Sansa

“Come on.” Arya groaned as she fidgeted in front of me. I could not help the tut that escaped my lips while my fingers worked to twist and pin the braids that would frame her miserable-looking face.

“Stay still.” I chided, pulling her head back against my belly as I looked down at her head to make sure I was not making a mess of my little sister's hair. The angle allowed her eyes to meet mine and she took the opportunity to roll her eyes. “Stop trying to get a reaction out of me, this is for you anyway!” I held some of her hair in place while I pulled one of the brass clips Ruby forged from a discrete pocket sewn into my dress and slid it into place as Arya held still.

“This is so stupid, hair is hair.” She grumbled as I cupped her cheeks and turned her head to the side.

“What nonsense, next you will say clothes are just clothes.” I wiggled my fingers to get the stiffness out before I got back to working on Arya’s braided crown.

“They are.” Arya huffed.

“Oh, I suppose this helmet or that is much the same, just hammered metal, no?” I teased as I felt Arya set her jaw with such indignation that I could feel it in her scalp.

“Obviously not.” She mumbled, knowing full well my point as I struggled not to giggle at her moody disposition. “Stop smiling.” She huffed, making it impossible for me to stop smiling. I had to take a breath to avoid laughing at her expense as I blinked away the faintest tears at the corner of my eyes. “Sansa!” She hissed.

“Stop making me laugh.” I commanded, “I have to focus on this.” and it was the truth. “Tommen will find it quite charming.” I grinned as Arya tried to turn about to scoff at me, something I predicted and stymied by holding her head in my hands causing Arya to remember herself and stay still.

“I don’t care what Tommen finds charming.” She snapped as I gasped in faux concern.

“But you took to each other so well at the feast, you made the good prince laugh and blush!” Arya made a strangled sound that might have been an attempt at words, and I felt my cheeks hurt in contrast to the lack of guilt I felt at the frustration I was inflicting upon my sister. “Doubtless the fair Prince dreams of the fair and well-behaved northern maiden who charmed him so.”

“Ohhh, do shut up!” Arya snapped as I finished tying one of her braids. As she spoke, the door to my chambers opened and Ruby stepped through, the faint cool breeze carrying the pleasantly floral scent that clung to Ruby at all times into my chambers.

“That’s a rude thing to say, Arya.” Ruby blinked and strode over, leaning down to inspect my work as I gently held Arya’s jaw and turned her head side to side so Ruby could look.

“Sansa is playing fun with me.” Arya grumbled as I giggled.

“I would *never*.” I lied.

“You look beautiful, Arya.” Ruby said with a smile, her tone so earnest and genuine that I felt Arya relax against me. “Now, what fun are you having with our dearest sister?” Ruby planted her hands on her hips and made a serious expression at me.

“Oh? Did you not know that during the feast Arya was the perfect picture of a northern lady.” Arya groaned as Ruby’s eyes lit up at the prospect of gossip. “Our sister attended the feast as a companion to the lovely Prince Tommen, you should have seen her Ruby, the pair of them were quite besotted with each other!” Ruby’s cheeks turned rosy and a wide smile was turned towards Arya as our elder half-sister practically danced in place to bleed off her excitement.

“What was he like?” She demanded of Arya, who was doing her best impression of a tomato.

“H-he’s fine, boring, I was just being polite, Sansa is making things up *again*!” I finished braiding the other side of her head as I felt Arya’s head grow hotter under my fingers. “I am not boy-obsessed like she is!”

“What did you talk about?” Ruby barreled through, genuinely delighted that Arya might have made an impression on the young prince as I basked in the frustration emanating from Arya.

“Nothing, he knows nothing of interest, so we merely talked to pass the time as we feasted.” Arya sighed.

“Oh, he must have been quite the boor in that case,” I spoke in a singsong tone that always grated on my little sister.

“No, he was not a boor! He was nice and...” Arya snapped before she realised that she had jumped to the defence of the young prince.

“Oooohhh!” Ruby cooed over Arya as the maiden crossed her arms and huffed.

“They are going to get Sansa married to Prince Joffrey,” Arya said quickly as I felt my face flush as Ruby gasped and clasped her hands over her mouth, her hips shaking from side to side as she looked at me.

