

Robb looked relieved. "Good." He smiled. "The next time I see you, you'll be all in black." Jon forced himself to smile back. "It was always my color. How long do you think it will be?" "Soon enough," Robb promised. He pulled Jon to him and embraced him fiercely. "Farewell, Snow."

Jon hugged him back. "And you, Stark. Take care of Bran."

"I will." They broke apart and looked at each other awkwardly. "Uncle Benjen said to send you to the stables if I saw you," Robb finally said.

"I have one more farewell to make," Jon told him.

"Then I haven't seen you," Robb replied. Jon left him standing there in the snow, surrounded by wagons and wolves and horses. It was a short walk to the armory. He picked up his package and took the covered bridge across to the Keep.

Arya was in her room, packing a polished ironwood chest that was bigger than she was. Nymeria was helping. Arya would only have to point, and the wolf would bound across the room, snatch up some wisp of silk in her jaws, and fetch it back. But when she smelled Ghost, she sat down on her haunches and yelped at them.

Arya glanced behind her, saw Jon, and jumped to her feet. She threw her skinny arms tight around his neck. "I was afraid you were gone," she said, her breath catching in her throat. "They wouldn't let me out to say good-bye."

"What did you do now?" Jon was amused.

Arya disentangled herself from him and made a face. "Nothing. I was all packed and everything." She gestured at the huge chest, no more than a third full, and at the clothes that were scattered all over the room. "Septa Mordane says I have to do it all over. My things weren't properly folded, she says. A proper southron lady doesn't just throw her clothes inside her chest like old rags, she says."

"Is that what you did, little sister?"

"Well, they're going to get all messed up anyway," she said. "Who cares how they're folded?"

"Septa Mordane," Jon told her. "I don't think she'd like Nymeria helping, either." The she-wolf regarded him silently with her dark golden eyes. "It's just as well. I have something for you to take with you, and it has to be packed very carefully."

Her face lit up. "A present?"

"You could call it that. Close the door."

Wary but excited, Arya checked the hall. "Nymeria, here. Guard." She left the wolf out there to warn of intruders and closed the door. By then Jon had pulled off the rags he'd wrapped it in. He held it out to her.

Arya's eyes went wide. Dark eyes, like his. "A sword," she said in a small, hushed breath.

The scabbard was soft grey leather, supple as sin. Jon drew out the blade slowly, so she could see the deep blue sheen of the steel. "This is no toy," he told her. "Be careful you don't cut yourself. The edges are sharp enough to shave with."

"Girls don't shave," Arya said.

"Maybe they should. Have you ever seen the septa's legs?"