

## in the midst of triumph

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# in the midst of triumph

by [Why\\_am\\_i\\_still\\_here](#)

## Summary

Arya wasn't stupid, but sometimes she did stupid things. Hiding the fact that she was injured seemed to make the top of that list as far as her family was concerned.

## Notes

English is not my first language. Not beta-read. All mistakes are mine.

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# Chapter 1

Arya wasn't prone to self-doubt. She never had been, at least not when it came to the skills she had spent a lifetime honing. Her abilities as a fighter, as an assassin, more than made her one of the best not only in the House of Black and White, but in the northern army as well. Therefore when it came to concern over her abilities and her place in the North, she had no worries.

When the Targaryen Queen's army arrived things became a bit more... interesting. Now she had a new level of fighter to aspire to. It was no longer just the Old Gods, Syrio Forel or Jaqen holding the (admittedly damn high) bar she worked to meet, she now had to deal with matching up to the Dothraki, the Unsullied, Wildlings and Jaime fucking Lannister, who might have lost a hand but was still a very capable fighter. That few.

Even then Arya never doubted her abilities because, come on, who could compete with all that without witchcraft or decades of experience of their own? Oh, that's right, Arya could. Frankly the only person in their army she would openly admit to fearing was Brienne of Tarth and her ruthless efficiency that so clearly ruled them all.

Arya had always enjoyed doing what she felt was right, though she could admit that there had been times in the past when she had been misled – both by people she believed to be honest and good, and by her need to rush headlong into fighting the good fight. Her need to be involved and to help. Arya hadn't realised how much she had learned to love training and fighting (most of the time) when she first begged her father for fighting lessons, but ending up working along the most fearless fighters in Westeros against the Night King? It was a battle she had never dreamed of being a part of and she was more than up for the challenge.

That being discovered, she maybe, occasionally, became a little more injured now than she had before returning to Winterfell, but not by much, so she honestly hadn't thought anything of it. At least not until this moment as she paused in her escape from the Maester, only a few feet from where the tired old man rushed to aid people. Her Lady Mother, before she had betrayed and slaughtered by the Frey, had always told her her nosiness would get her in trouble one day. It still didn't stop her from stopping and listening in the moment she heard her name cross his lips.

"I swear by the Old Gods that girl used to spend more time recovering in her chamber than actually attending her lessons. I'm certain she'll show up any time now, ridden with scratches and sores," the old man sighed, causing Arya to frown. Yeah, she had spent a lot of time under his care, that was generally why she always tried to sneak out against medical advice, but usually it was for something stupid: a sprained wrist, a cracked pinkie, a measly two story fall from her bedchamber window as she tried to run from the septa. Nothing to really worry about. Especially not after everything she had gone through in Bravos.

"I wonder why they'd even let her fight. She should've been with her Lady sister, in the Crypts." Another man responded, an unsullied fighter, Arya noticed through the opened door,

and the Maester snorted before indelicately moving on to tell him about her adventures as a child.

Arya pushed away from the wall he was holding up and walked passed the room without either of them noticing.

She didn't waste time worrying about what she had overheard; there was no point really as it was just servants gossip at its finest. Still it was enough to get her to start being slightly more careful, at least when training, and the nod of approval she received from Brienne when they finished her training session the next day without any muscle strain was kind of a win-win.

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The second time she overheard someone commenting on her rate of injury she was, once again, in the Maester's chambers. This time, however, it was being said to her directly. She had a concussion (only a mild one, thank you, and she had fought entire battles with those plenty of times before) and was basically using it as an excuse to watch Jon, who had also gotten hurt fighting some bandits, not really paying attention to the old man's words. At least until she heard the words 'bed rest' and 'can't keep going like this,' and 'not a soldier.'

Of course she was going to notice to that, because what the fuck did this quack know about being a soldier? All Arya ever worked towards was being the best she could be and just because she wasn't old and graying nor was a boy she was being discounted by a man who looked like he couldn't last one minute in a fight? Horse shit.

"My sister is more than capable of handling a little fight," Jon stepped forward suddenly and frowned up at the tall doctor. "If there are no further medically relevant tasks you need to perform, then I will take her with be back to her chambers." Arya closed her mouth, halting what would no doubt have been an affronted, childish retort beginning with the words 'listen here, you dimwit' and ending with another reprimand for not playing nice with old man. Fortunately, Jon's extremely bland stare was intimidating enough and the Maester promptly agreed that whatever Jon wanted Jon would get and left them alone.

"You're a soldier, a'right," Arya thought she heard Jon saying to her, as he helped her up from the bed. It was possible she had more than a mild concussion. "Try to not use your own body as a shield the next time, little sister, if only to save me from the worry."

"To be fair," Arya swung her legs over the side of the bed and pretended real hard that the movement wasn't too fast too soon. A strong, warm grip on her shoulder prevented her from toppling forward, "You were the one who didn't see the thief coming."

Jon got her back to her bedchamber safe and sound and Arya would never really remember everything that was said that day, but she did remember the words 'not a soldier' and 'capable of handling a little fight.' She didn't quite understand why it evoked feelings of bitterness and fondness but she figured she was better off just forgetting about it all together.

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Jon, Tormund and a few other man were off to fight a few raiders coming from the South and Arya was holed up in Winterfell due to a torn muscle in her shoulder. Another week and she'd be good as new, but it was a week where she was restricted from doing anything heavier than paperwork with Sansa. She'd finished her part the first day, mostly because Sansa hadn't given her much to do because she didn't have enough patience to deal with cowards passing as Lords.

Basically what that meant was that she wasn't allowed to train or help with the fight against the South, so she made do with walking silently behind every soldier who looked like they were doing something marginally interesting. This was acceptable until they went somewhere she had no interest in being.

