Sansa had clearly seen his body in the training yard, his clothes flush against his damp skin, and something hot had budded inside her then, like the first ripples spreading in a cauldron.

Notes

Originally started to cheer up justadram, but I took so long to put this together. The title is taken from Lana del Ray. If you guys have any comments, feelings, or suggestions for future chapters please let me know!
Chapter 1

When Sansa was little her mother taught her that ladies must always be kind, that they must always be helpful and sweet and polite. For many years these lessons served her well. Even in King’s Landing, Sansa found that the same rules applied. She may have hated the Lannisters, but she could still protect herself with a curtsey, the appropriate phrase, or a practiced smile.

But now, surrounded by family instead of captors, Sansa felt herself failing in every role she was supposed to occupy. Not for the first time, she wished her mother were still alive. Catelyn Stark knew how to run a household and care for children while fostering happiness in her loved ones. But for the third time that week, Sansa found herself searching the Godswood for Rickon, who refused to sit for his lessons or listen to Maestor Samwell.

Mother would have known what to say, she thought, spotting her younger brother underneath a white birch tree, his long legs stretched out in front of him.

Sansa sat down next to Rickon, linking her arm with his. It was easy to forget how young he was, her little brother, with his disregard for comfort and fierce attitude, but he was still just a child.

She squeezed his hand before asking, “Are you ready to use your manners with Maester Samwell?”

Rickon looked down sullenly before nodding his head. “Alright.”

Sansa gave him a hand up before walking him back to the library. She still had accounts to look over and expenses to calculate, but in this she felt some degree of success. Rickon could be difficult, but all he truly needed was some space and a kind word, at least in her experience.

“You will have lessons with Sam for one hour, and then you’re to go down to the training yard with Arya, understood?”

“Yes, Sansa,” he said.

She offered a smile to Sam, who gestured for Rickon to take his seat and begin reading.

“Thank you,” Sam said quietly. “He’s very bright, but sometimes I just don’t know how to reach him.”

“You do an excellent job,” Sansa replied. “If he gives you any more trouble I’ll be in my solar.”

She intended to spend the afternoon looking over her father’s old records, hoping to gather a deeper understanding of how a castle the size of Winterfell was run. Whenever Sansa tried to calculate the budget for their supplies she found herself making minor mistakes, each one picked out by Sam or Jon when they looked over her work, each error more work for them to attend to. As part of her lady’s training she had learned how to read and write and do basic math, but providing for their family was undoubtedly difficult, considering the state of the castle and its surrounding lands.

Jon was already waiting for her when she reached her solar, his brow knitted as he looked at old tax records.

A fine way to spend an afternoon, Sansa thought glumly.

She pulled out one of the many letters from Queen Daenerys that lay atop their shared writing
table. Inside was a detailed list of the sums the queen intended to provide for the restoration of Winterfell—more than Sansa had ever expected to receive from a Targaryen monarch. Jon’s fear, and her own, if she were being truthful, was that it would not be enough to repair the damage from the years of war, famine, and winter.

Spring had been a blessing for the entire realm, but most especially for the North. Even so, Sansa doubted their people could continue to live as they did, with very few able-bodied men to plow the fields and even less food to provide for them.

She opened the dusty, well-worn volume in front of her, immediately recognizing the faded script as her father’s. There were a few places where Maestor Luwin had made an addition here or there, but the record she had at her disposal looked to be a detailed account of her childhood years at Winterfell. The figures on the page were significantly larger than what they had at their disposal, a fact that had begun to deeply concern her.

Sansa remembered Joffery firing his crossbow at the small folk of King’s Landing, picking off those who complained of having no bread. Would the North ever become such a place? Not while Starks still lived and breathed, she hoped.

After many hours of reading Sansa put her face in her hands.

“We will have to write the Queen,” she said, feeling useless and unhelpful.

Jon’s hair was in a tangled mess, as if he had dragged his hands through it too many times. “Yes, we will have to. I have some ideas, but without coordination from the other Kingdoms it has no hope of working.”

The hour was late and several plates of food had been left out for the pair of them, its contents untouched. Sansa rubbed her eyes and tried to ease the tension building in her temples. Despite the time, Jon had already grabbed a roll of parchment to write a letter to the Queen, looking just as tired as she felt.

Sansa wanted him to rest, but it was up to them to allocate the available lands of the North, resettle the Gift, and increase trade in White Harbor. Without Jon’s dedication, she doubted Winterfell would run as smoothly as it did now.

“You should get some sleep,” she said, clearing away the food that obviously wasn’t going to be eaten.

“I won’t stay up too late,” he assured her, but Sansa knew there was a limit to his truthfulness. Perhaps he would not intend to work into the wee hours of the morning, but she would not be surprised to find him that way, asleep at their shared writing table come morning.

“Sleep well,” she said.

“Have a good evening, my Lady.”

Sansa knew a dismissal when she heard one. Closing the door behind her, she knew that the restoration of the north would not have been possible without Jon’s help.

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Sansa pulled the stitch through the fabric, mending one of the many new holes in Rickon’s garments. Her younger brother was so inclined to tearing his clothing that she was constantly fixing some piece of it. Gilly kept her company, the pair of them in her solar with several sewing baskets between them, the window opened to allow for the best light.
"You always have the finest embroidery," Gilly said, watching as Sansa stitched a gray wolf onto the cuffs of Rickon's tunic.

"Thank you. I could teach you, you know. I don't have anyone else to embroider with. Arya and I learned as girls but she never took to it much."

A knock sounded at the chamber door and Gilly rose to answer it. The maids had come to straighten up Sansa’s bedchamber, curtseying to her and offering a “good morning to you, m'lady.” They continued chatting while Sansa and Gilly worked on their sewing, with Sansa catching snatches of their conversation while she worked.

“He’ll never ask you at this rate,” Sansa heard.

“That’s what I told him. And it’s not like there aren’t finer men about. Llewellyn, from the stables, he’s ‘ad his eye on me for months now.”

The other girl made an appreciative sound. “I wouldn’t mind if Llewellyn had his eyes on me, or Toregg. He’s so tall.”

“Or Lord Jon,” the first girl whispered, causing both of them to giggle.

Sansa felt her face fall the moment she heard one of the maidservants mention “Lord Jon.” There was only one Lord Jon at Winterfell, and hearing the girls’ conversation made her feel hot and constricted, like she was standing too close to a fire.

Rising from her seat, Sansa approached the window and looked out at the yard until the maidservants left her quarters. Gilly continued with her sewing, but Sansa’s hands were fisted over the window ledge, her nails embedded in her palms. Suddenly, the light from outside and the sound of activity from the yard was harsh in its intensity.

She knew that Jon was an attractive man. He favored Arya and her father in looks, but Jon was taller than Robb or Lord Eddard had ever been, with an ease in his role as Lord of Winterfell that came from years of leadership. Sansa had clearly seen his body in the training yard, his clothes flush against his damp skin, and something hot had budded inside her then, like the first ripples spreading in a cauldron.

It had never occurred to her that other women shared her feelings.

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Rickon’s outbursts had decreased from three or four times a week to once a week, making Sansa feel that they had achieved something like progress. She found that Rickon was usually in better spirits when there were other boys of his age to play with, and so she wrote to Lord Manderly, inquiring about whether one of his nephews would like to foster at Winterfell.

It was one of the rare times that she had found a means to please everyone. Lord Manderly replied swiftly, writing that he would be honored to send his nephew Wyley to foster with them. Sansa used the arrival of the Manderly boy to keep Rickon in line, reminding him that he must be on his best behavior if he wanted Wyley to stay, and that if he could not be good it would be a simple matter to send the boy home.

Her strategy worked. Jon remarked to her that she was the only one to see what Rickon needed.

“I never thought about it, but he must have had lots of other boys to play with when he lived on Skagos,” Jon said, walking with her through the glass gardens.
“And before that there was always Bran.”

Sansa felt a marked sadness when she thought about Bran. In the time since they had reclaimed Winterfell no word had been heard of her brother, and it pained her to think that he may be alive somewhere with no way for them to know.

Jon must have seen her troubled expression, because he reached forward and put his hand on her arm, pulling her close to him in what felt like a hug. Sansa was so surprised at his display of affection that she almost didn’t register what he said next.

“You do a good job with him,” he said, his expression soft. “Rickon may think he doesn’t need a mother, but he would be wrong.”

Sansa’s stomach lurched in a way that reminded her of missing her footing on the stairs, or feeling off-balance from one of the fast, southern dances, but by the time she registered the sensation she and Jon were parting ways in the courtyard. As she walked toward the rookery her heart continued to drum against her chest, thrumming just under her skin.

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The Lords of the Gift descend on Winterfell in the coming weeks. The Great Hall was full for the first time in recent memory, as each wildling lord had brought a group of retainers with them, traveling more as a tribe than a lord and his men-at-arms.

Sansa took it upon herself to ready the castle and prepare their facilities as best she could. With the glass gardens repaired they have enough food to sustain their guests, but it was in sharp contrast to the visit Sansa remembered from King Robert, with their stores equipped for only a limited stay. Their fare would be considered meager by courtly standards but the wildlings are greatly impressed, with nightly calls for drinking and dances.

She had to remind herself on more than one occasion that the men Jon entertained were no longer called wildlings, that they were Lords in their own right, despite their strange customs and obvious differences. Among the ladies, Alys Thenn was the only face that Sansa recognized from her childhood.

Her belly was swollen, showing that she would likely give birth in a few months time. Sansa found her way to a seat beside Alys once the dances started, choosing to keep the other woman company instead of parading in front of the Lords of the Gift, nervous around so many strange men.

“How do you fare, my Lady?” Sansa asked.

Alys rested a hand on her stomach, relaxing in her seat. “I am fine, Lady Sansa, just eager for this time to be over.”

“This is your second child?”

Alys nodded. “My husband is convinced that it’s a girl, but I’m not as certain. This one kicks much more than the first.”

Sansa smiled at her before both of them turned their attention to the space that had been cleared for dancing. Jon was leading Arya in one of the traditional Northern dances, her sister outshining all the other women with her skill, though Sansa supposed it made sense for someone so sure on their feet to be an able dance partner.
Leaning closer, Alys said, “I haven’t seen Jon this way since Val was at the Wall. You must keep him happy.”

Sansa returned the smile Alys offered her, but the expression did not reach her heart. She had heard of Val the wildling a time or two before, but few brought up Jon’s former lover around her, making it difficult for Sansa to ever grasp the extent of their relationship. However, Alys had met the woman Val when she had married Sigon at Castle Black. Despite the deep feeling of anxiety in her stomach, Sansa felt the urge to ask Alys about her, curious about one of the few women linked to Jon.

The moment passed and Sansa forced herself to steer their conversation in another direction. They were discussing the future of the Dreadfort when she felt a warm hand at her arm, startling her in her seat.

“My Lady,” Jon said, offering his hand to her. “Would you dance with me?”

“Please don’t abstain on my account,” Alys said, gesturing to her stomach.

Sansa took his hand, feeling nauseous and excited at the same time. She thought of this fierce wilding woman that Jon had supposedly loved, so wholly different from herself, and the existence of her own feelings seemed ridiculous and immoral by comparison. His hand rested on her hip, making her skin practically shiver beneath his touch.

