

## (Don't Fear) The Reaper

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# **(Don't Fear) The Reaper**

by [prettylittlepetticoats](#)

## Summary

*'I disagree, I have come to the perfect place, I want to bring those who wronged me to justice and all those who have wronged me are right here'*

They had that in common.

Accused of murder, Sansa Stark sees no way out, but the Red Viper of Dorne may have one, if she has the courage to take it.

# I Have Questions

## Chapter Notes

idek where this came from, but I've wanted to write this for a long time.

it is a wip, shoot me, currently planning out the main story, but I've got the next chapter almost done.

do let me know watcha think! it is going to be spicy! lots of canon divergences, and lots of scheming.

for the purpose of this fic: oberyne is like 33, sansa is 17ish.

also this is primarily a book fic, book lore/events etc, some show - but it fits in the asoiaf category ty.

songrecs: don't fear the reaper - denmark and winter (original is awesome but the d+w version is haunting) d+w version is haunting)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*'All our times have come, here but not they're gone. Seasons don't fear the reaper, the wind, the sun or the rain, we can be like they are, don't fear the reaper, baby take my hand, we'll be able to fly'*

She has never been this filthy.

The cell is caked in mud, dirt, and other things she doesn't want to think about, dark and dim, a blessing so she cannot see her surroundings. There is only one tiny window, with bars obscuring most of it, and she is thankful for that, to sit in the dark, to not have to see what she has fallen to.

She is a prisoner, well ... she has been for a while, *hasn't she?* A pretty singing bird, a little dove, locked away in a gilded cage, golden bars, and diamond locks. Now she sits in a box, cracked and worn, dirty and destitute, a prisoner as she was before, just slightly worse circumstances.

Oddly, she has never felt this peaceful in Kings Landing. Perhaps it's the realisation she'll die soon, be free of the suffering and finally know some silence, perhaps it's the quiet itself, surrounding her, wrapping into her like a blanket, allowing her mind to rest. Perhaps it is that she finally feels free, even surrounded by stone walls and metal bars. There is no one to please here, no courtesies to parrot, no true feelings to hide, no lies she has to tell.

She remembers when she had almost taken her freedom months earlier, arms wide, wind whipping around her hair and nightgown, feet planted firmly on the stone windowsill, one step forward to go tumbling, down, down, down.

It had been the middle of the night, the moon high in the sky, the breeze harsh on her skin like a violent caress, the offer right there, *just jump*, and she would be free, on her terms.

She hadn't been scared, hadn't felt the fear of being about to plummet, the fear of tumbling to one's death. Sansa Stark had just breathed in the air, calming, quiet, fresh, and contemplated tumbling to her death, contemplated ending it all, in her own way.

*To be with them again...*

Sansa wasn't sure what had stopped her, what had her stepping back, back to bed, not the bed of grass that had called to her, so far down on the ground. Now she wishes she had taken that way out, been found the next morning, pretty, broken, crushed, the little dove taken flight and plummeted.

It doesn't matter really, the result will be the same, perhaps even this will be quicker, *easier*.

It would be lying to say she doesn't feel a flicker of fear, to die, and yet it is so tiny it is easily ignored. This isn't living what she's doing now, trapped away in the cell, accused of murder, or at least as an accomplice to a murder.

And it isn't like she wasn't living before either, trapped as a wife, unbedded as she was but still trapped, expected to spawn Lannister babies, to let them take her name, her body, her claim. *No*.

Why would she be afraid to die when she wasn't living? How can a life be considered taken if already gone?

Sansa Stark had been gone for a long time.

And so, she will sit here, in her dirty dress, in a little heap next to the wall, Southern hairdo half undone and tumbling down her shoulders, the mouldy food ignored in the corner, lips cracked from lack of water. She will take nothing from them, not anymore.

Perhaps it will take a while for them to come for her, perhaps from lack of water, lack of food, lack of will she'll die first. That would be nice, to be found by the guards having already taken a way out, gone and not there for the entertainment of a trial.

Part of her things she should plead guilty, get it all out of the way, but no, she wishes she had killed Joffrey, she'd go with more satisfaction if she had, but she hadn't (to her annoyance), and she wouldn't lie again, not anymore.

No, she'd profess her innocence but watch them condemn her anyway, and she'd go to the executioners block with her head held high, no shame, no begging, no lies, she'd die like her Father had, honourable until the end.

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At some point she had fallen asleep.

Not for long though, just drifted away, weak, and hungry. Sleep offered some respite, she had, had so little since news of her family, and so she managed an hour or so, *she did not dream*.

The sound of the door jolted her awake.

It was the lock first, and at that she quickly sat up, arranged her skirts, she was no pretty picture, filthy as she was, but she sat back straight, head high, they wouldn't take her dignity, they had already had everything else, that was all she had left.

Again, she felt calm, if this were to be her end, so be it.

*I can be with them again...*

It was the light she saw first, the cell was dark, the black cells as they were called, for her station she should have been in a tower cell or under guard, but Cersei had ordered her here, face full of hatred and malice, she wished she had ran, but felt too tired to care that she hadn't.

Part of her wanted to raise a hand, as even the light from the torch made her squint, but she did not, instead she just sat still, she wouldn't show them her discomfort.

But there was no them, just *him*.

He followed the light of the torch, and it was only through her time here, in Kings Landing '*we're all liars here*' did she manage to keep her composure, her eyes widening a touch but nothing else betrayed her, nothing, not a flicker, not a sound. Her surprise near swelled over her heart, her curiosity biting at her throat, but she made none of that known.

Prince Oberyn seemed to regard her with curiosity himself as he stepped into her cell, the light of the torch throwing his handsome features into focus.

They'd had little interaction since he'd arrived, she knew of him of course; *the Red Viper of Dorne*, for his losses, his sister and niece and nephew cruelly ripped away, she knew that had been the source of her Father's first falling out with the King, though they'd reconciled; perhaps if they hadn't, she wouldn't be here, she'd be in the North where she belonged.

Regardless, they'd been introduced in court one morning, she'd curtsied, eyes hard, barriers and courtesies firmly up, no more than an empty platitude spoken to him. She hated court, hated being dragged to it, but she stood alone, slightly off to one side, Tyrion usually missed it and so she stood firm and still, not drawing attention, ignoring any attempts to catch her eye or talk.

They'd been introduced and that was all, she couldn't imagine why he was here.

She should stand, courtesy, after all she was just Lady Lannister, the wife of a 2nd born son, the heir to Winterfell yes but nothing more, Prince Oberyn was a Prince of Dorne, she should stand and courtesy and know her station.

Sansa didn't though, for the first time in years she let her courtesies slip for a moment, just a moment, she'd be leaving this place soon anyway, and she was tired, so very tired, eternal sleep couldn't come soon enough, so why bother?

"Prince Oberyne" She was still polite, that had been taught to her by her mother and she wouldn't dishonour her now, "I didn't expect any visitors" Polite, kind, very voice a little cracked from disuse, but she'd done her part, she didn't know why he was here, but she could hardly ask him to leave.

Sansa wished he would though, so she could sit here in peace until her time came. Perhaps she'd pray, she'd tried for years and nothing, but if she were to go to the grave soon it might be good to talk to the Old Gods, she just had to hope the Weirwoods would hear her from here.

"I apologise for not coming sooner" Her eyebrow raised at that, why would he have come sooner? Why had he come at all? "I was spending some time with an absolutely stunning blonde"

Her cheeks heated a touch at that, she was still unbedded after all, a maiden proper, but she just nodded, "Oh?" What else was there to say, she was still trying to discern why he had come.

"Your once good-Mother to be" Without meaning to her hands screwed into fists at his words then, nails biting hard into the skin, she remained silent then, why had he come? To taunt her? He hadn't struck her as cruel, but then perhaps she had been wrong, most people in the world were cruel.

"Cersei approached me, we spoke a great deal about her daughter, how worried Cersei is about her, she was trying very hard to pretend she had not come to sway me against you, I think she may have even believed it herself" *Ahh*.

Sansa had been told the day before her trial would sit three judges; Lord Tywin in King Tommen's place, Mace Tyrell and then Oberyne Martell, all to decide her fate for Kingslaying. She had barely been listening, she didn't care about a trial, only planned to assert her innocence with her head held high and then leave it at that.

Prince Oberyne was here no doubt to play with her, like a cat plays with a mouse, she wished he would go but her politeness won out, even as her annoyance wouldn't leave her, did everyone feel a need to play with her? Mess with her head and treat her like a toy or a pet? Why couldn't she be left alone? Why couldn't anyone leave her alone?

"Making honest feelings do dishonest work is one of the Queens many talents" The words were stupid to say, foolish, dangerous, but then she almost laughed; what did she have to fear now? Still, she almost gasped at the end of the sentence, she hadn't known she had it in her.

Prince Oberyne didn't seem to mind though, not as he levelled his gaze on her, Sansa kept it, didn't look away, yes, she was a little scared but her blue gaze was clear and cold, she wouldn't flinch, he seemed to like that, she could see respect in his gaze.

*I am a wolf; I can be brave.*

"It was difficult for her to hide her true intentions" Oberyne said with a shrug, Sansa had come to learn to read people in Kings Landing, but she knew with Prince Oberyne she was outclassed, "Which is rare, to meet a Lannister who shares my enthusiasm for dead Lannisters?" He laughed then, but there was no humour, none at all, "She desperately wants to see your husband, Lord Tyrion and you killed"

She still didn't know why he was here, but she didn't ask, not yet.

"I don't think she needed to bother you" Her tone again was polite, clear, though some anger had crept in, rare for her, but again it wasn't directed at Prince Oberyne but the world, the whole cruel world, "I think she'll get what she wants, and I imagine she'll feel great joy when my head leaves my neck"

She paused then, her fists were still curled in, blood likely welling under her filthy nails, she didn't care, maybe an infection would take her, maybe that would be easier, "She'll be more pleased about Lord Tyrion of course, she has wanted that for a long time"

Sansa spoke clearly, as though just relaying facts, not as though she were talking about her own demise, perhaps it was apathy, perhaps it was resignation, perhaps something else.

"Yes" Prince Oberyne nodded, "But with Lord Tyrion she will not get what she wants"

"No?" Sansa asked almost idly, she didn't care for Tyrion, she could never care for a Lannister, but he had been kind to her, "Why is that?"

"He escaped" Prince Oberyne said with a shrug, "This morning, no one knows how but he's gone, the guards were drugged, and a ship bound for Pentos left this morning"

And at that Sansa Stark laughed.

Laughed so loudly it was unladylike, laughed as though it were coming from her very heart, laughed, and laughed, not even noticing Prince Oberyne's sad smile. She was suddenly glad he had come, if only to deliver her that news, his motives didn't matter to her anymore, not when he had given her such a gift, which she felt a need to say.

"Thank you" She said, her giggles petering out but her smile clear, she didn't realise she looked beautiful, even caked in filth, her beauty shone through, "That will see me to the executioners block with a smile, to know the Queen will be so furious and disappointed, thank you for that gift"

"You're welcome" Prince Oberyne said, with a smile of his own, *deadly*, but she could see some pity in his gaze, that was not good, and it took all of her courtesies not to throw it back in his face, "But Lady Sansa, don't be foolish"

"Foolish?" She asked, and there was some defiance in her tone, broken as she was, she knew she was going soon, so what did she care for the consequences? *What did she care at all*

*anymore?* "What can they do to me now Prince Oberyn? They will take my life, why should I be scared anymore?"

"Sweet girl" He said it with endearment, it was the first time someone had called her that without any underlying intentions, not since her Father maybe, it felt strange and a little bit sad. "They aren't going to execute you"

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Fear, it was an odd thing, a strange thing. It crept up on a person, or slammed all at once, made itself known with a cackle and a boot through the door.

Until now Sansa had felt flickers of it, sat in her cell contemplating her fate, but it had been mostly absent, to know it would be over soon, it would all be over, and she would be with her family again. Fear had left her alone for once, perhaps in respite, and she had been okay, peaceful even, even with knowing what was to come.

But now, at Prince Oberyn's words ... it, *fear* slammed into her, like a gust of wind whipping across a valley, like a horse and cart knocking her off the road, like the smack of a sword against her back as Joffrey ordered her beaten.

"No" She spoke too soon, should have processed, understood, and responded calmly, as she had been so good at doing. Many had commented on it, '*nothing rattles her not anymore*', '*she is so calm*', '*I've never seen anything flicker in those blue eyes*', but now it had all fallen away from her, as a horrid, ragged gasp left her lips, threatening to choke her, to strangle the life out of her.

"No, no, no" She had fallen to a whisper, she only didn't stand because she felt too weak, her hands shook now, uncurled, blood on her palms, "No, they will, they will"

"No" Prince Oberyn offered, and his kindness; he didn't know her after all, was almost too much, "You're far too important, they will see you live"

"But the Queen" She said, her gaze meeting the Princes then, and she knew as before her gaze had been clear, now it was brimming with terror, not that she might die, but that she might live.

"The Queen will be overruled by the Hand" Again his tone was gentle, and that near killed her, "They will likely put it all on Lord Tyrion, see you innocent and married again, you're too valuable to kill"

"I won't do it" Her tone was harsh then, all of her courtesies forgotten, *unravelling*, as she looked at the Prince, who she realised wasn't playing with her, wasn't mocking her, but had just come out of kindness, she was thankful for him, but part of her wished he hadn't come, so she could live in ignorance and perhaps make for the nearest window when she had the chance. "I won't"

"You won't have a choice" Again gentle, and it near made her scream.