The lurking meant Arya was privy to gossip; most of it was harmless and inane and boring. She perked up a bit when a fairly young unsullied soldier sidled up to the one she had been following and asked about the 'latest' on the Starks. The older soldier sighed. Arya expected him to rattle off some line about things that were need to know only but it quickly became clear that that wasn't how the new aide operated.

"They haven't been up to much," he shrugged, almost coming across as put upon despite the fact that he had yet to deal with any Arya's siblings or Arya herself personally. "Snow is actually talking instead of grunting for once and Lady Sansa is occupied with her northern Lords, which means that the she-wolf is the only issue."

That got Arya's attention right along with the gossip-y soldier.

"Arya Stark, isn't it? She's out on injury. Isn't that pretty much the only time she behaves?"

"Yeah, when she's not trying to bust out of the Maester's chambers," the older soldier snorted and shook his head, "which is kind of the problem."

"Busting out?"

"No, needing the Maester in the first place," the boy waved his helmet around as he walked. "The girl's always been in trouble all the time, if the stories are true, but now that she's fighting in a real war and if she gets hurt, Snow gets pissed. That's why our Queen is worried..."

"What? The Queen thinks she's not good enough of a fighter?" The younger soldier at least seemed to think that was ridiculous despite the other's careless shrug that did nothing for Arya's peace of mind.

"Maybe, or maybe they just don't like footing all the expanses. The rest of the soldiers spend less than half the amount of time in the infirmary than she does, even if a lot of it's just minor injuries. It's been noticed."

Arya couldn't actually deny that this was true. She just hadn't realize others were paying such close attention. It had never been an issue before. At least not that she knew of.

She split off from them and cut through a secret side door most people in the castle didn't know existed, emerging outside the wing to her bedchambers the next minute.

Apparently, she had some things to think about.

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When Bran made the comment, weeks later, that maybe they should just hire a personal Maester for her as she carefully wrapped a pressure bandage on the arrow graze in her thigh, Arya realized she had a problem. Bran had actually sounded serious (which meant he was concerned), and a serious Bran meant that the most out-of-it person in the North (which, is Arya was being honest, still creeped her out a little) had noticed that Arya tended to get banged around a lot.

She couldn't risk being tossed off the army because she kept getting nicked and bruised.

She couldn't risk being dismissed back to the frail, defenseless Princess status because they were concerned that she wasn't matching up to par in the field. For injuries acquired in the line of duty, saving everyone's arses, for crying out loud. She'd always imagined that if she was going to get the boot it would be because she was too slow, too weak, too old, or dead. That's why she had trained so hard to become the fighter she was. She wasn't going to let a couple minor scratches and scrapes get her cut from the army. Not now, that she had finally found her way home. Not a chance.

She laughed and told Bran she was all for a personal Maester, so long as he wasn't old and boring like Maester Luwin.

Bran stared at her, unimpressed.

Arya could live with it. What was a little pain after all?

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When Arya jumped out of the top of a tower during a perfectly timed roll as it plunged towards the ground, Jon effortlessly snagged her out of the air, while riding a fucking dragon.

(She was never going to forgive him for riding a dragon first.)

"Going my way?" Arya quipped to distract herself from the fact that being tackled in a free fall by a massive beast with iron-like scales hurt like a motherfucker. She could already feel the bruises forming across her shoulders and her right thigh was cramping in protest from the hit.

"Not in a million years," Jon voice responded sharply, but he curled his arms around Arya a little more, pressing her tighter to the dragons hard scales. "You alright?"

"I'm fine," Arya tried very hard not to snarl because she knew Jon was just worried about her. It had been a close call; if Arya hadn't timed her jump perfectly she would have been dust by now. Heh. "Just drop me off and go help the rest of the men, I'll see what I can do from this side."

"Stay still, I'll get you there," Jon said, true to his word as he was already slowing to land near the main road to where the enemy's men were camped.

"Don't land, just drop me and go," Arya bit out, watching as a few of the army came running out to meet them.

"You sure?" Jon sounded uncertain.

"I'm not made of glass, Jon!" Jon didn't argue after that, because it would be quicker if he could do a flyby and he needed to get back to his men. He flew closer to the ground than Arya expected and slowed to the point that it was almost a joke for Arya to tuck and roll as she hit the ground and popped back up to her feet. She'd been forced to leave her some of the newer weapons behind when she was called to join Jon's men what felt like hours ago and her hand clenched absently around the missing weight.

"M' Lady! M' Lady, are you all right?" the soldier to reach her first on the ground demanded and Arya pulled herself straight and squared her aching shoulders.

"Not a lady and I'm fine. Take me to wherever the Hound is stationed," she demanded and gestured impatiently as the soldiers looked uncertain, eyeing her quickly for signs of injury. When they apparently couldn't see anything obvious, he nodded dumbly and started to move.

Arya couldn't help grinning. She had spotted Sandor

He was standing right at the top of the hill, living up to his image with his bloodied armor and the Targaryen Queen's men flocked around him. Arya couldn't quite make out his face, but she very easily spotted the frown on his face.

"Do you need medical?" Sandor's growl-y, authoritative voice came through clearly, even with all the noise around them and Arya didn't hesitate to shake her head, ignoring the tight pull of muscles across her back and the throbbing in her thigh. It was just bruising.

"No, I'm fine."

"That's debatable, little she-wolf. What happened with the tower?"

"It fell but Jon caught me before it hit the ground." Off in the distance there was a large explosion; the resulting concussive force was enough to blow heated air past them and Arya turned to watch the massive, burning, company that their enemies had somehow acquired crash into the water. Her sharp eyes could just make out Jon and Daenerys dancing about in the sky as they circled above the currently drowning men. Arya grinned. It was a good day.