As a girl she had loved dancing, but being so close to Jon only reminded her of the rumors she’d heard about Val the Wildling Princess and her fling with the Lord Commander Jon Snow. He led her in a slower dance, the kind that placed them closer to one another, close enough for Sansa to pick up on the scent of pine and wood smoke on his clothes.

“You’re very good with the wildlings,” Sansa said, careful to let only Jon hear.

“I merely try to do my part,” he said. There was a faint blush to his cheeks, though she could not be sure if it came from her compliment or the dancing.

“You’re much better at it than me. I wouldn’t be able to do all of this on my own,” she said truthfully.

Jon smiled at her, the kind of soft, private smile she didn’t often see from him.

“Thank you,” he said.

Jon opened his mouth to say something else but it was then that the music changed from a slow, easy tune to a fast melody. One of Tormund’s sons asked to cut in and Sansa was politely handed off, taking her away from Jon and whatever thought he’d been trying to share.
Arya paced the length of the library, her long legs pulling her forward only to halt and turn on her heel. Her book forgotten in her lap, Sansa looked between her sister and Jon Snow, unsure if she had ever seen the two disagree until now.

“He’s only a boy,” Arya said, her arms crossed over her chest.

“Exactly. He’s a child, how can he possibly know what he wants to do for the rest of his life?”

This was not the reply her sister had been looking for, it seemed, for she huffed and plopped down in the chair normally occupied by Maester Samwell.

“What I mean is, it’s too much responsibility for someone Rickon’s age. He barely remembers living here before, or mother and father.”

“It is the same amount of responsibility Lord Stark gave to Robb,” Jon said seriously. “Rickon must learn these things now so he will be ready when the time comes. It will only be a matter of years before he’ll be Lord of Winterfell.”

“But what if he doesn’t want to be Lord of Winterfell,” Arya argued.

Jon’s expression gave away very little, but Sansa could see the furrow in his brow and the stubborn set of his jaw.

Breaking the silence, Sansa said, “He may not want to be a Lord now, it probably seems boring to a boy his age, but we must give him the opportunity. Let Rickon live a normal life, at least for now.”

Arya slumped in her chair. “I never wanted to be a Lady,” she said. “You let me be Master at Arms, even though by all rights I should have been married off to some Lord instead.”

Jon did not flinch or look away under Arya’s gaze. He regarded her thoughtfully, as if he were surprised by what she’d just said.

“Arya, I can’t make you do anything. You and Sansa are the true Starks here and Winterfell is your home. Besides, you’re a woman grown. Rickon hasn’t even reached his tenth name-day.”

“True Starks?” she asked. “The Queen changed your name, you’re just as much a Stark as we are, and it’s you that Queen Daenerys listens to.”

Jon opened his mouth to reply, but Sansa could tell from his posture that he was tired and in no mood to argue the point. She closed her book firmly, the sound catching Jon and Arya’s attention.

“Lord Manderly is sending his nephew to foster here. Maybe Rickon will have a change of heart once he realizes that living at Winterfell doesn’t have to be so lonely.”
Her words seemed to mollify the both of them.

“I suppose that makes sense,” Arya admitted. “We’ll just have to see how he acts once the Manderly boy gets here.”

“We can talk about this again later, alright?” Jon said.

Arya shifted around in her seat while Jon and Sansa chatted. As they began to discuss the Glovers’ logging proposal Arya left for the armory, mentioning something about needing to reorganize the weapons. Arya’s task made sense to Sansa. Their smith, a man named Gendry, had rapidly restocked their supplies of swords and armor, to the point where the armory had to be cleared out of old or less useful equipment.

Once her sister departed Sansa opened her book again, only to find herself staring at the page without actually taking in the words. She re-read the same line three times before closing it.

Glancing up, Sansa realized that Jon was looking over at her, his elbow on the desk, one hand resting under his cheek.

“You and Arya don’t argue like you used to,” he said.

Shrugging, she replied, “It never seems like there’s anything important for us to argue about anyone.”

A soft smile crossed his face. “I wish I could say the same.”

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Sansa walked to her chambers without noticing who passed her or spotting any of the familiar smiles she usually returned as she walked the castle. After what she had seen, she was too preoccupied to pay much attention to those around her, so deep in thought that she almost missed her footing on the stairs to Jon’s chambers.

“Careful, my Lady,” said Gilly, who was walking down the stairs.

“It’s fine, I’m alright,” Sansa assured her, but she wasn’t sure if that was entirely true.

She knocked on the door to Jon’s solar, giving a short “It’s Sansa” before the door was opened. Taking her usual chair by the window, she took a deep breath while Jon closed the door and joined her, biting her lip in anticipation.

“Are you busy?” she asked.

Sansa followed his gaze over to the stacks of letters and old volumes that took up most of the space on his table.

“Sorry. Do you have a minute?”

“Of course.”

Her hands were knitted together in her lap. She purposefully disentangled them and met Jon’s keen, gray eyes across from her.

“How much do you know about Gendry?” she asked.

Jon’s outward expression didn’t change, but Sansa could tell by the slight shift in his posture that she’d surprised him.
“Not much that doesn’t pertain to his work,” he admitted. “He’s an excellent smith. As good as any other that Winterfell has had. Why do you ask?”

“It’s only that…I went looking for Arya earlier. I wanted to see if she was alright after the way that talk went yesterday. She acts like she’s very hardened to the world but these things do get to her. Once I got to the training yard I didn’t see her around so I went looking in the armory. I saw her and Gendry together.”

“Together how?” Jon asked.

Sansa looked down, a blush rising in her cheeks. “In the way men and women are usually together.”

“I figured as much,” he said, frowning. “When I took Gendry into service here he admitted that he knew Arya, that they had traveled the Riverlands together when she was a girl.”

“I didn’t know,” Sansa admitted. “I worried because I don’t know anything about him. Arya likes to think that she doesn’t need any help and that she can take care of herself, and she’s probably right, but I still feel like I should look out for her.”

“I understand.”

His eyes found hers then, dark and piercing, like he could see inside her.

“I’ve felt that way many a time,” he said, his right hand clenching around the armrest. “When I think about what happened to you, or to Arya, or Rickon, I feel immensely guilty.”

“There’s nothing you could have done,” Sansa urged, but she understood him all too well.

“I used to think about father,” she confessed, her eyes beginning to sting, a prickling that made her blink while she gave a little exhale. “I was right there when it happened, and for months I went over it in my mind, thinking that if I had just done something everything would be different.”

Jon leaned toward her and took both of her hands in his, his touch warm against hers, the calluses on his palms rough against her skin. Looking at him through watery eyes, Sansa felt a slow, creeping heat under her skin.

Squeezing her hand, Jon said, “There’s nothing you could have done.”

Still holding one of her hands, he reached out to tuck her hair behind her ear, or touch her cheek, his fingers a hair’s breath from her face when the door opened. Jon drew away quickly, the interruption making Sansa feel strangely guilty. They hadn’t been doing anything wrong, she reasoned, but everything about the way they were sitting—the flush in her cheeks, the breathless feeling that was sweeping through her—spoke of intimacy.

Samwell stood in the doorway, doing his best to not look at either of them.

“I’m sorry, I can come back later—“

“It’s alright,” Sansa said, standing from her seat.

The sudden shift made her feel momentarily dizzy, not knowing whether to look at Jon or ignore him completely, each inch of her skin tingling like she’d been out in the sun for too long.

“I’ll see you later,” she said, glancing back at Jon before edging out of the room.
Sansa wasn’t sure if Jon had meant to touch her hair or if he had meant to kiss her, but the near contact of his hand made her feel like a coil twisting under pressure. Seeing him over her shoulder like that, his eyes following her as she moved, made her pulse thrum loud in her ears until she reached her own chambers.

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Sitting by the fire in the library, Sansa attended her sewing, so engrossed in her work that she only gave a cursory goodnight to Gilly when she left to put her son to sleep. Jon and Sam were bent over a large volume that Sansa didn’t recognize. There had been very few books left undamaged by the fire; Sansa figured they were reading one of the texts Sam had brought back all the way from Oldtown.

She folded the last of Arya’s repaired garments before pulling one of Jon’s tunics out of her basket. Sansa mended a torn seam while Sam said goodnight to the two of them, the lengths of his Maestor’s chain clinking as he walked down the hallway. Jon continued leafing through the text, but she could tell by his expression that his mind wasn’t on the words in front of him.

“Have you ever thought of getting married?” Sansa asked.

Jon looked at her over his book, one of his dark eyebrows raised in question. “Why do you ask?”

“I’ve heard the servants talk about the Lady Val,” she explained. “They say that you were together before you came to Winterfell. I suppose I’m trying to say that you don’t have to be alone, no one would object to you bringing her here, if that was your wish.”

Closing his book, he watched her sew, his expression difficult for Sansa to read.

“We never intended to marry,” Jon explained. “Wildlings often don’t, and I didn’t expect that we would stay together for very long.”

She looked back down at her sewing, carefully stitching up the last seam. Sansa bit her lower lip, wanting to look up at him but not trusting what she would say, the silence making her run through the past few moons in her mind.

Jon got up to add another log to the fire. It was spring but the evenings still grew cold, especially in the library, with its large panes of new glass.

His arm braced on the mantle, Jon asked, “Why do you ask me about having a wife?”

Sansa finished the last stitch in his tunic, cutting the thread and tying it off before neatly folding the shirt.

Standing, she approached him, the fabric clutched tightly in her hands.

“I do not wish for you to be alone,” Sansa said.

She held the shirt out to him, feeling her heart leap in her throat when Jon’s hand met hers around the fabric. He looked at her for a long, silent moment, his hand intentionally tangling with her own, and it was then that Sansa knew.

Jon moved forward just a half step, but that was enough to bring them face-to-face, the garment falling to the floor in her distraction. He leaned forward and caught her lips with his own, one hand cupping her cheek while the other wrapped around her waist, her arms caught between them in her surprise. Sansa closed her eyes and brushed her tongue against his, shuddering when Jon pulled her lower lip between his teeth.
She could not recall ever being kissed in such a way. Joffery had kissed her hand in the first stages of their betrothal, and Harry would always kiss her before lying atop her and spending himself, but Sansa had never had a man kiss her like this. Jon tugged his fingers through her hair, his lips pressing along he underside of her jaw while she ran her hands over his back and shoulders, feeling the hard planes of muscle beneath his clothes and wanting to dig her nails into his skin, to trace the sharp angle of his hipbones.

Sansa stood on the tips of her toes, one of his hands curving over her arse to anchor her more closely to him. She sighed against his mouth, the fabric of her gown feeling tight across her breasts, heat coiling between her legs as he pressed her body flush with his own.

Resting his forehead against hers, Jon said, “I’ve been wanting to do that for weeks.”

Sansa tugged on his curls, drawing a low sound of pleasure out of him as she dragged her nails over his scalp. She could feel him hard against her belly and a wicked part of her wanted to rub her sex against him through her gown, wanted to pull Jon on top of her in the deserted library and feel him against the cradle of her hips.

