

“A hard sacrifice,” Maester Luwin agreed. “Yet these are hard times, my lord. His road is no crueller than yours or your lady’s.

Catelyn thought of the three children she must lose. It was not easy keeping silent then.

Ned turned away from them to gaze out the window, his long face silent and thoughtful. Finally he sighed, and turned back. “Very well,” he said to Maester Luwin. “I suppose it is for the best. I will speak to Ben.”

“When shall we tell Jon?” the maester asked.

“When I must. Preparations must be made. It will be a fortnight before we are ready to depart. I would sooner let Jon enjoy these last few days. Summer will end soon enough, and childhood as well. When the time comes, I will tell him myself.”