart, not now that we found each other.” Her hands moved for his belt and dove in for his cock, giving it a squeeze as she whispered, “You can have me however you want, just as long as you don't push me away again. I'm yours, baby."

Jaime closed his eyes and rest his forehead against hers as he drew a shaky breath, her fist around him stroking while his fingers dug deeper inside her.

They were buying themselves an express ticket to hell.

“Take your pants off and get on the bed.” Jaime’s voice shook as he said it and he hoped that fact wouldn’t change her mind.

It didn’t.

She shimmied out of her jeans and watched him shuck his pants from over her shoulder as she made for the bed. Jaime took his dick in his hand as he approached, eyeing the light dusting of golden hair between her legs—not too much and not too little. She was perfect and what was between them wouldn’t change that. As he stood at the edge of the bed, she reached for his balls, gripping them gently. Her mouth was on him before he could blink and he coughed in surprise at how hard she sucked. “Jesus, Cers-”

She let up long enough to tease, “Let’s leave Jesus out of it, baby.”

Jaime was about to respond when she was on him again, her tongue working wonders. The golden crown of her head, bobbing back and forth over him, stole his whole attention. It was like staring straight into sunlight—so fucking beautiful it hurt. Tightening his jaw to the tingle and twitch of his cock, Jaime ran a hand through the spun gold locks and smiled down to her. “I told
you to get on the bed, didn’t say to suck me senseless.”

He was still smiling from another long glorious stroke of her tongue when she lifted her head and said, “I suck at listening.” She held her tongue out to tease the tip of his dick, red and pulsing. “I guess I need my old man to put me in my place.”

If her hair was sunset, her eyes were wildfire. There was no controlling this woman, but damned if he wouldn't light her fire and let the blaze consume him.

“Up on your knees.”

Grinning, she was quick to comply. Her legs parted a little, just enough to see the small plush of her pussy between her thighs and the pink line of pleasure that ran a highway down her middle. Jaime spent his life on his bike, making club runs up and down the road, and his tongue was no different—just itching to travel.

He hadn't noticed at first but she was staring over her shoulder, waiting for him to make his move. Jaime flashed her a smile and reached for her ass, letting it fill his palm. “Good girl,” he praised.

Good for obeying.
Good for wanting this.

Good for looking so fucking gorgeous wearing his brand above her ass. He held his hand between her legs, not touching, just hovering there. Heat radiated off her and lapped against his palm. Jaime had to give his cock a little pressure to relieve the ache that got worse knowing how bad she wanted it. He knew if he pushed his fingers back in her, she'd be soaking wet and ready to take him.

“Well?” She asked over her shoulder. “You gonna keep me in line?”

It was all the permission he needed. Without another thought, Jaime spanked a hand across her ass and she gasped. Cersei wasn’t a woman any man could control. She did what she wanted—or he wouldn't be having her right now. That didn't mean she didn't like it when he took the reins in the sack, and he knew it. He’d learned that all those nights in shitty motel rooms when she teased and toyed and always opened up for him.

PROPERTY OF KINGSLAYER, stared up at him as he gave the other cheek a sting to remember him by. *That's goddamned right*, he thought to himself. *You're still mine, Cersei. Bodies don't lie, neither do hearts*.

The world could call him sick for this and he couldn't care. If anything, it was the man above that had a screw loose for putting such thoughts and feelings in brothers and sisters.

She was moaning and panting something fierce when he stopped and he could see her pussy glistening for him. *Don't worry, baby. I always take care of what's mine*, he silently promised before pressing a kiss to his brand on her flesh. As soon as he pulled his lips from her, he ran the head of his cock over her slick skin, rubbing to find her opening. There was no warning, no going slow. Once he found her, his dick took over with a little help from his hips.

His heart hammered in his chest looking down to see her take him down to the balls, the rounds of her reddened ass snuggled up to the V of his pelvis. His hands found her hips and held her there, wouldn't let her move. Not yet. He could feel each breath she took contracting around his dick and he’d never found a heartbeat to be so beautiful before.

“*Jaime*,” she whimpered over her shoulder.
It did something to him, hearing her call him by his real name. It was so much more personal than what they’d been sharing along the highway. He slid back a little, watching her eyelids flutter. “You like saying my name, baby girl?” Cause he sure as shit liked hearing it.

“Mm,” she moaned her agreement as he slid back in.

He grabbed her hair, tangling his fist into it like she liked. “You can say it.” His other hand tightened on her hip. “In here you can say it.”

“What about out there?” She asked because even though she was enjoying herself, she hadn’t lost her mind yet. He’d fix that.

Jaime didn’t know what lay ahead for them anymore, whether there was an MC for him or if he would have to turn civilian. Too much was uncertain. “Out there I’m Kingslayer--just like before. Ain’t no one’s business what we call each other behind closed doors.”

“Will you hide what we have? Hide me?” Her eyes were wide and the fire in them banked to make way for anxiety.

“No,” he shook his head. “You’re my old lady. As much now as you ever were--more even.” Jaime slid gently into her, bending over to kiss her shoulder. “You’re gonna sit by my side always. But no one need know how else you hold my heart.”

“Oh fuck, baby, you mean that?” The hope in her smile made him pick up speed.

“Yeah,” he panted. “I do.”

“I love you too,” she said, meeting his thrusts.

“You don’t know how much you saying it means to me;” he promised. Overcome with emotion, Jaime tightened his grip on her and began to buck harder, pounding hard and fast. If she was trying to be quiet, she was doing a terrible job of it because he was sure she was gonna go hoarse from screaming. His chest puffed out with pride as he fucked her with everything he had.

He could have gone on like that forever, if he hadn’t remembered her G. Jaime knew he could tap it if he got just the right angle so he let go of her hair. “Put your head down on the bed,” he told her. When she gave him a curious look, he explained, “I want you to lift your hips up high for me.” Cersei moved like he said and the angle shifted how he’d imagined.

The friction under the head of his cock doubled and he knew he was hitting that cushion before her sounds said so. Her moans turned to desperate keening and it set off something primal in him, snapping his hips up to clap against her ass savagely. “Touch yourself,” he growled through his teeth. “I want you coming inside and out, baby.” His fingers dug deeper into her flesh. “Make my cock messy before I give you my cum.”

“Fuck, Jaime,” she whimpered. He knew she liked hearing it as dirty as she liked getting it and he aimed to please. A quick glance to the side showed her elbow moving, letting him know just how fast she was working her clit. “I’m gonna...I’m gonna...”

“What, baby girl?” He groaned, sweat dripping from his forehead down to the brand on her back. “What’re you gonna do?” He was so close, so fucking close.

“C-c-come!”

The was no bracing for the way she exploded around him. Spasms turned to quivers and her
thighs gave out from under, her screams driven down into the pillow. She wasn’t trying to quiet herself, or she would have done that a while ago. The pillow just happened to be in front of her and she lacked the wherewithal to move it out of the way.

Their sex had made her completely and utterly useless, and it made him roar with renewed purpose. Jaime needed to be there with her, needed to lose all his control, so he chased her down to the bed. There was no escaping him, his thighs going to either side of her ass as he bucked brutal. A small part of him was half afraid he might fuck her straight through the mattress to the floor before he came.

Letting her lose her mind first was how he showed her that he loved her with all his heart and would cherish her above all others, treating her like his Majesty. The rabid way his cock pillaged her pussy afterward reminded her that she was his woman and when he was dick-deep and needing, she was to submit. Her only job at that point was to be tight, wet, and wanting.

