



## ARYA

The man on the roof was the first to die. He was crouched down by the chimney two hundred yards away, no more than a vague shadow in the predawn gloom, but as the sky began to lighten he stirred, stretched, and stood. Anguy's arrow took him in the chest. He tumbled bonelessly down the steep slate pitch, and fell in front of the septy door.

The Mummers had posted two guards there, but their torch left them night blind, and the outlaws had crept in close. Kyle and Notch let fly together. One man went down with an arrow through his throat, the other through his belly. The second man dropped the torch, and the flames licked up at him. He screamed as his clothes took fire, and that was the end of stealth. Thoros gave a shout, and the outlaws attacked in earnest.

Arya watched from atop her horse, on the crest of the wooded ridge that overlooked the septy, mill, brewhouse, and stables and the desolation of weeds, burnt trees, and mud that surrounded them. The trees were mostly bare now, and the few withered brown leaves that still clung to the branches did little to obstruct her view. Lord Beric had left Beardless Dick and Mudge to guard them. Arya hated being left behind like she was some stupid *child*, but at least Gendry had been kept back as well. She knew better than to try and argue. This was battle, and in battle you had to obey.

The eastern horizon glowed gold and pink, and overhead a half moon peeked out through low scuttling clouds. The wind blew cold, and Arya

could hear the rush of water and the creak of the mill's great wooden waterwheel. There was a smell of rain in the dawn air, but no drops were falling yet. Flaming arrows flew through the morning mists, trailing pale ribbons of fire, and thudded into the wooden walls of the septy. A few smashed through shuttered windows, and soon enough thin tendrils of smoke were rising between the broken shutters.

Two Mummers came bursting from the septy side by side, axes in their hands. Anguy and the other archers were waiting. One axeman died at once. The other managed to duck, so the shaft ripped through his shoulder. He staggered on, till two more arrows found him, so quickly it was hard to say which had struck first. The long shafts punched through his breastplate as if it had been made of silk instead of steel. He fell heavily. Anguy had arrows tipped with bodkins as well as broadheads. A bodkin could pierce even heavy plate. *I'm going to learn to shoot a bow*, Arya thought. She loved swordfighting, but she could see how arrows were good too.

Flames were creeping up the west wall of the septy, and thick smoke poured through a broken window. A Myrish crossbowman poked his head out a different window, got off a bolt, and ducked down to rewind. She could hear fighting from the stables as well, shouts well mingled with the screams of horses and the clang of steel. *Kill them all*, she thought fiercely. She bit her lip so hard she tasted blood. *Kill every single one*.

The crossbowman appeared again, but no sooner had he loosed than three arrows hissed past his head. One rattled off his helm. He vanished, bow and all. Arya could see flames in several of the second-story windows. Between the smoke and the morning mists, the air was a haze of blowing black and white. Anguy and the other bowmen were creeping closer, the better to find targets.

Then the septy erupted, the Mummers boiling out like angry ants. Two Ibbenese rushed through the door with shaggy brown shields held high before them, and behind them came a Dothraki with a great curved *arakh* and bells in his braid, and behind him three Volantene sellswords covered with fierce tattoos. Others were climbing out windows and leaping to the ground. Arya saw a man take an arrow through the chest with one leg across a windowsill, and heard his scream as he fell. The smoke was thickening. Quarrels and arrows sped back and forth. Watty fell with a

grunt, his bow slipping from his hand. Kyle was trying to nock another shaft to his string when a man in black mail flung a spear through his belly. She heard Lord Beric shout. From out of the ditches and trees the rest of his band came pouring, steel in hand. Arya saw Lem's bright yellow cloak flapping behind him as he rode down the man who'd killed Kyle. Thoros and Lord Beric were everywhere, their swords swirling fire. The red priest hacked at a hide shield until it flew to pieces, while his horse kicked the man in the face. A Dothraki screamed and charged the lightning lord, and the flaming sword leapt out to meet his *arakh*. The blades kissed and spun and kissed again. Then the Dothraki's hair was ablaze, and a moment later he was dead. She spied Ned too, fighting at the lightning lord's side. *It's not fair, he's only a little older than me, they should have let me fight.*

The battle did not last very long. The Brave Companions still on their feet soon died, or threw down their swords. Two of the Dothraki managed to regain their horses and flee, but only because Lord Beric let them go. "Let them carry the word back to Harrenhal," he said, with flaming sword in hand. "It will give the Leech Lord and his goat a few more sleepless nights."