"No, no, no" She had promised herself she wouldn't cry, but soon tears were mixing with the mud on her face, with the dirt from how low she had fallen, would she ever rise? She didn't think so. She dropped her gaze, her eyes falling to look into her lap, at the blood half-moon marks on her palms, she'd never felt such despair.

"No, the Queen wants me dead, and sooner or later Cersei always gets what she wants" She insisted but the fight had left her voice, for what else did she have?

Nothing.

"And what about what I want?" It was Prince Oberyn's tone that had gaze lifted again, the sheer anger she could hear, and somehow, for some reason, something came to her, something blossomed in a place that had been dead and barren for so long, something in Oberyn's words, his fury, it allowed it.

Hope.

"Justice" He paused, "Justice for my sister and her children"

"If you want justice, you've come to the wrong place" Sansa said, for he had, there was no justice here, no honour, oh how she missed the North, the snows of Winterfell, maybe one day she'd return, in another life after this one.

"I disagree" Tears continued to leak down her cheeks as Prince Oberyn spoke, though that tiny spark of hope was not extinguished, not yet.

He stood, tall and imposing, and then he held out a hand to her.

Why she took it she didn't know.

But she did, tired as she was, as much as she had given up, she took it, allowed him to guide her up, his calloused palm gentle as he clasped her hand, her skirts rustling on the floor as they fell around her, wobbling a little bit but steadying somewhat. She stood tall, head held high now, even as tears decorated her cheeks, there was hope but even if it was gone, she would not be cowed, not again, not ever.

And yet the hope wasn't gone, and as Prince Oberyn continued to speak, it bloomed.

"I've come to the perfect place" He released her hand then, moved to stand next to the torch he had brought with him, and whereas when he had arrived, she had seen his handsomeness reflected, now she saw his fury. "I want to bring those who have wronged my to justice, and all those who have wronged me are right here"

That they had in common.

"I will begin with Ser Gregor Clegane who killed my sisters' children and then raped her with their blood still on his hands before killing her too" Prince Oberyn said, his expression fierce, his tone held no room for argument, and Sansa wouldn't have argued.

"How?" She asked, her voice no longer a whisper, the tears had stopped, and she took a step forward then, the most important step of her life, "Tell me how"

"You know how" He said, gentle once more, but the venom cut through his tone, not for her, for them.

All of them who had wronged him, who had wronged her.

She did know how, she nodded, and then he spoke the words out loud.

"I will be your champion"

And even though she had vowed it, even though she had stood strong, she near crumpled, she wept, but Prince Oberyn caught her before she could fall.

*'Valentine is done, here but now they're gone. Romeo and Juliet are together in eternity, 40,000 men and women everyday, another 40,00 coming everyday, don't fear the reaper, baby take my hand, we'll be able to fly'*

## Chapter End Notes

sooo thoughts?

ahhh, I so enjoyed writing this! adapting a scene to fit this pairing, I loved it, and I hope you did too!

there is going to be fireworks to say the least, and you can already see major canon divergences.

do comment to let me know if you want more, subscribe for updates

speaking soon

# Demands Made and Gained

## Chapter Notes

thank you to the awesome response to this story! now more to come...

do let me know watcha think

songrecs: lovely - billie eilish/khalid

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

She walks into the Throne Room with her head held high.

It is hard, with the stares, the people glaring at her, the whispers, and mutters. She is used to those of course, but it doesn't make it any easier to deal with as she walks the long path, a Kingsguard at either side, her hands clapped in chains, the judges and executioners waiting for her.

She almost flinches at that, as Prince Oberyn had said, perhaps the worst thing he'd said to her; '*Sweet girl. They aren't going to execute you*', she knew he was right now, was an idiot to think otherwise, she was too valuable to them and that near made her blood boil, her value as a hostage was the only thing keeping her from her family, another Lannister cruelty.

As she walked down the Throne Room, she could see him, Prince Oberyn '*your saviour*' her silly mind whispered, he had given her no choice, with the truth that they would never execute her, how could she refuse his offer?

If they found her innocent at trial, she would be a pawn once more, more likely they'd find her guilty, *guilty* and make her a ward of the crown once more. She knows it is likely even if Prince Oberyn stands for her and wins, she will still be trapped, but at least she will have tried, and so how can she refuse?

She couldn't, *wouldn't*, and at his smirk she only just managed to stop herself from flinching, her dignity demanding she did not.

*I am porcelain, turned to ivory, to steel.*

A mantra she had repeated in her head many times and did so again as she approached the box designed to hold her as the guilty. *Innocent until proven guilty* was the means of a fair trial, but this would not be fair.

*I am a Stark, I can be brave.*

Another mantra, perhaps more important than the last. It got her to the box, head held up, ignoring the Southerners crowing around her. They weren't Starks, they weren't Northerners and so why did they matter? They didn't, not to her, not anymore.

Few people left alive did matter, few indeed, and none in this room.

No, everyone she loves is gone, everyone that matters to her is gone, she will not cry for these people, these strangers, and liars, she will not let them see her weep, she will not let them see her cry.

Even if they execute her, even if they pardon her, she will not cry, she will turn to stone before she sheds a single tear, she will fall faint on the floor before she utters so much as a whimper.

As they lead her to the box, she steps inside, and they shut it behind her, her wrists remain in the shackles. She tries to look dignified, and knows people around her seem shocked, for months she has been a shell of herself, gaze on the floor, a pale slip of a girl, but now she stands tall, Sansa Stark reborn.

They allowed her a bath, and another when the first had been mud filled within minutes. A handmaid washed her hair with rough hands, but she hadn't protested, just relished in being clean. She had scrubbed her own skin pink, only stopping when the handmaid had taken it from her, her skin perhaps starting to bleed in some places, but clean, blessedly clean.

They had dressed her well too, but in Southern colours. Red and gold, if she'd had anything else she would have refused, but she didn't, she had no possessions now. And so, instead she had just stood stone faced as maids garbed her in red and gold, *Lannister colours*, hair in the Southern style, jewels at her throat and wrists, it was almost funny, how they were trying to portray her; a noble Southern woman, when she felt the very opposite.

It hardly stood well with her being an apparent murderer, but she supposed they had dressed her for the outcome, not for the farce of a trial.

Part of her wished she had refused, thrown the dress on the floor, ripped the jewels from her neck and hands, had walked into the Throne Room head high in her smallclothes, corset, and slip.

Arya would have and she smiles at that, Arya would have walked in filthy and unkempt, swearing and shrieking at them all, Sansa wished she had the courage to do that, but they all had their limits.

Instead, she looks beautiful, her expression cold, unflinching, her demeanour one of being closed off, but not in a shrunken violet fashion, no she doesn't shrink, there is just a wall between her and everyone else.

How long can she hold it up before it all crumbles?

"Lady Sansa" It is no surprise it is Tywin who speaks first, he is the leader of these proceedings. He sits on the Iron Throne even though it doesn't belong to him, though she

supposes in essence it does.

Lord Mace Tyrell sits on his left, and she knows his vote is purchased and paid for, whichever way Tywin would vote he would too, which means the Tyrell's can no longer be counted as friends. She glances then at Margaery, Olenna and Loras, sat to one side on the dais, *no*, they are not her friends anymore, dressed in black, playing the game.

Once she had thought she would join them, but they had ignored her, shunned her since she had been married to Tyrion, her benefit to them gone.

That is all anyone wants from her, her *claim*, her *usefulness*, and it makes her want to scream.

She is more than the key to Winterfell; she is more than a broodmare to be ridden and used. For once she almost feels in tune with Cersei, who sits on the dais too, though the Queen's grief is real, real and fury, and she knows if it were up to the Queen, they'd both be getting what they wanted, her head rolling on the floor, in Cersei's mind justice, in hers *peace*.

*'But what about what I want?'*

At least somebody would be getting that.

That had also been part of the reason she'd accepted Prince Oberyn's championship, not just to try and find one last way toward freedom, *as unlikely as that was*, but also for him.

Sansa hated Southerners now, hated that she'd ever wanted to be one of them, and though the Dornish were Southern folk, they hadn't wronged her, other than siding with the Lannister's, which she supposed roused a little hatred, for them to be complicit in the crimes of Tywin, Cersei and Joffrey.

Some anger flared in her then, perhaps she did hate them all, the Dornish too, and any who hadn't fought against the Lannister's and their evil.

But still, she understood Oberyn had been wronged too, even as complicit as he was now, and he (unlike her), had a chance for justice.

How could she take that from him?

She couldn't, especially when it meant little to her. She would not be executed, to her grief, but she couldn't imagine she'd be free either if found guilty. Better to hope, to hope and pray (though not really, what use was that now? She'd made her peace with the Gods, would go to them when they took her), that being found innocent would mean something else.

Unlikely, but also all she had left.

And she had to cling to what she had left, so few things, like rare precious stones she clutched in her hands; *her dignity, her name, her walls*, and then *this chance*, this dying, fleeting flame of hope.

For innocence, for freedom.

Unlikely, but all she had left.

And the diamonds wouldn't tumble from her fingers...

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"Lady Sansa" Tywin's words broke her out of her own thoughts, shattering her pensive gaze, his is one of annoyance at having to repeat himself and she resists the urge to smile. She is no Arya, won't go to her trial screaming and muddy, but she can be cold, she can be unflinching, she can be unbothered here.

She feels some connection with her sister then, lost and far away, perhaps far away with her father and brothers, in some ways that would be better, that is what Sansa hopes for her, to be in eternal sleep, not suffering this world anymore, she'll keep her head high for her.

*I am a Stark, I can be brave.*

"You are here as accused of the murder of King Joffrey" Tywin continues, looking down at her, from his seat of power, as Sansa knows it is his seat, even when Joffrey sat to it.

There is no question of that, to her, to the court, to any of them; Tywin is the King, had been with Joffrey, even more so with Tommen, it is his seat, his court, they only pretend otherwise.

*'I am the King!'*

*'Any man who says 'I am the King' is no King'*

"We are here to call you to trial for that crime" Tywin continued, Mace Tyrell was silent, Prince Oberyn concealing a smirk, but barely trying to, he didn't care to, he had no respect for this court, and if anything, that made her like him more.

And as she looked up at the three men, she noted how different all three were.

Lord Tyrell was all pomp, like a peacock but without the pretty feathers, head wiggling, perhaps more of a rooster or a chicken, indignant, entitled, the very worst of the South. *Goodness*, when had she grown so cutting? She blamed Kings Landing for her sins, the many she'd accumulated here, how many more would there be?

Then there was Lord Tywin, the Hand, the King in essence. He was in many ways the proud lion of his house, grizzled slightly, brave, fierce, as much as she hated him, she had to recognise that. But there was also something else, that of a fox about him, always tricking, manipulating. No a fox was too playful for Tywin, something else, something she couldn't place, a lion overflowing with cunning and a lust for power.

Finally, Prince Oberyn, the hardest to read of the three. He was no bird of paradise, or fierce lion, not even a roaring and dangerous wolf, no, he was truly a *viper*.

He was called the Red Viper of Dorne for a reason, an obvious reason, he was snaking through the grass, silent and deadly, waiting, understanding, plotting, until he struck.

Sansa, almost flinched at the stand as she thought of it, of who she was putting her trust in, whose hands here life lay in. She was like a little bird, as she'd always been called, a pretty golden bird, trusting that the snake wouldn't crush her, but protect her.

*'Little dove' 'Little bird'*

Would the dove be safe in the coil of the viper?

Her hands screwed into fists at her sides, her nails cutting into her delicate flesh, drawing blood. She hated that she needed to be saved, that even now she relied on others to help her. She felt the wetness of blood on her palms but didn't relent her grip, she could barely feel it anyway.

"You will have the opportunity to find witnesses, the Crown will call witness against you, you will be given the chance to speak, and we will render our verdict" Lord Tywin said, taking her through the trial step by step, as though she didn't know, as though her father hadn't taught her this. "The trial would start in two days' time"

She felt insulted on behalf of her father then, and glanced away, lest she glare; she wasn't quite that brave or that foolish.

"Do you understand?" He asked then, and it was that look that spurned her.

Originally, she hadn't planned on making any splashy declaration, that had never been her style here, she didn't like to speak in public to those that would mock and bully her, she had once...

*'As it please your Grace, I ask mercy for my father, Lord Eddard Stark who was Hand of the King.'*

*'I know he must be punished; all I ask is mercy. I know my Lord father must regret what he did'*

*'If you still have any affection in your heart for me, please do me this kindness your Grace'*

What a fool she had been, and what a use that had been, *useless* in the end.

The only comfort was that the boy she had begged to was dead, and his mother grieving, good riddance.

Now though, now she had planned to speak to the Hand privately, or ask at the start of her trial, to keep it quiet, to not make some show of it all.

And yet, as he spoke to her, Lord Tywin, one of the causes of her suffering, as he condescended her, as people around her, the liars of court whispered around her, Cersei glared at her, the Tyrell's distant, she found herself speaking before she could stop herself.

Still, she didn't sound angry, or cry or scream, her mother had taught her better than that, and her courtesies has always been he armour. That wouldn't change now.

"I understand my Lord Hand" She said with a nod.

"Good..." He began, but then she interrupted, to the gasps of the crowd.

"However, I know my innocence, I know I did not kill the King" She almost added in some simpering, but that was too much for her now, she'd already cut into her hands, she didn't want to start being sick at falsehoods, instead she stood straight and tall, but she spoke the truth.

The truth, it had been foreign to her for a long time.

It might have to be for a little bit longer, but not now, not here, not at this very moment.

"I know I am innocent" She repeated, glanced around, her eyes were hard, no tears to be found, her gaze sure and steadfast, she did not look at him, but Prince Oberyn was smiling now, for all to see, he'd chosen his side, though whether it was hers or his own she didn't know, but it was all she had.