Luckily, Cersei was always horny, so being his old lady wasn’t that hard a job for her. Jaime smiled, realizing their matching sexdrive was yet another one of the many ways they were so alike. The word, twins, came to mind and what should have disgusted was just the push he needed to nosedive off that cliff. He spewed a slew of curses before he fell forward and pressed his face into the back of her head, letting her sunlight blind his eyes.

Neither of them moved, their bodies stayed fused together for as long as they could before his cock slipped free and he sagged off to the side of her. Not appreciating the separation, she snuggled up next to him, not seeming to care they were both slick with sweat and they could definitely use a shower. Her fingers traced the tattoos on his chest and she whispered into him, “I want one.”

“You got one,” he answered, his hand coming down to run over his brand.

“Yeah, but I want one like yours.”

Jaime picked his head up to look down at her. “You’re not covering these tits up with tattoos. I like looking at them too much.”

Cersei laughed and swatted at him. “Not on my chest, dumbass.”

“Hey, watch it,” he scolded, smiling at her fresh mouth. Jaime loved how little she feared him. He’d been the club enforcer for a couple years and crowds parted when he walked through them. It wasn’t something he was gonna pretend to hate, but sometimes he needed someone to give him back his shit.

“I meant like around my brand,” she explained. “Like a lion head on the sides or maybe just pawprints. I’m not sure.” She turned her head and pecked a kiss to his chest. “What do you think?”

Jaime gaped at her. This girl was full of surprises. Not only did she still crave him like he did her, but she would further her commitment with more ink even!

“What?”

“You,” he said as if that was enough.

“What about me?”

He shook his head and wrapped both arms around her, holding her close. “I can’t believe you don’t hate me for all this.”
“I can’t,” she admitted. He pressed kisses to the top of her head as she spoke. “You’re the only man that’s ever…”

She stalled and he couldn’t have been more thankful for it. Jealousy had begun to rear its head again. He knew that he hadn’t been the first man she let between her legs, which was why he never told her that he hadn’t been between anyone else’s. It was work not to let her life before his brand bother him, but he managed most times. Except when she brought it up. Jaime held her hand as he said as much, “I don’t wanna hear about it. I can’t.”

Cersei eyed him and he swallowed, his voice going hard as he said, “When I think of another man touchin’ you… havin’ you…”

“No, baby,” she cooed.

He put a finger to her lips, needing to finish. “It makes me wanna punch a hole in the goddamned wall cause I don’t know who’s face to fuck up. And I probably shouldn’t, so don’t tell me.”

She reached for his hand and kissed his knuckles as if he’d already done it. “They were like drinking a flat can of warm Natty-Light, but you’re like a fresh bottle of Jack straight from the freezer. You burn me from the inside out.”

Jaime chuckled, knowing the fire was all her, but not minding one bit that she would stroke his ego regardless. Cersei being Cersei, she took him down a peg by nipping his lip. He said nothing only squeezed her ass and kissed her forehead. Apparently she took his silence for doubt because she whispered, “I don’t care if we’re blood or not.” Her green eyes grew large as she looked up at him. “I’m yours, have been since you put your brand on me--since I decided I love you.” She gave his hand a squeeze before dragging it down between her legs. “No man belongs here but you, baby.”

There were muffled sounds from downstairs, barstools scraping, glasses crashing, hushed voices. Yolo and Hellcat were still there, skulking around in all the things he wanted to forget. If they could hear them, then he knew his brother and uncle had heard them moments before.

“I guess we should face the music,” she said, thinking what he was dreading.

“Shower first,” Jaime ordered because he would prolong that shit as long as he could. It wouldn’t be so bad if he knew what to say, but hell if he did.

Cersei nodded, not bothering to protest. Not a half hour later, they were slinking out of Jaime’s room, to face the others. As they walked downstairs, Jaime knew their guilt was obvious, but their fresh-from-the-shower wet hair only seemed to boast it.

Tyrion spoke first, “It’s sick.” Before they could get out more than a scowl, he held one small hand up to silence them. “But it’s not a sickness I gotta live with.”

Jaime raised his brow in question, highly doubting his brother was for real.

Tyrion drank from the bottle in front of him and shrugged nonchalant. “Well it’s not as if I gotta fuck her, is it?”

Not taking kindly to the way his--their brother spoke, Cersei hissed, “The question is, can you run with it and keep your mouth shut?”

Tyrion glanced to Hellcat, then back to Jaime. “That’s not the question.”
“Aint it?” Jaime asks, determined to support his woman.

“No, it aint,” Tyrion defied. “The question is whether or not he can.”

Jaime followed Tyrion’s finger pointing to Hellcat. The man’s eyes narrowed, his jaw tight as he judged them. Tyrion’s voice interrupted the silent standoff between Jaime and his uncle. “No matter what I think, I love my brother--proved that when I killed our dear ol’ pappy for him.”

It was true. The world was falling apart and it was Yolo that showed up with a pistol in hand, taking his own father out for the love of his brother. Jaime glanced away, not wanting to think of what that took for a person to do. Grabbing a set of shot glasses from behind the bartop, Jaime poured four shots and sent Cersei a look before sliding a glass down the bar to Hellcat. “Don’t drink it till you’ve heard me out.”

“I’m listening,” Hellcat rasped.

”I’m gonna be Prez,” Jaime declared, enjoying the pride in Cersei’s smile.

Hellcat gave a sick chuckle. “And just exactly what are you gonna be Prez of?”

“You never wanted that before,” Yolo interrupted, leveling Jaime with a look that said he was worried he’d never really known his brother at all. “You even hated being enforcer for the responsibility of it.”

“Times have changed,” Jaime explained. “I have a woman to look after now.” She believed in him, and it was his duty as her man to provide the best he could. Being Prez is the best most highest rank he could ever get. She knew that and wanted nothing less for him, and he refused to let her down. Not when she decided to be with him despite everything else.

“And not for nothing, but you don’t have a head for it,” Yolo was quick to point out. “Now, I’m not saying anything you don’t know.”

Jaime clasped a hand on his little brother’s shoulder and smiled. “I’ll be fine with the right Veep.”

Hellcat shook his head. “I’m not your Veep.”

“I wasn’t asking you,” Jaime corrected, the smile dropping from his face.

Both men were surprised by that. As long as Big T had business up and running, Hellcat had been Veep. The idea that he might not be anymore seemed almost impossible. Jaime forced himself to ignore his uncle and zero in on Tyrion. “That’s right brother. I want you for my Veep.”

“What about Hellcat?” Yolo asked what everyone was thinking.

“Yeah, what the fuck about me?” Hellcat stood up from his stool, shoving it back behind him.

Jaime glanced his way. “The position of enforcer is open now…”

“A demotion?” Hellcat scoffed at that. “You gotta be fuckin’ kiddin’ me!”

Cersei thread her fingers through Jaime’s, sending him her silent support. He couldn’t have been more grateful for it as he drew a deep breath and faced his uncle. “If you wanna see it that way.”

Not backing down, Hellcat said, “Aint no other way to see it.”

“Really? I’d say it’s a fuckin’ favor,” Jaime insisted.
“You been wanting out of Veep since Big T put you in it,” Tyrion added, having his brother’s back. It just came so natural to him that Jaime couldn’t imagine another man as his Veep.

“You know you miss bustin’ heads and planning fights,” Jaime added, both brothers tag teaming him.

Hellcat raised a finger in the air and smiled wryly. “You’re missing one thing.”

“What’s that?” Cersei asked before he could.

Hellcat ignored her, addressing only Jaime as he said, “We aint got a club anymore. No one’s gonna ride with us after what went down here last night.”

