

HIGH LIFE

May 2019 NEW YORK HOTLIST, MAURITIAN STREET FOOD AND THE SHEPHERD AT THE END OF THE WORLD

GAME CHANGER

Sophie Turner, star of the
biggest TV show on the planet,
on life after Sansa Stark



.air**Want to connect to Wi-Fi?**

See the back of the magazine for details. On selected flights (long-haul only).

**ON THE COVER**

Sophie Turner at The Crown at Hotel 50 Bowery, thecrownnyc.com; jduhotels.com. Dress, £3,100, Louis Vuitton (louisvuitton.com). Photograph by Eric Ryan Anderson; styling by Sarah Slutsky

Above: horses on the remote farm of Heiða Guðný Ásgeirsdóttir, who packed in her modelling career to raise livestock in a remote part of Iceland. Hanna Woodside braves the cold on page 72. Photograph by Jenny Zarins

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THE TURNER

She's made it to the final season of *Game of Thrones* – the biggest TV show on the planet – and is about to take the lead in Marvel's comic book blockbuster. Yes, Sophie Turner means business, as **Helen Whitaker** discovers in New York



Photography: Eric Ryan Anderson
Styling: Sarah Slutsky

PRIZE



STREET SMART

Draped hooded maxi dress, £2,880, and golden calf leather sandals, £2,250, both Versace (versace.com). Carmine ring set, £70, and Revolve ring, £60, both Jenny Bird (jenny-bird.com)

POSITION OF STRENGTH

Berget blazer, £1,255, Escada (escada.com). Diamond thread ear pin, £925, Katkim (katkimfinejewelry.com). Shot on location at The Crown at Hotel 50 Bowery, thecrownnyc.com; jdvhotels.com

"I've never seen an arc on anything like the one that Sansa has from season one to the final episode she's in." In a conference-room-turned-glam-area in the Hotel 50 Bowery in New York, Sophie Turner is in make-up and seemingly unaware that she may have revealed the fate of her character Sansa Stark in the finale of *Game of Thrones*. The final episode she's in? Is that also the final episode of the show? She grins. "I don't know. You'll have to figure that one out."

Such are the perils of interviewing the star of a TV series with the highest body count since *The Walking Dead*. As you read this, Turner is (we hope) appearing in the massively anticipated TV event that is the eighth and final season of *Game of Thrones*. If you've been living in a pop-culture vacuum, the multi-award-winning spectacular with a sprawling universe and enormous ensemble cast has dominated television since it premiered in 2011. Everyone and their grandma has been hooked on its addictive alchemy of battles, betrayals and the fact that a fan favourite might be offed at any moment in a hideous way. Each episode is estimated to have an over £7m budget and, with the six episodes of season eight being billed as 'feature-length', that figure has rocketed in line with the final showdown – and all the CGI dragons that entails – to find out who will win the battle for the Iron Throne.

Having watched Turner, now 23, evolve her character from prissy 13-year-old wannabe princess to self-assured

another psychopath she was briefly betrothed to), her real-life relationships with the *GoT* cast are a lot less toxic. "We have a huge group chat called 'mates'," she says. Her British accent – she was raised in Warwickshire, but now splits her time between London and New York – has a definite transatlantic hint to it. "There are about 100 people from the cast on there because so many people have died and come into the show." Who posted the last message? "Oooh, let's find out," she replies, picking up her phone and putting down the Oi Ocha green tea that she's been sipping, the giant diamond of her engagement ring glinting as she does. "Kit [Harrington, who plays her cousin and King in the North Jon Snow] in the group," she says, scrolling through WhatsApp. "And Maisie [Williams, who plays her sister Arya] was the last person I talked to one-on-one."

Today, she's still processing that the show is coming to an end. "Right after I wrapped I cried for a few hours and then I was fine and was like, 'I have to go home and not talk to anyone and not do anything.' So I spent a week on my sofa not knowing what to do with myself," she says. "I've been there for ten years working six months of every year, if not more, living together, eating together. Maisie and I sleep in the same bed! So, the relationships I've created with these people is definitely the one big thing I'll take away from it, as well as the best drama class I could have ever asked for. It's like a really bonkers high school."