He was all she had.

"I know I am innocent" She said again, "And the Gods must know it too"

"And so" She paused for a second, just a second, the fury on Lord Tywin's face was clear, he knew what was coming, and as he went to speak, as he went to stop her ... Sansa knew she had made the right choice, and she spoke first.

Especially as she did look at Prince Oberyn and he was grinning, a viper coiled, waiting to strike, waiting to attack.

For her.

"I demand a trial by combat"

And the court erupted.

## Chapter End Notes

sooo thoughts?

lets gooooo sansa

so subscribe/comment etc

speak soon



# It Flickers

## Chapter Notes

in some ways this was a lil hard to write, but I hope you enjoy reading it.

do leave a comment/kudos

songrecs: skinny love - birdy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was a wonderful thing to see.

The chaos that erupted in court, the anger, the yelling, the outbreak across was quite something to behold.

It warmed something in his blood, to see such chaos in the Lannister Court, to see it up in flames, at something he'd helped cause. It wasn't justice, no, that would only come when he had Tywin Lannister's head on a pike above Sunspear, alongside the heads of Gregor Clegane and Armory Loch, only then could he rest and know justice had been done.

Only then, not a second before.

But for now, he could revel in, even enjoy the disruption his and Sansa's little plan had caused to the Kings Landing court, he didn't even try to hide his smirk, only sat back in his chair, and surveyed the chaos.

Surveyed the yelling, some people in tears, others shaking their fists. Mace Tyrell, the fat flower of Highgarden looked baffled by the going-ons, the Tyrells themselves angered. Cersei Lannister looked ready to throttle the young wolf, and Tywin, the Hand and murderer himself was glaring at her, hands clenched into fists, only a flicker of his composure compromised.

It was enough for Oberyn to enjoy himself even more.

One glance at Sansa Stark and he found himself feeling proud. She stood among the chaos, head, and chin up, back straight, face expressionless, not cold but closed off, not a *hint* of emotion. Her blue eyes, Tully blue, Riverlander blue were like chips of ice against her pale skin, he wondered wryly how her fairness would manage Dornish sun.

She stood among it all, *unflinching*, her hands clasped in front of her, as still and stoic as a statue. She did not glance at the honeyed Margaery Tyrell trying to catch her eye, did not even look at the Lord Hand glaring at her, only past him, past the Iron Throne, as though the wall was all that would catch her attention.

Like a wall of ice was between her and the world.

He felt saddened a touch, that, that was how she'd been forced to be, closed off, ice instead of warmth. They didn't treat girls in Dorne such a way, to be forced to hide within themselves, but then that was the Capitol, that was the Lannister's; rotten as always.

And yet somehow the young wolf had survived, she was here, standing, head up, proud, quiet, but proud. She ignored those yelling, those that condemned her, she just stood, as though none of it bothered her. Only the whites of her knuckles, her fingernails digging into the flesh of her hands gave her away.

He wouldn't be surprised if blood was pooling in her palm from the way she was clenching her hands, and yet he admired her for that oddly, that she would be so brave to stand so still in the chaos and refuse to flinch.

*Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken.*

His house words, and yet they applied to the little wolf too.

"The crown will call Ser Gregor Clegane to stand as Champion" The Queen Cersei spoke first, her beautiful face twisted with an ugly contorted rage. Evidently Lord Tyrion slipping through her fingers had made her determined to go after his wife for the crime.

If Oberyne had his way, she would find herself disappointed again.

"Yes, Lady Sansa" Lord Tywin said then, smoothing his expression, ever in charge, "Consider you may not find a champion to fight for you, and certainly not one willing to go up against Ser Gregor" He pauses then, "And so I will give you a chance to take that back, and instead go to trial"

"I will have a champion" The little wolf says, confident then, and he feels warmed at her faith in him, and slightly annoyed by it; Starks are *far* too trusting, he could easily be double-crossing her.

Though he feels more warm than annoyed, she has placed her faith in him; he will not let her down, not on his life. He knows he will either emerge victorious for both of them, or he will die, he knows the latter is not an option, not for him, nor the little wolf.

"None would dare go up against Ser Gregor" Cersei sneers and Oberyne wants to laugh, though he waits, just a touch, wanting to build the tension, wanting for the moment to be even more glorious than he knows it will be, as he waits.

Oberyne has always had a little showmanship, one of his few faults.

And yet, the little wolf, *the Lady Sansa* glances at him, eyes blue, and for a moment he can see the barest flicker of emotion, just a hint of worry, smothering hope, and so he rises. He won't torment her, not even for his own cruel pleasure at the spectacle they created, she has suffered enough.

"I will" He said simply, and stepped forward, down the steps and to the woman he would defend's side, he was standing with her after all, not the Lannister's, he'd be dead in the ground and rotting before he stood with them.

"I will be the Lady Sansa's champion"

And if they had thought the chamber had erupted before, now there were truly fireworks.

He could only grin, and he could have sworn he saw a flicker of one on Lady Sansa's face too.

---

Everything happened quickly after that.

Her hands were shaking as Prince Oberyn stood next to her, whereas he stood steady she tried to emulate him, gripping the flesh of her palm, her nails digging little half moons into her skin, she could feel blood pooling there, but that was preferable to openly trembling.

*'I will be the Lady Sansa's champion'*

*'I will be the Lady Sansa's champion'*

*'I will be the Lady Sansa's champion'*

The words seemed to echo across the room, and in her head. It was too good to be true, she was sure she'd wake either back in her cell, or under the canopy of her bed, Joffrey still alive.

But no, Joffrey was dead, to her glee, and she had a defender. The thought of Ser Gregor had near made her flinch, and yet as Prince Oberyn had stood and declared for her, she had felt eased, Prince Oberyn was a legendary warrior, and he hated the Lannister's (the latter they had in common), surely that meant for his victory.

The Gods had not listened to her prayers so far, and yet she vowed to pray as soon as she was able, to beg them to help Prince Oberyn, to beg for his victory.

She had little hope left, and yet some remained, a small flicker like a candle about to die, and yet if it did die ... what would be the point in any of it? She had to hope, even just a little, she had to.

"You fool" Cersei spit at her, and yet Sansa remained, nails pressing into her flesh, still, unflinching, she would not give them, particularly the Queen, the satisfaction. "Guards, take her back to the black cells, where she can think about her stupid decisions" The Queen said, grim satisfaction stamped across her features.

"The Queen Regent is mistaken" Prince Oberyn hurled back immediately, he seemed calm, and yet there was a deadly fury at the undercurrent of his tone that near made her shiver, only his hand moving over to halt her as she went to turn around stopped her.

She wasn't afraid of the black cells, and as the Kingsguard had stepped forward she had gone to return to them, the filth was everywhere in Kings Landing after all, some real, some

bleeding through the walls of deceit, she didn't care where she was.

But Prince Oberyn's hand stalled her, he shot out a hand and gripped her arm, and with ease turned her back to face front. She felt a little chilled, but also relieved by the strength she felt in his grip, though he was gentle she could see it took him no ease to move her around, and she hoped, hoped yet again he would succeed.

She would pray until her knees bled, for her safety, and the Princes.

"Lady Sansa is a Lady" He said, and she liked the way his accent curled around her name, so different from the clipped tones of the Lannister's, she liked that he was different, wasn't one of them, neither was she.

They may have dressed her in red and gold, made her marry a Lannister but she had never, and would never be one of them. *Never*.

"She is entitled to proper accommodations whilst awaiting trial" The Prince continued, eyebrow raised, "Surely you know that, my Lord Hand?" The disdain in his voice as he spoke to Tywin Lannister was clear, and Sansa near smiled at his boldness, none others would dare.

For the millionth time that morning she was glad to have the Prince be her champion, not just because of his skills as a fighter, but because he was the very antithesis of the Lannister's, and for him to potentially win? To put it to the Lannister's like that? She wouldn't have known that kind of satisfaction in a while.

She craved it then, as though it burrowed into her chest, for the Prince to win, not just to save her, but to make the Lannister's hurt.

Sansa had never been a vindictive person, and yet she'd grinned the night after Joffrey's death, even sat in the black cell she'd laughed, smiled, joy overflowing that he was dead, and now she wished for the Lannister's to hurt, to be ashamed, for the Queen to cry, for the Hand to lose. Never vindictive until now.

It certainly felt better than the pain that had been (and would continue to be) her constant companion these past moon cycles.

"Escort the Lady Sansa to her rooms" Tywin Lannister said, tone clipped, he like her was trying to remain composed, but whereas she bled to keep still, the Hand's anger bled through in his tone.

Good.

"She will not be allowed to leave, she will take her meals there, a handmaid will attend to her, and two guards will be posted at her door" Tywin said, "The trial will happen on the morrow" And then he looked at the wider court, who had fallen silent as Oberyn had challenged the Queen, all waited with bated breath. "Court is over for the day"

And then he left, and Sansa almost allowed herself to sag, to breathe, *almost*. She held back, as the Queen swept past her with just a glare, evidently not daring to say anything as Prince

Oberyn stood next to her, unmoving, even a little smirk playing on his features, his hand still on her arm.

She'd rarely felt safer than she did with him next to her. Some would say that was foolish, feeling safe with a viper coiled next to her, and yet she'd rather a viper than a lion.

The Tyrell's walked past next, and it was Sansa who looked away as Margaery tried to catch her gaze. She had no interest in rekindling her friendship with the brief Queen, not after it had become clear she had only been interested in marrying her claim to Highgarden.

That hurt Sansa, and angered her, she was more than her claim, more than just her name, she was a person, a person who had hurt and suffered, and yet that didn't matter here.

*'We're all liars here'*

And worse than that.

"Go" The Prince snapped her out of her thoughts then, his tone gentle as two guards converged on her, "I will see you in the morning before the trial"

"They won't let you" She hurried out, her nerves just starting to fail then, and she clenched her hands harder, felt blood drip down her fingers. She didn't want to leave, Prince Oberyn was the only thing keeping her together, his certainty, where would she be without it?

She was strong, she had to be, but a girl could only take so much.

"They will" He said assuredly, glancing at each of the guards, his expression arrogant, and yet rather than irritate her, it reassured her, "I will see you on the morrow"

She nodded then, for what else could she do? She needed to hide in her rooms, to scream into a pillow, to cry, to shake, to pray until her knees bled to match her hands.

Hope, near flickered and gone, she couldn't let that candle go out, wouldn't, *couldn't*.

"Lady Sansa" Oberyn said, pausing her then as she had once again gone to turn, though this time he didn't need to pull her back, she looked at him willingly, why did his gaze; as black as his hair, soothe her? She didn't know, it was foolish, *'life is not a song'*, and yet he made her feel safe, for the first time since her Father had died, there was some feeling of safety, no matter how small.

She had to hold onto it, like her hope, it was all she had left.

"I will not fail you" He said, and the way he said it, gaze dark but fixed on hers, his expression hard, she nodded, for she had to, for she believed him. *How could she not?*

And so, as she followed her guards, she kept her head up high, even as people looked and whispered and gossiped, she kept her hands clenched, the blood dripping down her thumbs of both hands now, but she did not flinch, she did not shake.

She held onto her hope, from Prince Oberyn's words, from her own beliefs, she held onto it, she held herself together, the candle flickering at the centre of her heart.

It was only when in her room alone did she fall to her knees and scream into her fist, muffling the sound, tasting the blood on her tongue.

## Chapter End Notes

thoughts?

my poor sansa 3

but next chapter we have the trial! it should be interesting and with a few healthy twists...

speak soon

# A Dornish Girl

## Chapter Notes

update before the end of the year? check!

do enjoy, do comment if you can

songrecs: the night we met - lord huron

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Morning came quickly.

It was an odd thing to track, to feel, the sensation of it; time. Sometimes it would go by so slowly it seemed as though hours had passed hidden in minutes, and sometimes it would go so quickly you wondered what you'd been doing. At other times it would not seem to move a clock hand for hours and then rush by all at once, and then it could go quickly all day and slow to a crawl as dusk broke.

That night it just went fast.

After composing herself (something she was used to now), the sun rose through the sky over the morning of Kings Landing, and it was time.

She had slept fitfully, but that was nothing new, only her nightmares last night had been different.

Normally she dreamt the same things every night...

*Robb dying, Greywinds head stitched onto his body and paraded for all to see.*

*Her Mother dying, throat slit, bone showing through the blood, and then her body dumped in the river, face down, never put to rest.*

*Her Father, head severed from his neck, a prayer on his lips.*

*Bran and Rickon burnt, screaming, crying, begging, the flames eating their flesh.*

*Arya captured again by pirates, or marauders or Lannister's, thrown into the sea and eaten by the fishes.*

*Jon, venturing Beyond the Wall, never to return, the ice freezing him still.*

All gone, all dead, filling her nightmares, stopping any sleep. Last night sleep had not come again, but the content had differed.

*Prince Oberyn struck down on the battlefield, cleaved in two by the Mountain.*

*The Lannister's, grabbing at her, throwing her back into her cage, locking it and throwing away the key.*

*Married off to a Lannister cousin, or the Kingslayer, or the evil Lord Tywin himself, forced to do her duty, screaming and sobbing as blood ran over the sheets.*

*A Lannister baby in her belly, clawing its way out, blood and guts, and screaming, and her death once and for all.*

Would they ever cease?

Well, one way or another something would inform her nightmares tonight, and she hated how she hoped it was her family again, as surely that meant she was free.

Maybe then she could finally begin to grieve.

Of course, she hadn't thought beyond if Prince Oberyn won the Trial by Combat, she could only see that, could only see not being found guilty, not giving the Lannister's something else to hang over her head, could only see Prince Oberyn offering to be her champion.

