

“I want to learn magic,” Bran told him. “The crow promised that I would fly.”

Maester Luwin sighed. “I can teach you history, healing, herblore. I can teach you the speech of ravens, and how to build a castle, and the way a sailor steers his ship by the stars. I can teach you to measure the days and mark the seasons, and at the Citadel in Oldtown they can teach you a thousand things more. But, Bran, no man can teach you magic.”

“The children could,” Bran said. “The children of the forest.” That reminded him of the promise he had made to Osha in the godswood, so he told Luwin what she had said.

The maester listened politely. “The wildling woman could give Old Nan lessons in telling tales, I think,” he said when Bran was done. “I will talk with her again if you like, but it would be best if you did not trouble your brother with this folly. He has more than enough to concern him without fretting over giants and dead men in the woods. It’s the Lannisters who hold your lord father, Bran, not the children of the forest.” He put a gentle hand on Bran’s arm. “Think on what I said, child.”

And two days later, as a red dawn broke across a windswept sky, Bran found himself in the yard beneath the gatehouse, strapped atop Dancer as he said his farewells to his brother.

“You are the lord in Winterfell now,” Robb told him. He was mounted on a shaggy grey stallion, his shield hung from the horse’s side; wood banded with iron, white and grey, and on it the snarling face of a direwolf. His brother wore grey chainmail over bleached leathers, sword and dagger at his waist, a fur-trimmed cloak across his shoulders. “You must take my place, as I took Father’s, until we come home.”

“I know,” Bran replied miserably. He had never felt so little or alone or scared. He did not know how to be a lord.

“Listen to Maester Luwin’s counsel, and take care of Rickon. Tell him that I’ll be back as soon as the fighting is done.”

Rickon had refused to come down. He was up in his chamber, redeyed and defiant. “No!” he’d screamed when Bran had asked if he didn’t want to say farewell to Robb. “NO farewell!”

“I told him,” Bran said. “He says no one ever comes back.”

“He can’t be a baby forever. He’s a Stark, and near four.” Robb sighed. “Well, Mother will be home soon. And I’ll bring back Father, I promise.”

He wheeled his courser around and trotted away. Grey Wind followed, loping beside the warhorse, lean and swift. Hallis Mollen went before them through the gate, carrying the rippling white banner of House Stark atop a high standard of grey ash. Theon Greyjoy and the Greatjon fell in on either side of Robb, and their knights formed up in a double column behind them, steel-tipped lances glinting in the sun.

Uncomfortably, he remembered Osha’s words. He’s marching the wrong way, he thought. For an instant he wanted to gallop after him and shout a warning, but when Robb vanished beneath the portcullis, the moment was gone.

Beyond the castle walls, a roar of sound went up. The foot soldiers and townsfolk were cheering Robb as he rode past, Bran knew; cheering for Lord Stark, for the Lord of Winterfell on his great stallion, with his cloak streaming and Grey Wind racing beside him. They would never