An hour later, Jon joined Arya and the rest of the men where they were sat on the small hill, watching the beginning of the sunset turn the clouds in the sky deep hues of pink and orange. They stood swiftly to meet him, Arya included, though it was some effort to make the movement smooth with her protesting leg. She managed. Jon looked them all over carefully.

"Injuries?" he asked mildly.

"None to report, m' Lord," one of Daenerys' men practically beamed and Arya was hard pressed not to roll his eyes. Jon looked to Arya then, gaze narrowing.

"Any minor injuries?" Jon decided to be more specific and Arya shook her head in a burst of irritation, because seriously, it wasn't like she got injured every fight..

"We're all fine," she insisted, and pushed the pang of guilt at lying to him (to them all) down deep. The look of satisfaction that crossed Jon's face made it easier.

"Glad to hear it. Gather everything, it's time to go home."

Sandor's shoulder brushed her's as they turned to head to their horses and Arya pretended it didn't jar muscles that were slowly locking up with a deep ache now that the action was over and adrenalin was gone. Arya had had injuries like this plenty of times before. A few days and she would be better than fine and, if she was needed on a battle before then it wasn't like her body wasn't going to work; it would just be sore. Even if she reported to medical they would say the same thing. She was sure of it.

Besides, it wasn't like she got any medical attention during her training in the House of Black and White and she still made it. It was fine.

Arya was just fine.

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Arya wasn't stupid. She wasn't going to hide anything that was serious enough to cause her permanent harm or affect her ability to do her part in the field. She was just going to hide the smaller things, things he was supposed to report regardless but that she knew how to take care of on her own terms. Much like she had before she'd made her way back to Winterfell and became Arya Stark once more.

At least she wasn't planning on hiding anything but the most minor cuts and bruises when she started the façade of being a less injury prone soldier.

The thing was she'd never realized the extent of all the casual and not so casual comments she'd been on the receiving end of over the years. From maids and healers to soldiers and even a few overconfident servants, to her own family. Sometimes the comments would come saturated in admiration, sometimes with ruefulness and wishes that Arya would be more careful, sometimes, though it was rare enough that he never paid it any real attention, it was said with mocking and implied glory seeking. Arya hadn't cared; she liked to believe she still didn't care now that she'd started paying attention to it.

After the first active decision to hide her bruises and strained muscles from everyone, she hadn't paid it much notice beyond the fact that Jon seem happy and left it at that.

The second time she hid an injury it was nothing more than a raw scrape on her lower back that had been easily hidden by her armour.



Of course there were plenty of battles and sparring sessions where she really didn't get hurt, but she made a point of teasing the Maester and Jon with complaints of paper cuts and hangnails just to be annoying, things that were sure to get no more attention than an eye roll. If she managed to swipe a variety of healing supplies whenever she did so, nobody seemed the wiser and she was more than happy to start carrying around the bare minimum necessary to hide small bleeds and such tucked away deep in her pockets.

Bruises were easier to hide, and not really something worth concerning healers with anyway. At least she was of that opinion, which is why she just laughed when Brienne of Tarth all but dragged her to the Maester when she had grabbed Arya's arm a little too hard in training. The old man confirmed it and sent Arya on her way with a short prayer that he wouldn't see her anytime soon. Brienne seemed relieved after that, even as she stared at Arya imploringly until she complacently pressed the ice to her arm. It felt good.

Sadly, two days later, Maester Ludwin did see Arya again as he carefully tied six stitches into her calf while Sansa watched, perched on the stool beside Arya's, still and poised like one would expect from the Lady of Winterfell. If the maester was bothered by her presence at all he didn't show it.

"You don't need to be here for this," Arya pointed out even as she focused her attention on the healer's movements, watching how he flushed the wound, lined up the edges, and sewed the skin together bit by bit.

Sansa's answer, not surprisingly, was a redirect.

"When did you hurt your shin?" For a moment she had no idea what the older girl was talking about, confusion making her frown at Sansa before she remembered the old injury. Leave it to Sansa to notice something so ridiculously small. The healer finished up and then prodded at said shin with his gloved fingers and Arya scowled.

"A few weeks ago?" she eyed the tiny red scar that was all that was left from what had been a damn impressive fight. It hadn't bothered her for over a week now and there was nothing but the faintest yellow hinting at old bruising on her embarrassingly pale legs. "Are you done there? I heard they were cooking kidney pies for tonight's supper and I want to get there before Jon does."

The maester warned Arya to be more careful and handed her a small bag filled with dressings and ointment before leaving. She rolled down her torn pant leg and tested her weight on her foot before deciding it wasn't too bad. With a raised eyebrow at her sister's watchful eye, she gestured to the door.

"You first," she leered and Sansa had to have been more relieved that she was okay than she initially thought, because even as she narrowed her eyes warningly at him, she stepped ahead and walked fast with her head held up high.

As she watched her sister walk away, she managed to grab a couple of the tiny, pre-prepared suture kits from the Maester's working table and slipping them into her brown bag.

It was a good move too, because a few weeks later, in the candlelight of her private chamber at the mansion, she got to test the new skill on her thigh. It was a minor wound, only needed three stitches, though it hurt like a son-of-a-bitch without any numbing ointment.

She didn't do a bad job if she did say so herself.

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Hiding a few bumps and bruises and cuts was no big deal. Head injuries he never concealed, unless it was just a little bump and the pain mostly cleared up after a few minutes. Prolonged headaches and dizziness, yeah, that was reported pretty much once the action was over and things were under control. Head wounds he tended to report directly to Jon, in person, because he tended to worry more if he found out she had gone to see the Maester without telling him.

