

boy's shoulders his cloak hung heavy. It was woven of forget-me-nots, real ones, hundreds of fresh blooms sewn to a heavy woolen cape.

His courser was as slim as her rider, a beautiful grey mare, built for speed. Ser Gregor's huge stallion trumpeted as he caught her scent. The boy from Highgarden did something with his legs, and his horse pranced sideways, nimble as a dancer. Sansa clutched at his arm. "Father, don't let Ser Gregor hurt him," she said. Ned saw she was wearing the rose that Ser Loras had given her yesterday. Jory had told him about that as well.

"These are tourney lances," he told his daughter. "They make them to splinter on impact, so no one is hurt." Yet he remembered the dead boy in the cart with his cloak of crescent moons, and the words were raw in his throat.

Ser Gregor was having trouble controlling his horse. The stallion was screaming and pawing the ground, shaking his head. The Mountain kicked at the animal savagely with an armored boot. The horse reared and almost threw him.

The Knight of Flowers saluted the king, rode to the far end of the list, and couched his lance, ready. Ser Gregor brought his animal to the line, fighting with the reins. And suddenly it began. The Mountain's stallion broke in a hard gallop, plunging forward wildly, while the mare charged as smooth as a flow of silk. Ser Gregor wrenched his shield into position, juggled with his lance, and all the while fought to hold his unruly mount on a straight line, and suddenly Loras Tyrell was on him, placing the point of his lance just there, and in an eye blink the Mountain was failing. He was so huge that he took his horse down with him in a tangle of steel and flesh.

Ned heard applause, cheers, whistles, shocked gasps, excited muttering, and over it all the rasping, raucous laughter of the Hound. The Knight of Flowers reined up at the end of the lists. His lance was not even broken. His sapphires winked in the sun as he raised his visor, smiling. The commons went mad for him.

In the middle of the field, Ser Gregor Clegane disentangled himself and came boiling to his feet. He wrenched off his helm and slammed it down onto the ground. His face was dark with fury and his hair fell down into his eyes. "My sword," he shouted to his squire, and the boy ran it out to him. By then his stallion was back on its feet as well.

Gregor Clegane killed the horse with a single blow of such ferocity that it half severed the animal's neck. Cheers turned to shrieks in a heartbeat. The stallion went to its knees, screaming as it died. By then Gregor was striding down the lists toward Ser Loras Tyrell, his bloody sword clutched in his fist. "Stop him!" Ned shouted, but his words were lost in the roar. Everyone else was yelling as well, and Sansa was crying.

It all happened so fast. The Knight of Flowers was shouting for his own sword as Ser Gregor knocked his squire aside and made a grab for the reins of his horse. The mare scented blood and reared. Loras Tyrell kept his seat, but barely. Ser Gregor swung his sword, a savage twohanded blow that took the boy in the chest and knocked him from the saddle. The courser dashed away in panic as Ser Loras lay stunned in the dirt. But as Gregor lifted his sword for the killing blow, a rasping voice warned, "Leave him be, " and a steel-clad hand wrenched him away from the boy.