Jaime knew he was probably right and managed to keep himself from saying so because Cersei piped up at that exact moment. “The only people who know anything are dead on the floor.”

She was right. They could make a new start of things and Jaime hoped they would see that too.

Hellcat tried to blow holes in their plan. “Yeah and what do we tell the rest of the boys whenever they roll in?”

“Whatever the hell we want,” Jaime growled.

“A rival gang got the jump on you,” Cersei supplied.

For the first time since the start of this conversation, Hellcat seemed to seriously consider what they were saying. “Which gang?”

“Does it matter?” Tyrion asked.

“Of course it matters!” Hellcat exclaimed. He turned and walked a couple steps away before coming back. “Everybody knows the Wolves keep to themselves, Sands Snakes are a bunch of uppity fuckers, but they haven’t messed with any of our shipments in years. Krakens don’t leave the coast. Wildlings are skeezy as all-shit, but they aren’t organized enough to attack a full fledged MC.”

“How about this?” Cersei asked to keep his attention. “How about you pick who our scapegoat is.”

“That way when men start rolling in, it’ll be you that’s spinning the lie you’re most comfortable with,” Tyrion explained, catching up to where Jaime and Cersei’s thoughts had brought them: the others. There was still an MC, it was just that most of the boys had been gone from the clubhouse that night.

“You must have some enemies,” Cersei pressed.

Hellcat smirked to the side of his mouth. “A couple. But the Ragin’ Bucks would bring a shitstorm.”

“Look,” Jaime decided he’d be as straight up as possible. “You know you don’t wanna be Veep, and you know you wanna keep this biz in the family. So however you feel about me and my old lady, you’re gonna go along with our lies to keep the rest of the boys together.”

Hellcat glared at him, as if he was seriously going to refuse, only to then gulp down the shot he’d been holding before agreeing, “Sounds about right.”
“So we have a deal?” Cersei asked, her eyes darting between Hellcat and Yolo.

A couple seconds passed before Hellcat laughed and looked straight at Jaime. “Enforcer?”

Jaime nodded, confirming that plan. “What do you say?”

Hellcat shot a look to Cersei before saying, “Fuck it. We were all going to hell anyway. What’s the difference really between keeping a room to rent and living in the penthouse? Hell is hell.”

Jaime glanced over to Tyrion. “And you? You cool with Veep?”

Tyrion laughed. “As if I gotta choice.” Before Jaime could open his mouth, Tyrion continued, “I can’t let my brother get his head shot off one day cause of his snap decisions.” He flicked his gaze over to Cersei as he added, “Besides, I killed Big T saving your ass, so it’s not as if I don’t got the stomach for whatever comes.”

“Are you going to be smacking me with that forever?” Jaime felt his gut ball up inside itself.

“No, just as long as it gets me things,” Tyrion laughed, sliding back into the Yolo persona he’d made for himself. To Jaime’s surprise, Hellcat snickered too. For a moment they all felt like family again even though Jaime knew it would take time for everyone to rebuild what they had. This was shaky, but it was still a start. Cersei’s hand squeezed his again, reminding him that she was at his side, a part of their family now too. Kingslayer had never thought of unseating Big T, never in a million years. He didn’t think he could keep all the balls in the air the way his father did, but now that he had Cersei, it was like a half of him had been missing all his life and now that he was whole, he could do anything.

“Alright, first order of business,” he announced. “Call all the boys off the road and into church so we can announce the new order.”

“We’ll have to put it to a vote,” Yolo reminded him. Big things like new Prezes only happened in the MC with a vote.

Hellcat cleared his throat. “You’ll have our votes, and a couple of the boys will vote your way too because everyone’s always expected it—should Big T go.”

Jaime tried not to acknowledge that. Hellcat had been made Veep when Kingslayer was too young for the job, and the natural order of the club would have been that the Veep moved up, not the Enforcer. But the boys weren’t stupid. They knew Hellcat didn’t want Prez, never would either. They also knew that Big T would want his son in his shoes, and would be priming him for it, even if he’d done so underhandedly over the years. Still, Jaime didn’t have to admit that shit. It was a slap in his uncle’s face, and he’d already given the man enough hard blows for one twenty-four hour period.

“But there’s still gonna be some boys raw over the fact that you flew the coop for a few,” Hellcat said what no one else had. It was true. “And it’s gonna look awful strange that the night someone massacres our clubhouse, is the same night you show up hand in hand with your new girl—who looks just fucking like you.”

He’d choked a little on that last part and Jaime couldn’t blame him for it. He was still trying to make the fact that Cersei was his sister sit right in his own gut.

“I was kidnapped by some punkass-bitches from the Ragin’ Bucks and Jaime came home to ask daddy for help getting me back,” Cersei said quickly, the story spinning from her lips. “Big T agreed on the condition we come home. Fuckers show up at the clubhouse with me tied up. It’s all guns blazing from there.”
“You’re forgetting one thing,” Yolo said, smirking like he actually appreciated her mind.

Hellcat nodded.

“What?”

“The Raging Buck bodies,” Jaime answered for his brothers. He pulled her in close for a hug to promise she wasn’t stupid, she just wasn’t used to thinking of these sorts of things. “We could set a fire out back and say we burned those bastards up.”

“We’d need bodies for the ashes later,” Yolo replied.

“You got any clubwhores?” Cersei asked, her question coming from nowhere. Was she worried he’d fuck around? How could she think of something like that at a time like this? Jesus, he’d just upturned his whole life for her, stray pussy wasn’t his concern.

Hellcat nodded and Yolo scoffed, “Of course. It’s a MC sweetheart.”

Jaime pressed a kiss to her shoulder and said low, “Don’t worry about them, baby girl. I wouldn’t sniff around them while I got you.”

She smiled and kissed his cheek. “Good. But that’s not what I was thinking.” She turned her gaze to the stairs. “We stack enough timber so it looks like a lot of ashes, we only need say two or three bodies to make the bones on top for when the fire dies down.”

Yolo’s jaw dropped. “You can’t be thinkin’...No. We take care of our girls here. We don’t murder them in cold blood.”

“They been here the whole time?” Cersei asked and Jaime knew where she was going with that.

So didn’t Hellcat, “Yeah. Funny they haven’t run outta here screaming over all the noise. It’s been a bit too…”

“They’re probably too doped up with most of the boys gone,” Jaime figured. “You know when the club is running half-staff, the girls take a load off and chill in their room.” He couldn’t blame them. While the Rocky Mountain Lion MC didn’t rough up girls like some of the other MCs out there, the boys still had a lot of steam to blow off and a biker’s fuckin’ wasn’t exactly tender lovetakin’. Big T gave them the occasional vacation whenever he sent the boys out on the road for a longer trip.

“Doped up or not, I’m sure they heard something,” Cersei pointed out.

Hellcat hung his head, hating himself for admitting, “When the boys get back, they’ll wanna question them.”

“No,” Yolo protested--weakly. “Their only crime is being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It ain’t right.”

“What is anymore?”

It was Hellcat that said it, but Jaime had been thinking it since the moment he told his sister to get on the pill so he could keep driving his dick in her. For a split second he wondered if he would burn up on the spot if he ever stepped foot in a church again.

“But I like Daisy,” Yolo whined. “She does the best things with that tongue ring.”
“The blond one?” Jaime asked, not knowing. He’d never paid the whores a visit, so he never bothered to learn their names.

Yolo glanced between him and Cersei and then closed his eyes and sighed, “On second thought, it’s fine. I’m thinking it’s time I take a different flavor anyway.”

“So we’re agreed? Well use the girls for bodies and tell anyone who asks after them that they ran off scared,” Cersei asked as Jaime poured them all a shot. “Drink only if so.”