“So do you want, I, do you want to…?” Sansa struggled to put it into speech

*Do you want to fuck,* she thought, but she was too shy to speak the words. Jon’s hands brushed up her sides, and she gave a sharp exhale when he pulled her hair out of its twist, sending it tumbling down her back in waves. Sansa wanted to wind her limbs around him, his eyes practically black in the dim light from the fire.

“Yes,” he said, swallowing hard, his Adam’s apple visible in his throat. “But not yet. We can’t do that yet, but I can still make you feel good.”

She nodded, letting Jon guide her to the furs by the hearth, feeling him ease her onto her back while he pressed hot, full kisses to her open mouth.

Sansa felt her hips work themselves against the pressure of his body, one of his thighs planted between hers. Reaching for Jon’s hand, she placed it over her breast, saying, “I want you to touch me.”

She didn’t miss the hungry look in his eyes, his pupils blown wide with only a thin band of gray around the outside. She felt a quiver between her legs as he roughly pushed down the neckline of her dress, burning a trail across her skin. Jon pulled her nipple between his teeth, making her spine arch off the floor, her hands fisting the fabric of his doublet as he twisted her other nipple with his fingers.

“You’re so beautiful,” he said, kissing the underside of her teats, his voice low in his throat.

Jon rolled his hips against hers and she squeezed her eyes shut, lost in the rhythmic fluttering from deep inside her. She slid her tongue between his lips, pleased when he moaned into her mouth, shivering at the contrast of his rough clothes against her naked chest.

“I just want to look at you like this,” Jon said, running her hair through his fingers.

He cupped her cheek, his thumb brushing over her lower lip. Sansa brought his thumb between her teeth, biting softly before swirling her tongue around it, watching the pace of his breathing change.

Jon moved down her body, kissing her stomach and pinching her nipples with his fingers. Sansa breathed a low moan of frustration when he swatted her hands away from his laces, pushing aside
her skirts and tugging her smallclothes past her hips. She wasn’t sure what he was about until he began to kiss the inside of her thighs, his fingers gently teasing her sex until she wanted to writhe against the stone floor.

“Be still, sweet girl,” Jon said, sliding his fingers inside of her, her wetness making an obscene sound in the nearly silent library.

Sansa felt immensely aroused but frustrated. She could feel her own dampness leaking against her skin and the thing she wanted most of all was to be filled, to feel Jon’s lean body over hers while he rocked into her over and over. But then Sansa felt his lips brush against her bud, her eyes flying open at the sensation. She saw Jon’s dark head between her legs and a jolt of heat shot straight to her groin, her toes curling into the fur beneath her as he laved that small spot with his tongue, sucking it between his lips and making Sansa’s body tremble from the intensity of it.

“Jon, please,” she said, not sure what she was begging for but wanting it desperately.

“I know, sweetling, you’re almost there,” he said, his voice a rumble against her skin.

Sansa clutched his hair in her hands, each of her muscles tightening like a spring, building in pressure until Jon twisted his fingers inside her, her peak curling through her limbs. Distantly, she heard herself making soft cries while he drew his tongue around her bud in slow circles.

“You’re so pretty like this,” Jon said, kissing her neck and cradling her against him, his lips brushing over her cheek, her eyelids, her jaw line.

Sansa wrapped her body up in his, their legs twisted in her skirts. Her brow was damp with sweat and her body was pleasantly wrung out, sighing at the feeling of his lips on her skin, his hand curled over her hip.

Before she could untie the laces of his breeches Jon was straightening his clothes, smoothing down his wild hair from where she had clutched at it.

“Not tonight,” he said, leaning over to kiss her, his mouth tasting tangy and sweet on her tongue. *He tastes like me*, she thought, relishing in the wrongness of it.

Sansa wanted to take Jon back to bed with her and keep him there, to slide her hand inside his smallclothes and repay him for the pleasure he’d brought her.

“Why not?” she asked.

Jon pressed his face into her neck, his stubble rough against her sensitive skin, breathing her in like he was trying to memorize her scent.

“I want to,” he confessed, his desire apparent in his expression. “But I promise I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Sansa began to straighten her clothing, covering herself while Jon watched her, more than a hint of regret in his eyes. She felt herself flush from the directness of his gaze, not used to such attention from him.

*Don’t be silly, Sansa thought. He’s kissed you between your legs but you’re afraid to let him watch you dress?*

She tied up her laces as best she could without a maid to help her dress, knowing that she was about to return to her bedchamber and remove them anyways. Jon came up behind her, his arms encircling her waist, making Sansa close her eyes and lean into the form of his body.
“Goodnight, my Lord,” she said, feeling weak and wrung out from earlier and yet wide awake. Sansa broke away from him, offering a playful smile before saying, “I’ll see you in the morning.”
When Sansa woke the sun had not yet fully risen, casting her bedchamber in a bluish hue that gave off little light. She pulled the furs tighter about herself and sighed into her pillow, remembering more and more about the previous evening as she woke up, a blush beginning to steal over her cheeks.

She did not know the name for what Jon had done to her, but she was certain it was not the kind of thing that lords and ladies did with each other, making her wonder where he had learned such a thing. In any case, Sansa felt her hips shift restlessly at the memory. Under her pile of blankets and covers she slid her hand inside her smallclothes, biting her bottom lip, thinking of the way Jon had looked between her legs, her wetness covering his mouth. Sansa circled her bud with her fingers, thinking of how he’d seemed to like it, how he’d whispered sweet words to her and sucked bruises onto her skin.

Despite still being drowsy from sleep, she peaked quickly. Sansa closed her eyes, only intending to lie down for another half hour, but before she could fully relax she heard a nnock at the door. It had been a soft knock, quiet enough for her to wonder if she’d imagined it, but Sansa heard it again and rose from her bed. Quickly wrapping a dressing gown around herself, she padded across her solar and opened the door that led to the outer hall. Jon stood in the doorframe, fully dressed, looking far more ready for the day than she was.

“I’m sorry if I woke you,” he said, his eyes flicking down to her robe.

“I wasn’t really asleep,” Sansa lied. “Come in.”

Jon stepped into her rooms and for a moment she felt uncertain of what to do. Should she kiss him? In the back of her mind Sansa worried that he could have changed his mind about her in the hours between bedtime and morning, but Jon solved her dilemma by taking her hands and kissing her. Sansa relaxed against him, her arms winding around his neck like a vine.

His body was wonderfully warm against hers, solid and full of heat, a pleasant contrast to the chilly air of her chambers.

Pulling away, Jon played with a strand of her unbound hair, sending a little thrill along her spine.

“I’m afraid I can’t stay,” he said, his expression regretful. “A raven came in the night. I have to ride out to the Bolton lands, we won’t be back for a few weeks.”

Sansa felt her heart sink in her chest. “What happened?” she asked. “Will you be fighting?”

Frowning, Jon answered, “Several moons ago I sent a party of men to put the lands around the Dreadfort in order, but the scope of the problem has become too much for them.”
“Bolton loyalists?” Sansa asked incredulously.

“No,” he chuckled. “Just outlaws. Men that did well when there was no order. But if we have any hope of rebuilding the north we must put a stop to it.”

She ran her fingers over the front of his leather jerkin, wanting to remember the shape of him beneath her hands. Sansa reached up on the tips of her toes and kissed him. She knew that when she saw him off at the gates they would not be allowed this intimacy, and Sansa treasured the moment for as long as she could, feeling Jon encircle her in his arms.

Pressing her cheek against his, she gave a little exhale as she leaned into the shape of his body.

“I understand,” Sansa said. “I merely hope that you come home safely.”

--

Sansa went down to the Great Hall to break her fast with Jon and the other men. It had been some time since she’d seen the hall so filled with soldiers in armor and boiled leather, not since the winter, when Queen Daenerys and her dragons had taken up residence at Winterfell.

She took a bowl of porridge for herself and bid Gilly to sit next to her, adding a spoon of honey to her breakfast.

“Are you not hungry?” Sansa asked, noting Gilly’s meager plate of plain bread.

“Not truly, my Lady. I’ve felt ill since I woke this morning.”

Pressing a hand to Gilly’s forehead, Sansa frowned in concern. “Are you alright? Shall I call Maestor Samwell for you?”

Gilly shook her head. “Thank you for the offer, my Lady, but I’ll be alright. I know why I’ve taken ill.”

Looking down at her plate, she twisted her hands around her napkin, unable to meet Sansa’s eyes.

Her expression hesitant, Gilly said, “My Lady, I’m with child.”

Sansa beamed at her, grasping Gilly’s hands between her own. “But that’s wonderful.”

Smiling now, she said, “Sam was afraid to tell you and Lord Stark.”

Sansa nodded. “I understand, but you have nothing to worry about. Any children of yours are welcome at Winterfell.”

Gilly’s news gave her a happy thought to return to as the morning went on. Breakfast for the men didn’t last long, not with bags to pack and horses to ready. Sansa tried to help the preparations as much as she could, instructing the kitchen staff to prepare adequate food for the force of men that would be departing and keeping Arya company as she dispensed Gendry’s newly-made weapons.

Jon and his companions departed before noon. In their absence Winterfell felt significantly less crowded, the level of activity reminding Sansa of those last few months of winter, when the snows still piled as tall as a man.

Her embroidery hoop under her arm, Sansa entered Sam’s study, carrying several spools of thread and hoping to find him unoccupied.

“My Lady,” Sam said, rising from his seat and nodding toward the empty chair for her.
“I’m not interrupting, am I?”

Sansa could plainly see the pile of parchments and leather-bound volumes covering his desk, but Sam didn’t appear to be put out by her visit.

“No, it’s nothing that can’t wait.”

Nodding, she threaded her needle and began working on a pattern of birds along the sleeves of one of her gowns.

“How long do you expect Jon and the others to be gone?” Sansa asked. “He told me two weeks, but I wonder how close to the truth than can be.”

Sam crossed his arms over his chest, his clothing seeming to hang off him. He looked to have shrunk since arriving at Winterfell.

“It’s hard to say,” he confessed. “It’ll all depends on how things go once they arrive.”

“And what do you think of Emmet?” she asked.

“He was a member of the Watch—he’s very loyal to Jon. If he’s sent a raven now then I’m sure he tried to do as much as he could before this.”

“Yes. But what do you suppose we should do with him once this is all dealt with? Jon seems to trust him enough to deal with outlaws, but would he make a good lord?”

Sam frowned and laced his hands together. “That’s a much harder question to answer, my Lady. Emmet’s a good fighter, I could see him as a captain of the guard for whomever takes up residence at the Dreadfort, but I don’t know if he has the right experience to be a Lord.”

“It seems that few people do,” Sansa said, finishing a branch of thorny vines. She switched to gray thread and began stitching songbirds along the hem.

“If we give the Dreadfort to a wildling the Northern Lords will be very unhappy,” she explained. “They already think that we offer the free folk too much by allowing them to settle in the Gift and the lands around Winterfell, but if we give the lands to a nobleman it will seem like we don’t think the wildlings good enough for a lordship.”

Sam’s frown deepened. Sansa felt similarly discouraged by the situation.

“You could always reward someone for their service,” Sam suggested. “Someone capable but not highborn.”