“It’s not been decided yet...” I smiled and played with my hair idly as Ruby pulled me into a hug, the tall girl intent on smothering me as I pushed uselessly against iron-wrought muscle. “We are going to have dinner with the Queen and her children,” I told Ruby.

“Queen Sansa! All hail Queen Sansa!” She cheered as Arya giggled and joined in on the chanting. I dug my fingers into Ruby’s side, making her squeal and release her grip to escape my fingers from jabbing into her ticklish spots.

“It’s not been decided yet!” I snapped, moving to neaten my dress as Ruby sauntered forwards.

“...What’s he like?” She sheepishly asked in her childish way.

“He is charming, tall, handsome, strong.” I felt my heart flutter and indulged in the delightful fear that I might have already fallen in love with Prince Joffrey. From the moment he had taken my hands into his own, how he held me as we walked through the great hall together. The endless curiosity he had for Winterfell and the North. “I hope father agrees.” I felt my ears burn in embarrassment as Ruby reached forwards in a rare moment that reminded me that she was the big sister and gently squeezed my fingers.

“Well, it won’t happen if Tommen asks to marry me, will it?” Arya grinned, ruining the moment as I glared at her.

“I thought you did not care about Tommen?” I snapped as Arya acted the grumpkins that Mother assured me she was not.

“I might be far too charming for my own good.” She gracelessly pretended to walk like a lady over to the tall mirror Ruby had made for my name-day years ago and smiled at herself. “Mother said that we would be matched with different houses to benefit the family. So if I-”

“Arya.” Ruby said, her voice like iron. “Don’t be cruel.” She commanded, and Arya’s smug grin faltered as she looked up at Ruby.

“She is always doing this!” I clenched my fists, feeling my eyes water. “Just being nasty to hr-” I felt Ruby’s arms around me, gentle this time.

“Sansa, let this be enough. You are sisters.” She reached out a hand for Arya and the nasty girl stomped over before she too was pulled against our eldest sister. “You should be doing your best to help each other and make each other happy.” She chided us both; I felt frustration wheeling up inside of me. I always tried! I always did my best to be kind and sisterly to Arya, but she was a nasty little bully! She always got her way with Father and Ruby and forced Mother to bear the brunt of punishing her!

“Arya, apologise to Sansa,” Ruby asked softly.

“...Sorry, Sansa.” Arya looked up, meeting my eyes as she spoke.

“What are you sorry for?” Ruby prompted.

“I was... saying that stuff because you looked really happy about marrying Joffrey. I thought it would annoy you.” She admitted.

“Sansa?” Ruby looked at me, and I held back a sigh as I looked at Arya.

“I accept your apology.” I lied at last.

Ruby

The twilight hours in Winterfell were always the most magical. Faint snowflakes fluttered down in twisting patterns from the sky, tired knights and sentries huddled around warm fires with cuts of meat and warm mead, the sky took on its final range of purple to red hues before darkness would fall over the land. I smiled; the lantern at my hip was not quite necessary yet, but the light gave off a warm glow that kept the faint kiss of 'summer' snow at bay. I turned a corner to my workshop and saw a figure leaning against the door, arms crossed as I slowed my pace.

Theon Greyjoy.

I stopped and stared at him before shaking my head and marching up to my workshop. Theon stood up, shoulders pushed forwards as the lean nineteen-year-old made a petty attempt to intimidate or merely show his displeasure.

"You're a snitch then?" He snapped as I gave him a contemptuous look. He was dressed in a black velvet doublet embroidered with the kraken of House Greyjoy. He also had the black silk gloves he was so fond of as well as a fur-lined cloak to keep the cold at bay. I noted that he did not carry a sword or dagger at his hip; both his scabbards, richly clad in black and gold, hung loose and empty.

"You've been punished?" I had stayed out of the stupid games Theon wanted to play as he crossed his arms, his voice unsteady in his rage.

"I am to feast with smallfolk, forbidden from going on hunts or leaving Winterfell, I will have nought but coppers as a stipend, and Lady Catelyn would see me tend to the kitchens as a servant for a year!" He ended his sentence with a shout as I looked at him impassively.