They all looked at each other, sizing up the situation for the last time. Jaime and Cersei were the first to toss their drinks back, their eyes sparkling at each other as they did. Yolo came next, knowing what options were left in life, and what ones weren’t. Hellcat took the longest, but even he eventually huffed, “Alright! All-fuckin’-right!” They watched him throw the drink back and swallow hard.

His eyes slid to Cersei as he pulled his pistol from his belt and handed it to her. “You’re gonna be first lady of this MC, you best earn it.” He glanced back over his shoulder at the stairs. “Go get your hands dirty.”

Jaime wondered what she’d do. It was one thing to talk, to say some whores needed to be put down to bury some lies. It was another to actually pull the trigger. He reached to take the gun from her hand. “I’ll—”

“He’s right,” Yolo cut him off.

Cersei cleared her throat and jerked the gun away from Jaime. “I know,” was all she said before she took a hard step forward and then another one after that.

Jaime stood there watching her round ass climb the stairs to execute a bunch of lazy whores cracked out of their heads, wondering how lucky he was to have a woman like her.

“It makes sense she would be our sister,” Yolo said beside him. “She’s definitely Big T’s daughter.”

“Shut your fucking mouth with that,” Jaime warned.

Deafening shots fired from the bedroom above, shrill screams followed with the sound of bare feet thudding on the floorboards. A half naked blond--Daisy emerged from the top of the stairs covered in blood, stumbling over herself as she ran. Cersei was on her in a heartbeat, kicking the back of her knees with her boot to knock her off her balance. The girl fell and lay in a pile at the bottom of the stairs. Cersei moved swiftly down each step and popped a shot in her face for good measure before wiping the blood splatter from her cheek.

Hellcat clasped both Jaime and Yolo’s shoulders. His voice was heavy as he said, “As far as I’m concerned, she’s a sister to every fucker wearing our patch. She’s my nephew’s old lady, and the first lady of this here club as soon as Kingslayer’s been voted in.”

How quickly his opinion changed once Cersei had bled for her rank. Jaime prayed the rest of his men would be see it the same. Mostly, he just wished his little brother would too.

“We gonna start a fire, or what?” Was Yolo’s only response, which was as good as acceptance because he would of kept on about things if he didn’t agree.

“Yes.” Jaime eyed Cersei as he said, “Burn ‘em all.”

Blood caked some of her golden waves and Jaime never felt more alive and drunk on sunlight
than he had in that moment. “Come here,” he growled. “I’m so proud of you.”

She gave a shy smile as she ran to him, handing Hellcat his gun back over Jaime’s shoulder. “I know it’s fucked up,” she whispered in her old man’s ear. “But I’ve never felt better than I do right now.”

“Me neither, baby girl. Me neither.”

“Together forever?”

His hand went to her ass as he promised, “God and Satan themselves would have to join forces to ever tear me away from you again.”
Arya squeezed her eyes shut, refusing to let the sunlight assault her before she was ready. Facing the day would require a healthy dose of the following: caffeine, nicotine, and hair of the dog. That was all before she could even think about dragging her ass in the shower.

A warm body shifted beside her in bed and she sighed to herself. It was so annoying when they stayed over. Either the nameless lump in her bed was too exhausted after he blew his load, in which case he was a lazy fuck and she had no respect or patience for him. Or, he felt some entirely one-sided connection to her that lead some degree of entitlement on his part--enough to nap in the sheets he’d helped to dirty. Were the later the case, she would have to disabuse him of that ridiculous notion.

Arya didn’t ‘connect’ with anyone.

And absolutely no one was entitled to anything of hers.

Ever.

Slapping at the table beside her, Arya felt for her pack of smokes. When she couldn’t find them where she always ditched them, she cracked one blurry, bloodshot eye open for closer inspection. Nothing looked right--the table was smaller, darker, more cluttered.

It wasn’t her table.

Arya’s eyes snapped open.

Gone was the high loft ceiling braced in exposed rafters that she woke up to every morning, only to be replaced by shitty drop-ceiling tiles with brown water marks smattered throughout.

This was not her ceiling.

Irritation tickled and tensed her muscles as she lifted her head to look down at the shitty afghan that covered her. It was two shades of orange, dark brown and a baby-puke green, all crocheted into a large monstrosity that spanned the full-sized bed.

Full-sized.

Jesus-fucking-Mary-and-Joseph.

Whoever this lazy, entitled prick was, he lived in a slum, had no taste, and slept in a fucking full-size!

Arya might have only been nineteen, but she wasn’t a fucking kid anymore and this wasn’t her first time to the rodeo. Full-size wouldn’t fly. Shit, what was next? Top-bunk twin size in a dorm room--or worse, a frat house?

Yikes.

And she never went home with them.

Too many unknown variables involved in letting a guy take her home. If they passed all her impromptu tests, she’d lead them back to her place and send them packing before she got some shut-eye.
She sure as hell, didn’t follow them back to their dingy hole-in-the-wall and let them take her under damaged popcorn ceiling tiles with a fucking homemade throw as cover. She had to get out of there pronto, and she had to do so without waking up her casual fuck. A quick glance over to his side of the bed revealed a single wisp of dirty blond hair sticking up above the covers. The man had burrowed the majority of his head down under the blanket, snuggled in as comfortably as if it was his own bed...because it was...and she was the uncomfortable one who needed to piss off-like yesterday.

Sucking in a shameful breath, Arya gently peeled back the covers, careful not to wake the man beside her.

“Fuuuuuuuuuck,” Arya hissed as she glanced down at her naked body.

The earthy scent of nickel and musk filled her nostrils. Red, tacky blood oozed and stuck her thighs together, caking into the sheets beneath her ass.

Of all the days--of all the places to start her period.

“Shit, shit, shit,” she whispered.

How in the hell would she escape this? Hope the stranger she shacked up with either didn’t notice that she left a bloody mess in his bed, or at least that she hadn’t given him her number to hunter her down with after?

Fingers crossed…

Gingerly sliding one leg out, more self-deprecating whispers escaped her lips.

“Who’s a stupid shit?”

Arya froze.

It hadn’t been her that had asked, but instead Mr. One-Nighter next to her. Fuck. Awkward.

Her cheeks burned red with mortification as she realized sadly that there was no way she was getting out of this without him knowing how horribly his casual screw had defiled his piece of shit full-sized bed. Not daring to look in his direction, she tensed, bracing herself for the onslaught of profanity he was sure to sling at her as she sprinted for her clothing.

“Hmm?” He asked again, a calloused hand reached deep down beneath the blankets to massage her hip.

Wincing at the affectionate gesture, Arya began scanning the room for her clothes and calculating how quickly she could throw them on. His hand on her hip shouldn’t have felt so soothing, being that it was foreign and rough, and somehow so goddamned sure of itself. And yet, it was.

It wouldn’t be.

Not once it realized what she’d done.

Spotting the majority of her clothes scattered by the door, Arya decided it was best to rip the bandaid off quickly. It wasn’t like this guy mattered to her at all, or as if she’d ever see him again. Flinging back the covers, Arya exposed the blood stains as she ran for her clothes.

“Leaving?” The man yawned through his words. He was older, much older than she was used to. She would wonder what she’d been thinking, if she hadn’t noticed his dimples. They were
prevalent even in the faintest of smiles. And his eyes. Good god, those eyes. They held a sparkle to them that was nothing short of delinquent. Not to mention, he was fit--she could tell by the lean cut of his face, the bulge of his biceps as his arms reached over the blanket. There was also a faded tattoo on his shoulder that reminded her of the ones sailors used to get back in the fifties, next to a couple of scars that told her he'd seen his fair share of a few bar fights. Judging by the fact that he still had all his teeth, she’d guess that he was always just that little bit faster and rougher than the other guy. Well, hell. The man may have been many years her senior, but he ticked all her boxes, that was for damn sure.