Jack-Be-Lucky, Harwin, and Merrit o' Moontown braved the burning septy to search for captives. They emerged from the smoke and flames a few moments later with eight brown brothers, one so weak that Merrit had to carry him across a shoulder. There was a septon with them as well, round-shouldered and balding, but he wore black chainmail over his grey robes. "Found him hiding under the cellar steps," said Jack, coughing.

Thoros smiled to see him. "You are Utt."

"*Septon* Utt. A man of god."

"What god would want the likes o' you?" growled Lem.

"I have sinned," the septon wailed. "I know, I know. Forgive me, Father. Oh, grievously have I sinned."

Arya remembered Septon Utt from her time at Harrenhal. Shagwell the Fool said he always wept and prayed for forgiveness after he'd killed his latest boy. Sometimes he even made the other Mummer's scourge him. They all thought that was very funny.

Lord Beric slammed his sword into its scabbard, quenching the flames. “Give the dying the gift of mercy and bind the others hand and foot for trial,” he commanded, and it was done.

The trials went swiftly. Various of the outlaws came forward to tell of things the Brave Companions had done; towns and villages sacked, crops burned, women raped and murdered, men maimed and tortured. A few spoke of the boys that Septon Utt had carried off. The septon wept and prayed through it all. “I am a weak reed,” he told Lord Beric. “I pray to the Warrior for strength, but the gods made me weak. Have mercy on my weakness. The boys, the sweet boys . . . I never mean to hurt them . . .”

Septon Utt soon dangled beneath a tall elm, swinging slowly by the neck, as naked as his name day. The other Brave Companions followed one by one. A few fought, kicking and struggling as the noose was tightened round their throats. One of the crossbowmen kept shouting, “I soldier, I soldier,” in a thick Myrish accent. Another offered to lead his captors to gold; a third told them what a good outlaw he would make. Each was stripped and bound and hanged in turn. Tom Sevenstrings played a dirge for them on his woodharp, and Thoros implored the Lord of Light to roast their souls until the end of time.

*A mummer tree*, Arya thought as she watched them dangle, their pale skins painted a sullen red by the flames of the burning septy. Already the crows were coming, appearing out of nowhere. She heard them croaking and cackling at one another, and wondered what they were saying. Arya had not feared Septon Utt as much as she did Rorge and Biter and some of the others still at Harrenhal, but she was glad that he was dead all the same. *They should have hanged the Hound too, or chopped his head off.* Instead, to her disgust, the outlaws had treated Sandor Clegane’s burned arm, restored his sword and horse and armor, and set him free a few miles from the hollow hill. All they’d taken was his gold.

The septy soon collapsed in a roar of smoke and flame, its walls no longer able to support the weight of its heavy slate roof. The eight brown brothers watched with resignation. They were all that remained, explained the eldest, who wore a small iron hammer on a thong about his neck to signify his devotion to the Smith. “Before the war we were four-and-forty, and this was a prosperous place. We had a dozen milk cows and a bull, a

hundred beehives, a vineyard and an apple arbor. But when the lions came through they took all our wine and milk and honey, slaughtered the cows, and put our vineyard to the torch. After that . . . I have lost count of our visitors. This false septon was only the latest. There was one monster . . . we gave him all our silver, but he was certain we were hiding gold, so his men killed us one by one to make Elder Brother talk.”

“How did the eight of you survive?” asked Anguy the Archer.

