

“Inside was a fine new lens for the observatory, from Myr by the look of it. The lenscrafters of Myr are without equal.”

Ned frowned. He had little patience for this sort of thing, Catelyn knew. “A lens,” he said. “What has that to do with me?”

“I asked the same question,” Maester Luwin said. “Clearly there was more to this than the seeming.”

Under the heavy weight of her furs, Catelyn shivered. “A lens is an instrument to help us see.”

“Indeed it is.” He fingered the collar of his order; a heavy chain worn tight around the neck beneath his robe, each link forged from a different metal.

Catelyn could feel dread stirring inside her once again. “What is it that they would have us see more clearly?”

“The very thing I asked myself.” Maester Luwin drew a tightly rolled paper out of his sleeve. “I found the true message concealed within a false bottom when I dismantled the box the lens had come in, but it is not for my eyes.”

Ned held out his hand. “Let me have it, then.”

Luwin did not stir. “Pardons, my lord. The message is not for you either. It is marked for the eyes of the Lady Catelyn, and her alone. May I approach?”

Catelyn nodded, not trusting to speak. The maester placed the paper on the table beside the bed. It was sealed with a small blob of blue wax. Luwin bowed and began to retreat.

“Stay,” Ned commanded him. His voice was grave. He looked at Catelyn. “What is it? My lady, you’re shaking.”

“I’m afraid,” she admitted. She reached out and took the letter in trembling hands. The furs dropped away from her nakedness, forgotten. In the blue wax was the moon-and-falcon seal of House Arryn. “It’s from Lysa.” Catelyn looked at her husband. “It will not make us glad,” she told him. “There is grief in this message, Ned. I can feel it.”

Ned frowned, his face darkening. “Open it.”

Catelyn broke the seal.

Her eyes moved over the words. At first they made no sense to her. Then she remembered. “Lysa took no chances. When we were girls together, we had a private language, she and I”

“Can you read it?”

“Yes,” Catelyn admitted.

“Then tell us.”

“Perhaps I should withdraw,” Maester Luwin said.

“No,” Catelyn said. “We will need your counsel.” She threw back the furs and climbed from the bed. The night air was as cold as the grave on her bare skin as she padded across the room. Maester Luwin averted his eyes. Even Ned looked shocked. “What are you doing?” he asked.

“Lighting a fire,” Catelyn told him. She found a dressing gown and shrugged into it, then knelt over the cold hearth.

“Maester Luwin-” Ned began.