“And we could marry them to a wildling,” Sansa said, completing the stitching to the first of many birds.

She remained in the study with Sam for several hours, with talk eventually turning to the Glovers and their timber proposal. Sansa had spent the better part of the last week trying to figure out a means to transport timber from the Wolfswood to merchants at White Harbor without paying too great a price, but the situation had yet to yield an appropriate solution.

It was a predicament she had discussed at length with Jon, but without allies in the South or across the Narrow Sea she feared their venture with the Glovers could not take place. Sam had even written to his brother Dickon at Horn Hill, asking if he knew of any men in the Reach who were looking to get into the timber business. Sansa knew that if they could establish a presence in the
timber market in Braavos the Northern economy would be greatly improved. Without the gold, it would take decades for the North, and Winterfell, to recover from the war, while the south outpaced them by leaps and bounds.

Eventually Sam returned to his letter writing, but Sansa continued her work on the gown, carefully placing each stitch until they formed a flawless pattern.

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Sansa leaned against the base of a tree in the Godswood, a book spread over her lap. It was much warmer today than it had been for several weeks, warm enough for her to wear one of her thin summer gowns, the air balmy against her bare skin. She had kicked off her slippers to better feel the soft grass beneath her feet, glad that the weather had proved agreeable, even if Winterfell felt especially lonely.

Jon and his men had been gone a moon’s turn, two weeks longer than he’d initially predicted. Sam had received a letter in that time but it was short, obviously written at a late hour and filled with good news despite its brevity. Their party would be returning soon, having made short work of the outlaws with their superior numbers. However, Jon’s letter had arrived a little over a week ago and no ravens had been received since.

Sam assured her that Jon and the men who traveled with him would be home any day, but Sansa felt an apprehension that stemmed from more than Jon’s mere absence from home. Her duties as Lady of Winterfell had kept her exceptionally busy. This left Sansa with little time during the day to think on her night in the library with Jon, but in the hour before she went to bed or during the occasions she visited the Godswood her mind would invariably fill with doubts about his return, wondering if he hadn’t thought better of what they’d done together.

While Sansa’s mind roiled in uncertainty her body had not taken heed of her troubles. She woke from many dreams where she was naked with Jon Snow, her imagination filling in the appearance of his body or the feeling of her unclothed skin against his. In her dreams, her clothes fell away like water dripping over her skin, and Jon kissed her sex over and over again until she woke, trembling and frustrated.

Sansa found herself falling into a routine in the evenings: she would lay awake in bed for some time before falling asleep, her smallclothes somewhere around her ankles while she touched herself, her blood running hot beneath her skin, finding even the weight of her nightrail to be too constricting. Would Jon think lesser of her for doing this, she wondered. Sansa didn’t think that highborn women were supposed to indulge themselves in such a way, but the sharp, hollow ache in her lower belly had become too persistent for her to ignore.

To an outsider it would appear that she was simply engrossed in her book, but Sansa hadn’t read a word for some time. In fact, she hardly noticed the sound of someone approaching until a shadow fell across the page.

“Good afternoon, my Lady.”

Looking up, it seemed that an age passed before Sansa felt herself respond, her mouth going dry before she stood.

“Jon,” she said, the volume tumbling from her lap.

“Am I disturbing you?” he said, looking far too handsome in his jerkin and riding boots. He had obviously just arrived, with dust from the road still staining his breeches, but despite his disheveled appearance she wanted nothing more than to throw her arms around him.
“No, of course not,” Sansa replied, her voice sounding high and breathless in her ears.

“Good,” Jon said, his eyes never leaving her face even as his long strides bridged the gap between them.

He kissed her under the shade of the evergreens, her eyeslids falling shut at the feeling of his mouth on hers, her pulse thrumming heavily in her ears. Sansa whimpered into his mouth, shocked at the feeling of his body, warm and strong against hers, Jon’s hands curving along her arse and anchoring her tightly against him.

“Sansa,” he said, pulling away and burying his face in her neck, his teeth nipping at her earlobe.

“Come here,” she urged, pulling him to the ground with her, the pair of them sprawled out in the grass.

Jon’s stubble scraped against her sensitive skin of her chest, her hands carding through his dark hair while he kissed along her collarbone. Sansa pulled him up to kiss her, hitching her leg over his hip while currents of heat pooled in her groin.

Rolling onto his back, Jon eased her on top of him, her hair forming a curtain around their faces.

“Gods, I missed you,” he said. His expressing was open and full of longing, shattering any doubts Sansa had entertained about his feelings.

Her hand cupping his face, she ran her thumb over his bottom lip, testing the fullness there.

“You hardly seem real,” she confessed. “I had so many dreams…”

Jon offered her a wicked smile, his hands finding her hips, sliding up and down her sides, brushing the bottom of her breasts.

“Tell me what you dreamt,” he said, his hips angling upwards, rocking against her in a way that left her quivering against him.

Her legs fell to either side of him, finally there, his hands gliding over her body while he licked his lips. Sansa closed her eyes and braced her hands on his chest, her hips circling his.

“I dreamed that we were in the hot springs together,” she said, feeling Jon pull at the laces of her gown. “You touched me and kissed me the whole time so that no one would hear us.”

He pulled at the neckline of her gown until it fit beneath her breasts. Sansa moaned at the feeling of his hands on her, at the way he played with her nipples, rolling them between his thumb and forefinger.

“Ah, Jon,” she said, heat gathering low in her spine. “That feels so good.”

“Filthy girl,” he said, his voice low and gravely in his throat.

Sansa helped him out of his clothes, ridding him of his tunic and jerkin, her hands shaking as she tugged at the laces of his breeches. Jon pushed the garment past his hips, the outline of his cock clearly visible through his smallclothes. Her lower lip between her teeth, Sansa stroked him through his last layer of clothing, feeling a heady rush when he rucked up against her hand, the muscles in his neck standing out.

“Let me touch you,” she said.
Jon met her eyes and gave the slightest nod, his lips falling open as she slid her hand inside his smallclothes and brushed her fingers over his length.

“Oh, gods, Sansa,” he said roughly, the muscles in his stomach rippling at her touch.

She watched every change in his body, each response from him making her feel practically lightheaded. Sansa pulled his smallclothes down his hips, taking in the sight of Jon’s lean form beneath her, the hard-soft feeling of his cock in her hand and the sinewy planes of muscle beneath his skin.

“Jon, please, I want to so much,” she said, rubbing her center against his leg, feeling her own wetness along her thighs.

“Yes, come here my sweet girl,” he said, his hands finding her hips beneath her skirts.

Sansa had never been astride a man before, but Jon helped her, reaching between their bodies and guiding himself inside her, making her shudder and squeeze her eyes shut at the intensity of the sensation.

“Oh,” she said, her wetness allowing him to easily slide between her legs. “Oh gods.”

Harry had never made her body respond in such a way, and Sansa remembered the beginnings of sex with him as uncomfortable and halting. This couldn’t feel more different. Sansa hadn’t known it could be like this, full and slick at the same time, her body pitching itself forward until she nearly felt him leave her, then feeling him reach her core, her hair falling away from her face as she arched her back.

His hands bracketing her hips, Jon let out a string of filthy words, causing a blush to rise in her cheeks even while he was still inside her. Sansa leaned closer to him, burying her face in his neck and licking the sweat-slicked skin there while he bent his legs at the knee and angled into her.

“Yes, that’s so good, my sweet, dirty girl,” he said, his lips finding her shoulder.

Sansa dug her hands in his hair, pulling it impossibly hard as her peak began to overtake her. She could feel her body begin to tense up, her limbs feeling more and more rigid until it seemed that she could do nothing but cling to him. Jon’s thrusts grew more erratic until he spilled inside her, his body taunt as a bowstring beneath her, holding his hips painfully close to hers.

Sansa stroked his face and kissed along his jaw line, not wanting to let go, not wanting to disentangle herself from him. He wrapped his arms around her and they stayed like that, covered in sweat and breathing heavily, kissing each other in the spring air until her lips felt sore.

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Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

I may not have the next chapter up for a week or two, with final exams and graduation all happening next week. Thank you to everyone that has shared their thoughts/comments!

Lord Manderly’s grandson arrived in Winterfell in time for spring, lifting Rickon’s mood and giving the boy a companion to play and train with. Sansa could not recall the last time she saw her younger brother truly act his age until the entrance of Wiley into their lives.

In the mornings Sansa would watch Rickon and Wiley spar in the training yard, the both of them improving daily under Arya’s instruction, and she felt a sense of pride in having uncovered the secret to her brother’s happiness. She was startled one morning when Ghost’s wet nose brushed the back of her hand, making Sansa jump. Jon gave a chuckle before joining her at the railing that overlooked the yard.

Her eyes on the sparring boys below them, she gave a little shiver when Jon brushed her hand with his own, his fingers tracing the inside of her palm.

“You left early this morning,” Sansa said quietly.

“I had to send a letter to Deepwood Motte as soon as I could.”

“Hm, that means you owe me some time away from Sam and your letters this evening.”

“Greedy,” he said, a teasing lilt to his voice, “but I must do as my Lady commands.”

Sansa felt a smile spread across her face in spite of herself. Taking her leave, she said, “It sounds as if you’re terribly busy. You’d best get to work, Lord Stark.”

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The past several weeks had felt like a dream to Sansa. She had not spoken a word of her relationship with Jon to anyone in the castle, not even to Gilly or Arya, but some days she felt like the whole keep could hear her thoughts. She found herself daydreaming more often than usual and one afternoon, while they sat in her solar, Gilly had to say her name three times before catching her attention.

“I’m sorry Gilly, I was thinking. What did you say?”

“It’s alright, m’lady,” Gilly said, sewing a set of baby clothes. “I only asked if you wanted company this evening for embroidery.”

It was true that Sansa normally sat by the fire with her needlework in the evenings, but Jon had assured her that he would stay in her chambers that night, and she was eager to see him.

“I think I’ll retire early this evening,” Sansa said, “but I’ll send word to you if I change my mind.”

Heat began to rise in her cheeks as she remembered how she and Jon had spent their time together
the night before, making Sansa feel as if the whole castle could see through the false distance between them. When it was time for the evening meal to be served Sansa had a hard time focusing, not catching a word of the conversation between Jon and Arya on sword fighting techniques. She found herself fixated on Jon’s mouth: the full swell of his lips, the stain to them when he finished a glass of Dornish sour, their easy curl when he smiled.

*What is wrong with me?* Sansa thought, internally scolding herself, but the truth was that she could not stop thinking of how it felt to have Jon’s mouth no her, no matter the inappropriateness of the idea.

Sansa had never been so preoccupied with a man before. Her feelings for Joffery had been short-lived, and Harry Hardying had been more interesting to her as a means to return home than as a husband. She left dinner early, claiming that she was merely tired, but Sansa didn’t fail to catch Jon’s lingering gaze on her as she left the hall.

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Curled up by the fire, Sansa pretended not to hear the door to her solar creak open, appearing as if she were reading a letter. In truth, she had been driven to distraction when she heard Jon’s footsteps down the hall and lost track of the words in front of her.