It was foolish to be short sighted, and yet as she dressed for the day (no handmaidens to help; good, she knew they were spies and had no interest in putting on a brave or even neutral face that morning), all she could see was the Trial ahead, not what came after.

She dressed herself quickly, and yet as she threw on any dress she could find, she paused for a second in front of the mirror.

This was important.

Sansa knew the importance of appearances, of courtesies, goodness they were all that had kept her alive and relatively safe (i.e., not murdered, raped or beaten too badly), over the past years, and this morning would be the most important of all. She had to show she was unrattled, that she had made this choice, that she was innocent.

She didn't know what would come after, was even too scared to think of it, but she knew if the Lannister's found her guilty, they would not execute her, but would do as they wished. This was her one chance to prevent that, to be found innocent, what that looked like she didn't know, but she knew how vital that was.

Her life, not literally, for they wouldn't sever her pretty neck, but any kind of hope for living, for not plunging herself out of a window, was to be found innocent today.

It was hours until the Trial, and so she took her time.

She ordered a bath, with rose water, and sunk deeply into it, she had washed her hair the night before, and so just bathed her body, dabbing lemon oil at her wrists and neck as she stepped out and dried herself.



She wore no makeup, but was quick with her hair, no Southern plaits or embellished hairstyles Queen Cersei favoured, no, instead she left it down, only adding a simple plait at the crown of her head that ran down her back. She brushed it 100 times, as her Mother used to, until her red locks gleamed pretty in the sun, and ran straight to the end of her spine.

Choosing the dress was easy.

Lannister gold and red were discarded, as were the green and gold gifts from the Tyrell's, purple was pushed aside as being too plain, and her grey dress, a homage to her Stark heritage was even a little too risky for her.

No, she found her gem at the back of her wardrobe.

She owned no orange gowns but had a yellow in Baratheon colours she'd had made before she realised how little favour Joffrey or Queen Cersei gave his Baratheon heritage. She pulled it out, it was still her size, only ordered months prior, and only had a tiny bit of black at the waist, the rest was yellow; not quite the colours of Dorne, but that could be fixed.

She owned no orange fabric, but one of her red dresses was butchered quickly, tearing strips of the hem away to form a belt that was pretty. She stitched that onto the yellow gown, working fast, her hands flying with the stitches, forming a bow at the back of the yellow dress, looping the red fabric tightly.

It was easier to pull out the embroidered Stags at the shoulders of the dress, revealing plain yellow fabric underneath. The suns she embroidered were trickier, using some red thread she had. They weren't particularly fancy, nor did she have time to add spears, but they were there, and though her hands felt like pincushions at the end, and she realised she'd spent the entire morning working on it, did she manage a smile.

A Dornish dress for a Stark girl, it was perfect.

She wore no jewels, except for the dragonfly necklace her Father had gifted her for her 12th nameday. It had been tucked away in her jewellery box ever since he had been named traitor, but now she slipped it on and vowed to herself she would never take it off, even if somehow, they severed her head from her shoulders, her necklace would go with her.

As she finished, she turned to look at herself in the mirror.

Modest as she been raised to be, she still knew she looked beautiful. The dress was some of her best work, even rushed, and she smiled at the simple suns gleaming from her shoulders, the red fabric at her waist being a butchered Lannister gown brought her great satisfaction. The yellow skirts of her now Dornish dress fanned out across the floor, and she slipped her feet into golden slippers with a smile.

And she was ready ... ready for whatever came next.

With a nod to herself she realised the time for the trial was upon her. Perhaps she should have spent the past hours praying, or reflecting, or contemplating life, but as the guards opened the

door and gaped at her attire, not a different style (for she'd never be comfortable with the Dornish dress sense) but colours, she much preferred how she'd wiled away the morning.

She wore her colours proudly, though grey was still at her heart, as she swept through the corridors to gasps in her red and yellow, she managed a smile.

Though it was hard to keep as she was escorted to the trial grounds, she managed it.

*Unbowed, unbent, unbroken.*

Good words, but she kept her families to her heart.

*Winter is Coming.*

She just hoped Winter would come for the Lannister's and not Oberynd Martell.

---

The day had come.

The day he would get his vengeance, would finally be able to give Elia and her children (Gods rest them) some modicum of peace. It wouldn't be enough, no, there was much more to do and further to go after this, but it was a start.

When he had Gregor Cleganes head on a spike, it would be a start.

Then there would be Amory Loch, then Tywin Lannister himself. Step by step, but it all began here and now with Gregor Clegane.

He had been given his chance and he would not squander it.

And yet, that was not all he was here to do.

It was by chance he had the ability to save Sansa Stark among all of this, the poor little lost wolf, who upon meeting her had been more defiant than he'd imagined but had near crumpled several times. She was alone here, looked exhausted, and his heart ached for her, in a way she reminded him of Elia; crushed by the weight of court, the expectation, only for Sansa it was even worse.

Traitors they called her family, but Oberynd and Doran, his brother, knew the truth, knew that Lord Eddard Stark, fool he had been, had been right in the end, he had just gone about it all wrong.

And so, when he had seen Sansa Stark, dirty and muddied, yet still a Lady among the filth of the black cells, he had known he would do this not just for his sister, for the vengeance he craved in his veins like a good wine or a good woman, but he would do this for her too, he would do this to free her.

And he only knew one way how.

After his offer a hasty raven had been sent to his brother, a rider had arrived that morning with the reply, one word, an acceptance, an agreement.

*'Good'*

And there was the answer.

For, this wasn't just for Elia, he had meant what he said;

*'We don't hurt little girls in Dorne'*

Not on his watch, not whilst the Martells ruled. And though Sansa Stark was no little girl anymore, beautiful, and flowered and a Lady so polite and pretty many would envy his plan, it stood. She had been through a world of pain, near defeated each time, and yet there was ice at her core, like all the Starks before her; and he wouldn't see it melted.

"I should have known this day would come" His paramours words interrupted his musings, Oberyn when he sunk into thoughts could stay there for hours, turning them over in his head, ripping them apart, pulling and then pushing them back together, and yet he had something to do now, before the trial, before his vengeance, before he would hope to free the pretty little bird that was Sansa Stark.

"I wish it did not have to" He said with regret, as he did wish it. Even as he turned and then pulled Ellaria into his arms for a burning kiss, his heart and something else stirring, his regret did not rule him.

In many ways he was a selfish man, taking what he wished, doing as he pleased, but even some things were above and beyond him. Family, vengeance, saving a lost little girl in the Red Keep. Even he could not play to his every whim, not always.

Not with this.

"It does pain me" Ellaria said as she pulled back, and he could see the sadness in her eyes.

"It pains me too" And it did, truly, "But she is a Lady, and there are expectations one must follow"

"I know, I know" Ellaria said ruefully, "You do not need to explain or give me some fucking pre-rehearsed speech" She grinned then, pain in her eyes but she would recover, she was stronger than letting this break her.

"Good, you free me of such a burden" He said cheekily and laughed as she swatted at him.

"I did think when you took a wife it would be a Dornish woman, who would understand what we have" He appreciated her candour, as she often was with him, even in light of her pain.

"I thought to never take one" It was true, he'd never intended to marry, as a second son, who's brother had three heirs, why bother? He had his girls, his children, why any need to marry him off like a prized pig? This was the one exception he had not anticipated. "But plans change"

"Yes" Ellaria said with a sigh, "Your brother and his plans"

"Actually, this one was mine" He replied, he'd give her the truth as she did to him. "I could see no other way"

"Well," Ellaria said then with a nod, "Of course, you never could resist a damsel in distress"

He said nothing to that, for what else was there to say?

"Be careful today" She whispered then, her tone frantic now, less resigned, she could risk losing him to another woman, the pain would thaw and heal, but the thought of Oberyn Martell, snuffed out like a candle too soon ... that was too much to bear. "Don't let your ego get the better of you"

"I won't" It was a promise if in fierceness not in words, "I will have my vengeance"

"And save the damsel" She finished for him with a sad smile.

For a moment they were silent, silent and quiet, heads pressed together, taking a last moment together, for what might be a while, might be forever, they both paused to take it in, sadness seeping between them like paint on stone.

"There is a ship waiting for you" He said for he knew he could not wallow here, much as he wished it, "You'll have all you need"

"I think I will go to Essos" She said with a nod, knowing the same, they could not let their pain break them, not with why they were breaking apart in the first place, "The younger girls should see the Free Cities"

He nodded at that, he would never dictate where to remove her too, but this would be easier, and he thanked her for it, for it was deliberate he knew.

"You will have gold and guards and all you need" He repeated, for he could do nothing else, but provide he could do, and that he hoped was something.

"And you will have a pretty new wife, and obligations all of a sudden" She teased, for it was easier that way, "She has known so much pain, I would say be good to her, but I know you will"

"I will" He promised, his vow, to Ellaria and Sansa.

"Goodbye my love" She whispered, and her lips ghosted over his, not once, not twice, but three times, and then she was gone.

Oberyn did not weep but allowed the tears he felt rise to channel into his anger, pain always fuelled the best anger before battle, and he would need it, he was no fool, he knew the task he faced, he knew the Mountain would live up to his name, and yet he did not feel fear, only fury, only determination.

*'I will not fail you'*

That he had promised Sansa, and as he grabbed his spear, prepared by his own hand, secured his leathers and made his way to the trial grounds, Martell guards at his flank (for Sansa not him), he knew there was no option to fail, not now.

*'I will not fail you'*

He would not.

---

It seemed the entirety of Kings Landing had arrived for the trial.

The large circular grounds were usually used for tourneys and looked much the same as she remembered at the ones she'd been forced to attend. Lannister banners flapped in the wind, at the large raised area sat the royal family, the Hand, the Queen, though Tommen was not present. Lord Mace and other members of the Small Council, Jaime Lannister included too all sat, all waiting, all judging in their own way .

She stood off to one side, under a little canopied area, two Dornish guards stood around, and on the table sat two spears. Her hands were not manacled, but she stood with them clutched together so tightly they might as well have been.

When she had entered a gasp had flown through the crowd like a wave.

She had met the gaze of the Queen, the Hand, all who looked furious at her state of dress, at her allegiance, but her expression did not change, did not flinch, not for a second.

*'I am a Stark, I can be brave'*

She would be strong here, no matter what happened, she would not cry, weep, or beg, she would keep her head held high, her expression neutral, and she would not let them break her.

The hope flickered in her like a candle, burning still, but one gust away from being snuffed out forever.

Though as Prince Oberyn arrived and made his way to her, the candle burned a little brighter.

He was dressed in leathers, light armour and carried a spear at his side. His paramour wasn't present which surprised her, only a further two guards that took their places to the side of the gazebo, almost as if defending her, which was silly she knew, they were here for their Prince, not her.

"Prince Oberyn" She curtsied as he arrived, her courtesies on full display, they had been her armour for so long, and she would not let them go now, not at this crucial point.

"Lady Sansa" The Prince offered with a bow, a smirk playing at his lips, "I like your dress, it is pretty, becomes you"

"Thank you, my Prince," She said, and she knew a blush rose across her cheeks, her dress did not dip low, she was too much a Northerner for that, but the blush also played across her chest, clashing magnificently with her hair.

"You stitched it yourself?" He asked, eyebrow raised, and she near laughed then, to be asking such inane things on such an important day, and yet somehow it put her at ease.

"Yes" She said with a nod, a little proud, for she was, "I wanted to ..." She paused, what did she want? It had been a long time since she had gotten anything she wanted, she wasn't sure she knew the answer to her own question, "Wanted to be in solidarity with you" Even with Prince Oberyne her courtesies remained.

He may be on her side ... for now, but she had no intention of letting her shields down.

"Good" Was all he offered, before a scraping sound caused her to turn her head, as the Mountain stepped into view.

"Oh no" She whispered, for here he was much larger than she remembered, clad in black armour, a large sword being pulled from its scabbard, she had faith in Prince Oberyne, truly she did, but this seemed impossible, "You're going to fight that?"

"I'm going to kill that" His confidence helped ... *some*, but fear still flickered in her heart. It was only her determination not to give the Lannister's the satisfaction that kept her expression somewhat neutral.

"He is the biggest man I've ever seen" She said, she wasn't sure, she didn't want to break Prince Oberyne's confidence, and yet it had just been blurted out.

"Size does not matter when you're flat on your back" He said, and his confidence soothed her ... *some*.

Then Master Pycelle began to speak, waffling on, which she tuned out, and instead turned to the Prince and grabbed his wrist, he turned to her in surprise, eyebrows raised, she knew it was out of turn, she knew it was not ladylike or in good courtesy, and yet she had felt she had to say it, had promised herself she'd say it.

"I..." She stumbled, but shook herself, she could not afford to stumble, not now, "Please win" She whispered, scared, nervous, for a moment not caring who saw her expression, just needing to get her message across.

A chuckle from the Prince, "I intend to"

"Please, don't hesitate" She urged, grabbing his other wrist then, she knew he allowed it, he was too quick and too strong to be grabbed by her if he did not wish to be, manacled by her at his will, "Please win ... for me"

He paused then, shook off her hands, and she let him, did not try to hold on as he then moved, cupping her face with his hand, his gaze hard, and yet, when he looked at her it was with a kindness, she did not know he possessed. "I will not fail you"

It was said with such certainty she felt she had to believe it.

And then as he placed a kiss to her forehead, gentle as the horn rang to indicate the start of the bout, did she feel the hope inside of her bloom, from a candle to a roaring fire. Her hand

circling his wrist as he cupped her cheek, his kiss lingering.

There was a comfort in it she had not known for a long time, and she hung onto it for a moment just longer than proper before he released her, and turned to the battlefield, cocky smirk affixed back in place, ready to do battle.