“I am ashamed,” the old man said. “It was me. When it came my turn to die, I told them where our gold was hidden.”

“Brother,” said Thoros of Myr, “the only shame was not telling them at once.”

The outlaws sheltered that night in the brewhouse beside the little river. Their hosts had a cache of food hidden beneath the floor of the stables, so they shared a simple supper; oaten bread, onions, and a watery cabbage soup tasting faintly of garlic. Arya found a slice of carrot floating in her bowl, and counted herself lucky. The brothers never asked the outlaws for names. *They know*, Arya thought. How could they not? Lord Beric wore the lightning bolt on breastplate, shield, and cloak, and Thoros his red robes, or what remained of them. One brother, a young novice, was bold enough to tell the red priest not to pray to his false god so long as he was under their roof. “Bugger that,” said Lem Lemoncloak. “He’s our god too, and you owe us for your bloody lives. And what’s false about him? Might be your Smith can mend a broken sword, but can he heal a broken man?”

“Enough, Lem,” Lord Beric commanded. “Beneath their roof we will honor their rules.”

“The sun will not cease to shine if we miss a prayer or two,” Thoros agreed mildly. “I am one who would know.”

Lord Beric himself did not eat. Arya had never seen him eat, though from time to time he took a cup of wine. He did not seem to sleep, either. His good eye would often close, as if from weariness, but when you spoke to him it would flick open again at once. The Marcher lord was still clad in his ratty black cloak and dented breastplate with its chipped enamel lightning. He even slept in that breastplate. The dull black steel hid the terrible wound the Hound had given him, the same way his thick woolen scarf concealed

the dark ring about his throat. But nothing hid his broken head, all caved in at the temple, or the raw red pit that was his missing eye, or the shape of the skull beneath his face.

Arya looked at him warily, remembering all the tales told of him in Harrenhal. Lord Beric seemed to sense her fear. He turned his head, and beckoned her closer. “Do I frighten you, child?”

“No.” She chewed her lip. “Only . . . well . . . I thought the Hound had killed you, but . . .”

“A wound,” said Lem Lemoncloak. “A grievous wound, aye, but Thoros healed it. There’s never been no better healer.”

Lord Beric gazed at Lem with a queer look in his good eye and no look at all in the other, only scars and dried blood. “No better healer,” he agreed wearily. “Lem, past time to change the watch, I’d think. See to it, if you’d be so good.”

“Aye, m’lord.” Lem’s big yellow cloak swirled behind him as he strode out into the windy night.

“Even brave men blind themselves sometimes, when they are afraid to see,” Lord Beric said when Lem was gone. “Thoros, how many times have you brought me back now?”

The red priest bowed his head. “It is R’hllor who brings you back, my lord. The Lord of Light. I am only his instrument.”

“How many times?” Lord Beric insisted.

“Six,” Thoros said reluctantly. “And each time is harder. You have grown reckless, my lord. Is death so very sweet?”

“Sweet? No, my friend. Not sweet.”

“Then do not court it so. Lord Tywin leads from the rear. Lord Stannis as well. You would be wise to do the same. A seventh death might mean the end of both of us.”

Lord Beric touched the spot above his left ear where his temple was caved in. “Here is where Ser Burton Crakehall broke helm and head with a blow of his mace.” He unwound his scarf, exposing the black bruise that encircled his neck. “Here the mark the mantichore made at Rushing Falls. He seized a poor beekeeper and his wife, thinking they were mine, and let it be

known far and wide that he would hang them both unless I gave myself up to him. When I did he hanged them anyway, and me on the gibbet between them.” He lifted a finger to the raw red pit of his eye. “Here is where the Mountain thrust his dirk through my visor.” A weary smile brushed his lips. “That’s thrice I have died at the hands of House Clegane. You would think that I might have learned . . .”

It was a jest, Arya knew, but Thoros did not laugh. He put a hand on Lord Beric’s shoulder. “Best not to dwell on it.”

