

Around him others knelt: Greatjon Umber, Rickard Karstark, Maege Mormont, Galbart Glover, and more. Even Tytos Blackwood was among them, the great raven cloak fanned out behind him. These are the ones who keep the old gods, she realized. She asked herself what gods she kept these days, and could not find an answer.

It would not do to disturb them at their prayers. The gods must have their due... even cruel gods who would take Ned from her, and her lord father as well. So Catelyn waited. The river wind moved through the high branches, and she could see the Wheel Tower to her right, ivy crawling up its side. As she stood there, all the memories came flooding back to her. Her father had taught her to ride amongst these trees, and that was the elm that Edmure had fallen from when he broke his arm, and over there, beneath that bower, she and Lysa had played at kissing with Petyr.

She had not thought of that in years. How young they all had been-she no older than Sansa, Lysa younger than Arya, and Petyr younger still, yet eager. The girls had traded him between them, serious and giggling by turns. It came back to her so vividly she could almost feel his sweaty fingers on her shoulders and taste the mint on his breath. There was always mint growing in the godswood, and Petyr had liked to chew it. He had been such a bold little boy, always in trouble. "He tried to put his tongue in my mouth," Catelyn had confessed to her sister afterward, when they were alone. "He did with me too," Lysa had whispered, shy and breathless. "I liked it."

Robb got to his feet slowly and sheathed his sword, and Catelyn found herself wondering whether her son had ever kissed a girl in the godswood. Surely he must have. She had seen Jeyne Poole giving him moist-eyed glances, and some of the serving girls, even ones as old as eighteen... he had ridden in battle and killed men with a sword, surely he had been kissed. There were tears in her eyes. She wiped them away angrily.

"Mother," Robb said when he saw her standing there. "We must call a council. There are things to be decided."

"Your grandfather would like to see you," she said. "Robb, he's very sick."

"Ser Edmure told me. I am sorry, Mother... for Lord Hoster and for you. Yet first we must meet. We've had word from the south. Renly Baratheon has claimed his brother's crown."

"Renly?" she said, shocked. "I had thought, surely it would be Lord Stannis..."

"So did we all, my lady," Galbart Glover said.

The war council convened in the Great Hall, at four long trestle tables arranged in a broken square. Lord Hoster was too weak to attend, asleep on his balcony, dreaming of the sun on the rivers of his youth. Edmure sat in the high seat of the Tullys, with Brynden Blackfish at his side, and his father's bannermen arrayed to right and left and along the side tables. Word of the victory at Riverrun had spread to the fugitive lords of the Trident, drawing them back. Karyl Vance came in, a lord now, his father dead beneath the Golden Tooth. Ser Marq Piper was with him, and they brought a Darry, Ser Raymun's son, a lad no older than Bran. Lord Jonos Bracken arrived from the ruins of Stone Hedge, glowering and blustering, and took a seat as far from Tytos Blackwood as the tables would permit.