"Today is not the day I die"

And then as he turned to the Mountain and Sansa dug her fingernails into her palms hard enough that blood trickled out of her grip ... she believed him.

## Chapter End Notes

cliffhanger much?

I'm sorry! but be reassured I've written a third of the next chapter already! it is gunna be tenseeeee

do let me know watcha thought!

# The Dance

## Chapter Notes

here we go

do comment

songrecs: all the things she said - tatu

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*'Today is not the day I die'*

Gods, she hoped that was true.

As Oberyn stepped into the tourney ring, she sent up a prayer to any Gods that might be listening, pleading, near begging for mercy, just this once, *just this once*.

It was a fool's errand most likely, how many times had she prayed? First to the Seven and then her Fathers Gods, and had nothing in return, *nothing*. The Gods had left her long ago, it was better she accept that.

The Gods had left her, all she had was Prince Oberyn.

Who, stepped into the clearing with a smile on his features, but not one of kindness like he had given her, but one lined with hatred, and he raised his spear.

"Do you know who I am?"

And so, the dance began.

---

And a dance it was.

Weaving back and forth, Prince Oberyn did not let Ser Gregor touch him, back and forth he'd jab the point of his spear into the gaps of the Mountains armour, under his arm, at the crook of his hip, behind his knee, little jabs, not enough to fell the beast.

He'd roar in anger; he'd stagger a touch but then he'd be back as though he'd not been hit at all. Would swing his mighty sword, the metal whistling through the air, in one of Sansa's ears and then rushing out the other, missing Prince Oberyn by just inches, and Sansa had to force herself not to gasp.



The cuts she'd made the night before by digging her own fingernails into her hands easily reopened, and she could feel her palms slick with blood as the Mountain rushed forward, as he screamed in fury, as he tore off his helmet and slammed his sword into the ground before thrusting it forwards.

Prince Oberynd jumped out of the way, but the Mountain kept coming, he just kept coming.

Another jab, another slash of the spear, this time a drag of it over the Mountain's ankle who roared again, but it wasn't enough, and with ease he shoved Prince Oberynd to the floor.

Her heart jumped into her throat, and she nearly fell over with a wave of dizziness, the blood trickling through her fingers.

She realised then she wasn't just scared for her own fate, knowing if Prince Oberynd lost she'd be in the bed of a Lannister, wedded for her claim against her will within the week, but she was scared for the Prince too, didn't want to see him die.

She didn't trust him, not fully, she couldn't, not with the scars, *real and emotional* she bore, due to being a stupid girl too quick to put her trust in others who hadn't earned it, but she felt a flutter across her chest in relief as he jumped back up, laughed even and then twirled his spear around again.

She didn't want him to die, she wanted him to live, not just for her, but for himself.

"Do you know who I am?"

And the dance continued.

---

"Tell me" His tone was quiet for now, deadly, he wanted answers.

And he would get them.

He wasn't just doing this for Sansa, he was doing this for his sister, for Elia, and for every girl the Mountain had killed, had crushed at the order of Tywin Lannister, and every single one this beast had murdered of his own accord.

He was there for all of them, and yet as he sliced another cut across the Mountain's arm, he could only see two faces, two faces he'd come for.

His sister Elia, for her vengeance, and he'd hear the Mountain admit it.

And for Sansa, Sansa who he cast a glance at for just a second before turning back to his opponent.

He had a plan, a plan his brother had been surprised he'd devised but had been eager to approve of, and he could hardly pull it off if he was dead.

No, he would see no more girls ruined by the Lannister's, would not see Sansa meet the fate Elia had. Sansa Stark was an innocent, dressed in a handmade dress she'd rushed together to

be on his side, he'd been touched, and it had only strengthened his resolve.

Oberyn would get her out of here.

That would be the tricky part, but first, he had a duel to win.

"Do you know who I am?" He asked again, another jab and he could smell the poison as it mixed with this monster's blood, rushed into his veins and planted itself deep, the Mountain would die, even if he somehow lost, not that he intended to, but he would have his revenge whichever way it went, he'd made sure of that.

"Some dead man" The Mountain lumbered, he was quicker than Oberyn had anticipated, and he had to dodge another blow, and another, wasn't quick enough and found himself on the floor again, quickly flipped back to his feet, and jabbed again.

He'd need to end this soon.

The dance staggered on.

---

It had only been minutes but to Sansa it felt like hours.

The fight dragged.

Because that was what it was, even as the Mountain charged forward as though it were a joust, and Prince Oberyn ducked and weaved like it was a dance, in truth it was a fight, a duel, and one that would only end one way.

With one of the men on the floor.

*'Please let it be the Mountain, please Gods, whoever is listening, please'*

She'd only ever requested the Old Gods save someone or save her, never that they cause harm on another, with only one exception.

Joffrey.

She'd prayed for Joffrey's death every time she'd gone to the Godswood, the words dirty on her lips but desperate all the same, praying he died, fell from a balcony, or perhaps was killed in one of the riots, or just maybe didn't wake up one morning.

She didn't beg for his death to be painful, regardless of the countless pain he'd caused her, she just begged the Gods that he died.

She'd gotten her wish, the Gods had given her that, and now she asked for more.

"No, I am the brother of Elia Martell, and do you know why I have come all the way to this stinking shit-pile of a City?" She was snapped out of her prayers then as Prince Oberyn spoke and she flinched, she did not want him to be distracted by his vengeance, even if said vengeance was owed to him, "For you"

On and on it went, Prince Oberyn got in better blows, a slice against the arm, a flat jab against the Mountains neck, but it wasn't enough, and Sansa knew it could still go either way.

"I'm going to hear you confess before you die" Prince Oberyn continued, Sansa wanted to scream at him to end it, as blood trickled between her fingers, wanted to beg him to not put him winning at risk and yet she didn't dare, he wasn't just doing this for her after all.

He wanted vengeance for his sister, for his family, and Sansa could appreciate that more than anyone.

She could not take that from him.

"Say it now and we can make this quick"

But it was anything but.

---

He shoved forward, parried, danced back, smacked the spear into the monster's armour again and again, sliced near his arm, the poison working its way deep already, and then with a quick thrust relieved the Mountain of his helmet.

And yet, he was nowhere near done.

He wasn't just here for Sansa, for the damsel Ellaria had teased him about, but for his sister too.

It wasn't enough to kill the monster that had raped and murdered her, and his nephew and niece, no he needed more than that.

Oberyn needed a confession.

And so, a confession he would have.

"Say it" He insisted, an edge of anger creeping into his tone; as soon as the beast confessed he'd strike the killing blow.

"You raped her" He parried, he struck, he danced.

"You murdered her" Dodged, whirled, turned, thrust.

"You killed her children" Looked the monster in the eye, danced away, flipped, smacked again with his spear, even smirked, though there was no mirth too it.

He felt no joy in this, satisfaction yes, the desire for vengeance burning in his veins as strongly as his poison surely did in the Mountains but there was no happiness, only the drive for revenge, only the certainty he could not kill this man until he confessed.

What came next would be decided then, for now he just needed that.

"You raped her" Stepped back, parried.

"You murdered her" Dodged, jumped away, flicked his spear.

"You killed her children" Stabbed his spear forward, not enough force, was pushed back and fell.

Back on his feet like a flash. He had meant what he had said to Sansa; today was not the day he would die.

For her, for his sister, for Dorne.

*'Today is not the day I die'*

---

He was good, Sansa even with her untrained eye could see his skill, but it wasn't enough.

A gasp left her lips as his spear snapped, wood breaking under the Mountains sword, jumped backward; her nerves were unreliable, her courtesies crumbling, she dug her fingernails in further to her wounded hands.

A glance at Cersei told her the Queen Mother was watching the fight and she was thankful the Queen hadn't seen her betray herself, gasp and let the wall of ice fall.

It was all she had after all.

That and Prince Oberyn who just whirled away, laughed with no humour to it, and caught the new spear thrown from his squire.

And it continued.

Her heart was in her throat as the Mountain threw him to the floor again, as he had to dodge lying on his back, as the Mountains sword came far, far too close.

It was only practice, of screwing her lips tightly shut, of biting her tongue so hard she could taste blood, that stopped her screaming.

This wasn't just about her, about any hope for something after she was found innocent (what she didn't know, but guilty surely meant continued, worsened imprisonment), but this was about Prince Oberyn too.

He had stood for her, he had his own reasons, but he had all the same when she knew no-one else would have, would have condemned her to a horrid fate, had stood for her.

She didn't want him to die.

For a moment she thought she needn't have worried, that it was over.

As Prince Oberyn dodged another blow and then struck forward, and even she further away, heard the sickening crunch of Prince Oberyn's spear finding the gap in the Mountains armour and meeting flesh with a sickening crunch.

The added blow was him twisting the spear into the wound, standing up with a smile, turning back for more.

"You raped her, you murdered her" He was incensed now she could see, and she understood, understood *completely*. This was his chance to get vengeance for his family, but there was no thrill to it, no joy that came with justice, only the desire for it and the satisfaction.

If she one day had the chance to take the heads of the families and people who had destroyed her own, she would not find happiness in it, only a satisfaction in justice, in truly putting her family to rest, in getting what honour demanded.

They were alike in that way, and she even found herself smiling just a touch as Prince Oberyne sliced up the Mountain's leg, finally bringing him to his knees.

"You killed her children!"

And then came the final blow.

Or so she thought.

---

His spear landed in the guts of the monster who'd murdered his family, right over the wound he'd already made with a sickening squelch of a blow.

And blood sprayed across the courtyard.

He left his spear there as he stepped back, and his anger, his fury at facing one of the many men responsible for this faded as he realised he'd struck too soon.

His spear forgotten he stepped away, his eyes widening, no, no, *no*.

"Wait, wait" He said, more to himself, as the Mountain was gone, eyes closed, blood on his chin, unmoving, *fuck*, "You're dying, no, no, *no*, you can't die yet, you haven't confessed"

He pulled the spear free then, it would make no difference, but he did all the same, the fury coming back, but a different kind of fury, of the confession being taken away from him, of his moment of vengeance, or the start of it at least being robbed from him.

From Elia and her children.

"Elia Martell" He continued, an edge of not just anger but sadness creeping into his voice, only covered by the venom in his tone, "You raped her, you murdered her, you killed her children" Repeating over and over, as if saying it would cause the Mountain to sit up and confess, like he needed.

Needed.

"Who gave you the order?" He asked then, to the husk of a man on the floor, pointed at the dais, at the fucking Lannister's he despised so, he needed this, he already knew, but he needed the confession right here, as he'd planned. "Who gave you the order?!" He yelled now.

The crowd had gone silent.

"Say her name!" He yelled, "Say it!" He continued, tears pooled in his eyes, but tears of fury, of anger. How could he have mistimed this? As soon as he had known Sansa Stark needed saving, he had planned this, planned the poison, planned the timing, where and when and who would be present.

To finally force the Lannister's to be held accountable for his sister's death, for her children's death.

To force Twyin fucking Lannister, the plague of a man on this world, to be accountable.

And it was all falling apart.

"Say it, say her name" He continued, quieter, smiled again but with no joy or satisfaction, nothing there, not if he was to be robbed of this.

Not considering what he would need to do to get it again.

He glanced up then, glanced across at Sansa; she was one of the reasons he was doing this, at least that he had got right, and he looked up at her, just for a second.

A second too long.

---

"Prince Oberyn, *move!*" She screamed, screamed it so loud everyone turned to her.

Turned to her as she had seen the Mountain twitch, as she had seen him move just a touch as Prince Oberyn thought him long-dead, they all did for he'd been so still, but he'd twitched, and she's screamed.

Screamed so loud she was sure something had torn in her throat to match her other wounds, had yelled so loudly tears had come to her eyes. Screamed in warning.

Not just for her.

And then, everything seemed to move slowly.

Prince Oberyn's eyes widened in surprise, his gaze having met hers just for a second before she called out to him, he'd looked angry, furious but with something there, something content, perhaps for the Mountain at least being dead, but he'd looked at her, away from the battlefield.

But his opponent wasn't dead.

Hence her scream.

And *thank the Gods* she wasn't too late.

Perhaps they had *finally* listened.

Listened as Prince Oberyn quickly jumped back, less than a second before the Mountain swiped out with a hand, surely a hand that would have caught Prince Oberyn if he'd been stood there by the ankle to pull him down, and as the Prince's eyes widened further and he quickly thrust the spear still in hand forward, this time through the Mountain's eye.

No confession was worth his life.

And then there was no doubt, as blood sprayed across the courtyard, the same colour of that, that dripped between her fingers.

The Mountain was dead.

She was innocent.

Prince Oberyn was alive.

And she realised, minutes later, had caught her as she'd tumbled to the ground, the shock of the day leading way to the blackness that called her seconds after he gave the killing blow, she'd tumbled, eyes rolling into the back of her head, hands bloodstained, face pale, heart racing.

*"You're safe"* Was all she heard in that thick Dornish accent as he caught her, and for the first time in King's Landing, she believed it.

## Chapter End Notes

and we can all take a breath

Oberyn lives! ofc.

this was a tough chapter to write, I wanted to make some changes (and the big one) but keep the core of the scene as it is fantastic, hopefully you enjoyed the way it played out

new chapter coming soon - what will be the aftermath?

do comment if you can

# Plummet

## Chapter Notes

sorry this took a lil while, but I sense you'll like it...

do let me know if you did

songrecs: I need some sleep - eels

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When she woke it was night.

Her eyes flickered open, blinking a few times but there was no need to adjust to the sunlight, as the sun had long set. No, instead only burning candles either side of the bed (and as she glanced from side to side and felt the feathered bed underneath her she knew it was not her bed, not her room), illuminated the room.