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"What's this?" the Maeste asked as he finished wrapping Arya's knee and the girl looked to see him nodding at her foot. "You didn't report that you hurt your foot as well," he frowned and Arya did as well. It was kind of hard to explain that she hadn't mentioned the possibly dislocated toe out of habit.

"I forgot about it," she shrugged smoothly and the old man looked up at her incredulously.

"You forgot about it," he repeated, dryly, and Arya glared, because yeah, she had.

"I guess we could say I was a little distracted by the pain in my knee," she tried one of the famous Stark glares on for size. "It's not a big deal, just pop it back in and I'll be good to go."

The maester ignored her, just like Arya ignored Sandor's concerned gaze from where he hovered on the other side of the medical cot Arya was perched on. The old man called out for aid from a nearby maid and Arya didn't argue, because it was honestly a relief to know she wouldn't have to deal with this injury alone, and simply let herself be wheeled off again. She was too tired to notice the frown in the maester's followed her until she was out of sight, or the way he reached for Arya's file and began to flip through it more carefully than he usually did.

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Almost three weeks later Arya realized she had a serious problem. Too bad she was too caught in the moment to do anything about it before it all came tumbling down around her.

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Jon barging into her chambers unexpectedly, waving what looked like a letter in his fist, was not how Arya had planned to begin her morning. Nor was her brother's abrupt stop in the middle of the room, his brows furrowed deeply as he stared unabashedly at Arya.

"What in the seven hells, Arya?" he demanded as Arya finished pulling her under-armour into place, covering the deep red and bruised welts on her stomach. She'd had to knock a

couple stitches into two of them and was pretty sure the small white bandages she'd placed over her handy work just made the small injuries look worse than they were. At least Jon hadn't seen her ribs.

"For a King, your choice of words is embarrassingly limited at times," Arya decided as she walked towards a chair on the corner. Jon followed her like a shadow.

"Seriously," Jon waved at her torso area dramatically, "when the hell did that happen? Shouldn't you be resting?" Arya raised a sardonic eyebrow at that, because when did a few cuts and bruises actually keep any of them down? Jon glared. "You know what I mean," he waved at Arya's entire torso again and trailed after her as she moved back to her bedside.

"Is there a reason you barged into my chamber without knocking? What is that letter"

"It doesn't matter. Did this happen yesterday? How did I not know that this happened yesterday? You were barely out of my sight for five minutes," he was talking to himself more than Arya at this point, but he looked up sharply when Arya stood smoothly and very carefully did not groan at the fire that spread across what felt like her entire body, but was mainly sitting around and under her ribs. "Nothing was mentioned during the council...you saw the healers, right?" and whoa, right there, Jon was truly getting worked up by this and Arya needed to put a stop to it now. Her hand ache for her dagger but she couldn't reach for it without showing she was restless. First step: distraction.

"Who do you think patched me up, Jon? Relax, would you? It's just a couple of bruises. I got some scattered gravel in the gut but my armour stopped most of the damage." She moved to the door, not worried about Jon being left alone in her chambers; it wasn't like she had any truly personal things in there to poke through. "No big." Jon followed her into the hall, eyes still narrowed. "What the hell got you worked up enough to just barge in anyway? Has Sam eaten all your kidney pies again?"

"Please," Jon snorted, finally distracted, his tone was already lighter, effectively placated and distracted and Arya grinned.

She didn't waste time feeling guilty about blatantly lying to Jon. She just didn't have the energy.

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She would never really understand what made her agree to spar with Sandor later that afternoon. He'd eyed her and promptly announced that she looked like shit before making the offer. Tender loving care at its best. aRYA had laughed and gone off to meet him in the training grounds even though the idea of even a light jog made her feel nauseous. She never said no to sparring though, not unless she was ill or injured, of which she was neither; she just had a few bruises and cuts.

She hadn't been expecting his warm-up roundhouse to connect with her ribs. She could say with absolute certainty he hadn't expected it either, if the look on his face was anything to go by at the time.

Though by then she'd been on the floor and her vision had been kind of blacking out so what did she know?

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She woke up to a fuzzy world and a cloudy head. There was sharp pain as light attacked her eyes and sound that she figured should be familiar but she didn't know what it was saying. She recognized the tone though, steady and soothing and safe. She may have smiled, she had no idea, but that was pretty much all she knew before she was swallowed back under the heavy veil of rest.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

HEADS UP: I wrote this on my way to university so don't expect much. Also THERE WILL BE A THIRD PART, SOMETIME SOON but yeah...

"Lady Arya? Lady Arya, how do you feel?" Arya blinked her eyes open, feeling about a hundred times more alert than the last three times she'd woken up, and she squinted up at the man standing over her. Too close. She twitched, swallowed a few times, and rolled her head to look around.

Jon stood by the door, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed and staring at Arya. Normally Arya would be glad that Jon was even alive to stare at her, but the intense look she was receiving right now was a little concerning.

"What-" she swallowed thickly past the dryness in her mouth and tried again. "What happened?"

"How do you feel, m'Lady?" the man, Maester Ludwig it turned out as her wandering gaze focused, ignored her question.

"Awake," she mumbled and gratefully took a few sips of water a nearby maid offered.

"Can you tell me the last thing you remember?" the doctor asked, checking her wrist in a subtle way that meant he was paying close attention to her and trying to not show it. Arya was instantly suspicious but she thought back to the last thing she remembered obediently.

"I was sparring with the Hound," she cleared her throat and wondered if she could get more water, but the maid had left the room. It was just Arya and the maester and Jon.