“Good evening,” he said, his eyes looking practically black in the dim light.

Her mouth dry, she licked her lips and said, “Good evening.”

Sansa made to stand up but he held out a hand, gesturing for her to stay where she was. He stood by her chair, his fingers tugging at the cord that held her braid in place before running his hands through her hair.

She closed her eyes and leaned into his touch, liking the feeling of his nails along her scalp.

“You look so pretty like this,” Jon said quietly.

Sansa opened her eyes and covered his hand with hers. The look on his face was completely unguarded admiration, and something in his eyes that made her feel a surge of warmth from the tips of her hair down to her toes. She tugged at the front of his doublet, pulling him down to her level before Jon sank to his knees, his head resting in her lap.

Their position made Sansa especially aware of the heat coiling between her legs. One of his hands brushed her ankle, gently feeling his way beneath her skirts until he found the hem of her stockings. She sucked in a breath at the sensation of Jon’s warm hands against her bare legs, but he only stroked her there, his touch never straying too close to her smallclothes.

After a time he pushed up the hemline of her skirts so he could nuzzle her bare thigh, his close-cut beard scratchy against her skin. Sansa carded her fingers through his hair and tried to ground herself in the crackling of the fire or the rigidity of the chair against her back but she quickly gave it up as impossible. Jon’s lips started at her knee, the softest brush of his mouth before he moved to the sensitive skin of her inner thigh, but every touch from him made her belly curl in on itself in anticipation.

“You’re shaking,” he said, his fingers toying with the drawstring of her smallclothes.

Sansa breathed out slowly, resisting the urge to shimmy her hips or curl her hands in his hair and drag him closer. Jon reached between her thighs and pushed her underthings aside, laving soft kisses along the insides of her legs. She spread her legs wider, her eyes nearly rolling back in her head when she felt the first press of his lips against her sex. Sansa found herself unable to remain
silent, letting out a series of soft keening noises while he brushed his tongue against her bud. Jon’s hands bracketed her hips, keeping her still and stopping her from rocking herself against his mouth no matter how desperately she wanted to.

It didn’t take long before she felt a heady tension building in each of her muscles. Sansa pulled at his hair, grasping for something to anchor herself.

“I—I want,” she panted, her hips straining to move against the pressure of Jon’s hands.

He reached upward and tugged down the neckline of her dress, tugging one of her nipples between his thumb and forefinger while he sucked on her clit, making Sansa cry out, her peak shattering through her. Jon continued his attentions, brushing the edge of his tongue against her until she pushed him away, every part of her limp and boneless as she sucked in several deep breaths.

He scooped her up in his arms, his mouth still covered with her wetness.

“Time for bed, my lady,” Jon said, his hair a riot of curls. “You seem to be perfectly exhausted.”

Normally Sansa would blush at such bawdiness, but she was too pleased to care. Perhaps she could have drifted off to sleep in such a state, but once she stripped off her gown and shift Jon could not stop caressing her. He had undressed for bed as well, and Sansa did not miss the state he was in. She reached between her legs and found herself embarrassingly wet.

Rolling onto her stomach, Sansa looked at him over her shoulder, hoping that he understood what she wanted. Jon crawled between her legs and slipped inside her. He moaned once their hips were flush with one another, his voice low in his throat, one of his hands reaching forward to fondle her breast.

“I can’t last long,” he said, his movements obviously controlled.

Sansa took one of his hands and kissed his palm, rocking her own hips backward. Jon took this as the encouragement that it was meant to be, one of his hands holding her hair while the other clutched her hip, his movements becoming more erratic until he cried out and spilled inside her.

They fell asleep soon after. Curled up in Jon’s arms, she felt safe, protected, loved. It seemed that, despite all their family had endured, she had found someone worth all the suffering.

Sansa unfurled the scroll in her hands, smoothing out the parchment and taking a deep breath before handing it to Jon. The canopy of the Godswood stretched above them, ancient and perfect, one of the few places in Winterfell that had been untouched by destruction.

"She wants a representative from each house, a member that can join her Great Council," Jon read, frowning.

"She requests your return to the capital," Sansa said, "as her nephew."

The letter from Daenerys Targaryen had arrived that morning, bearing the royal seal, written in the formal tone of a Queen making a demand in the guise of a request.

Jon’s expression darkened, his features in the shadow of the leaves. "But not as a representative of house Stark?"

Sansa shook her head, her bottom lip between her teeth.
"But she legitimized me as a Stark."

She tasted a sharp, coppery undertone in her mouth, realizing just how hard she’d bitten into her skin while her hands knotted themselves in her skirts. Her eyes closed, Sansa forced herself to release the fabric she was tensely clutching.

"Someone will have to go," she reminded him.

The words left a physical weight in her chest, like her lungs were constricting, giving her the bristly feeling of not having enough air.

"It will have to be me," Sansa said, her mouth filled with the taste of blood.

"What? No, I'll write to the Queen, there must be a way for you to stay here."

She shook her head, feeling the warm touch of Jon’s hand around her own.

"Daenerys will not allow us to hide away in the snow," Sansa reminded him. "We owe her our lives, we owe her the restoration of Winterfell—if we do not go to King's Landing she will see it as an insult to her generosity."

"But that doesn't mean that you have to go, Arya might--"

She shook her head. "Arya would be better served here. The Northmen respect her, the members of the court will not."

Jon put his arms around her, enfolded in strength and security and the smell of evergreens. "I won’t let you go alone, I promise."

--

Each time, the dream began the same way.

Sansa stared at her lord father, who watched her with his sad gray eyes, his body half-turned to the statue of Lyanna. Water dripped down Lyanna’s cheeks, the melting frost falling like teardrops.

“Father,” she said, but then it was Robb standing in front of her, blood staining the front of his doublet.

Robb’s eyes were pale and icy, not the clear, deep blue Sansa remembered. Desperately, she thought of the White Walkers, but the frozen beasts were vanished, sleeping in the far north, at rest again for centuries to come.

Sansa reached out to Robb but then the figure was her mother, beautiful and yet horrible to look upon, her throat a vivid gash. Her mother’s skin was cold, so cold, and the shock of it woke her, her body pitching forward in her sleep. Sansa sat up in her bed, her chest heaving as she tried to breathe. The fire had gone out and her chambers were frigid. She could see her breath condensing in the air.

Shivering from the cold, Sansa pulled the blankets closer around her, stubbornly keeping her eyes open. She did not want to think on her dream, but it was early yet, and Sansa hadn’t felt this chilled since their last winter.

Her dream did not fade with the passing hours of the day. She thought of it as the morning grew later, the sun peaking through the panes of her windows but doing little to warm her rooms. Sansa
ruminated on the image of all that blood leaking from her mother’s throat, the thought causing a sharp, prickly feeling to overtake her spine.

She heard a familiar nock at her chamber door before Jon let himself in, looking dour in a dark gray doublet, the shade reminding her of a time when Jon had worn only black.

Sansa was dressing for the day, just in her shift and stockings, her hair unbound and falling past her shoulders.

“Good morning,” she said, pulling a light blue gown over her head and turning her back to him. “Could you lace me up?”

Jon had done this a time or two before, and it only took a moment for him to knot the back of her gown. His hands shifted to her hips, and Sansa leaned against his chest, her hands covering his own.

“Good morning, my Lady,” he said, but Sansa could sense that, beneath his politeness, he was occupied by an ill temper.

She turned around and kissed him, slow and sweet, her hands tangling in his hair. Jon sighed and relaxed into her touch. It gave her some satisfaction to feel him relax against her, his arms encircling her waist, one of his hands reaching upward to cup her cheek.

He brushed his lips along her jaw line, his hands resting on the soft curve of her hip.

“Why did you not join me last night?” Sansa asked, her hand fisted in the front of his doublet.

Jon kissed her one last time on the cheek. “I was thinking about that damned letter.”

She frowned, running her fingers over the direwolf pattern she had stitched onto his shirt.

“We will have to be careful in King’s Landing,” Jon said, tilting her chin up so that her eyes met his.

Sansa felt her heart sink in her chest, empty and joyless at the thought. She had given every aspect of her life to repairing the North, to advancing House Stark, to Rickon’s future—all save this. In King’s Landing, the court would not care that Jon was one of the few people who brought her happiness.

“I know,” she said, feeling sadder and older than she had any right to feel. But she was Sansa Stark, daughter of the north and sister to a King of Winter, and she would do her duty.

--
They took a ship to the capital, bringing a large number of household guards along with them. Jon purposefully brought free folk and former members of the Nights Watch, hoping that their dissimilarity from the southerners would make them more loyal. Sansa hoped he was right. Jon had appointed Leathers, a former wildling and a man who preferred to speak in the Old Tongue, as their captain of guard. He had fought with Jon in the long winter and chosen to remain in service to Winterfell instead of settling in the Gift as so many others had.

She wasn’t sure if his use of the Old Tongue would protect them. It was rumored that Queen Daenerys had a personal servant that spoke all the languages in the world, but no precaution was too great when it came to their safety.

It was a relatively short journey from White Harbor to King’s Landing and once they arrived in the capital Sansa was uncomfortably reminded of the last time she’d lived in this place. The Red Keep looked much the same as it always had, with a few patches in the distinctive pink stone showing where it had been repaired, but the main difference was the presence of Her Grace’s dragons. Even in the harbor they could be seen flying over the capital, looking like large, scaly birds from such a distance.

Jon watched the beasts from the deck of the ship, an unreadable expression on his face. She was suddenly reminded that, even if he had chosen the name Stark, he was still a dragonrider and the Queen’s nephew.

“Why did you leave him here?”

Jon looked away from the skyline to face her. “Leave who?”

Sansa nodded to the black and green dragons that were gliding toward the Blackwater. “Your dragon.”

He gave her a half smile before looking wistfully toward them. “I thought she would be happier with her mother.”

Sansa had never heard him speak of his dragon, and it was the first time she’d heard anyone refer to the green one, Rhaegal, as being female, but she supposed Jon would know better than anyone else.

They rode through the city to the Red Keep, with Ghost sticking close to her during the journey. The smallfolk seemed a great deal happier under Daenerys than they had been under Joffery, but Sansa was grateful for the company of the direwolf all the same, conscious as she was of how crowds could turn. Luckily they came across no trouble and their party was smoothly admitted to the castle.
As the gates closed behind them Sansa tried to keep her face expressionless, reminding herself that, although they had arrived in a dangerous place, she would not have to face the royal court alone.

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Their first days in the capital were filled with dinners and engagements, each one celebrating the historic gathering the Queen had devised. Sansa made sure to not appear anything but friendly with Jon—she knew how vicious rumors could be in King’s Landing—but she could not deny that she missed spending time with him without the fear of discovery.

Even with Jon’s chamber being placed so near her own she felt uncomfortable joining him there. The capital had many luxuries that the North lacked, but privacy was not among them, and with nobles from other houses arriving every day Sansa grew more and more anxious about what was to come.

