

And Danwell was unhorsed by a hedge knight! Some days I wonder if those two are truly mine. My third wife was a Crakehall, all of the Crakehall women are sluts. Well, never mind about that, she died before you were born, what do you care?

"I was speaking of your sister. I proposed that Lord and Lady Arryn foster two of my grandsons at court, and offered to take their own son to ward here at the Twins. Are my grandsons unworthy to be seen at the king's court? They are sweet boys, quiet and mannerly. Walder is Merrett's son, named after me, and the other one... heh, I don't recall... he might have been another Walder, they're always naming them Walder so I'll favor them, but his father... which one was his father now?" His face wrinkled up. "Well, whoever he was, Lord Arryn wouldn't have him, or the other one, and I blame your lady sister for that. She frosted up as if I'd suggested selling her boy to a mummer's show or making a eunuch out of him, and when Lord Arryn said the child was going to Dragonstone to foster with Stannis Baratheon, she stormed off without a word of regrets and all the Hand could give me was apologies. What good are apologies? I ask you."

Catelyn frowned, disquieted. "I had understood that Lysa's boy was to be fostered with Lord Tywin at Casterly Rock."

"No, it was Lord Stannis," Walder Frey said irritably. "Do you think I can't tell Lord Stannis from Lord Tywin? They're both bunnies who think they're too noble to shit, but never mind about that, I know the difference. Or do you think I'm so old I can't remember? I'm ninety and I remember very well. I remember what to do with a woman too. That wife of mine will give me a son before this time next year, I'll wager. Or a daughter, that can't be helped. Boy or girl, it will be red, wrinkled, and squalling, and like as not she'll want to name it Walder or Walda."

Catelyn was not concerned with what Lady Frey might choose to name her child. "Jon Arryn was going to foster his son with Lord Stannis, you are quite certain of that?"

"Yes, yes, yes," the old man said. "Only he died, so what does it matter? You say you want to cross the river?"

"We do,."

"Well, you can't!" Lord Walder announced crisply. "Not unless I allow it, and why should I? The Tullys and the Starks have never been friends of mine." He pushed himself back in his chair and crossed his arms, smirking, waiting for her answer.

The rest was only haggling.

A swollen red sun hung low against the western hills when the gates of the castle opened. The drawbridge creaked down, the portcullis winched up, and Lady Catelyn Stark rode forth to rejoin her son and his lords bannermen. Behind her came Ser Jared Frey, Ser Hosteen Frey, Ser Danwell Frey, and Lord Walder's bastard son Ronel Rivers, leading a long column of pikemen, rank on rank of shuffling men in blue steel ringmail and silvery grey cloaks.

Robb galloped out to meet her, with Grey Wind racing beside his stallion. "It's done," she told him. "Lord Walder will grant you your crossing. His swords are yours as well, less four hundred he means to keep back to hold the Twins. I suggest that you leave four hundred of your own, a mixed force of archers and swordsmen. He can scarcely object to an offer to augment his