And she’d just bloodied his bed.

How beyond embarrassing.

If she could sink down between the cracks in the floorboards, she would.

Snatching up her shirt and sticking her head through it, she wrestled her arms through the holes as she groaned, “Yeah, I think I should.”

Lifting his head up, he braced himself on his elbows and watched her grab at her pants. His eyes narrowed on her naked thighs and the blood on them. If only she’d been quicker!

“You’re bleeding, love.”

Her cheeks grew a deeper shade of red. Too embarrassed to admit it, Arya wore a defensive posture. “Yeah, it’s what chicks do.” Gesturing to the bed, she waved her hand and said, “Sorry about the sheets, but I figure it’s a price you’re willing to pay.”

“Price I’m willing to pay?” He sat up to mirror her words back to him, the blanket pooled around his waist.

Arya shrugged her shoulders as she slid one leg into her pants--she’d clean herself and her clothes up later. “For fuckin’ pussy instead of your hand.”

He blinked his hazel eyes a few times before he reached up to rub and cover his face. The man chuckled behind his palms. “My hand would have been less of a mess.”

“Get fucked!” She growled back, because even if she was at fault, there was no need to rub it in.

Both hands dropped and he looked incredulous. “Jesus woman, you’re worked up over a little blood? When I had my nose halfway up your ass hours ago? And that was after we downed those ghost pepper nachos, I might add.”

Arya bristled. She hadn’t remembered that. In fact, she hadn’t remembered much of anything past the midnight mark. That’s when the tequila took over and judging by the state of this apartment and the age of her bedmate, it had punished her profusely.

Panic suddenly shot through her as she asked, “Did we use a condom?”

He rest his forearms on his knees, now raised to cross his legs under the blanket. At least he was limber--for an older guy. Dimples flared in his cheeks as he shook his finger in the air and said, “I knew we were forgetting something.”

What had been a lightening bolt of worry was now a cold rush of dread. Trying not to drown in the fear that rapidly rose, Arya fought the tremor in her voice as she asked, “Did you give me anything?”
Making a little pistol with his thumb and index finger, he winked at her. “Only my best.”

Arya glared back at him, because she felt more in control if she was angry than if she was scared. She told herself to relax because he wouldn’t possibly be this nonchalant if he was dirty. Though, if he had infected her with something, the fact that she’d ruined his sheets was somehow less embarrassing and much more satisfying.

“Oh relax!” He lifted the blankets and swung his legs around the side of the bed. “Of course we were safe.”

Air returned to her lungs as she gasped. “Oh, thank fuck!”

“I pulled out,” he explained easily.

He pulled out?

He pulled out?!

How in the hell was she supposed to trust that? How in the hell was that safe?

Slowly, he stood, feeling absolutely no shame in showing her his bare ass as he stretched. There was an interesting tattoo of a sphinx spanning his back. She would have appreciated her view more, if he hadn’t just said they’d relied on the stupidest method of birth control to ever exist.

Wide-eyed and full of rage, Arya grabbed whatever was closest to her—which happened to be a shoe--and threw it at him. “Are you serious?!?”

“Ow!” He winced at the contact of her boot smacking hard against his ass. “No, of course not.”

Arya zipped her fly and began buttoning it. “You think you’re hilarious.”

Until that moment, he’d had his back to her. He looked over his shoulder here and there, but hadn’t turned. For whatever reason, he decided then that he would. “Yes.”

She tried not to gape at his cock, but she’d never seen a dick piercing before. Her head filled with questions that a sober mind might remember to answer. Had she tongued that little metal ball? How differently had it felt inside her?

Reminding herself that it was all beside the point, she pursed her lips and promised, “You’re not.”

His eyes followed hers, right down to his morning wood, and then he chuckled. “No, I don’t imagine I am to you. Not while your head’s done in.”

“Done in?” She asked, wishing she hadn’t thrown one of her own boots at him.

He must have realized her regret because he picked it up off the floor and came out from around the bed. Each step bobbed his dick and she was hard-pressed to tear her gaze from it. Her boot hovered in front of her for a good second before she accepted it from him.

Reaching for a discarded pair of jeans at the foot of the bed, his voice was calm and kind as he said, “Hangovers suck, and I’m not a woman, but I imagine waking up to World War III between your legs isn’t the best either.”

Arya chuckled at that. Despite herself and the situation, she let herself laugh. “Who are you?” And what have we done together? She grinned, and then instantly regretted it. It didn’t matter who he was, and she had no right to ask. Their business was done and over.
He frowned a little then, but it didn’t touch his eyes. “I told you my name last night, love. But, seein’s how you can’t remember that, I’m going to assume there isn’t a lot you do remember.”

“No, there isn’t,” she admitted.

He zipped his fly before he stuck a hand out to shake and introduced himself. “My name is Bronn, and you and I met at a bar. We both got very drunk and consented to some very dirty--very safe fucking. It was great and I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Arya stood stunned, blinking at such blunt admission. That was her shtick. No way was he allowed to beat her to the punch. To show him so, she growled, “I wouldn’t.”

Bronn reached behind himself and started digging in his back pocket for his wallet. Opening it, he looked inside. “You already did.”

“Did what?” She asked, wondering why she was still there. She had her boots now, no reason to stay. “What do you mean?”

“I mean,” he started, making it a point to lift his head and flash her a mischievous grin. “It looks like we used more than one raincoat.”

Raincoat?

Who says that?!

Arya slid her feet into her boots, silently cursing herself for fucking this man and not remembering. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw him reach for a shirt and pull it over his head. She wouldn’t bother with her laces, knowing it would take too long to do them up. It would be uncomfortable and awkward to flap her open boots as she walked, but no more uncomfortable than it was to walk around with ‘World War III’--as he put it--in her pants.

The memory of the night before may have escaped her, but it wasn't the sex she could do without remembering, so much as the morning after. Bronn was in front of her, definitely not letting that happen, and using the wall behind her to his advantage.

“What are you do-”

His lips cut off her question and though she’d normally be upset by that, the taste of him told her not to bother with troublesome feelings like indignation. It took a backseat to need and want, and his lips worked to convince her that he was the answer to both. Experience taught him well, because his head turning to deepen the kiss gave her permission to melt into him. She’d never felt that with anyone else before--never needed to be granted permission. Never knew how gratifying it would be to feel accepted. The last of her reserve told her that it didn’t matter if he was a good kisser, this was out of her control and as a rule, Arya disliked losing control. She could blame last night on tequila, but what of this morning? In this dingy apartment...with this naughty older man...all messy and gross... As if none of these thoughts entered his mind, Bronn's tongue teased at hers, coaxing it out to play. Determined to stay strong, she tried to deny it, and failed pleasantly. Palms sweaty and fingers curled, she ordered her hands to remain at her sides. They decided not to listen, however, and instead gripped and grabbed for him. A low rumble sounded in his throat when she dug her fingers in his hair, and it encouraged a low moan of her own.

After a couple of seconds that definitely didn’t feel long enough, Bronn lifted his smiling face from hers. His words were husky, and drew a direct link between her ears and clit as he whispered, “Look me up when your Aunt Flo leaves town.”
Her hips bucked in time with the thrusts of the man below, finding a cadence they both knew so well though they were strangers to one another.