Her uncle Brynden would be arriving within a fortnight from the Riverlands, as would Yohn Royce from the Vale, Asha Greyjoy from the Iron Islands, and Nymeria Sand from Dorne. As the Queen’s Hand Tyrion Lannister was already in the capital, along with Willas Tyrell, the Lord of Highgarden and the man Sansa once dreamed of marrying. After two unsuccessful marriages she had all but lost hope in having a husband, and Sansa felt a keen sorrow for the girl who had pinned for this young man to whisk her away from the Lannisters.

Meeting Lord Willas for the first time was strange indeed, especially with Jon and Tyrion Lannister present for their dinner in the Queen’s apartments. Jon was exceptionally polite with the Lord of Highgarden, but Sansa could tell that something was brewing beneath his cool demeanor. He escorted her to her chambers after dinner, Ghost’s head nudging her hip until she buried her hand in the wolf’s rough coat.

Once her chamber door was firmly closed Jon asked, “How do you know Willas Tyrell?”

“Tonight was the first time I’d ever met him,” she confessed. “Margaery tried to arrange a marriage between us but the Lannisters found out and married me to Lord Tyrion—they wanted my claim to the North.”

He wound his arms around her waist and Sansa felt a surge of sympathy for him. Jon may have been the current heir to the Iron Throne, but he had no means to control the past, and she had once been the unwilling object of many schemes.

“I don’t want him,” Sansa said, cupping his cheek. “Please believe that.”

Jon gave her a sad smile, his eyes looking very much like her father’s in that moment.

“I know,” he said. “But he wants you.”

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It was mid afternoon and Jon had only just left a meeting with the Queen. Sansa hoped to learn what they had discussed, but finding a quiet place to talk without fear of being overheard was a neigh impossible in the Red Keep.

“Come with me,” Jon said softly, leading her down the corridor to a Lyseni tapestry.

Looking over her shoulder, Sansa made sure no one else was present before taking Jon’s hand in her own. They had gone without such simple contact since arriving in King’s Landing, and the brush of his hand against hers sent a warm, welcome shudder along her skin.
He pulled back the panel of fabric to reveal an alcove in the wall, large enough for several people to stand in and impossible to see from the corridor itself.

“How did you find this?” she whispered. Sansa had lived in the Red Keep for the entirety of Joffery’s reign, but she had never found this hiding spot.


There had been much speculation and gossip about Tyrion Lannister and his female companion from Braavos, a woman that acted as the man’s wife in everything but name. Sansa had found the woman to be polite and unassuming, not the sort of person to normally attract speculation, which made her wonder how such a person had fallen into a relationship with the Lord of Casterly Rock. She remembered Lord Tyrion as a sad man occupied by drink and the attentions of loose women, but what she had seen of him since arriving at Daenerys’ court did not resemble the man she had been married to. Perhaps his companion from Braavos had truly brought him happiness.

Sansa was surprised at how large the alcove was—there was even an upholstered bench along the back wall. They sat and Jon leaned close to her in the darkness, his lips almost brushing her ear, his voice impossibly quiet lest they be overheard.

“Daenerys suggests that we set up a trade deal with the Tyrells,” he said.

She bit her lower lip, thinking of Margaery and the way Lady Olenna had always ensured her granddaughter’s success, even if it depended on the misfortune of others.

“We must be careful in dealing with them, Jon,” she warned.

“Don’t worry, sweetling,” he said, his lips brushing her cheek. “I’ll look out for you.”

In the complete darkness Sansa could not see, only feel, and each brush of Jon’s lips over her own made her quake against him like a leaf in autumn. They had hardly spared an inappropriate glance toward each other since arriving in the capital, and Sansa was starving for the familiar closeness they’d had in Winterfell, the nights curled up together beneath the furs and the peaceful afternoons when they would work alongside each other.

“I’ve missed you,” she whispered, pawing at the front of his doublet before sliding her hands beneath his tunic and feeling the smooth planes of his chest.

“Oh, gods, Sansa I’ve missed you too,” Jon said, pulling her onto his lap so that she straddled his hips.

They kissed in the darkness of the alcove, stifling their cries and trying to remain as silent as possible. He reached up and cupped her breasts through the thin fabric of her summer gown, pulling down the neckline of her dress and circling her nipples with his tongue.

Sansa rocked her hips against his, not caring about the layers of fabric that separated them, desperate to feel Jon against her after so long apart.

“We don’t have much time,” he warned, sliding his hand inside her smallclothes, but she didn’t need much time, it seemed.

Sansa had to bite down on his shoulder to keep from crying out as her peak came over her. She was surely hurting him with how fiercely she clutched his hair, but her pleasure was overpowering, obscuring any thoughts of the capital or Daenerys or the Tyrells. Jon circled her bud with his thumb until she pushed his hand away, breathing like she had just climbed all the
steps in the Red Keep.

“You needed that, didn’t you, sweet girl?” he whispered, stroking her hair while she came back to herself.

Nodding, she asked, “What about you?”

“I’ve had worse,” he assured her, and Sansa could practically hear the smirk in his words.

Jon checked outside the tapestry before ushering her out into the hallway, the pair of them clearly disheveled. She did her best to straighten her hair and clothes but Sansa felt like their tryst would be painfully obvious to anyone who bothered to look.

“I should go,” she said, regretting it even as she spoke the words.

Jon gave her one last, heated look before leaving her, making Sansa miss the privacy of Winterfell even more. The walk back to her chambers felt unusually long, leaving her to worry that someone of import would be just around the corner to question her about her state of appearance, but no one came and Sansa was able to reach her apartments without incident. She almost wished that they would be exposed, if only so she and Jon would not have to constantly deceive those around them.

Lying on her bed, Sansa wondered if he had gone straight to his rooms as well or if he had been forced to suffer through another meeting with Tyrion Lannister or one of the Queen’s advisors before being allowed some privacy. She closed her eyes and imagined him in bed, his dark curls plastered to his brow while he touched himself. Her hips moving restlessly against the mattress, Sansa slipped her hand between her legs, remembering the few moment’s they’d had together that afternoon. It wasn’t enough, not nearly enough, but it didn’t take long for her to reach her peak once again.

Sansa ran a brush through Ghost’s fur, slowly working out the knots and tangles. She knew of no other person the wolf would tolerate in such a way, a fact that gave her great pride. The direwolf had a fearsome reputation with Jon’s men, especially among those who had fought with him during the long winter, but around Sansa he was as sweet as any dog.

“You spoil him.”

She looked up to see Jon watching her, his frame braced against a tree. The Godswood was deserted save the two of them, allowing Sansa to almost forget that they were in King’s Landing. If it weren’t for the faint saltiness of the air she could pretend they were in Winterfell with Arya and Rickon, but that vision left Sansa as quickly as it had come, causing a soreness in her heart for the smell of evergreens or quiet afternoons sewing with Gilly—for home.

“I take care of him,” she said, tenderly rubbing Ghost beneath his chin.

“Aye, that you do,” Jon said, joining her in the grass. “I’ve just had a meeting with Lord Willas.”

Sansa looked directly at him, her play with the wolf forgotten.

“What did you promise?” Sansa asked, reaching for his hand.

“Nothing for one year,” Jon explained. “But he hinted quite heavily that Margaery is a widow.”

“Nothing else?”
Jon shook his head. “No, I couldn’t agree to anything without speaking with you first.”

Sansa squeezed his hand, feeling an overwhelming sense of relief. They would not lose each other, the two of them, and despite the risk she leaned forward and caught his mouth in a kiss. It would be a sin to mask her feelings in a Godwood so Sansa did not hold back, glad that Jon was not the type of man to barter her away for the promise of ships and gold, glad that he took no joy in the thought of marrying another woman.

Once Sansa had been in King’s Landing for a moon’s turn she began to feel more at ease. The layout of the castle was undoubtedly familiar to her, but Daenerys and her foreign court had altered much of the Red Keep. Queen’s guard and Unsullied patrolled the corridors together, and the Throne Room featured massive dragon skulls alongside courtiers from Astapor and Yunkai while tapestries from Braavos and Volantis decorated the walls.

In one of the lesser-used wings of the castle Sansa found portraits of the old Targaryen monarchs, reaching from Aegon the first to the Mad King. There was even a portrait of Prince Rhaegar in his black armor, with his famous rubies emblazoned on his breastplate. She studied his face for some time, noting the sharp cut of his cheekbones and the sad, far away look in his eyes—the same expression she had seen on Jon countless times.

While she was examining Prince Rhaegar’s portrait a young handmaid approached her. Sansa recognized the woman as one of Queen Daenerys’ personal lady’s maids, the much talked of girl who could sing in old Ghiscari and recite High Valyrian poetry.

“My lady, her grace the Queen requests your presence in the gardens, if you would be kind enough to accompany me,” the girl said.

“Of course,” Sansa replied, following the young woman to the other side of the Keep.

The Queen was waiting for her with one of her Dothraki handmaids. As Sansa approached she dismissed her companion, but not before calling for a platter of refreshments to be placed on a nearby table.

“Lady Sansa.”

“Your Grace,” she said, curtseying.

“Please, sit and have a glass of wine with me. I feel like I’ve hardly spoken a word alone with you since you’ve arrived in King’s Landing.”

Sansa took a seat under the Queen’s silken canopy and accepted a cup of wine, the both of them seeking refuge from the afternoon sun.

“I’ve spent many hours with Lord Jon discussing trade, but I feel that I’ve hardly gotten to know you, my lady. Your cousin tells me that you are instrumental to the reconstruction of the north.”

Unused to hearing such praise, Sansa broke eye contact and took a sip of her wine. “Jon is too kind. I try my hardest for our people, but I’m afraid it will be many years before the north will recover.”

“The seven kingdoms have bled for too long,” Daenerys said. “We cannot allow things to become as divided as they were, which is precisely why I will need your help, my lady.”

Sansa’s eyes grew wide. “Me, your grace?”
“Naturally. I would have you as my Master of Conciliation. It is a new position on my council, one that I believe is necessary for the longevity and harmony of Westeros. In essence, you would be the master of peace: promoting agreements, settling disputes, and building rapport between the kingdoms.”

“I am honored by the offer, your grace,” Sansa said deferentially. “But I must admit that I did not expect it. I’m sure there are many others with more experience, others who would perform these duties better than I.”

Daenerys gave her a knowing smile. “I had heard you were quite modest, Lady Sansa, but you are truly the best of any noble man or lady for the position. You were born in the north but your mother was a riverlander, you spent many years in King’s Landing, you married into a family from the west and spent several years in the east—I can think of no one with more ties to every corner of the seven kingdoms than yourself. But, most importantly, you understand the cost of discord in Westeros.”

*She is not wrong,* Sansa thought, remembering Robb, Bran, her parents.

“I am truly grateful for the offer, your grace, but I must take time to consider it.”

“Of course,” said the Queen. “However, before you leave there is another matter we must discuss.”

Their talk had included nothing but unexpected topics. Sansa took a gulp of wine, bracing herself for yet another one.

“I was recently made aware of a relationship between yourself and my nephew, Jon Stark,” Daenerys said, her pale blonde hair stirred by the breeze.

Sansa felt her stomach drop below her navel while a cold tingling shot through her spine. She opened her mouth to speak, to say something in her defense, to deny, deny, deny, but the Queen halted her with a look.