Which was not hers.

It was quiet, and though she'd never feel at home in Kings Landing, she had found some comfort in her own room, with her things, the lock on the door that she always fixed shut, her blanket she had seen herself, and so she bolted up as she noted she was not surrounded by her own things, in her own room, she was somewhere new.

Nowhere in Kings Landing was safe, but she felt her heart splutter with fear at entering the unknown in a City she already hated.

Quickly she took stock of herself, her mind reeling back to fainting, and yet some relief chased through her as she remembered:

Oberyn had won!

He had beaten the Mountain, her shout allowing him to take the final blow. She felt some regret he hadn't gotten his own justice in the Mountain naming who had given the order to butcher his sister, but she felt tears well in her eyes that he had won it for her.

She was as safe as could be, the Gods had found her innocent.

She no longer cared what the Southern Gods thought, had known she was innocent and was sure the Old Gods too, but it would be a lie to say she didn't find some comfort in her proven innocence.



And primarily that this meant her head wouldn't roll, or worse, maybe now she wouldn't be an official prisoner of the crown.

But her mood, so likely to swing on a pendulum, plummeted: it didn't matter that she'd been found innocent, they'd never have taken her head (and she reflected again, sometimes that would have been easier) but she was still a prisoner.

Still a pretty bird trapped in a gilded cage.

She hadn't thought this far in truth, what comes next? She'd just been focused on not being found guilty, knowing she'd never escape the Lannister's if she were accused of kingslaying, but what did it matter now? She was still a prisoner.

But in a different cage.

That ricocheted her mind back to the present, to the here and now; where was she?

The room was about the same size as her own, the same layout but there were more differences than just the absence of her things.

The colours of her room are red and gold, colours she despised but the Lannisters had given up any attempt to represent the Baratheon family in decor or anything else, and so she was surrounded by Lannister colours, if she ever managed to escape she'd be happy if she never had to see red or gold again.

She dreamed of grey and white.

Here it was neither gold, red, grey or white.

The walls were yellow and black; Baratheon colours but the blanket on the bed was orange, an open wardrobe showed yellow and orange dresses with a splash of vibrant red. Next to the bed there was a small dagger, the pommel was a snake with ruby eyes.

A balcony spilled out into the City, and the curtains were a pale yellow, she stood, noting she was still in her homemade dress, even her slippers remained on her feet, no one had touched her, nor put her under the quilt, she'd just been resting atop of it, untouched.

She smiled as she reached the balcony, parted the curtains, she wasn't allowed a balcony in her own rooms, perhaps the Lannisters feared she'd plummet to her death, dive over the side and take her life into her own hands.

They were valid in that worry, she'd considered it many a time, and even now, innocent and clearly somewhere new she was tempted.

How easy it would be, a quick jump and it would all be over. She was up high enough, a floor or two above her own rooms. It would just be a rush of fear but then quiet.

Peace.

And yet, she didn't.

Instead she just took in the air, sweeter smelling this high, the breeze on her cheeks stung them pink but the warmth of the sun soothed them. It was nice, even stuck where she was.

With reluctance she pushed herself away from the balcony; she needed to figure out where she was, though the picture was making itself clear she had to make sure.

She gathered she was in the guest wing of the Castle, where the Martells were staying; the signs were all there, but she didn't dare hope.

Hope that if the Martells had the power to move her to their wing, it must mean something.

Instead she crushed down that hope, as she had done so many times when stuck here. And quickly went to wash up. Her dress was muddy and uncomfortable, and so as she shed it and her small clothes, she washed in the adjoined bath and then returned to the room, wrapped in a robe she'd found on the back of the bath door.

Her hair dried quickly in the sun as she looked through the dresses. She didn't want to be rude but she couldn't wear her old dress and she hoped these were for her to use, in the room she'd woken in with an open wardrobe door.

There were small clothes too, her size, and she took that to put them on, found slippers and slipped her feet into them, and then went about finding a dress.

Several of them she'd rather die than be seen in, some made Margareys dresses look modest! She was thankful to find one, orange with yellow sunbursts stitched on the collar, hem and sleeves, it fit, and covered her with long flowing skirts that as long as she held onto them didn't reveal the slits split up the side. The short sleeves were fine, and she was thankful though it wasn't cut high enough for her, it didn't show too much.

Her hair dried she left it running down her back, the ends curling, she felt no need for the southern hairstyles, she wasn't trying to emulate the Queen anymore.

Her dragonfly necklace remained at her neck, where it would always.

And so, comfortable, clean and dressed but with her nerves fizzing she made for the door, holding her skirts.

Though her nerves settled as she stepped out, even managed a smile as she found two Martell guards stood either side of it. Here to protect.

To protect her.

She let herself hope.

---

As she out of the corridor the two guards fell into step behind her, she flinched as they did. It had been a while since she had, had guards, there was some comfort in the protection, but her distrust wouldn't abate so easily.

Of course, she was thankful to Prince Oberyn for standing for her, for saving her from definite imprisonment (though she still shook that he might have only delayed it), but that didn't mean she fully trusted him.

She'd been burned like that before; and did not intend to stand so close to the flames again.

And so, she clasped her hands together as she walked forward, her skirts flowing rather than rustling against the ground, even as she held them together.

Her cheeks were pink as she walked the corridor, to the open door, where she knew the guards would have guided her had she not found it alone.

Was she still a prisoner?

She supposed she'd find out.

And so she stepped inside, to find Prince Oberyn, alone, sat at a desk, writing something out, but as she stepped inside and the guards shut the door behind her, he looked up, and offered her something close to a smile, but it was guarded.

They both had their guards up here.

"Lady Sansa" He stood then, bowed his head, and she dropped into a curtsy, her courtesies her constant armour. She remembered first meeting Prince Oberyn all of that frippery shed in the mud and dirt of her cell, it felt like a long time ago, when in reality it had been only days.

Would time stretch on like this? Like a painted fence bleeding on and on until it dried? It sounded unbearable. Perhaps she should have considered the balcony option.

"Join me on the balcony?" He asked as she raised her gaze to meet his, and her eyebrows near raised had she not schooled her expression so quickly, so used to doing so. Had he read her mind? Was giving her an out? Not that she'd take it.

But no, he wasn't, she knew she was too valuable to all of them, even men with honour like Prince Oberyn, she thought she could deem him someone honourable after how he'd treated her, after how he'd stood for her, but they were all the same, they all wanted something from her.

*'Men only want one thing from a pretty girl'*

She didn't think Prince Oberyn wanted *that*, but he no doubt wanted something.

She followed him though, what choice did she have? Her options were limited, and her eyes even sparkled as she joined Prince Oberyn, at the idea of having options, something other than this prison. She was cynical from her experiences but not quite bitter yet, not if there was still a way to be free of this place.

It was foolish to still have hope, but she did, in her heart a candle of it refused to be snuffed, she wasn't sure if that was a good or a bad thing.

She supposed she'd find out.

"My sister hated this City" Prince Oberyn said, as soon as she came out onto the balcony, in her handmade dress, the sun making her squint against it before she repositioned herself. "Hated every stinking inch"

Sansa could only hmm in response, they were a long way from the dungeons now, where she'd spoke freely in the face of death, now, she had to be careful once more.

It had been nice to not have to be careful, if just for a short while, now it felt like her walls were coming back, ice reforged raising around her, hiding behind those courtesies and manners, for what else did she have?

Nothing ... expect Prince Oberyn, who seemed intent on helping her, for his own reasons yes, but if it gave her options ... perhaps she had to hope.

Though it was a dangerous thing.

"You can talk here" He said, and Sansa resisted the urge to scoff, not her most ladylike impulse, instead she just said...

"No I can't" Polite, sweet, walls firmly in place, but Prince Oberyn didn't seem to begrudge her that, just nodded his head.

"Perhaps you are right" He said, he didn't have to be as careful as her, few people did.

*'I am the daughter of a traitor'*

She may not believe those words, but she had to pretend she did at least. Life all felt like pretending now, from each step to each breath, it was exhausting.

And yet something kept her living.

She remained quiet after that, perhaps she should have initiated the conversation, started a discussion, even said thank you, but her courtesies kept her quiet, it was the safest way to be, silent and solemn, no one could question what she would say if she said nothing.

Instead she could listen.

And Prince Oberyn obliged her and spoke first.

"You may now be cleared of any crime, but you are not yet free" He ruminated, leaning on the balcony, seemingly at ease, as she stood opposite him, back straight, hands clasped in front of her. Prince Oberyn was taller than her by a good few inches, strange to look up when usually her eyes were on the ground, but she did meet his gaze, sensed fire there and that scared her.

She preferred ice nowadays.

"I know that" She said, in a whisper this time, before straightening herself, "Thank you, Prince Oberyne for standing for me though"

"You're quite welcome Lady Stark" He said, his accent wrapping around her name, "But I did not save you to see you wed off to some Lannister cousin, or Gods forbid Tywin himself"

It was only years of smothering her true self that kept her expression wiped clear, though she did flinch at Prince Oberyne's suggestion, even she couldn't hold that back.

"Exactly" He said sardonically, eyebrow raised, "So we must find a solution"

"Did you have one in mind?" She asked, face polite, tone even, and yet she felt her heart beating hard in her chest, smacking, and smacking against her ribcage, Tywin Lannister? She'd rather die.

There was her limit, she'd surely jump from the tallest tower before she married the murderer behind her family's demise.

She felt a sudden urge as she looked at the balcony; how easy it would be now, Prince Oberyne would likely not catch her in time if she dived, tumbled and tumbled and tumbled...

But before she could take a step forward...

"I may" He said, oblivious to her flight of fancy, as she considered it, truly, rather than be married again, she suspected no other Lannister would spare her virtue as Tyrion had. "You need not consider the other way" He looked deliberately at the balcony then, arms crossed, "Yet at least"

Her cheeks flamed before she could help it, he was more observant than she'd thought, she scolded herself internally; of course he was, she shouldn't underestimate him, fool she was.

Hadn't she learned better by now?

"Then what is your solution?" She asked, resisting the urge to cross her arms and mimic his pose, instead she kept her hands, still cut up clasped together, she noted they'd been treated, but she knew they'd scar, not that it mattered.

None of that did anymore.

She still looked a picture of a perfect Lady regardless of her internal debate, of whether to plunge into the depths of Kings Landing, at least plunge until she smacked against the stone floors.

"I will demand a reward for keeping an innocent woman in the eyes of the Gods alive" He said, smirking now, so sure of himself, had she ever been? She wasn't sure.

She certainly wasn't now.

And yet, as Prince Oberyne spoke, she felt something in her stir, that perhaps he did have a solution, could she hope?

Not quite yet, did she dare?

...

"And what reward is that?" She asked in a whisper, but this time, unlike when they'd first been acquainted in the dungeons, she knew what he'd say.

"I will tell Tywin Lannister, the Queen Regent, and the rest of this rotten City.." He paused then, took a step forward, and smiled, there was arrogance there, and misery, and so much anger, but for her there was a hint of a real smile.

Hope.

"That I intend to take you for my bride" He said, and then he reached for her hands, her scared, trembling hands now, and clutched them, gentle and yet there was a strength that had her looking into his eyes, seeing the fire there, and feeling something in herself light. "That I intend to make you Sansa Martell"

"Sansa Martell" She tested on her tongue, it sounded odd, not Sansa Stark, but at least not Sansa Lannister, she found a smile playing at the edge of her lips, it couldn't quite be described as hopeful, but there was something there.

"Yes" He said, rubbing a thumb back and forth over her hand, in comfort, and she felt comforted, for the first time in a long time, "I will make you my wife, and take you away from here"

Her eyes widened then, her hands truly shook now, even in his grasp, "Away?" She asked.

Hope, the flame inside of her, was lit.

"Yes" He said with a nod, "Away from this stinking place, but you cannot leave as Sansa Stark" He said, apologetically almost, but she nodded instantly.

"Then I'll leave as Sansa Martell" She didn't hesitate, not for what he was suggesting, her hands no longer shook as she clutched his, "I'll leave as your wife"

## Chapter End Notes

poor sansa, but perhaps things are looking better... perhaps...

next we go to the kings landing court

do comment

# You've Got Your Demons

## Chapter Notes

I enjoyed writing this (and did so in one go! woo what a marathon), I hope you do to do comment

songrecs: love the hell out of you - lewis capaldi (his new album is heavenly and a heavy source of inspo for my more angsty fics, highly recommend)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Two days later they stood in front of the court.

Sansa had her hands clasped in front of her, her gaze trained just above the floor, her hair was plaited, and the rest waved down her back, and she wore a simple light blue dress, her dragonfly necklace (a gift from her Father she never took off), and nothing else, she looked like an innocent maiden, which had been her exact intention.

No one could see her shaking hands, clasped firmly together, or the scars on her palms, or the bloody skin on her lips from chewing on them constantly. She had rouged her pale cheeks, her handmaidens had bathed, and scrubbed and perfumed her, slathered a gentle paste on her lips to make them not crack, heal and look smooth.

After she had met with Prince Oberyn she had returned to her own rooms to pick up her things, her own dresses and trinkets, before returning to the Martell wing of the Castle, Martell guards had flanked her since, the sunburst shining brightly on their bronze armour, and she certainly felt better for having them at her sides.

Joffrey may be gone, and she had to resist to smile at the thought, but she knew she wasn't safe here, she never would be.

And so, she stood, dressed prettily but modestly, she wore no adornments, unlike Queen Cersei, sat on the dais, Lord Tywin on the Iron Throne taking court as Regent, before Tommen would come of age. Cersei wore black for mourning, but was still wearing diamonds at her ears and wrists, and rubies at her neck. Sansa did not glance at her for long though, as the Queen glared hatefully at her.