Her friendship with co-star Maisie Williams is one of her favourite by-products of the show, they have matching tattoos of the date they were both offered their roles (07/08/09), and the women have said they are so close they have on occasion been mistaken for a couple. I think people are very invested in your BFF-dom, I tell her. "I'm very invested in our BFF-dom!" she laughs back. "I love that Maisie isn't afraid to say anything," she says. "She's kind of everything that I aspire to be. She's very good in social settings. She's so fun. She can talk to anyone. That girl can't stop chatting, I would love to be like that. She is an incredible dancer and she'll call me out on my bullsh*t." Like what? "There's so much. If I say something wrong or if I'm... too much. She's also a massive goofball. It's quite bad for the crew on set because they're like, 'they never concentrate.' That's what you get for putting best friends together."

With the dawn of prestige TV, the small screen is no longer seen as the poor relation that one 'graduates' from anymore, but the end of *Thrones* does coincide with Turner helming a big screen blockbuster: *Dark Phoenix*, the latest instalment in the *X-Men* franchise. As Jean Grey, she reprises the role she played in 2016's *Apocalypse*, but this time her story takes centre stage. Jean is the Dark Phoenix of the title, a mutant with telepathic and telekinetic powers, and in whom there lurks a cosmic entity called the Phoenix who starts to turn her towards evil.

"I think it's the most taxing role that I've ever played, and that includes Sansa," she says. "Every intense emotional scene for this was one on top of another on top of another. The way I compare Jean's character is to someone who has an addiction, and losing that person to the drug addiction. It's a really heartbreaking story about a girl who can't @

"GAME OF THRONES IS THE BEST DRAMA CLASS I COULD HAVE EVER ASKED FOR. IT'S LIKE A REALLY BONKERS HIGH SCHOOL"

advisor to the King in the North, one is struck by how she has also evolved as an actress, from naïve mean girl to victim to survivor, and how often her only tool of communicating her inner journey has been with a look. She's not wrong about her plot arc, and what everyone in the *Thrones*-verse wants to know is if she'll be one of the last characters standing – and if not, what sort of creative death the showrunners might have in store for her. Of course, she won't tell me. "I don't think they will be mad," is the only thing she'll allow when I ask if viewers will be satisfied with the ending, "because they love the show. The writing is fantastic, so it just depends on which characters you love and your allegiances."

What she will say, is that despite her incredible bad luck with on-screen husbands (two coerced marriages, one to a psychopath and one to someone accused of murdering

FREE SPIRIT

Dress, £3,100,
Louis Vuitton
(louisvuitton.com)



NY-LON

Sophie's choices in each of her home cities

NEW YORK

"SoHo is my area. I love that everything is so close and that you can walk everywhere. It has really cool independent cafés and shops, and as soon as I step out of my front door, it's bustling."

Café Select

"Café Select is one of my favourite places to eat. Have you tried their polenta? It's so good."
cafeselectnyc.com

Café Habana

"Café Habana is an amazing Cuban place and a New York institution."
cafehabana.com

LONDON

"Whenever I'm back in London we go to Queen of Hoxton's rooftop. In summer, they have sand and sunbathing chairs and screenings, and in winter they put up a tepee and you can roast marshmallows."
queenofhoxton.com

The Quince Tree

My favourite café is The Quince Tree in Maida Vale. You can buy all sorts of pots and plants there and then there's this tiny little café in the middle of it all, covered in flowers."
clifton.co.uk

Sexy Fish or 34 Mayfair

"For dinner I love Sexy Fish or 34 Mayfair – I think that might be my favourite place."
sexyfish.com; 34-restaurant.co.uk

control this thing that's inside her and in doing that she loses everyone."

"She did an immense amount of research into the psychology of a person slowly losing their sense of identity," *Dark Phoenix* director Simon Kinberg tells me. "Jean Grey isn't just a superhero grappling with her powers, she's a human being struggling with her sense of self. In preparation, Sophie would walk around with earphones playing voices in her head, to go inside the experience of someone struggling with schizophrenia, hearing voices, distorting reality. And so the performance and arc feels like someone going through that struggle, losing their mind as their powers/voices get more and more overwhelming. So instead of simply fearing Jean/Phoenix, the audience empathises with her, feeling her pain, her fragility, her humanity."

As with the last two *X-Men* films, shooting took place in Montreal. Originally billed to be released in November 2018, it then underwent extensive reshoots and the release date was pushed back twice – rarely considered a positive thing in the movie world – which got internet tongues speculating. Turner, however, is sanguine about it: "We did a month of reshoots and changed a big part of the movie. When I read the script for the reshoots I was like, 'Oh my God, it's perfect' and I think it's a really amazing movie – the most grounded, the most character-driven *X-Men* movie that they've ever had."