“Can I dwell on what I scarce remember? I held a castle on the Marches once, and there was a woman I was pledged to marry, but I could not find that castle today, nor tell you the color of that woman’s hair. Who knighted me, old friend? What were my favorite foods? It all fades. Sometimes I think I was born on the bloody grass in that grove of ash, with the taste of fire in my mouth and a hole in my chest. Are you my mother, Thoros?”

Arya stared at the Myrish priest, all shaggy hair and pink rags and bits of old armor. Grey stubble covered his cheeks and the sagging skin beneath his chin. He did not look much like the wizards in Old Nan’s stories, but even so . . .

“Could you bring back a man without a head?” Arya asked. “Just the once, not six times. Could you?”

“I have no magic, child. Only prayers. That first time, his lordship had a hole right through him and blood in his mouth, I knew there was no hope. So when his poor torn chest stopped moving, I gave him the good god’s own kiss to send him on his way. I filled my mouth with fire and breathed the flames inside him, down his throat to lungs and heart and soul. The *last kiss* it is called, and many a time I saw the old priests bestow it on the Lord’s servants as they died. I had given it a time or two myself, as all priests must. But never before had I felt a dead man shudder as the fire filled him, nor seen his eyes come open. It was not me who raised him, my lady. It was the Lord. R’hllor is not done with him yet. Life is warmth, and warmth is fire, and fire is God’s and God’s alone.”

Arya felt tears well in her eyes. Thoros used a lot of words, but all they meant was *no*, that much she understood.

“Your father was a good man,” Lord Beric said. “Harwin has told me much of him. For his sake, I would gladly forgo your ransom, but we need the gold too desperately.”

She chewed her lip. *That’s true, I guess.* He had given the Hound’s gold to Greenbeard and the Huntsman to buy provisions south of the Mander, she knew. “The last harvest burned, this one is drowning, and winter will soon be on us,” she had heard him say when he sent them off. “The smallfolk need grain and seed, and we need blades and horses. Too many of my men ride rounseys, drays, and mules against foes mounted on coursers and destriers.”

Arya didn’t know how much Robb would pay for her, though. He was a king now, not the boy she’d left at Winterfell with snow melting in his hair. And if he knew the things she’d done, the stableboy and the guard at Harrenhal and all . . . “What if my brother doesn’t want to ransom me?”

“Why would you think that?” asked Lord Beric.

“Well,” Arya said, “my hair’s messy and my nails are dirty and my feet are all hard.” Robb wouldn’t care about that, probably, but her mother would. Lady Catelyn always wanted her to be like Sansa, to sing and dance and sew and mind her courtesies. Just thinking of it made Arya try to comb her hair with her fingers, but it was all tangles and mats, and all she did was tear some out. “I ruined that gown that Lady Smallwood gave me, and I don’t sew so good.” She chewed her lip. “I don’t sew *very well*, I mean. Septa Mordane used to say I had a blacksmith’s hands.”

Gendry hooted. “Those soft little things?” he called out. “You couldn’t even hold a hammer.”

“I could if I wanted!” she snapped at him.

Thoros chuckled. “Your brother will pay, child. Have no fear on that count.”

“Yes, but what if he *won’t*?” she insisted.

Lord Beric sighed. “Then I will send you to Lady Smallwood for a time, or perhaps to mine own castle of Blackhaven. But that will not be necessary, I’m certain. I do not have the power to give you back your father,



no more than Thoros does, but I can at least see that you are returned safely to your mother's arms."

"Do you *swear*?" she asked him. Yoren had promised to take her home too, only he'd gotten killed instead.

"On my honor as a knight," the lightning lord said solemnly.

It was raining when Lem returned to the brewhouse, muttering curses as water ran off his yellow cloak to puddle on the floor. Anguy and Jack-Be-Lucky sat by the door rolling dice, but no matter which game they played one-eyed Jack had no luck at all. Tom Sevenstrings replaced a string on his woodharp, and sang "The Mother's Tears," "When Willum's Wife Was Wet," "Lord Harte Rode Out on a Rainy Day," and then "The Rains of Castamere."