Sansa could not wait to leave.

But she did not dare to hope, not yet. She thought of her and Prince Oberyns conversation, about saying goodbye to Sansa Stark, and becoming Sansa Martell.

She supposed really she was Sansa Lannister, even as a Septon had come to her the morning after her trial to declare her marriage annulled on the grounds of non-consummation and criminality on the part of Lord Tyrion, and so she was Sansa Stark again technically.

Though not for long.

But she had meant what she said to Prince Oberyn, if she could not leave Kings Landing as a Stark, she would gladly leave as a Martell. She'd give up furs and snow for silk and sand, she'd learn the Dornish way and even bear him children if she must, anything to get away from here.

And she shivered again, as she thought of what he'd said, that she might be forced to marry a Lannister cousin who'd never show her the courtesy Lord Tyrion had, or Gods forbid Lord Tywin himself.

The balcony flashed to mind.

But, no there was an alternative, hence why despite Queen Cersei's glares, despite the distinct lack of friends she had here, despite being alone, and scared, and always so afraid here, she'd come to court, as Prince Oberyn by messenger that morning has asked of her.

He planned to act, and she must be there to see it.

Nothing could keep her from it.

And so she stood, and waited, as petitioners approached the Throne, as she tried to ignore Cersei's glare, as she kept quiet, and pretty and observed, as she always did in Kings Landing, many thought she was a fool, none realised she was merely keeping her walls up, walls of ice to protect her from them, listening keenly always, but quiet, quiet and behind her walls.

It would have to be the same in Dorne, it was not her home, not Winterfell where she could be free, though she doubted she could be free anywhere now.

She was in the game, and there was no leaving it; and even if she did, she was a long cry from the innocent girl who'd left Winterfell, that girl was dead.

"My Lord Hand" She looked up then, snapped from her own melancholy, as she heard his voice, one of the few that soothed her rather than scared her, for she trusted Prince Oberyn as much as she could trust anyone, not truly, but at least a little.

She knew she should be more accepting, he'd saved her life after all, saved her and would save her again, and though she would be eternally grateful to him, she could not allow herself to trust him, not yet.

She was no fool, not anymore, and she'd trusted too easily and paid for it, too many times.

The crowd fell silent as Prince Oberyn approached, no Paramour on his arm anymore, and Sansa knew that was for her, and her cheeks went pink at the thought, Prince Oberyn had proven himself considerate.



Everyone was curious to hear what the Red Viper of Dorne had to say, for there was a Small Council meeting to follow Court; and so why would he need to petition publicly?

Sansa knew, knew this plan, relied on a public audience. Prince Oberyn couldn't ask this privately, no, no, he would be refused, Sansa called a ward of the state, intended for another marriage, the daughter of a traitor to be kept close and all of that, but in front of the court? With Prince Oberyn reminding all of the Lords and Ladies of Kings Landing, those from the Crownlands, Lannister, Tyrells, the Queen, all of them, that he had saved an innocent woman from death and deserved a reward ... that was there one chance.

It might still not work, but Prince Oberyn seemed confident, and perhaps Sansa did trust him, had trusted him with this.

"Prince Oberyn" Lord Tywin said, and by his tone Sansa knew he was on alert, unsure as to why the Prince had brought this publicly, "What brings you to petition before the court?"

Sansa gripped her hands together and had to hold herself still so her shoulders would not shake, she felt a little faint, it was all riding on this.

Her entire future, nothing too small.

"My heart my Lord Hand" Prince Oberyn said, and Sansa could hear the mocking in his tone, but perhaps that was because she were more observant, as the court seemed to eat it up, fools, "I have a request for the Hand of the King, and felt I must ask it immediately"

"And what might you ask for Prince Oberyn?" Lord Tywin said, tone bitter, and like a rock weighed it down, he knew, but he could not refuse the Prince a public audience.

Sansa dared to hope.

"As we know, the Lady Sansa was saved from an awful fate" He gestured to her then, she was stood off to the side of the court, where he'd asked her to stand, not at the front, but observing from the raised standing area, it was quite empty, for everyone preferred to be on the floor near the Throne, and so she was easy to pick out, dressed in blue, fire red hair, surrounded now suspiciously by Martell guards. "The fate for an innocent woman to be condemned to death"

"But you saved her" The Queen sneered, "Did you not? So heroic Prince Oberyn" Sansa forced herself not to flinch as the Queen looked to her, she had to be strong.

"Yes, former Queen Regent, now Lady Cersei" He said, curling his tongue around it, using the words that would no doubt irritate the Queen, Sansa would have smiled or repressed one, were she not so nervous. "I did, and for that I feel I am due a reward, do we not agree?" He asked, appealing to the crowd, the nods, and murmurs, and even a clap or two, spoke for him.

Hope again bubbled, she pushed it down, but not quite as ruthlessly as she might before, for she dared.

"And what reward were you hoping for Prince Oberyn?" Lord Tywin asked, he leaned on the Throne, seemingly casual, though Sansa could see the lines of tension running through him, he still terrified her of course, and as he looked to her she couldn't hold back a flinch this time, "I'm sure any reward you may ask, we may offer, gold? Riches?"

"No my Lord Hand, something far more valuable than that" The Prince said, and he smiled then, smiled, like a viper, ready to strike, and turned to look at her as he said it, threw down the gauntlet, and Sansa's heart felt like it stopped, "I wish to take Lady Sansa's hand, and make her my wife"

The court predictably erupted, Queen Cersei even yelled, the Tyrell's seemed aghast, there were cheers, fussing, but Sansa only had eyes for Prince Oberyn, as he had the audacity to shoot her a wink, with that smirk still in place, and she smiled, Sansa Stark, stood in a court surrounded by enemies, with Lord Tywin trying to calm the court, Queen Cersei screeching at her, actually smiled.

And hope sprung forth.

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"The meetings aren't always going to be so soon after court are they? I hardly had time to speak to my new betrothed" Prince Oberyn asked with a grin, attending his first Small Council meeting since he had arrived, all others had been postponed due to Lord Tyrions escape, and then Sansa's trial, it felt almost fitting his first was after he had caused so much trouble at court that morning.

Trouble he was happy, and even glad to cause, for two key reasons. One, any trouble he could cause this awful place, filled with awful people was a joy to him, and also for Lady Sansa.

Lady Sansa, sweet, young, innocent, a doe surrounded by lions in this nest, and he had to get her out of it, he would get her out of it, he would not see her suffer.

But, he was not a politician, not like his brother, no, he found it far easier to slip poison into a cup, or bring a sword or spear to his enemies throats, now he had to be deft, he had to be light handed, he could not strike, he had to play a difficult game.

One he would play, for Lady Sansa and for Dorne.

His brother had trusted him, and vengeance was finally in reach, some already given that had been as sweet as a maidens song, but there was more to give, more to do, and it was his job to do so here, in Kings Landing, as much as he despised the wretched city.

"So, does this mean I am a Master of something now?" He asked, he knew he was teasing, taunting, but that was the role that he both enjoyed and was expected of him, just because he was in a dangerous city, did not mean he would not be himself, much to Dorans worry, "Coins, ships?"

"Lord Tywin and I agreed I would be Master of Ships, long before you came along..." The Fat Flower spluttered, but cut himself off, hurrying to stand, as did the rest of the Council as Lord Tywin walked in, Prince Oberyn kept his seat.

He had no respect for that man, and couldn't even force himself to pretend to.

"Lord Tywin, thank you so much, it is an honour to be granted a seat on this Council..." The Fat Flower cut off again as the Lord Hand began, Oberyn felt disdain chase through his blood, the sooner Lord Mace had some kind of hunting accident or perhaps ate himself to death, the better for the Reach, his friend Willas was already running half of it.

"Now the trial of Lady Sansa is done, we can discuss the matters of affairs of the state" Lord Tywin began and Oberyn was not surprised to see him ignoring his request, he had done so in Court, dismissing everyone as the crowd had grown loud (and Oberyn had only seen that as expected), but Oberyn would not allow him to do so now.

"Sandor Clegane has been spotted in the Riverlands, travelling with a squire, my Lord" Lord Varys began, and Oberyn knew he would have to bide his time, perhaps speak to Lord Tywin alone, he had done the public bit, the information about any betrothal to Lady Sansa was out, and already referring to her as his intended further stroked the seed, but he knew the conversation with the Hand, as unpleasant as it may be, had to be had.

The chatter about Sandor Clegane went on, and Oberyn felt a rush of satisfaction that he'd killed the other Clegane, Gregor, the start of his vengeance yes, and though he hadn't got a confession, he had killed the man who'd done the act, he looked at Lord Tywin then, he'd have the man who ordered it next.

"More whispers from the East my Lord" The spider began, Oberyn noted the conversation had moved on, Sandor Clegane was of no consequence to him, but he had listened, all affairs of state he needed to take note of, though this was of more consequence, at least more so to Doran.

"The Targaryen girl?" The Hand asked, and Oberyn wasn't sure if he was glad for the distraction, or just glad to have a problem brought to him that wasn't close to home.

Prince Oberyn of course already knew the gossip about Daenerys Targaryen, conquering in the East before she'd surely come to Westeros, though he did not share his brother's confidence that, that would be anytime soon, she was still young, impressive yes, but impulsive, the wait to conquer Westeros might be longer than they'd anticipated as she focused on Slavers Bay.

The talk continued on Daenerys Targaryen, and he near rolled his eyes at the Queens dismissal of her, foolish, short-sighted, and he intervened.

"Lord Varys is right" He said, at the Queens doubts, "I have been to Essos and seen the Unsullied first hand, they are very impressive on the battlefield, less so in the bedroom" He said with a smirk, as the conversation moved on, unsettled, which he enjoyed.

That conversation soon wrapped up too, and though he enjoyed Lord Mace being treated as a squire, he did have to subdue his smirk, especially as Lord Tywin wrote a note, handed it to Lord Varys and then seemed ready to dismiss everyone.

He knew this was his time.

"My Lord Hand" He did not move, nor change his stance, he seemed for all the world relaxed, though his gaze was deadly, "I believe now is a good time to discuss my request from this morning"

"Your request?" The Queen Regent intervened, and Prince Oberyn turned to her with an eyebrow raised, "Lady Sansa is a Ward of the Crown"

"I am well aware of that" Prince Oberyn said with a shrug, he felt tense, for he could not and would not fail Lady Sansa, but not an inch of it showed on him, he knew better than to betray anything here, and he was far too good to, "But she would be nothing at all, wrongly accused and dead in the ground if not for me" He said, frowned even then, rehearsed, practised, he knew what he was doing, "I feel it fair that she be my reward" He said, innocently.

"Your reward?" Lady Cersei spluttered, aghast, and he grinned at that.

"She is a beautiful girl, a fine reward indeed" He despised the words on his lips, but it was all part of the game, "And as a Ward of the Crown it would only strengthen the Lannister relations with Dorne" He said with a nod, turning to Lord Tywin then, so far silent, and furious, "Or do we not want stronger relations?"

"My daughter isn't enough?" Lady Cersei continued.

"Your daughter is apparently very happy betrothed to my Nephew" Prince Oberyn said, and that was no lie, "As I said we don't hurt little girls in Dorne, and Lady Sansa would be very happy there too"

"Lady Sansa would not be in Dorne if she were married to you Prince Oberyn" Lord Tywin stepped in then, and their gazes met, this was the conversation that mattered, "You are here as a member of this Council, the Dornish representative, and Lady Sansa would remain with you"

"For a time" He said with a shrug, anticipating this, he hated having to do it, for he knew Sansa wanted to leave, he did too, but his priority had to be to keep her safe, "Until Doran may visit, or Tristan returns with the Lady Myrcella and takes this seat" He shrugged again, "And I will take her to Dorne once we are wed, to visit her new home, as my wife that would be my right"

"Once you are wed?" Lady Cersei asked, "We have not granted your request" She sneered.

"The Lord Hand will" Prince Oberyn said, he knew where the power lay, as he nodded at Lord Tywin, the rest of the table sat silent, "A fine reward as I said, and certainly a joy to have by my side as I am in Kings Landing" A concession, one he hated to make, but knew he had to.

He had done exactly as he planned, one better even, now there were two public outings to his demand, and he knew as Lord Tywin nodded, he could not refuse or even stall a Prince twice, especially as he had conceded on a point ... for now.

"Very well" Lord Tywin said with a tense expression, "Lady Sansa is a lucky girl I am sure, to be wed to yourself"

"I am the lucky one" He said, relief coursed through him, but again not a hint showed on his face, "She will make a beautiful bride" He laughed then, smacked his hand on the table, and the Fat Flower, and Pycelle flinched at it, especially as he bounced to his feet with the energy of ten men, "And rest assured my Lord Hand, I will see her second marriage consummated"

"I have no doubt about that" The Hand said, his expression hardened then, and that was a cause for dread, "We will have to see you married in the Great Sept, as a member of the Small Council and as Lady Sansa is the Heir to Winterfell, it is only suitable"

"Of course, an honour I've no doubt" He said with a grin, though it was not full of joy, but venom, hatred coursing through him, he knew Lord Tywin's angle, to make it a Kings Landing rather than a Dornish one, but again he knew he had to compromise this, to keep Lady Sansa safe, and by his side where he could keep her safe, "I'm sure my betrothed will be delighted to plan it, I will go and tell her"

A nod and he strode from the room, he did not need to be dismissed.

His smile dropped as soon as he left, and like a whirlwind he tore through the castle to deliver the news to Lady Sansa, both good and *bad*.