Then she remembered the injuries she hadn't reported from the last battle and the fact that two days wouldn't be nearly enough time to conceal them. It went a long way in explaining the look Jon was sporting.

"Shit," she groaned, apparently having even less of a brain to mouth filter than normal. She blamed whatever they had given her for the pain.

"What is it?" the Maester demanded, dark eyes looking up to watch her with more open concern than he had ever really shown her before.

"I think I forgot to feed Nymeria," Arya evaded obnoxiously. She closed her eyes and very carefully brought her hand up to rub at her forehead. Her co-ordination was a little off and apparently she only really had the energy to poke at her right eye once before she dropped her

fingers back down. The maester caught her wrist before it landed and gently moved it to the bed instead of her lap. With a frown, Arya looked down at her chest and began tugging at the blanket that was covering her. She managed to drag it halfway down before Jon moved from the door and finally joined her at the side of the bed. He helped fold the thin sheet down to her waist and even in her dazed, tired state Arya couldn't help but to curse at herself for making Jon worry.

There was some fabric wrapped around her chest, giving her some sort of decency, which Arya appreciated but the large square of bandaging sitting just below her ribs stole her attention almost immediately, because the stitches she had put in were on his left side. They were still there, fresh and surrounded by mottled flesh and welts that had thankfully gone down since the last time she'd checked them, but the bandage on her right was new.

"What happened?" She asked again and nodded thankfully when Jon lifted a cup to her lips, letting her drink slowly.

"You were sparring with the Hound," The maester unhelpfully answered and Arya tried to glare but her eyes weren't really cooperating as they drifted shut. "Due to injuries previously sustained the blunt force from his kick fractured two of your ribs." That would explain why every breath sent fire along her chest. "While we were assessing the damage we discovered a small laceration in your liver, most likely caused from the direct impact of high velocity debris on your last mission. You were slowly bleeding internally, we had to operate."

Well...shit.

"Lady Arya?" She opened her eyes just a bit, finding it more and more difficult to focus, and noted that Jon had moved back to leaning against the wall by the door, stiff and cold. "Can you tell me why you failed to report such serious injuries after your mission was complete?"

Arya closed her eyes, focus drifting as she felt an overwhelming tiredness swell up within.

"Jus' a few bruises," she muttered, not really aware of what she was saying anymore. Definitely no longer aware of the piercing glare Jon was gifting her with. She was fast asleep moments later and the old man sighed as Jon stepped up beside him.

"Your Lady sister heals surprisingly fast; she'll be completely healed in about two months," he reported dutifully and then hesitated, not sure how to point out the rest of his findings without pointing out that he hadn't noticed the problem earlier.

"But you don't think these are the first injuries my sister has concealed," Jon stated bluntly and the maester dipped his head in agreement.

"No, I don't. I do, however, think these were the most severe. Lady Stark has reported numerous injuries over these past months that required medical attention, but there is faint evidence of other injuries we have no record of." He looked back at his slumbering patient. "I had noticed a decrease in minor injuries being reported but assumed it was due to her being more...cautious in the field." He knew instantly that it was not the smartest way to word what he was trying to say as Jon's fingers twitched where they rested on the bed, inches from Arya's own hand. Belatedly he realized it sounded more like a criticism than an objective

statement. He looked to his patient again and wondered if he had ever made other similar statements that the young girl had taken to heart. Lady Arya had never, not once, given him the impression that she cared about what anyone thought of her, even before her Lord Father had been murdered. He would need to be more careful in the future, and perhaps begin checking his words around other soldiers as well.

Thank god he hadn't had to report that the injuries were self-inflicted. As a whole, however, it didn't make the old man feel much better about the situation and he knew for a fact that the elder Stark was not taking any of this lightly. Jon Snow never took things affecting the Starks lightly, but especially not where it concerned Arya. Nobody who had ever met him would ever doubt that.

"I would like a full report on other suspected injuries and a supposition on when you believe this behaviour may have begun at your earliest convenience," Jon ordered softly, his eyes not leaving Lady Arya's face. Ludwig nodded.

"Right away m' Lord." He'd already started.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

Sorry I took so long to write this but uni and work have been crazy! Hope you enjoy this and please like a comment with your opinions!

Arya woke up a few more times before she was moved to her own chamber and not a single bouquet of flowers wishing her well. It would be depressing if it weren't pretty much a given; nobody ever really sent her flowers, even when she was a child, but the lack of gifted ammunition from her favourite bull headed bastard and kidney pies stolen from the kitchens was disappointing in a way she had never thought she'd expect. The maid had smiled softly at her as she'd tried to casually look around the large empty space and gently pet her on the leg after changing up her bandages.

"I'm sure someone will be by to visit soon, m'Lady. Your Lord brother was very worried about you," she sympathised. Arya didn't look at her after that, answering questions about how she felt with minimal effort. She managed to swallow down half a bowl of surprisingly delicious stew, closed her eyes, and pretended to sleep when the maid came to clear away her meal. She was feeling better, able to stay awake for longer periods of time and she was much more lucid, but she still tired maddeningly easily. It had been a full day and a half since the surgery and the longer she was forced to lie in bed, alone, the more she wanted to get out.

Soon. She'd give it another day or so, because she kind of felt terrible and there was no point in keeping up the charade anymore, but then she'd get up and head to the training grounds and see what everyone was doing.

She hadn't needed to bother worrying about the lack of visitation though, because it soon became clear that everyone was just waiting for their schedules to synch up so they could ambush her en masse.

Apparently Arya had inadvertently upset a few people.

Waking up to finding the Lannister Imp's face only a foot away from her own was enough to have her clenching a fist reflexively. She blinked. Tyrion blinked back and then pulled away altogether, which was a bit of a relief, truth be told. Arya liked the man just fine, but his was not the face she wanted to wake up to.

