

“So long as Lord Eddard is away, my son is the master of Winterfell,” she told him.

Robb stood a little taller. “Put one man in the sickroom, night and day, one outside the door, two at the bottom of the stairs. No one sees Bran without my warrant or my mother’s.”

“As you say, m’lord.”

“Do it now,” Catelyn suggested.

“And let his wolf stay in the room with him,” Robb added.

“Yes,” Catelyn said. And then again: “Yes.”

Hallis Mollen bowed and left the room.

“Lady Stark,” Ser Rodrik said when the guardsman had gone, “did you chance to notice the dagger the killer used?”

“The circumstances did not allow me to examine it closely, but I can vouch for its edge,” Catelyn replied with a dry smile. “Why do you ask?”

“We found the knife still in the villain’s grasp. It seemed to me that it was altogether too fine a weapon for such a man, so I looked at it long and hard. The blade is Valyrian steel, the hilt dragonbone. A weapon like that has no business being in the hands of such as him. Someone gave it to him.”

Catelyn nodded, thoughtful. “Robb, close the door.”

He looked at her strangely, but did as she told him.

“What I am about to tell you must not leave this room,” she told them. “I want your oaths on that. If even part of what I suspect is true, Ned and my girls have ridden into deadly danger, and a word in the wrong ears could mean their lives.”

“Lord Eddard is a second father to me,” said Theon Greyjoy. “I do so swear.”

“You have my oath,” Maester Luwin said.

“And mine, my lady,” echoed Ser Rodrik.

She looked at her son. “And you, Robb?”

He nodded his consent.

“My sister Lysa believes the Lannisters murdered her husband, Lord Arryn, the Hand of the King,” Catelyn told them. “It comes to me that Jaime Lannister did not join the hunt the day Bran fell. He remained here in the castle.” The room was deathly quiet. “I do not think Bran fell from that tower,” she said into the stillness. “I think he was thrown.”

The shock was plain on their faces. “My lady, that is a monstrous suggestion,” said Rodrik Cassel. “Even the Kingslayer would flinch at the murder of an innocent child.”

“Oh, would he?” Theon Greyjoy asked. “I wonder.”

“There is no limit to Lannister pride or Lannister ambition,” Catelyn said.

“The boy had always been surehanded in the past,” Maester Luwin said thoughtfully. “He knew every stone in Winterfell.”

“Gods,” Robb swore, his young face dark with anger. “If this is true, he will pay for it.” He drew his sword and waved it in the air. “I’ll kill him myself!”

Ser Rodrik bristled at him. “Put that away! The Lannisters are a hundred leagues away. Never draw your sword unless you mean to use it. How many times must I tell you, foolish boy?”