“You’re so fucking hot,” he hissed, his thumbs digging as his grip tightened. The heels of his feet kept sliding out from under him as he sought more leverage on the bed. Sansa leaned forward, her long red hair surrounding their faces shielding them from the shitty apartment she’d invited him back to. She would silence his pathetic endearments with a kiss, even if it meant she had to drive her tongue as far back in his mouth as it could reach. His way with words had her regretting him and fantasizing about the blond he had been standing next to instead. Honestly, either would have done the trick.

That was provided they didn’t ruin a good fuck trying too hard, as this one was.

Sweat dripped down the crack of her ass, her tits bouncing and slapping hard as she ignored his heavy breathing, finding even that annoying now. Sansa tried to focus beyond the other person in her bed, her knees burning into the mattress, impaling herself on him over and over again. A loud clap and a sting pulled her attention back as she gasped.

“You like that, baby?” He asked, the hand-shaped print on her ass warming.

Sansa stared back into his hazel eyes, watching the male pride go to his head. When life gives you lemons…, she thought before deciding to use it to her advantage. Bending lower, she let her breasts drag across his tattooed chest to better appreciate one of his few assets and remind him of hers. Her palms spread flat on the mattress to either side of his head and whispered, “Again.”

Only too happy to oblige, he slapped her other cheek, bucking up into her for all he was worth. A rogue moan escaped her as his cock battered her insides. Chuckling in her ear, he insisted on more dirty talk. “Does Daddy’s girl need another spankin’?”

Sansa rolled her eyes and bit his ear to shut him up. Why were all the pretty ones dumb as rocks? This wasn’t a porno, just a night without end that shouldn’t have ever been. Smiling when he yelped, caught in her teeth, she picked up the pace. His pain didn’t matter and he was a fool if he thought it did. Sansa had brought him home for one reason only, and it wasn’t to make a friend.

“Fuck, that hurt,” he complained.

Covering his mouth, she shushed him. “I’m so close.”

Lie.

How could she be with the constant distraction of his imperfections? Praying her lie would put an end to his asinine narration, she clenched around the cock she dominated, giving silent encouragement. They were here to get off, and anything else was a waste of both their time.

After a couple of minutes, in the quiet repetition of wet slap and gradual build up, Sansa felt herself tense toward the edge. She closed her eyes and rode hard for that special bliss only ten inches could bring, forgetting the man attached to the dick, but for his hands clutching at her. She had tried to ignore the pain of his tight vice grip, so determined to orgasm, but it became too great.

“Ease up,” she barked down to him, wincing at his squeeze.

He didn’t, and more than that, one hand reached to grab wildly at her arm. Her eyes snapped open
then to stare into the face of a dying man. Panic flooded his eyes, bloodshot and bulging, tears
gathering to drown them in. Every muscle in his body drew taut as he fought the pain in his chest,
ugly veins sticking out against the backdrop of his once supple flesh.

“No,” she breathed. Anger replacing worry as she declared, “Not again!”

“Help,” he gasped, one hand going to his chest as if he could somehow soothe it by doing so.

Sansa was off him in an instant, crouching beside him as she started chest compressions. “It’s
okay,” she lied again, far more nobly. “You’re going to be okay.”

His face was already turning grey with death before she had finished pumping his chest for the
first round. Sansa turned her head and laid it on his chest, listening for a beat and hearing only
silence. “Fuck.”

“Not anymore.”

The voice came from the all the dark corners of her bedroom, and sounded only too pleased by
her failure to save the man. Of course he was pleased, that had been the point all along. Men in
their late twenties didn’t die of heart attacks without a little help.

“Show yourself,” she commanded, goosebumps spreading over her naked body. She wouldn’t
cover herself, wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of her feeling indecent. Not when it was he that
wallowed in immorality. Needing to still the shake in her legs, she found strength in goading him.
“Or perhaps you prefer hiding, you coward.”

The darkness laughed and an apparition of soft grey-green eyes appeared before the rest of his
body materialized. A well-groomed man in his forties appeared, with a goatee and silver temples
that fooled many into thinking he was more dignified than he truly was. His fifty thousand dollar
suit was a stark contrast to the small apartment she kept above a butcher shop six blocks down
from all the best clubs, and she forced herself not to admire it.

“I knew you liked looking at me,” he said, shining a light on her internal struggle.

Her body had been responding to his presence—against her will, though her mind reminded her
that he was pure evil and deemed so by God. Satan, Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness—he went by
many names—though he’d introduced himself to her as Petyr. She was so young then, so innocent
and naive.

“You liked that I spelled it with a Y.”

Her best defense against his reading her thoughts was to speak faster than she could think, though
that often lead her down the wrong path.

“Or the best paths,” he interjected, still listening and not showing an ounce of shame for it.

“You’ve got to stop doing this.”

“What?”

Sansa pointed to the heart attack victim on her bed. “You know what.”

“Then stop trying to upset me by spreading your legs for strange men in bars. That won’t drive me
away,” he replied like a petulant child. If he hadn’t been on God’s Most Wanted list, his pout
might have made him less intimidating. Sansa had been dealing with him for longer than she could
remember, however, and knew he wouldn’t harm her. Not when he wanted her as his immortal
bride.

He smiled then, reading again. “Would you like to see the throne I had fashioned for you? Promise it’s not any smaller than mine.”

“Get out of my head,” she snarled, rising up off the bed.

His gaze swept over her, dilating with each inch of flesh discovered. His voice was husky as he admitted, “It’s not your head I’d like to be in.”

Sansa flipped her long hair over her shoulder, letting it fall down her back. Slowly, she turned her back on him, denying him the full frontal view he’d been enjoying. “You’ve made that apparent.”

“Not enough, it would seem.”

She knew his eyes were on her ass, but his attention remained with the victim on her bed. “I’m not yours,” she reminded him--and herself. “I can fuck who I want.”

“And I can kill who I want,” he quipped. “Isn’t free will splendid?”

“Man was given free will, not you,” she reminded him.

She could hear the rueful smile in his voice. “No, I took mine. And was punished for it.”

Closing her eyes, her voice hardened. “Then learn your lesson, repent, and kneel before your master.”

“And give up the kingdom I’ve created? Never. I kneel for nothing and no one.” A moment of silence passed, his seriousness disappearing as his sense of humor returned. “Unless of course, it’s to worship at your cunt.”

She threw a hand up in rejection. “Don’t even.”

“What?” he teased. “Too naughty a thought?

This needed to end. He was wicked with his words and worse with his intentions. She scanned the room, looking for something to cover with, deciding she’d waited long enough to save face. “I’d rather join a convent.”

“Perfect.” The pleasure in his voice had her flexing intimate muscles and then hating herself for it. “I haven’t worn priest robes in quite a while--not since bible camp when you were eight. And there are so very many uses for rosary beads. I couldn't show you back then, but I most certainly can now.”

Fists clenching at her sides, Sansa braced herself against the images he bombarded her with--prayer beads in various states of misuse. Her own face stared back at her in his visions, twisted in ecstasy so brilliant as to verge on painful, big black eyes rolled back in her head and tight lips curled into an O.

“Stop,” she breathed, her face flushing with the knowledge he shared.

“There will come a day when you beg me not to,” he stepped closer. “On that day, my love, you will be my queen.” His voice was in her ear, his presence so close behind her now that she knew he flashed across the room to invade her personal space.