At least she was safe, that was his primary goal, he'd get her out of here though, sooner rather than later, even if it meant adjusting their plans, he wouldn't see her suffer here, she would be his wife after all.

That was his thought as he approached her rooms, in his wing now, where she belonged, under his protection. He would protect her always from any who sought to harm her, no matter the cost.

He had promised not to fail her, and even as circumstances changed, and he entered her rooms to find her sat sewing on her bed, though she rose as soon as he entered, it didn't matter. All that mattered was keeping her safe, and happy, as he looked at her kind face, her eyes wide with worry, as she approached him, and he could see the naked hope in her eyes as she looked at him.

He would not fail.

## Chapter End Notes

and there we go

prince oberyn knows what hes doing, and he is currently holding down his temper ... for now, but enemies remain all around

next chapter, more sansa/oberyn together, a wedding needs to be planned after all  
speak soon

# Not a Promise, a Vow

## Chapter Notes

sorry for the delay but I have 0 excuse.

I'm trying to update all my fanfics before the end of the year and then get on some consistent schedule, which means I have \*checks\* 8 days to update 15 WIPS. SORRY SLEEP YOU'RE NOT HAPPENING FOR A WHILE.

anyway, do enjoy

songrecs: chemtrails over the country club - lana del ray 'I'm in the wind, I'm in the water, nobodys son, nobodys daughter...'

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a roaring sound in her ears.

She wasn't sure if it was because of a large crowd outside, perhaps there was another riot? Perhaps as Prince Oberyn had entered the room, and she'd fumbled and near dropped her sewing stuff, pricking herself with a needle, perhaps a riot had broken out?

Perhaps the people of Kings Landing had decided they'd had enough. Perhaps Queen Cersei's head was being dashed against a wall, and Lord Tywin was being torn apart, perhaps they'd stormed the Red Keep and she'd be next, held down and killed, darkness rushing for her, peace at last.

Or maybe, she was sick, or about to faint, she could see Prince Oberyn's lips moving, could hear the words, 'accepted', and 'concessions', and 'fuck them', and 'don't worry', but she couldn't really string them together.

Perhaps it was shock, as she near keeled to the floor, and it was only sheer determination that kept her standing, and it all came rushing back as she felt a shake of her shoulders, and kept herself standing, as Prince Oberyn grasped her, and brought her back to herself.

*My skin has turned from porcelain, to ivory, to steel.*

*I am a Stark, I can be brave.*

If what Prince Oberyn was saying was true, she'd have to be, for a while longer.

But only for a little while longer.

She'd be free.

It was scary, that she'd have to stay for a while longer, but she'd been convinced for a while Kings Landing would be her graveyard, had, had nightmares about being buried in the Sept, so far away from Winterfell and the Old Gods, even in death so far from home, her bones crumbling to dust in Southern soil.

She had long feared being buried in a Southern ceremony, snow to never touch her body again, to never be blessed by Northern earth, to be so far from her family put to rest, unable to reach them, in whatever came next.

And now ... it would likely be the same in that she couldn't go home, but she wouldn't be here. She could accept that, she could accept living and dying in Dorne, as it wasn't Kings Landing, it wasn't the viper's nest she'd come to hate, it wasn't the place that had turned her from innocent girl to terrified woman.

And she allowed herself, just for a second to have hope, that if she left Kings Landing, if she was no longer a hostage, perhaps she would return to Winterfell one day. Surely Prince Oberyn was marrying her to inherit Winterfell for the Martell family? She could swallow that, weep for the loss of the Stark name but accept it, if it meant returning home.

*Home.*

The thought near made her weep.

"Lady Sansa?" She shook her head then, as though coming up from water, as Prince Oberyn took her by the shoulders, gave her a gentle shake, to take her out of the spiral of her own thoughts. "Are you alright?"

She could do a lot worse.

That was the thought that came to her. Prince Oberyn was kind, strong, handsome, a Martell. He would take her away from this awful place. It scared her, marrying him, or marrying at all in truth, it was no longer something she dreamed of. And he was older, more experienced, and she wanted to die at the thought of him being with other women, but she knew that was his and the Dornish way, and she'd accept it in a heartbeat to get away from here.

She'd accept almost anything.

"I'm okay" She said quietly, and nodded, because she was, she *really* was ... okay maybe not completely, maybe she never would be again, but she felt reassured, if they weren't leaving now, they would eventually.

And even stuck here, Joffrey was gone, and if she married Prince Oberyn, *surely*, she'd be protected? She'd already moved to his guest wing of the Castle, surely it would be safer for her here now? No longer battling to be Queen, no longer a traitor, no longer alone. Married yes, but under the protection of her husband.

She gulped at that; *husband*. But she had meant it; she would accept almost anything.



"You are?" He asked, sounding doubtful, which she could understand, but she nodded. She wasn't fully but it was enough.

"Yes" She said, "I... I never thought they'd accept, and even if we have to stay here for a little while longer" Her brow furrowed, "It is worth it"

"I wish I could take you from here now" He said, and she wanted to believe him, but as good as Prince Oberyn was she couldn't trust him, she would never be that foolish again. "But my power here, the power of Dorne is limited"

She nodded, "I understand" She said, and she did, even if she didn't like it, even if she wished she could leave now, she would grasp freedom, or a type of it, the second it came, just not now.

"The second we can leave we will" He said, his accent curling around the words, "I give you my word"

At that she nodded again, coming back to herself now, remembering her courtesies, it didn't matter if she felt safe around Prince Oberyn, if she'd slipped in front of him, she had to be careful. She could only trust herself.

Yes, he had saved her, been kind to her, and she desperately wanted to trust him, hence her slip ups but she'd learned that lesson once and learned it the hard way.

Her walls were coming back up, as she looked at her shoes, but Prince Oberyn wasn't accepting that, and he gently placed a thumb under her chin, to her gasp and lifted her gaze to meet his.

"My word" And it sounded not like a half-hearted promise, but a *vow*, and she nodded, her eyes Tully blue, meeting his, black like vipers, and for a moment she trusted him, rueing herself for doing so, but unable to stop.

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Come morning Sansa's walls were firmly back in place but she was feeling oddly optimistic.

There was a strangeness that it had all seemed too good to be true, too unrealistic, she would have of course preferred to leave Kings Landing, but being forced to remain grounded her, this was really happening, perhaps not in the way she had hoped, but it was.

She was going to become Sansa Martell.

She knew, she had never really been Sansa Lannister, their marriage unconsummated. She remembered Tyrions kindness to her in that regard, his attempts to make her smile, to be kind to her, but she had thrown it all back at him, unable to bear him in any sense because of his name, even though he'd never fully given it to her. She thought of him for a moment, escaped, and hoped he was well, his kindness to her she would not forget.

She knew, as she walked through the long corridors, a Martell guard a step back from her, shadowing her, that Prince Oberyn would not show her the same kindness. This marriage

would not go unconsummated.

The thought *terrified* her, but also, she knew it was necessary, and almost wanted to do it, not for the act itself, which she'd always been told was unpleasant at best, but because this time she wanted the protection of being Prince Oberyn's wife, not just in name, easily broken, but wedded and bedded, unbreakable, even by the Lannister's.

She would ensure this marriage could not be annulled, they couldn't marry her to another dreaded Lannister, keep her here forever and see her remains cursed forever by the Capitol.

And so, she walked, alone but for her guards, thinking on what that meant for her, the fear that chilled her. She hoped Prince Oberyn would be kind, she thought he would, but she had no way of knowing, and the nerves ate at her.

Until, her thoughts were interrupted by a voice she hadn't heard at least direct to her, in a little while.

"Sansa!" Lady Margaery stepped forward, a woman she'd once hoped and considered to be a friend, came into her view, followed by her own Tyrell guards, as she always was, no one was truly safe here. "I have been looking for you"

"My Lady" Sansa said, for Margaery was no Queen, not yet, she had been briefly, but now she was a Lady again, though she assumed Lady Olenna and Lord Tyrell were working hard to see her married to Tommen, she wondered whether they would succeed, if Lord Tywin decided it, surely so.

Sansa had once had that ambition to be Queen, to be beloved by many, to be married to a handsome King. That desire had died when Joffrey's cruelty had been revealed and she had realised being Queen surely meant a lifetime of suffering.

Even the Queen couldn't be protected from the King.

And yet despite her best efforts not to get carried away, she thought Prince Oberyn could protect her.

"Walk with me?" Margaery asked with that dazzling grin and Sansa knew she could not say no, and so she nodded, and the guards fell into line behind them, one Martell behind her, one Tyrell behind Margaery, two steps back to give their Ladies some space.

That was odd to phrase in her mind, she would be a Lady of House Martell, and soon.

"How are you?" Lady Margaery asked sympathetically, and yet Sansa did not let down her guard, not as she once had.

For Lady Margaery had been her friend once, a close friend she'd confided in and liked immensely. And yet, after she had married Lord Tyrion, Margaery had disappeared. Not because of wedding planning, but because Sansa had realised, she was no longer useful, no longer a chip to be bargained to marry into the Tyrells and become one of them.

Not just one of them, but to bring the North under their control.

Sansa knew that was her value as a hostage, to be the key, and the Heir to the North. With Robb dead, Bran and Rickon too, Sansa would inherit, and the Tyrells had wanted that, Margaery had wanted that, for her family, so much so she had faked a friendship to try and get it, and that hurt.

Sansa had been taken advantage of time and time again, and each time the hurt didn't seem to lessen, and that hurt flashed in her eyes as she spoke.

"I am fine" She said gently as they walked the same path they had when Margaery had suggested a match with Willas, conspiring they'd be sisters, Sansa so overjoyed to have a friend, and to maybe leave this place tears had rolled down her cheeks and stung from the wind, now it felt like a mockery, to be played so easily.

Had she learned nothing? Was she still that foolish girl?

*A stupid girl who never learns...*

"Sansa" Margaery said with a frown, it didn't suit her beauty, "I'm worried about you, I care about you" She sounded *so* convincing, Sansa wanted to believe her, but she couldn't.

"Do you?" Sansa said, not intending to bite back, but alongside her hurt was a bit of anger, she was part wolf after all, "I don't think so"

"Why would you say that?" Margaery asked though there was something in her gaze that told her she knew, and Sansa could have sworn she was sincere, after all what did she have to gain from friendship now?

"You were only friends with me when I could become a Tyrell" She said, and Sansa remembered the absence of Margaery's friendship, taking her cousins and her retinue with her, all alone again in Kings Landing, she'd had to get used to it all over again.

They approached the coast now, and Sansa looked out at the bay, at the ships rolling past, she wondered which were going to Dorne, and wondered when she would be on one, sailing away from here, from all of this.

"I know" Sansa turned around at that, raising an eyebrow, she hadn't expected honesty, and Lady Margaery looked truly abashed, even a little sad, "But it wasn't all about that, I did-" She paused then, and smiled, taking Sansa's hands, and squeezing them, "I *do* want to be friends"

"Why?" Sansa asked, she so hoped to have a friend again, she did like Margaery, immensely, and though Sansa knew she couldn't trust her, not again, could they be friends? Could she trust her once more?

Was she to condemn herself to loneliness to be spiteful? Or because like so many other girls Margaery had done as she'd told?

And Margaery had never been unkind to her, and so Sansa decided to listen as Margaery spoke, with an open mind.

"Because I think we could both use one" Margaery said sadly, as she turned to look back at the Capitol, "I think we will both be here for a while"

And wasn't that the truth.

"You're to marry Tommen then?" Sansa asked, cautiously.

"Nothing is final yet" Margaery said, giving a little, and Sansa managed a small smile, Margaery responded with one dazzling, had she come here to repair the friendship for no other reason? Sansa's smile grew, just a hint. "But I presume so"

"How do you feel about that?" Sansa asked, they were limited to what they could say here, even with the spray of the sea, the whistle of the wind, and the guards stood far back, they could still never know who was listening.

"It will be easier" Margaery said ruefully, and Sansa nodded, easier than Joffrey indeed.

"And you" Margaery said with a smile then, it was a tentative restart to their friendship, but Sansa didn't want to swear it off, not when Margaery had been right – they could both need this. "They made the announcement this morning, that you'll marry Prince Oberyn, become Princess Sansa Martell" She paused then, searched Sansa's eyes, and offered her a hand, "How do you feel about that?"

Sansa took her hand as they turned to the sea, just two girls, in Kings Landing, trying to understand how to survive, "Nervous, but ... it will be better too, more ... secure" Sansa wasn't sure how to phrase it but Margaery nodded.

"You shouldn't let this one go unconsummated" Margaery said honestly, and Sansa flinched, but nodded as Margaery squeezed her hand. Margaery's voice dropped to a whisper, "Don't give them any chance to annul it"

"I know" Sansa said, though she felt those nerves in her stomach again, "I thought the same thing, but ... I don't know ..." She stumbled then, cheeks flaming, though they paled just as easily, "I'm scared" She whispered.

"It's okay" Margaery said, and pulled her close, dropping her hand but to wind her arm through hers, as they continued to look out at the bay, "Prince Oberyn is experienced, he won't hurt you, and he'll I'm sure make sure you have a good time" She said with a smile then, teasing a little, "Better than good even"

"Good?" Sansa's nose wrinkled, "I've heard the best I can hope for is unpleasant" Sansa said with a frown.

"I'm sure Prince Oberyn will strive for better than that" Margaery teased, and Sansa giggled, as did Margaery.

Yes, they had both needed this.

## Chapter End Notes

don't think too harshly of margaery, she too has been behest to her circumstances

more sansa/oberyn next time, and a wedding? maybe...

do subscribe and I promise a swifter update next time!

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