

Petyr's rings and leather into the soft flesh below the ribs, so deep that Catelyn was certain that the wound was mortal. He looked at her as he fell and murmured "Cat" as the bright blood came flowing out between his mailed fingers. She thought she had forgotten that.

That was the last time she had seen his face... until the day she was brought before him in King's Landing.

A fortnight passed before Littlefinger was strong enough to leave Riverrun, but her lord father forbade her to visit him in the tower where he lay abed. Lysa helped their maester nurse him; she had been softer and shyer in those days. Edmure had called on him as well, but Petyr had sent him away. Her brother had acted as Brandon's squire at the duel, and Littlefinger would not forgive that. As soon as he was strong enough to be moved, Lord Hoster Tully sent Petyr Baelish away in a closed litter, to finish his healing on the Fingers, upon the windswept jut of rock where he'd been born.

The ringing clash of steel on steel jarred Catelyn back to the present. Ser Vardis was coming hard at Bronn, driving into him with shield and sword. The sellsword scrambled backward, checking each blow, stepping lithely over rock and root, his eyes never leaving his foe. He was quicker, Catelyn saw; the knight's silvered sword never came near to touching him, but his own ugly grey blade hacked a notch from Ser Vardis's shoulder plate.

The brief flurry of fighting ended as swiftly as it had begun when Bronn sidestepped and slid behind the statue of the weeping woman. Ser Vardis lunged at where he had been, striking a spark off the pate marble of Alyssa's thigh.

"They're not fighting good, Mother," the Lord of the Eyrie complained. "I want them to fight."

"They will, sweet baby," his mother soothed him. "The sellsword can't run all day."

Some of the lords on Lysa's terrace were making wry jests as they refilled their wine cups, but across the garden, Tyrion Lannister's mismatched eyes watched the champions dance as if there were nothing else in the world.

Bronn came out from behind the statue hard and fast, still moving left, aiming a two-handed cut at the knight's unshielded right side. Ser Vardis blocked, but clumsily, and the sellsword's blade flashed upward at his head. Metal rang, and a falcon's wing collapsed with a crunch. Ser Vardis took a half step back to brace himself, raised his shield. Oak chips flew as Bronn's sword hacked at the wooden wall. The sellsword stepped left again, away from the shield, and caught Ser Vardis across the stomach, the razor edge of his blade leaving a bright gash when it bit into the knight's plate.

Ser Vardis drove forward off his back foot, his own silver blade descending in a savage arc. Bronn slammed it aside and danced away. The knight crashed into the weeping woman, rocking her on her plinth. Staggered, he stepped backward, his head turning this way and that as he searched for his foe. The slit visor of his helm narrowed his vision.

"Behind you, ser!" Lord Hunter shouted, too late. Bronn brought his sword down with both hands, catching Ser Vardis in the elbow of his sword arm. The thin lobstered metal that protected the joint crunched. The knight grunted, turning, wrenching his weapon up. This time Bronn stood