*And who are you, the proud lord said,  
that I must bow so low?  
Only a cat of a different coat,  
that's all the truth I know.  
In a coat of gold or a coat of red,  
a lion still has claws,  
And mine are long and sharp, my lord,  
as long and sharp as yours.  
And so he spoke, and so he spoke,  
that lord of Castamere,  
But now the rains weep o'er his hall,  
with no one there to hear.  
Yes now the rains weep o'er his hall,  
and not a soul to hear.*

Finally Tom ran out of rain songs and put away his harp. Then there was only the sound of the rain itself beating down on the slate roof of the brewhouse. The dice game ended, and Arya stood on one leg and then the other listening to Merrit complain about his horse throwing a shoe.

"I could shoe him for you," said Gendry, all of a sudden. "I was only a 'prentice, but my master said my hand was made to hold a hammer. I can shoe horses, close up rents in mail, and beat the dents from plate. I bet I could make swords too."

"What are you saying, lad?" asked Harwin.

“I’ll smith for you.” Gendry went to one knee before Lord Beric. “If you’ll have me, m’lord, I could be of use. I’ve made tools and knives and once I made a helmet that wasn’t so bad. One of the Mountain’s men stole it from me when we was taken.”

Arya bit her lip. *He means to leave me too.*

“You would do better serving Lord Tully at Riverrun,” said Lord Beric. “I cannot pay for your work.”

“No one ever did. I want a forge, and food to eat, some place I can sleep. That’s enough, m’lord.”

“A smith can find a welcome most anywhere. A skilled armorer even more so. Why would you choose to stay with us?”

Arya watched Gendry screw up his stupid face, thinking. “At the hollow hill, what you said about being King Robert’s men, and brothers, I liked that. I liked that you gave the Hound a trial. Lord Bolton just hanged folk or took off their heads, and Lord Tywin and Ser Amory were the same. I’d sooner smith for you.”

“We got plenty of mail needs mending, m’lord,” Jack reminded Lord Beric. “Most we took off the dead, and there’s holes where the death came through.”

“You must be a lackwit, boy,” said Lem. “We’re *outlaws*. Lowborn scum, most of us, excepting his lordship. Don’t think it’ll be like Tom’s fool songs neither. You won’t be stealing no kisses from a princess, nor riding in no tourneys in stolen armor. You join us, you’ll end with your neck in a noose, or your head mounted up above some castle gate.”

“It’s no more than they’d do for you,” said Gendry.

“Aye, that’s so,” said Jack-Be-Lucky cheerfully. “The crows await us all. M’lord, the boy seems brave enough, and we do have need of what he brings us. Take him, says Jack.”

“And quick,” suggested Harwin, chuckling, “before the fever passes and he comes back to his senses.”

A wan smile crossed Lord Beric’s lips. “Thoros, my sword.”

This time the lightning lord did not set the blade afire, but merely laid it light on Gendry’s shoulder. “Gendry, do you swear before the eyes of gods

and men to defend those who cannot defend themselves, to protect all women and children, to obey your captains, your liege lord, and your king, to fight bravely when needed and do such other tasks as are laid upon you, however hard or humble or dangerous they may be?”

“I do, m’lord.”

The marcher lord moved the sword from the right shoulder to the left, and said, “Arise Ser Gendry, knight of the hollow hill, and be welcome to our brotherhood.”

From the door came rough, rasping laughter.

The rain was running off him. His burned arm was wrapped in leaves and linen and bound tight against his chest by a crude rope sling, but the older burns that marked his face glistened black and slick in the glow of their little fire. “Making more knights, Dondarrion?” the intruder said in a growl. “I ought to kill you all over again for that.”

Lord Beric faced him coolly. “I’d hoped we’d seen the last of you, Clegane. How did you come to find us?”

“It wasn’t hard. You made enough bloody smoke to be seen in Oldtown.”