“It makes no matter to me if you are involved,” she continued. “But I must remind you: Jon is the heir to the Iron Throne. He will marry eventually and it will be up to you to decide if you wish to become his wife or his mistress. I understand if you do not desire to be Queen one day, it is not a position that suits everyone, but I think you would do well as Jon’s consort.”

Daenerys paused to sip from her glass. “That is all, lady Sansa. Please consider my offer—I hope to hear back from you soon.”

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Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The small council chambers had obviously been redecorated since Daenerys took control of King’s Landing. Sansa noted the ebony chair at the head of the wide table that was carved into the likeness of her grace’s dragons, with its three sleek necks and three sets of gleaming, pointed teeth. All the other chairs were finely crafted but simple and without adornment. Sansa wondered if it meant something, if dragons were truly all that held the Seven Kingdoms together. If she were to be successful in her role as Master of Conciliation then it was her duty to find out.

She was the last to leave the rooms, having mostly listened while her uncle Brynden and Willas Tyrell spoke of the dire need for assistance in the fields. It had been far too long since Westeros had seen a large harvest and after such a fierce winter they were in desperate need of both crops and men to tend them.

Lord Tyrion had made a jape, saying, “If only we could eat gold.”

*Or snow*, Sansa thought.

She did not speak up much until the end of her meeting, when she broached a subject that had occupied her thoughts ever since she arrived in the capital.

“Your grace, I feel compelled to remind you that the Baratheon’s have the most cause to dislike your reign. The Lady Shireen is still quite young, but she grew up as King Robert’s niece, and later a princess herself. Invite her to court, your grace, make her one of your companions so that she may befriend you.”

Daenerys’ expression was completely neutral, but Sansa hoped that her words would make a difference in the fate of House Baratheon. She, along with many others, had noticed that a representative from every kingdom had been chosen for the small council, every kingdom except the Stormlands.

“Thank you, Lady Sansa. I will take it into consideration,” the Queen said. “As strange as it may sound, there are still those loyal to Stannis Baratheon. It would be wise to make peace with his daughter.”

Sansa thought her efforts had been well spent, but it was hard for her to be certain. It was one of her first meetings as a member of the small council, and even so only half of their members had been present. Asha Greyjoy, Nymeria Sand, and Yohn Royce had not yet arrived in King’s Landing.

It was not the first time that Sansa had wished for Jon to be at her side in these meetings, but as a member of the royal family he had not been named to the small council. The crown’s interests were to be represented by Daenerys while Sansa filled him in on the day’s proceedings.

What had most troubled her was a small comment made by Willas Tyrell after they had discussed the potential war between Pentos and Myr. As master of coin, he had a ledger of all the expenses, debts, and accounts of the crown. Daenerys had begun to make purchases for a large royal event that was to take place in two moons turns, but Lord Willas had not been made aware of the nature of the event, and Sansa felt herself grow tense at the mention of a large transfer of funds.

“This is a rather large withdrawal for personal spending,” Lord Tyrell had observed.
“Those are some foreign investments, a matter that we will go over later in detail.” Daenerys had said smoothly, but Sansa could not allow herself to grow complacent.

Save Jon and the Queen, no one else knew of the nature of the royal event, and Sansa hoped it would stay that way long enough for the Lord of Highgarden to strike an agreement with House Stark.

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As the days continued to grow warmer more produce could be seen in the markets. Jon had taken to visiting the largest of the bazaars in King’s Landing once a week in the hopes that he could directly see if the Queen’s official policies were aiding in the production of foodstuffs, often taking Ghost and a small party of northmen with him.

Sansa accompanied him on this day. She slipped her hand around Jon’s arm, strolling with him while he talked with some of the merchants. She remembered the long lines of people waiting to pay a golden dragon for a mere fish during the War of the Five Kings, and Sansa was relieved to discover that, despite the shortage of men to tend the fields, there was still requisite food at the markets.

There were many stalls devoted to potatoes, turnips, and greens, but Sansa saw only one stall with the season’s first honeyberries. A crowd of children had gathered, each of them looking at the bushels of plump blue fruit, but the stall keeper eyed them all closely. Honeyberries ripened several weeks before any other fruit, and he was sure to earn their weight in coin by the day’s end, but only if the hungry, penniless children kept their distance.

Sansa looked to Jon. “If we could stop here for a moment?”

“Of course,” he replied, accompanying her to the stall.

The merchant smiled at them, apparently pleased to entertain customers who obviously had gold, unlike the curious children who continued to stare longingly at his stall.

“How much is it for a sack of berries?” Sansa asked.

“It’ll be five silver stags, m’lady,” he said.

Jon’s eyebrows shot up at the price but Sansa was already reaching for her coin purse. She handed the silver to the merchant, smiling at the children while the stall keeper handed her the ripe fruit.

“Would you all like some?” she asked, looking at the group of children.

They sprang to life immediately, running over to Sansa and looking at the fruit expectantly. One of the bolder children asked, “Who are you?”

“My name is Lady Sansa,” she said. “Here, have some berries.”

She gave each child a handful of fruit and soon there were even more of them holding out their hands—children from all over the market excitedly ran up to her. Sansa gave away all the honeyberries, but not before making each girl or boy promise to share what they had and not to steal from each other.

Once all the children had their hands and mouths stained blue from the ripe, sticky fruit, Sansa took Jon’s arm, ready to depart. He wore a soft smile while he looked at her, the expression making him look years younger.
As they continued walking, he said, “Be sure to come with me next week. I fear that every child in King’s Landing will be disappointed if they see me arrive without you.”

Sansa blushed, forcing herself to look straight ahead instead of down at her feet. “It is a noble’s duty to be kind, to give when others can not.”

Jon looked at her, his eyes reminding her very much of her father in that moment.

“Perhaps so, but most highborn men and women would have ignored those children and any others like them. You are kinder than all of that.”

“I try to be,” Sansa confessed. I will make them love me, she thought, remembering the advice Cersei Lannister had given her on how to control the common people. She hoped that, once she became a Queen herself, she could reach out to the people of Westeros through kindness, not fear.

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Sansa clutched her embroidery hoop in her hands, her needle working along the edge of her cloak. She looked up at the sound of footsteps on the gravel path that led to the gardens, her needlework forgotten as Jon and Queen Daenerys came into view, the pair of them looking as different as night and day.

Daenerys wore a gown of purple silk in a cut that was popular in the Free Cities, a strand of onyx gemstones woven into her hair, while Jon looked imposing in a black doublet with red stitching along the cuffs and collar, appearing as a true Targaryen prince aught to look. Sansa observed that, with his beard cut so close, the similarities in their features were plain to see.

“Your grace,” she said, anxiously rising from her seat beneath a shaded arbor.

“Lady Sansa,” the Queen said. “I believe we should have a drink to celebrate.”

It was clear that Jon could not hide the smile that now overtook his features. “He agreed to a betrothal between his daughter Celsia and Rickon.”

“Truly?” Sansa asked, unable to believe her ears.

Taking her hand, Jon said, “Yes.”

One of Daenerys handmaids served them all a glass of wine. She shakily took the cup, feeling a reassuring squeeze from Jon’s hand.

“Take care in your appearance this evening, my lady,” the Queen said. “For tonight we will announce the wedding. It’s been difficult to conceal it for as long as we have.”

Sansa looked to the white and gray direwolf cloak she’d spent the afternoon stitching. Her eyes and neck were sore from all the precise needlework but she would not allow a seamstress to make this garment, not when the duty should have fallen to her lady mother.

“I agree, your grace. We have kept everything covered up for far too long.”

She drank deeply from her cup, toasting to the betrothal that would unite houses Stark and Tyrell and to the royal marriage that would belong to Jon and herself.

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Once Daenerys announced Jon and Sansa’s impending marriage the royal court took on an
increasingly hectic feel. There was much talk over where the ceremony itself would take place. There had never been a crown prince that worshiped the Old Gods, but Jon settled the issue by arranging for their marriage ceremony to be held in a sept, pleasing the High Septon and the southern lords at court.

Asha Greyjoy was the last of the Queen’s advisors to arrive but her tardiness was not interpreted as a slight. The Iron Islands had been wrestled from one lord to another over the years, falling under the sway of both of Asha’s uncles before she was able to claim her birthright.

Two weeks before the wedding Sansa noted the distinctive longships used by the Ironborn in Blackwater Bay. However, despite her curiosity about the woman who ruled over one of the fiercest kingdoms in Westeros, she found little time to introduce herself to the Lady Asha. The plans for her wedding to Jon took up most of her waking hours and Sansa was especially relieved when Arya arrived from the north to aid her in the many tasks that needed to be completed.

“Rickon was very angry when I told him I’d be leaving,” Arya said, the two of them seated beneath the heart tree in the godswood of the Red Keep.

“I can imagine. He must remember mother and father leaving, and Robb.”

Arya nodded. “But things are different this time. He needs to see that people come back.”

The thought of her brother alone at Winterfell with only Maestor Samwell and Emmet as castellan filled her with sadness, but Sansa hardly had a chance to speak on it with anyone besides her sister. Jon was just as busy as herself, and it seemed a cruel irony that, in spite of their upcoming marriage, they had not had a true moment alone together, without fear of discovery, since they’d left Winterfell.

Sansa hoped that they would be granted more privacy once they were married, but a cynical part of her doubted that would ever happen in the capital. I must make it so, she thought, remembering the rumors of discontent that had constantly surrounded Queen Cersei and King Robert. While she could think of no similarities between her Jon and Robert Baratheon, Sansa began to wonder if it would take much more than love between them to preserve a marriage under such scrutiny.

“The Queen would have us remain in King’s Landing once we are married,” Sansa said, closely watching Arya’s face for any sign of disapproval.

“I figured she would,” her sister said neutrally. “Jon’s the heir. She was never going to let him stay at Winterfell forever.”

Biting her lip, she fought the instinct to dodge eye contact with Arya. “Before we came to the capital, did you know…”

“About you and Jon?” She said, her eyebrows raised. “Of course I did. I knew, Gilly knew, even Sam noticed what was going on.”

Sansa felt her cheeks flush scarlet at her sister’s words.

“I was angry at first, I thought you were stringing him along, but I suppose it makes sense, doesn’t it?”

“What makes sense?”

“He’s like father,” Arya said. “Of course he looks like father, but once you see him next to the Queen it’s obvious he looks like her too. What I mean is that he’s good. He’s honest. He cares about you. I can hardly blame you for wanting to be with someone like that.”
It seemed as if, by the end of her little speech, Arya were speaking more to herself than to Sansa. When they rose to leave the godswood Sansa put her arms around her sister, hugging her close as her eyes stung with tears.

“What’s wrong?” Arya asked.

“Nothing,” Sansa said, but as she wiped at her eyes it became clear that her words were untrue. “I’m just glad you’re here.”

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On the morning of the wedding Sansa woke earlier than usual, feeling wide-awake despite her fretful hours of sleep. She had been too excited to get much rest, or too nervous, if she was being honest with herself. Arya broke her fast with her but they had to be quick about it—her lady’s maids had already drawn a bath and Sansa had no desire to be late to her own wedding.