One thing *Dark Phoenix* has in common with *Thrones* is its multi-generational ensemble cast, but unlike *GoT*, where many of its characters were little known until breaking out via the show, *Dark Phoenix* already features a roll call of Academy-bothering names. "Having one-on-one scenes with Michael Fassbender has been a dream of mine for so long and then to be able to do it was amazing," says Turner. "His work is just mind-blowing to see in person. He's consistently one of the greatest actors I've ever worked with. And then James [McAvoy] and Jen [Lawrence], too." The bonding didn't stop when the cameras did – the cast returned to their favourite places on Montreal's nightlife scene. "Our local bar was L'Original," she says. "All of us would go. It's 100 per cent my favourite place in Montreal. We go there every time we shoot and we've made such good friends with the people that run it that they let us stay there until the early hours of the morning and dance on the bar. They have truffle *poutine*, the music's amazing – kind of 1980s – and it's a cosy little cabin that you can't see from the street. You have to walk down all these stairs to get to it."

Her engagement to middle Jonas brother Joe is of ongoing interest to the tabloids, but Turner won't let her increasingly public profile stop her speaking her mind: "I think I probably should get media training now, because I say a lot of things in interviews that I don't mean." Her publicist at this point interrupts to reassure her she doesn't and that she's sitting a few feet away. "I would rather be my authentic self than a trained doll," she adds. I've been warned in advance not to ask about Turner's partner, but she can't help but drop his name into the conversation. Their wedding is expected to happen in France this summer (according to the invitation leaked last year on Instagram), and that she will be wearing Louis Vuitton, for whom she is an ambassador is a safe guess. So far, the rest of the details are under wraps. "It's difficult, for sure," she says of dating ☹

Turner also wears: Faye Knocks earrings, £60, Jenny Bird (jenny-bird.com)



Watch the last episode of *Game of Thrones* season seven on board (selected flights)

someone as famous as she is. "People read stuff into your relationship or they're around the corner taking pictures if you're having a fight or having a bad day," she says. "If you're crying then they will create stories out of that, saying that you're breaking up, you're making up, or someone's getting cosy with someone else. It's annoying."

Turner arrives at the *High Life* shoot in the unassuming outfit of a cropped Backstreet Boys T-shirt (she admits she doesn't really know their music), jeans, beanie hat and a 'J' necklace, but once she starts gamely strutting around New York's Chinatown in a red floor-length Versace gown, it's only a matter of time before the paparazzi show up.

But with 8.9 million followers on Instagram, she has a more direct route to her fans than the tabloids. Despite once telling an interviewer that she won a role over another actress because of her bigger following, she has a conflicted relationship with social media. "I make a point not to read the comments," she says, holding up her phone. 'Social media seriously harms your mental health' is emblazoned on the case. "And I've got it set up that I can't see pictures that are tagged of me."

She also suffers from social anxiety, something she thinks is the norm among her Gen-Z contemporaries. "People don't talk about anxiety and depression enough, but I'd say about 80 per cent of people my age do suffer with these things," she says. "I would definitely rather sit at home than venture out of the house and have to talk to strangers, but I get over it. A shot or two helps before you go," she adds with a laugh. "Having to do a panel in front of people. That scares the sh*t out of me,

I'll be shaking, my heart will be pounding. I've definitely been in social situations where I've had to escape to the toilets because I get so nervous that I can't really talk to people. But I deal with it. It's not, like, crippling."

For now, as *GoT* makes its final TV lap, she's concentrating on what's next for her career. "Initially all I got was offers for mediaeval queens or aristocrats and I stopped my agents from sending me them because they will forever be compared to Sansa Stark," she says. "It doesn't get easier just because you've been in one big thing, because the reality of it is that *Game of Thrones* has been one kind of role, one kind of genre for ten years of my life." When we meet, she's been off for a month while waiting for the respective *X-Men* and *Thrones* publicity machines to crank into action. "I'm auditioning a lot and there's a lot of conversations between my agents and I'm, like, 'What do I want to do? Where do I really want my career to go? Do I want to take a break? Do I want to be working more?'" she says. "It's a very strange time in my life right now. But I'm enjoying it. I'm enjoying the freedom." ■

✉ @helbobwhitaker

Dark Phoenix is out on 7 June; *Game of Thrones* season eight is currently airing on Sky Atlantic and NOW TV



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STAND OUT

Berget blazer, as before, and trousers, £355, both Escada (escada.com). Ear pin, as before