“What’s become of the sentries I posted?”

Clegane’s mouth twitched. “Those two blind men? Might be I killed them both. What would you do if I had?”

Anguy strung his bow. Notch was doing the same. “Do you wish to die so very much, Sandor?” asked Thoros. “You must be mad or drunk to follow us here.”

“Drunk on rain? You didn’t leave me enough gold to buy a cup of wine, you whoresons.”

Anguy drew an arrow. “We’re outlaws. Outlaws steal. It’s in the songs, if you ask nice Tom may sing you one. Be thankful we didn’t kill you.”

“Come try it, Archer. I’ll take that quiver off you and shove those arrows up your freckly little arse.”

Anguy raised his longbow, but Lord Beric lifted a hand before he could loose. “Why did you come here, Clegane?”

“To get back what’s mine.”

“Your gold?”

“What else? It wasn’t for the pleasure of looking at your face, Dondarrion, I’ll tell you that. You’re uglier than me now. And a robber knight besides, it seems.”

“I gave you a note for your gold,” Lord Beric said calmly. “A promise to pay, when the war’s done.”

“I wiped my arse with your paper. I want the gold.”

“We don’t have it. I sent it south with Greenbeard and the Huntsman, to buy grain and seed across the Mander.”

“To feed all them whose crops you burned,” said Gendry.

“Is that the tale, now?” Sandor Clegane laughed again. “As it happens, that’s just what I meant to do with it. Feed a bunch of ugly peasants and their poxy whelps.”

“You’re lying,” said Gendry.

“The boy has a mouth on him, I see. Why believe them and not me? Couldn’t be my face, could it?” Clegane glanced at Arya. “You going to make her a knight too, Dondarrion? The first eight-year-old girl knight?”

“I’m *twelve*,” Arya lied loudly, “and I could be a knight if I wanted. I could have killed you too, only Lem took my knife.” Remembering that still made her angry.

“Complain to Lem, not me. Then tuck your tail between your legs and run. Do you know what dogs do to wolves?”

“Next time I *will* kill you. I’ll kill your brother too!”

“No.” His dark eyes narrowed. “That you won’t.” He turned back to Lord Beric. “Say, make my horse a knight. He never shits in the hall and doesn’t kick more than most, he deserves to be knighted. Unless you meant to steal him too.”

“Best climb on that horse and go,” warned Lem.

“I’ll go with my gold. Your own god said I’m guiltless—”

“The Lord of Light gave you back your life,” declared Thoros of Myr. “He did not proclaim you Baelor the Blessed come again.” The red priest unsheathed his sword, and Arya saw that Jack and Merrit had drawn as

well. Lord Beric still held the blade he'd used to dub Gendry. *Maybe this time they'll kill him.*

The Hound's mouth gave another twitch. "You're no more than common thieves."

Lem glowered. "Your lion friends ride into some village, take all the food and every coin they find, and call it *foraging*. The wolves as well, so why not us? No one robbed you, dog. You just been good and *foraged*."

Sandor Clegane looked at their faces, every one, as if he were trying to commit them all to memory. Then he walked back out into the darkness and the pouring rain from whence he'd come, with never another word. The outlaws waited, wondering . . .

"I best go see what he did to our sentries." Harwin took a wary look out the door before he left, to make certain the Hound was not lurking just outside.

"How'd that bloody bastard get all that gold anyhow?" Lem Lemoncloak said, to break the tension.

Anguy shrugged. "He won the Hand's tourney. In King's Landing." The bowman grinned. "I won a fair fortune myself, but then I met Dancy, Jayde, and Alayaya. They taught me what roast swan tastes like, and how to bathe in Arbor wine."

"Pissed it all away, did you?" laughed Harwin.

"Not *all*. I bought these boots, and this excellent dagger."

"You ought t'have bought some land and made one o' them roast swan girls an honest woman," said Jack-Be-Lucky. "Raised yourself a crop o' turnips and a crop o' sons."