After being cleaned and dressed she sat in front of her vanity while one of the Queen’s handmaidens braided her hair. Sansa had intended to do her hair herself, preferring a simple Northern hairstyle to the elaborate foreign ones so common at court, but she had reconsidered. With this being the only royal wedding to take place for the foreseeable future, Sansa knew her appearance would be remembered. *I must be a Queen for all the kingdoms, not just the north,* she thought.

Though she had been awake for hours, it seemed like only a short time had passed before she was being escorted to the sept. She rode alongside Arya and was surrounded by a retinue of northmen carrying Stark banners. Once they reached the Sept of Baelor Sansa took stock of the crowd, noting more people in attendance than she could possibly count, reminding her of Joffery’s extravagant wedding to Margaery Tyrell.

Her uncle Brynden had offered to walk her down the isle, but Sansa had asked Arya to do the honor instead. There was no mistaking the many looks and whispers as her sister walked her toward the altar, but Sansa couldn’t think of a better person to give her away. Out of everyone in their family Arya looked the most like their father, and she thought it appropriate that, this time, the person to hand her over to her future husband was her own flesh and blood instead of a cruel boy King or a distant relative.

When Jon took her hand all of Sansa’s anxieties left her. *We are finally here,* she thought, unable to hide the smile spreading across her face. She feared that she was gripping his hand too tightly, but he gave no sign of it, his dark hair combed close and his beard completely shorn. Sansa thought he looked much younger, even with his fine clothes and his black and red cloak.

The High Septon began to recite their marriage vows but Sansa could hardly be bothered to listen. All she saw was Jon and the look of open wonder on his face, like he was amazed that they were truly standing before the court, about to be man and wife when they had spent so much time keeping their relationship a secret.

Once several prayers and songs had been completed the septon looked to Jon before he stepped forward to remove her maiden’s cloak. He undid the silver direwolf clasp and pulled the fabric away, the touch of his hand along her collarbone making her skin grow heated. Jon placed his cloak around her shoulders, the set of his jaw betraying his nervousness to no one but herself, with Sansa giving a small exhale before stepping forward for the kiss.

“With this kiss I pledge my love and take you for my King and husband,” she said.

“With this kiss I pledge my love and take you for my Queen and Wife.”
Jon cupped her face and brought his lips to her own. His mouth on hers was the sweetest thing she’d ever felt, obscuring any thoughts or worries she had about the people in attendance or the ceremony or her new role as Queen of the Seven Kingdoms.

Sansa felt her cheeks heat up under the gaze of so many people. The High Septon raised a crystal so it caught the light, shining a rainbow down on the pair of them before saying, “Here in the sight of gods and men I do proclaim Jon of House Targaryen and Sansa of House Stark to be man and wife, one flesh, one heart, one soul, now and forever, and cursed be the one who comes between them.”

The occupants of the sept cheered and threw flower petals as they walked down the isle, a Targaryen cloak around her shoulders and Jon’s hand intertwined with her own.

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Seeking a moment of rest, Sansa had to hold her hand over her cup to stop the servants from filling it with wine.

“Water, please,” she said.

The girl with the pitcher turned scarlet and scurried over to a neighboring table to fetch a glass for her.

“I’m sorry, your grace.”

“It’s fine,” Sansa said, smiling.

The cool water felt heavenly on her tongue. She had spent the last hour dancing, first with Jon and then with her uncle Brynden, along with Garlan Tyrell and the young Trystane Martell, among others.

Sansa could not be sure of how much wine she’d had to drink, not with the servants refilling her cup after nearly every swallow, but her cheeks were flushed and she felt warm under her cloak and gown. Despite the heat, she didn’t dare take it off. Sansa did not want to send the wrong message by shedding her marital cloak only a few hours into her union with Jon.

The sharp sound of wood tapping on stone caught her attention. Leaning on his cane, Willas Tyrell slowly approached the empty chair by her side, bracing himself on its straight backing before finding his seat.

“Congratulations, your grace,” he said, offering what appeared to be a genuine smile.

“Thank you, my lord.”

“I fear I can not dance with my condition, otherwise I would ask for your hand.”

“Would you? Do they have northern dances at Highgarden?”

The musicians played a fast northern song, one of the tunes Sansa had first learned to dance to as a girl in Winterfell, while Jon and Arya captured the court’s attention with the quick, close steps. Southern dances had more distance. Growing up, Sansa had preferred the southern styles, thinking them more ladylike. As she had gotten older the whirling northern songs had become nostalgic for her, reminding her of the feasts when her parents would lead the people in the hall to such a tune.

“I can’t say they do, but I’m sure you would be capable enough to lead any partner,” he said.
kindly.

“You are too kind, Lord Willas.”

“It is my understanding that we are to be related one day,” he said, watching Jon lead Daenerys in a dance. The Queen wore a deep red gown with black embroidery and onyx jewels stitched into the fabric, catching the eye of every man in attendance, her silvery hair curling down her back.

“Rickon is very excited to meet your daughter,” Sansa said. It was the truth. Arya had explained the stipulations of the betrothal to their little brother, making Rickon especially curious about the Tyrell girl.

Smiling, Willas said, “Let us hope that he remains as interested in her as the years go on, your grace. It will be some time before a marriage is appropriate, I think, but Celsia has already asked me about visiting the north.”

“You would be welcome at Winterfell at any time, my lord. My sister Lady Arya is to rule the north now that Jon and I must remain in King’s Landing, but I promise that she isn’t as fierce as she looks. She is merely protective, of me and of Rickon.”

“I can understand that, your grace,” Willas said. “I have been searching for a husband for my sister Margaery for some time, and yet I seem to find fault with every suitor that comes her way.”

Sansa laughed. She saw Jon end his dance with Daenerys and make his way to the dais. The feast had gone on for several hours now, the members of the court were already showing signs of having drunk far too much, and she knew that the bedding would be called for soon, but Sansa was glad to have a few more moments with her husband before they fell under everyone’s attention once again.

Lord Willas stood, leaning heavily on his cane. He bowed his head to Jon before departing.

“Your grace,” he said by way of leaving.

Jon took the seat by Sansa’s side, finding her hand and lacing his fingers with hers. She was particularly happy that, after all this time, they were free to hold hands in public instead of hiding within empty rooms, that she could smile at him without fear of how her affections would appear to others. He smiled at her and dragged his finger along the inside of her palm, soothing her nerves and letting Sansa feel like a simple bride that was happy to be with her husband.

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The door to their bedchamber slammed shut behind Jon, the sound of catcalls and drunken yells still audible through the walls.

Sansa was already sitting on the bed in her smallclothes, slowly pulling out the pins in her hair while Jon shed the rest of his clothing and joined her on the mattress, his eyes traveling over her form unabashedly. He reached for a stray curl that clung to the side of her neck, tugging it loose before he ran his fingers through her freed hair.

“So pretty,” he said, his thumb brushing her cheek.

“Without my clothes, you mean?” she asked, her eyes meeting his over her bare shoulder.

Jon chuckled and pulled Sansa closer to him, his arms slipping around her waist.

“I was going to say that I liked your hair down.”
Even though Jon had seen every inch of her, had already had her countless times before, Sansa felt her cheeks grow red under his gaze. He did not even try to hide his desire for her, a vivid contrast to the guarded manner they’d adopted since arriving in King’s Landing. He rolled her underneath him, the length of his cock pressed against her thigh, already hard and leaking at the tip.

Jon leaned down and kissed her along the side of her neck, his hand tracing the curve of her hip, the dip in her waist, the arch of her back. He felt along the insides of her thighs, his fingers ghosting over her through her smallclothes.

Sansa let out a low exhale, her eyes falling shut as Jon sucked at the soft skin along her jaw, giving her a slight nip with his teeth.

“What is it, sweet girl?” he asked, his hand cupping her breast, his thumb lazily circling her nipple.

She squirmed under his touch, wanting more contact, wanting to satisfy the heady rush of warmth under her skin.

“Jon,” Sansa whined, arching her back off the bed.

Opening her eyes, she felt a rich heat curl through her belly at the sight of him. Jon’s body was hard and sinewy from years in the training yard and the sight made her toes curl in the sheets. Sansa brushed her hand along his stomach, feeling the smooth muscle beneath her hand and sighing when he lowered his head to suck on her nipple, his fingers rubbing her through her smallclothes.

She pushed at the last bit of clothing she wore but Jon held her still.

“I want you to say it,” he said, laving the underside of her breast with his tongue. “Say what you want me to do to you.”

His dark eyes watching her, Sansa bit her lip and said, “I want you to kiss me down there.”

“Here?” Jon said, pressing a kiss to her hipbone, his shadow of a beard scraping against her skin.

Sansa wriggled her hips against him, wanting to feel his fingers slip inside her more than anything, but he ignored her frustrated keening and continued to kiss the sensitive skin along her belly.

“I want you to kiss my cunt,” she said, a fierce blush rising in her cheeks.

Jon moaned and pressed his face to her hips.

“Gods,” he said, yanking her smallclothes down her legs. “I love hearing you talk like that.”

Sansa felt all the air slip out of her once Jon pressed his lips to her bud, brushing the edge of his tongue along it and making her whimper into the coverlet. She dug her heel into his back, feeling a rushing in her ears once he twisted his fingers inside her and reached up to play with her nipples. He placed his lips around her and sucked, making the rushing in her ears intensify to a burning that coursed through her whole body, curling in her belly and making each of her muscles feel impossibly tense.

Jon moved up her body and settled between her legs. He pressed his mouth to her own, the taste of her all over his tongue. Sansa let out a long, full sigh when he guided his cock inside her, her arms wrapped around him while her hands fisted in his hair.

“Ah, Sansa,” he said, pressing her legs against her chest. “You’re so wet and tight and you’re
Her second peak came upon her quickly, surprising her with the intensity of it.

“Oh, that’s my girl,” Jon groaned. “My sweet wife. No one else gets to have you.”

The movements of his hips became more forceful, the muscles in his back tensing beneath her hands while Jon rocked into her over and over again, spilling inside her and encircling her with his warm weight. Sansa stroked his back and pressed soft kisses all over his cheek and jaw, whispering sweet words to him. Gods, she had missed this.

Jon rolled onto his side and took her with him, keeping her close for a time and only then pulling out of her. Holding her face in his hands, he kissed her sweet and slow, brushing his tongue over hers and making her shiver deep in her spine. Sansa stretched and pulled the covers over them, turning over so that her back was flush with his chest. Jon curled his arm around her and pressed his face into her hair before placing a kiss on her cheek.

The hour was late and once they were beneath the blankets it wasn’t long before Sansa felt herself begin to drift off. She wanted to remain awake, to remember every minute of her wedding night, but the solid, reassuring presence of Jon next to her lulled her to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

It’s hard to believe this is the last chapter. I hope you guys have enjoyed reading this as much as I have enjoyed writing it :D I wrote this story to cheer up just_a_dram but it turned into a really fun project for me as well. I may revisit this ‘verse in the future, but my immediate plans are to work on the murder mystery, which will be a much longer modern AU Jon/Sansa fic. If you guys are interested in reading that once it’s posted then I encourage you to check out my tumblr, where I have the most up to date info about updates and sometimes snippets of backstory/notes.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!