"Lady Stark awakens," he announced and reached out as though to greet Arya's consciousness with a hand to the shoulder, before he hesitated and pulled away. Arya frowned, and then frowned even more as the imp retreated clear across the room (a whole ten feet away) to stand beside Sansa. Sansa, who was watching her intently, one arm tucked across her torso and she was chewing on the inside of her cheek in a clear sign of agitation.



Arya had never enjoyed how slow she was to alertness when doped up on poppy seeds, but right now it felt like more of a nuisance than usual.

"Thank you, Tyrion," Bran said, carefully polite, as he was wheeled to the foot of Arya's bed by Samwell Tarly, who abruptly stopped trembling behind him. Lady Brienne was there as well, though she was just out of Arya's visual range behind her left shoulder. Arya relaxed slightly as soon as she spotted Jon, his silent sentry, just off to her right and allowed her brain to wake up just a little bit more.

"It's disturbing that you were all watching me sleep," she asserts, which was maybe not the nicest thing to point out considering that just before she'd fallen asleep she'd maybe, sort of, been wondering where the hell they all were. Nobody had ever been left to wake up alone while they were recovering, unless they were on a mission. A tight feeling that had nothing to do with her fractured ribs squeezed her chest. Sadly it still took her a moment to realize nobody was responding to her declaration. Frowning she fumbled for the bed's railing and used it to push herself upwards, careful not to show how the movement jarred hurts ribs and aching body. She wasn't surprised when Sansa gently pushed her hand away and pushed her back towards the bed, quickly adjusting the pillow behind her head before slipping back out of view.

Arya eyed the room, noting the tension as she took steady shallow breaths and wondered if it would be out of place to ask for a drink. Preferably something spirited, but water would do fine. It seemed like they were waiting for her to start and, actually feeling uncomfortable, she said the first thing that came to mind.

"What, is this some kind of intervention?" Stupid. She cracked a small grin to show she was teasing, but that seemed to make the tension rocket even higher in the room and Brienne looked like she was forcefully resisting a visceral need to speak.

"Should it be?" Sansa asked and Arya became acutely uneasy. She looked at her sister, and then around the room, and squinted a little in the light.

"Huh?" Fuck, she was tired and fuzzy, but this was definitely not the usual 'welcome back to the land of the non-dying' visit. Sansa walked to her bed, her hands wrapped around the bed footboard and her leaned forward slightly, like being a few inches closer would make her more understandable. Arya was starting to feel a little closed in.

"Should we be staging an intervention?" she repeated softly, eyes filled with concern and stern and Arya suddenly realized what this must be about.

"Nah, no need," she lifted a hand off the bed to wave dismissively. "I'm fine."

"You're fine." Sansa stated, as bland as Arya had ever heard and what the fuck? Had everyone else lost their voices or something? She resisted the urge to look to Jon for support, the last memory he had of her brother was the dark look in his eyes and a thousand yard stare and she really didn't want to see it again. Avoidance had often proven to be life-saving in the past.

"Yeah," Arya enunciated a little too clearly. "I'm fine. Good. I'll heal up in no time."

"Is that what you told yourself once you returned home? When you made the decision to keep your injuries to yourself and then nearly bled out internally?" There was a reason Sansa, cool and collected, was Jon's hand, and Arya very carefully met her intelligent gaze.

"Honestly, I had no idea I had internal injuries," she tried to explain.

"Or potentially damaged ribs," Sansa cocked her head knowingly and Arya began to get irritated.

"Or damaged ribs," she clenched a fist and was disheartened by how weak his grip was. "I didn't know it was that bad."

"That wasn't your call to make," Sansa judged and, on the corner of the room, Jon started shifting, never one to stay still. "We have healers in the castle whenever possible for that reason." Arya couldn't help rolling his eyes at this, because yeah, she was aware of that, thank you. She'd been fighting for longer than any of them and spilled more than a little blood in the field. Hell, according to her mental records she regularly spilt it more frequently than the rest of them. That was the problem.

"Look, I thought it was just a couple of bruises. It didn't exactly seem life threatening at the time," she reasonably tried to explain. Apparently that was the end of Jon's patience.

"A couple of bruises?" Jon snapped, clearly freaked out as he glared at Arya, cutting a hand through the air and beginning to pace again. "You think that was a couple of bruises? What's next? Poison and blades?"

What?

"What-" Arya started to ask before the meaning of his accusation became clear and she suddenly felt icy with anger, and maybe a little ill. "Hey, fuck off!" she snarled and furiously shoved herself up straighter in the bed, nearly blacking out from the stabbing pain of the sudden shift. She was used to pain though; she could work through it.

She froze when warm fingers wrapped around her wrist and held her in place. Warning her. She recognized the hand, recognized the tiny patterning of scars across the three knuckles and the large freckle between the index and middle finger. Recognized the old leather bracelet and brown woolen sleeve. She couldn't quite bring herself to look up at Sandor, or anyone at that moment so she ground her teeth together and breathed deeply through her nose until he calmed down a bit. Then she forced herself to take another breath, leaned back against the mattress, and swallowed thickly. If they all thought that...if they thought she was harming herself that way...fuck. Intervention her ass.

"Am I off the army?" she asked bluntly, not seeing the point in beating around the issue when they were all there because of it in the first place. The fingers still wrapped gently around her wrist twitched, but that was all the reaction she received from the question. When the silence carried on she had no choice but to open his eyes and face them. She wasn't quite sure what to make of the varied looks she was receiving so he focused on Sansa again, standing with her ridiculously straight back slightly hunched and staring at Arya like she was trying to read her mind. It was fucking unnerving. Arya raised her eyebrows expectantly.