Sansa swallowed, the image of a golden crown appearing in her mind. A pair of hands--his hands-
-placed it gently atop her head. They were surrounded by darkness, as if they were the only people in the world, her smile true as he looked into her eyes. He leaned in to press his lips to hers and she welcomed it, holding his hands as they lost themselves in each other. The darkness gave way to firelight, bright red burning around them, their attention never distracted by the screams of agony and hatred that tormented. Her stomach churned at the insidious thoughts planted in her brain, and yet she couldn’t force away the image, not until the fires turned to embers and all that surrounded them was cinder and ash falling from the sky like snow. Only then did he pull from her lips and whisper, *Our love will outlast them all.*

Had she just watched a complete and utter genocide unfold in the span of a kiss? Or had he simply given her a snapshot of a vacation home in Hell? Bile rose in the back of her throat, despising herself more for missing his kiss, than for playing a part in such evil plans. What kind of monster was she?

“Looking for this?” He asked, holding her robe up for her.

In the past, she would have ripped it from him and covered herself, yelling at him to, ‘piss off!’ She knew now that he enjoyed her fire too much, and instead forced herself to remain calm as she slid each arm in and allowed him to draw it up over her shoulders. The brush of his fingertips over her neck as he did so made her shiver until her belly tightened and she thought again of his lips on hers.

“Frustrated, sweetling?” He taunted.

Having learned long ago that he was the father of lies and could see through each and every one of them, she no longer bothered. Making it a point to look over at her bed, Sansa allowed the anger she felt to sound as irritation. “You always kill them at the worst time.”

His face pressed into the back of her head, inhaling her scent. Again, she felt that familiar twinge of excitement dampen her sex. “I don’t mind if they warm you up,” he rumbled into her skull, his erection drawing full against her backside. “So long as I can finish you off.”

Her head filled with images of them naked together fucking in various positions on the floor, the bed, the counter in her kitchen. His thumbs worked her shoulders, massaging the tension and resistance away as he implanted more of his fantasies. She wore a french maid’s costume and took it from behind as she swept out a fireplace. He ate her pussy in a bed of hay while farm animals looked over the stall doors. Sansa sucked his cock in a school uniform while he spanked her ass with a ruler and promised her a good grade if she kept staying after class.

“Stop it,” she groaned, her breasts growing heavy.

“Why?” He smiled. “Like what you see too much?” He pecked a kiss to her shoulder and she shrugged him off, though she did so only half-heartedly. It wasn’t as if sex with the devil was all whips and chains.

Fingers trailed up her arm as he purred, “It could be if you’d like. Bondage is always fun, but I find I enjoy your pleasure more than your pain. I’ve decided your face is prettier that way.”

“Has anyone ever told you that your fantasies are pedestrian?” She rebuffed, stepping away from him and drawing her robe closed.

“Only you.”

“And what does that tell you?”

He stuck his hands in his pockets, following her as she left her bedroom. “That you’re trying just
Sansa shook her head as she stepped into her kitchen. “You’re so full of yourself. You’re such a...a...” She tried to think of the best insult to throw his way as she opened her fridge and pulled the lime juice out.

“Call me Petyr.” He leaned against the counter and grinned.

“Ugh,” she groaned, disgusted. “Why do you insist on me calling you that?”

His fingers traced the counter top as he admitted, “Because we were happy then. Before you knew.”

“That you’re Satan--literally,” she said because his words seemed too pure without her adding that very important fact to messy things.

“You say that as if it’s a bad thing.”

Sansa grabbed a bottle of vodka and triple sec from her freezer and slammed the door shut.

“Could it possibly be good?”

“I’ve been told I’m quite good,” he teased, giving her smug smile.

She set the bottles down between them. “Would any woman dare tell you if you weren’t?”

“Volunteering to be the first?” He waggled his brows at her. “You have to try the goods before you can leave a review.”

“You’re insufferable,” she groaned, turning to grab two glasses from her cupboard.

“So put me out of my misery.” He began pouring the vodka as soon as she set them down. “By the way, have I mentioned how much I enjoy it when we make Kamikazes together?” Dimples flared high in his cheeks. “It’s no wonder it’s our favorite drink.” Leaning in, he smirked, “I’ll let you in on a little secret; I only drink them with you.”

Ignoring his sentiment, she cut to the chase. “We’re not fucking, and I’m not marrying you, so get it out of your head—and mine.” She squeezed the lime juice into each glass, her brow furrowed to her task, trying not to think of how automatic it was for her to pull down a second glass in the first place.

Both their hands went for the triple sec at the same time, grazing each other as they did. His touch was warm and soft and way too good for someone so inherently bad.

“I’m only bad because the Bible tells you so,” he whispered.

Too stunned to move, Sansa’s hand dropped away from the bottle, letting him pour. He eyed the levels as he spoke, “I can be good to you.”

“I’m only bad because the Bible tells you so,” he whispered back, her voice betraying her own need.

He sipped the drink in front of him, his green eyes glinting over the top of it as he did. “You’re mine, Sansa. The sooner you come to terms with that the better.”

Not one to let a good drink go to waste, she took a sip of hers before she asked, “And what terms are those? Whore myself out to Satan and birth an army of his brats?”

He had the indecency to look wounded. “Now that’s not fair.”
“Tell me about it,” she cut him off before he could keep talking. “And what would I get out of damming my soul and handing myself over as broodmare?”

“Such colorful language. *Broodmare*,” he repeated, laughing. “I do adore your tongue. I look forward to feeling it on my balls later.”

“You wish.”

“I do.”

Sansa rolled her eyes and took a bigger gulp of her drink, letting it slither down to her belly and soothe the anxiety that only his presence brought. She wished he would leave her alone already, quit tormenting her. It would be one thing if he offered her something worthwhile, but it was always the same.

He held his finger in the air, looking amused as he said, “One, you so quickly assume our children will be awful, but I disagree. I think they’ll be great. Many child psychologists say that it’s all in the parenting, and I truly feel as though we’ll be way more involved than Dahmer’s parents.”

Sansa coughed on her drink. Jeffrey Dahmer was the bar for which to determine one’s parenting success now?

Another finger flew up on his perfectly manicured hand. “Two, I’d never pay you for sex, sweetling.” He paused to glance back over his shoulder toward her bedroom. “Especially since you give it away so freely. Therefore, you wouldn’t be whoring yourself to me.”

Sansa sighed and closed her eyes, feeling a headache coming on. Again, he was beside her, his fingers working at her temples, his words soft as he continued, “Though I have many more points to make, I feel as though three is sufficient for the time being. So I’ll only add that as my wife, you’ll have a place at my side and receive my undying devotion.”

The pain was easing away as she imagined having anything she desired. Images of a privileged life flashed before her eyes: marble mansions, custom cars, designer dresses, and a staff to serve. “It can all be yours,” he promised. “Let me give it to you.”

Children raced through a main hall she’d never seen before but somehow recognized as hers, and down the front step onto the perfectly manicured lawn. They smiled back at her and mouthed, *Come on, Mom!*

“It’s a pretty picture,” she admitted, still watching her hypothetical children play in front of her without a care in the world. What it would be like to have a family again… It was then that an old pain resurfaced, shaking her from the vision. “You killed my parents.”

Dropping his hands, he turned away from her, huffing in annoyance. “They were in the way.”

She said nothing, only began pouring another drink. They had covered this ground before, and gotten nowhere. In hindsight, he may have regretted taking such severe action in his earlier attempts to win her heart.

“I regret nothing,” he hissed, his head whipping around to hers. “They preferred your brother Robb over you anyway. I did you a favor.”

Outraged, she slammed her glass on the counter. “A favor!”

Completely unruffled by her sudden exclamation, he said, “Don’t rush to repay me.”
“I hate you,” she spat.

“What is it they all say about the line between love and hate being so very thin?” He pretended not to remember because he was one for theatrics.