"Warrior defend me! What a waste that would have been, to turn my gold to turnips."

"I like turnips," said Jack, aggrieved. "I could do with some mashed turnips right now."

Thoros of Myr paid no heed to the banter. "The Hound has lost more than a few bags of coin," he mused. "He has lost his master and kennel as well. He cannot go back to the Lannisters, the Young Wolf would never have

him, nor would his brother be like to welcome him. That gold was all he had left, it seems to me.”

“Bloody hell,” said Watty the Miller. “He’ll come murder us in our sleep for sure, then.”

“No.” Lord Beric had sheathed his sword. “Sandor Clegane would kill us all gladly, but not in our sleep. Anguy, on the morrow, take the rear with Beardless Dick. If you see Clegane still sniffing after us, kill his horse.”

“That’s a good horse,” Anguy protested.

“Aye,” said Lem. “It’s the bloody rider we should be killing. We could use that horse.”

“I’m with Lem,” Notch said. “Let me feather the dog a few times, discourage him some.”

Lord Beric shook his head. “Clegane won his life beneath the hollow hill. I will not rob him of it.”

“My lord is wise,” Thoros told the others. “Brothers, a trial by battle is a holy thing. You heard me ask R’hllor to take a hand, and you saw his fiery finger snap Lord Beric’s sword, just as he was about to make an end of it. The Lord of Light is not yet done with Joffrey’s Hound, it would seem.”

Harwin soon returned to the brewhouse. “Puddingfoot was sound asleep, but unharmed.”

“Wait till I get hold of him,” said Lem. “I’ll cut him a new bunghole. He could have gotten every one of us killed.”

No one rested very comfortably that night, knowing that Sandor Clegane was out there in the dark, somewhere close. Arya curled up near the fire, warm and snug, yet sleep would not come. She took out the coin that Jaqen H’ghar had given her and curled her fingers around it as she lay beneath her cloak. It made her feel strong to hold it, remembering how she’d seen the ghost in Harrenhal. She could kill with a whisper then.

Jaqen was gone, though. He’d left her. *Hot Pie left me too, and now Gendry is leaving.* Lommy had died, Yoren had died, Syrio Forel had died, even her father had died, and Jaqen had given her a stupid iron penny and vanished. “*Valar morghulis*,” she whispered softly, tightening her fist so the hard edges of the coin dug into her palm. “Ser Gregor, Dunsen, Polliver,

Raff the Sweetling. The Tickler and the Hound. Ser Ilyn, Ser Meryn, King Joffrey, Queen Cersei.” Arya tried to imagine how they would look when they were dead, but it was hard to bring their faces to mind. The Hound she could see, and his brother the Mountain, and she would never forget Joffrey’s face, or his mother’s . . . but Raff and Dunsen and Polliver were all fading, and even the Tickler, whose looks had been so commonplace.

Sleep took her at last, but in the black of night Arya woke again, tingling. The fire had burned down to embers. Mudge stood by the door, and another guard was pacing outside. The rain had stopped, and she could hear wolves howling. *So close*, she thought, *and so many*. They sounded as if they were all around the stable, dozens of them, maybe hundreds. *I hope they eat the Hound*. She remembered what he’d said, about wolves and dogs.

Come morning, Septon Utt still swung beneath the tree, but the brown brothers were out in the rain with spades, digging shallow graves for the other dead. Lord Beric thanked them for the night’s lodging and the meal, and gave them a bag of silver stags to help rebuild. Harwin, Likely Luke, and Watty the Miller went out scouting, but neither wolves nor hounds were found.

As Arya was cinching her saddle girth, Gendry came up to say that he was sorry. She put a foot in the stirrup and swung up into her saddle, so she could look down on him instead of up. *You could have made swords at Riverrun for my brother*, she thought, but what she said was, “If you want to be some stupid outlaw knight and get hanged, why should I care? I’ll be at Riverrun, ransomed, with my brother.”

There was no rain that day, thankfully, and for once they made good time.