"Why don't you explain why you did this, and then we'll see," Sansa replied, not unkindly, and damn it Arya was going to upset her no matter what she did.

"Yes," Jon broke in with a snarl that was more hurt than angry as he pushed up beside Sansa and glared. "Why don't you explain why you looked me in the face and lied about this" he waved at Arya's entire body. Arya refused to feel guilt, honestly she was too busy trying not to let his abject misery through for them to see.

She couldn't help the sardonic chuckle that cracked out of her throat. It hurt, so she stopped almost immediately, but it was enough to have Sandor removing his hand and stepping back. Arya missed the warmth immediately but still couldn't look at him so she focused on Jon's furs instead.

"Something funny about this?" Jon snapped and Sansa laid a warning hand on his shoulder, which Arya was almost thankful for.

"More ironic than funny," Arya sighed, wondering if could possibly embarrass herself further. "I kept the injury to myself so I wouldn't end up out of the battlefield, and now I'm laid up for what looks to be an amazing couple of months." She wondered off hand if she could go back to serving the House of Black and White once this fight was over. She'd have to be in moderate fighting shape before she could even think of finding a new cause to fight for. Or the same cause really, just a new method.

"That... that doesn't make sense to me," Jon frowned and looked around the room, as to check if he was alone in his confusion. Arya exhaled slowly out her nose to keep her temper. It was hard to concentrate with the two points of burning on her body and the meds affecting her reactions. Usually she was more focused than this. Usually the entire Stark house and allies didn't surround her bedside at once. Well, except for Sam and Gendry, who were standing in the back; they just looked like they wanted to hug her or something, which was kind of worrying in and of itself. She glanced around the room from under her half closed eyes and came to the unfortunate conclusion that nobody was planning on leaving until they understood her motives. That was fair, she supposed. If she was in their shoes, she'd probably be doing the exact same thing.

"Look," in for a coin and all that shit, "there were concerns about the number of injuries I was receiving in comparison to the rest of the soldiers and I got the impression that it wasn't in a good way. I didn't-" holy shit was this ever not funny, but she couldn't help another rough chuckle at her own expense. "I wasn't ready to be demoted to fragile little rich girl status again while everyone else was out-" she cut that train of thought off sharply before deciding that it was too late to take any of it back "-just because I get broken more than everyone else. I figured hiding a couple scrapes and bruises meant less medical attention which would keep me in the battlefield, where I can be useful to the North.."

"You do not suffer mere flesh ailments that heal in days," the Maester pointed out when it became clear that no one else really knew what to say to that. Arya couldn't help the grimace of embarrassment.

"Yeah, no. This was...this was a mistake. I didn't think I was actually seriously injured, turns out I was wrong." She was not expecting the roar of voices clamouring over one another to be

heard before she'd even finished speaking, and she couldn't help the tiny, oh so small, flinch in response.

"-your chest was the shade of a plum-"

"-your ribs had hairline fractures-"

"-internal bleeding is not a mistake-"

"-what exactly do you consider serious if-"

"-this is certainly a jest-"

"You sewed stitches into your own flesh," Sansa's soft words seemed to have more weight than all the angry protests combined and the room fell silent. "Five stitches that, so we're told, were even enough to suggest experience. " She moved silently next to the headboard and Arya lifted her head and met her hard, very cool (pissed, she was so pissed) eyes. "How long has this been going on Arya?"

She was medicated, she was exhausted, she was hurt, and now she had a headache. She continued to take even, steady breaths to control the ever-increasing pain that was beginning to gnaw deep in her side, throbbing along with each heartbeat.

"Not long," she sighed and pressed her lips together, biting her cheek lightly to try and distract herself. It didn't work. She couldn't help squirming slightly under the covers to see if it would help with the discomfort. It didn't make it worse, but it didn't make it better.

"How. Long." She repeated just as softly, and she abruptly ran out of patience.

"By the Old Gods, Sansa, I don't know! It's not something I considered serious enough to keep track of! It was just some goddamned bruises! Would you back the fuck off already!" she roared and maybe, just maybe, she was panicking a little.

The room felt too small, she had a hot poker pressing between her ribs with each breath, and she wasn't thinking clearly enough for this. Not right now.

She eyed the door, ignoring the fact that Jon and Sandor were mostly blocking her sight of it. Not noticing how they shared a look before quietly stepping aside to give her a clear visual. It didn't help. She switched her gaze to the window, already knowing they were at least eight stories off the ground floor. It would be a tough climb. She hunched over and noticed as everyone swiftly moved to leave the room, as ordered by the Maester, but it was peripheral so she missed their concerned, guarded looks.

She definitely noticed, however, when Sandor's hand wrapped around her wrist once more. And, like the first time, Arya stilled instantly. She focused on the warmth, the pressure, and tried desperately not to whine about how it hurt. Fuck, did it hurt. And it was all her own damn fault.

She was tired of it always hurting.

"Relax, she-wolf," Sandor dragged a chair to her with his foot, sat down, and leaned forward over Arya. His words were soft, calm. Arya eyed the maid as she entered the room and stuck a syringe into her arm. She didn't try to fight it because she knew that Sandor would only hold her down and order the maid to put her to sleep immediately. Still, she couldn't bring herself to look at Sandor.

"I'm gonna miss Winterfell," she mumbled, the pain nothing more than a dull throb in the distance now, easily ignored as her world narrowed to the heat around her wrist and the overwhelming heaviness of her eyelids.

"We're going to continue this when you wake up," she heard, but it didn't register. Didn't matter anyways. She really was going to miss her home, especially now, after fighting so hard to return to it.

"Tired."

"Sleep. I'll be here."