Feeling despair creep back into all her softest places, Sansa relented, “Why me? Please just tell me, why did you pick me?”

“You always ask this,” he sighed.

Hating him all the more for being so callous, she growled bitterly, “And you never answer.”

“And neither do you,” he was quick to remind her of his proposal. All the amusement drained from his expression. “Though, one day you will.”

Rejection wasn't a non-answer. She grit through her teeth, “When hell freezes over.”

“Already working on that, sweetling.” Petyr smirked when her tv turned on thirty feet away. Sansa glanced over his shoulder past the half wall that divided kitchen from living room. President Trump’s face flashed across the screen in all its orange glory. Underneath his puckered lips the tagline read, *Trump continues to deny Climate Change.*

“Get out!” Sansa threw her glass at the tv. It cracked and sparked, a black screen replacing the news report.

“Wasn’t that new?” He pointed to the tv, acting as if he didn’t know it was--as if he hadn’t been watching her every move since birth.

“Shall I get my gun?” she threatened, needing to feel powerful, or at least not powerless.

“Ah yes, that pistol you picked up last week.” He set his glass down and opened one of her kitchen drawers, pulling the gun in question out of it. She hadn’t left it there, though she knew that didn’t matter. He had a way of finding whatever he was looking for, wherever he looked. Holding it up into the light now, he smiled. “Do you think this will keep the bad men away?”

Sansa had gotten it for protection against some people she owed money to. Everything cost something and she wasn’t exactly making millions, so she made a couple of deals, placed a couple of bad bets. She hadn’t always been down on her luck, though. Everything had been going smoothly at first, and she was even able to pay off her tuition after her parents inheritance had been given away to charity per an addendum to their will made the day of their death. The devil had a sick sense of humor.

“I told you, call me Petyr,” he corrected again. “And the inheritance wasn’t to be funny. I thought if I gave to needy people it would balance out offing your parents and maybe you’d see that I was trying to be a better man for you. It was a romantic gesture…”

“Romantic gesture?! Murdering my parents was a romantic gesture ?!” She screamed, because she was outraged and old Ms. Mordane next door was away for the the weekend and wouldn’t bang on her wall. “Chocolates are romantic!”

He shook his head, denying it. “Fattening.”

“Flowers!” She yelled.

“They wilt,” he chuckled.
Ignoring him, she exclaimed, “Carriage rides and moonlit walks are romantic!”

He shrugged his shoulders, his eyes glittering back at her. “I’d love to take you on a carriage ride, but you refuse to come to Hell.”

Sansa reached for his glass to throw it, and missed when he swiped it away quickly. Fuming, she reminded him, “You trapped me last time!”

“I told you it was an accident,” he said impatiently, grabbing the vodka off the counter and pouring it into the glass in his hand. “I had no idea that door would lock from the outside.”

Accepting the glass he handed her, she slugged it back before she sneered, “You’re such a liar.”

“I know, and it will grow on you.” He held one hand up in mock oath. “I swear.”

Sansa breathed deeply, telling herself to calm down, to hate him just a little less. To ignore the voice in her head that said, That’s how he’s gonna wear you down.

“Shh,” he put a finger to her lips to hush her thoughts. “We’re making such progress. Don’t ruin it.”

Tears pricked her eyes, threatening to escape and roll down her cheeks. How many times had they had this conversation? How many times had he insisted they were meant to love each other? And at what cost?

“I’d pay any price,” his lips brushed her ear. She sighed into his embrace, too comfortable to fight in his arms, his goatee tickling the crook of her neck. “You’re worth it.”

Resistance was futile, and yet it was what she’d been doing since she learned the truth. He smelled of a cologne she couldn’t place and crushed mint leaves, the warmth of his flesh so unlike any other man’s. “Do you remember when I made my father buy me a hope chest?” She asked, allowing herself this brief moment of peace.

“Of course,” he purred. “I used to love looking through it while you slept at night, learning how best to woo you when you came of age.”

“I was so certain I was going to marry a knight, or at least the modern equivalent,” she confessed because she knew he despised the idea of her wed to anyone else but him.

“Mm, that was quite a phase.” His arms tightened around her, hugging her close. “I was so jealous that I tortured all the knights in Hell extra until I was sure you had gotten over such fantasy.”

Ignoring the way he dismissed her childhood infatuations, she carried on, “When my greatest concern was deciding what flowers to put in a bouquet for a dream wedding I was still too young for?”

Resting his forehead against the back of her head, he chuckled. “I possessed no less than thirty-two florists in your fifteenth year, trying to find the perfect arrangement for you--to speak to our love.” Pecking a kiss into her hair, he said, “All of your burdens have been shared, whether you’ve known that or not.”

Sansa held her breath as he traveled down over her hips, healing the bruises John Doe left as he found her hands hanging beside her. Twining his fingers in hers, he raised them to press a kiss to the back of her hand. “You don’t need a gun, my love. Only me. No one will harm you as mine.”

She’d only wanted to scare them away. So many men had died around her, she wasn’t sure she
had the stomach for more death. “You’ll kill them.”

“If you like,” he said so simply that it was hard to imagine they were discussing life and death. “Say the word and it is done.”

Sansa sucked at the sour taste in her mouth. “You’re disgusting.”

She didn’t pull from his arms and neither did he loosen his grip. “Methinks thou doth protest too much.”

Hating the teeny tiny part of herself deep within that wondered if he may have a point, she quieted, refusing to give him the satisfaction of a denial. As time went on, it was becoming more and more difficult to spurn his advances. In all these years, he hadn’t given up his chase, flirting relentlessly at every chance, studying all her interests, toying with her life to keep her notice. On more than a few occasions, she’d woken up in the morning, having had the feeling that she might not have been sleeping alone. Again a voice inside herself asked, *Would that be so bad?*

She felt his smile around her and she threw up a wall of static to keep him from reading her thoughts. He had no right to know her mind, and she would not allow him to prey upon her weaknesses, however momentary they were.

His grip loosened and slowly, he released her. “Fine. I’ll leave you--for now.” Taking a step back away from her, he sighed at the loss of contact.

The cool air rushed over her, letting her feel his absence. She had wanted him to go, and now she was stifling the urge to ask him to stay. This was how he worked, playing games, making her want what was wrong. Sansa cursed him under her breath.

To which he replied, “I heard that,” over his shoulder as he walked toward the darkest corner of the room. He turned back and gave her look of exasperation. “Try not to drag any more unsuspecting imbeciles back to your bed. As much as much as I love dispatching them, I’ve got a busy schedule this week.”

Sansa scowled at the flippant way he spoke, and if she were being honest, the fact that he apparently didn’t have time for her. That was a terrible thought.

“Although, if you need it that bad,” he smirked. “Maybe this will help.” He snapped his fingers and a hot pink dildo materialized on the counter beside her.

“Asshole!”

His snicker grew faint as he faded away into the darkness, his eyes taking the longest to leave. Sansa closed her own and drew a deep breath, hoping the sex toy might disappear when she opened them.

No such luck.

Instead, there was a note beside it that read, *Feel free to take out your frustrations. I’ll be watching.*

“Asshole,” she cursed again, crumpling the love note up and throwing it in the trash. The sun was rising and any day that started with disposing of a body was destined to be a long one. She was fortunate to live above a butcher shop in situations like these, though she cringed thinking of the meat grinder and the sound it made—a sound she had depended on too many times. “Is it too much to ask that you clean up after yourself?” She grumbled as she walked back toward the bedroom, her nausea growing.
There was no note, or disembodied words to reply, though Sansa was sure she heard someone laughing far off in the distance.

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