"Seems fair enough to me." It was more than fair; he had promised to remain silent about my Aura and Semblance, and as far as I could tell, instantly broke that promise. Lashing or any of the more brutal punishments inflicted for such crimes were far too much. I am sure that many in Winterfell would consider Theon's punishment to be remarkably gentle, however.

"You seem pleased with yourself." He stepped forward as I held firm.

"I never said a word to Lord Stark; perhaps I should have." I did not hold out much hope that I would convince Theon that I just wanted him to leave me alone.

"Why are you at odds with me?" He snapped. "To them you are just a bastard; what happened to our friendship?" His voice softened as I blinked at him, my mouth falling open in shock.

“You pulled out your penis and asked me what I thought about it!” I shouted, my blood running hot. I heard a distant voice whisper ‘*quiet*’ somewhere around us and felt my anger grow further at the idea that this confrontation was being observed by someone.

“You wanted to go hunting with me.” He jabbed a finger at my face. “You... we... you, want... wanted to have a picnic and spend the night camping together!” He seemed genuinely exasperated.

“As friends!” I snapped. “Platonically, I wanted to go out *hunting,* not having sex! How is this so difficult for you to comprehend? I thought you were courting Kyra at the time so-”

“Courting? You thought I intended to marry a tavern wench?” He looked genuinely insulted. “I am a Greyjoy, heir to the Iron Islands; Robb is my equal, and when we rule our realms we will do so as peers. You think that I would lower myself to marry some smallfolk whore?”

“This! This is why I never wanted to have a relationship with you. ‘Whore’ this, ‘Cunt’ that. All you can say are vile words about people! Everything is some joke to make at everyone else’s expense. Kyra is a lovely woman, and you talk about her like this. It’s disgusting.”

“Is this all about Kyra? Of all the stupid... if it upset you so much, why didn't you say anything? You just refused to talk to me at all.” He planted his hands on his hips and gave me a condescending look. “I was going to make you my lady of the Iron Isles, I was not going to treat you like some Wintertown whore, Ruby.”

“I’m not interested.” I said flatly, quite eager to be done with this conversation.

“Oh, you would rather be the Starks’ pet bastard! They will marry you off to some fat little lordling with no claim to anything out of an insipid fear of your blood. You want that?” He spread his arms as if showing himself off as something quite distinct from this terrible fate that awaited me.

“There is more to life than clinging to titles or power, Theon. Nobility is how a person behaves, and regardless of whatever title you think you hold, you don’t have any. I don’t want to marry a man who would treat women the way you do.”

“Is this about Kyra again?!” He snapped.

“In part, yes, you can’t treat pe-” I began, only for him to cut me off.

“Kyra, Kyra, Kyra! If you want to go play the game of flats with Kyra be my guest, Ruby, but there are easier ways to find out what my cum tastes li-” I planted my palm on his cheek, realising only a moment too late that I had activated my aura. A spike of fear filled me as Theon staggered to the ground, clutching the side of his face and sitting dumbfounded, blinking away his confusion.

“Theon. I’m sorry.” I rushed forward as blood dribbled out of his mouth and ran down from his nose. He shuffled back on the snow and mud away from me.

“Get away, you crazy bitch!” He snapped, his voice slurring as he spat some blood onto the ground.

“You have to go see the maester.” I pleaded with Theon as he staggered to his feet. “I might have given you a concussion,” I called after him as he stomped away from me. I clenched my fists in frustration, watching to see if he stumbled, thankfully he seemed stable enough.

I turned away from the workshop and hurried to the maesters’ chambers. My boots and guilt carried me across Winterfell at pace as many people turned to watch my passing with confusion. I arrived, practically running into Luwin as the man hurried out of his turret containing his personal library, chambers, and the ravenry.

“Ruby!” The kindly old man exclaimed as I apologised for nearly barreling into him. “Whatever is the matter, girl?” He asked softly.

“I hit Theon, and I think I might have hurt his head. You need to look at him. You need to make sure he is alright.” I must have seemed distraught as the small grey man took my shaking hands and gave a comforting smile.

“I will tend to him, child, I promise, but a... message has come. It must be delivered to Lady Stark, with haste. Come with me child, I will deliver this message, and then I shall go to the Greyjoy.” I took a deep breath as I smiled and nodded.

“Okay.” I said at last as he chuckled and gave my hands one last comforting squeeze before he began to hobble to his destination.