Arya didn't need any more than that to let go.

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She didn't need to open his eyes to know that Jon was sitting in a chair level with Arya's thigh. She felt the press of his familiar gaze the moment she woke up, and she was well aware that Jon knew she was awake. Just like she knew that Jon wasn't going to call her on it. He was going to sit there and stare until Arya stopped pretending. Arya waited about ten minutes on principle, but when she started to feel tired again she decided it wouldn't be right to fall asleep on the man again.

She opened her eyes, blinked in the relatively dim light, and met Jon head on.

Jon did not look happy.

Jon looked... he looked... yeah, not happy.

"Are we going to have to talk about this?" she croaked out and damn near winced when the man's gaze just pinched tighter as he very pointedly did not respond. Arya noted the wooden table dragged partially over her bed on the right side, the cup of water and fresh baked bread very easy reach. The thoughtful placement had Jon's name all over it, even if the man looked angry enough to spit swords. In their world that was a scary possibility. Arya slowly took a drink, noting that the pain accompanying every breath was more manageable even if it wasn't absent, and looked back at Jon.

"You here to give me my discharge order?" she asked in lieu of a simple thank you. Jon did react overtly to that, quirking his head very slightly as he watched Arya, damn near

unblinking. He knew what Arya was asking and it had nothing to do with getting out of the hospital.

"Is that what you want?"

"No." Fuck no. Was she not being obvious enough with how much she didn't want to leave?

"You'll forgive me if I have reason to doubt your words," Jon said evenly, gaze unwavering.

"If I wanted to leave, I'd choose an extraction method that didn't involve internal bleeding and a medical chamber."

"Internal bleedings," Jon corrected like Arya knew he would, Jon always got stuck in minor details when it came to Arya's safety, not that it really made a difference. He said this with the growly, "I'm the King of the North, I came back from the dead because I'm too stubborn to die" manner that sent alarm bells ringing and Targaryen soldiers diving for cover. The problem here was that this was different from battle Jon and end-of-the-world Jon; it was her big brother Jon who was talking and it struck deeper than usual. It almost hurt. "You admitted to concealing injuries which, judging by this, could have had the potential to cause you serious harm. There is reason to question your motives so I am going to ask you this once, and you are going to answer me truthfully: are you concealing these injuries with the intention of, or have you ever contemplated, hurting yourself?"

Arya stared. Jon stared right back, hard as a glacier.

It hit her then exactly how fucked up this all was. How far she'd gone. How it must look to Jon and their siblings, friends and allies and that maybe, just maybe, they were right to be concerned. Arya swallowed thickly, because this wasn't at all what it was supposed to be like. Jon was never supposed to look at her with that smoldering fury buried behind the ice in his eyes, not like that.

"No," her voice cracked a little and she cleared it and tried again, making sure she put the force of her conviction into it this time as she met Jon glare for glare. "No. By the Gods, I'm not trying to hurt myself." She rubbed an exhausted hand over her eyes and up through her hair. She needed a shower.

"I believe you," Jon said after a heavy moment and then he sagged slightly in his seat, not enough to lose his ever-present posture but enough to show that a weight had disappeared and true guilt began to settle in Arya's gut, low and nagging. "And fortunately so does the Maester, despite not having spoken with you yet." His frown was back as he studied her and Arya didn't know how to respond to that, so she focused on the lesser of two evils. She should probably just learn to keep her mouth shut, but she doubted that would ever be high on her list of priorities.

"Four moons. That's how long you'll stay outside of the battlefield." Jon finally broke the silence, startling Arya. She hadn't realized it had been so long. Jon clearly wasn't happy with this either as he stood slowly from his seat and glowered down at Arya. He was not hiding his anger from Arya now.

"Yes, four moons." he repeated as soon as Arya opened her mouth. The sarcasm didn't sit right this time, like it was purely there as a misdirect and Arya swallowed, feeling a little blindsided. "This may come as a shock to you, Arya, but it is not okay to conceal injuries, from battles or merely accidents and it is most assuredly never okay to lie to me about it." He braced his hands on the mattress and leaned right into Arya's face. Arya froze, not sure whether she should lean back or push him back and definitely trying not to show his indecision. "As of this moment you will never lie about an injury again, to me or to any Maester or healer who inquires about your health. Is that understood?"

"Yes my Lord," she forced out between clenched teeth, trying to get a reaction out of Jon. He didn't move away nor took the bait; he kept right on meeting Arya's eyes, his right hand moving to hold her hand.

"Our family has suffered enough, Arya. We must stay together, alive and safe, to protect our home. Don't do this again."

"I won't," she assured him, because he felt like Jon maybe deserved something for the stress Arya had apparently caused him "“wasn't a big fan of it.”".

"I know," Jon hovered a moment longer before pulling to a stand and dragging the table forward until it rested over Arya's lap. Behind him, the Maester entered the room. "You are going to write down every single scrape, bruise and cut that you sustained and failed to report for the last five moons. In detail. The Maester is here to ensure that the visible marks on your body match up with your descriptions.

"Jon, you can't be serious-"

"Any attempt not to comply with these orders will result in your removal from your current position until it has been proved that you are no longer a danger to yourself," Jon continued, cutting Arya off with a sharp look of warning. "This is not open for negotiation."

Arya thought about it.

She wasn't being kicked off the army.

She leaned forward carefully and dragged the parchment paper on the little table closer to him and rolled the writing feather between her fingers.

"I'm going to need the mission reports to cross-reference correctly," she sighed.

Jon smiled and, for the first time since Arya woke up, she thought that maybe things would be okay.

## End Notes

Please be kind to me and feel free to chat with me in the comment section.

If you could also check my other GOT related works, I'd be very happy.

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