Catelyn had almost forgotten the softness and warmth of the southern rain. In the north, it fell cold and hard and sent grown men running for shelter.

An inn... if we dare not risk it. If we wish to remain unknown, we must...

Lord Jason Mallister and his men, with his son Patrek by his side. The last time she had seen him, he had been jesting at her uncle's wedding feast. Mallister stood bannerman to the Tullys.

The nod he gave her was a high lord's courtesy, but there was no recognition in those fierce eyes.

Lord Mallister did not know you.

He saw a pair of mud-splattered travelers. It would never occur to him that one might be daughter of his liege lord.

I think we shall be safe enough at the inn.
TWO ROOMS. THAT'S ALL THERE IS. THEY'RE UNDER THE BELL TOWER, BUT WE'RE FULL UP. IT'S THOSE OR THE ROAD.

LEAVE YOUR BOOTS DOWNSTAIRS. THE BOY WILL CLEAN THEM.

WE HAD BEST MAKE HASTE IF WE HOPE TO EAT TONIGHT, MY LADY. THOSE WHO COME LATE TO THE TABLE DON'T EAT.

IT MIGHT BE BETTER IF WE WERE NOT KNIGHT AND LADY, BUT COMMON TRAVELERS. FATHER AND DAUGHTER ON SOME FAMILY BUSINESS?

AS YOU SAY, MY LADY...

MY DAUGHTER.

SEVEN BLESSINGS TO YOU, GOODFOLK. ARE YOU BOUND TO THE TOURNAMENT AT KING'S LANDING?

MY NAME'S MARLION. DOUBTLESS YOU'VE HEARD ME PLAY SOMEWHERE. I WAS MADE TO SING FOR KINGS AND HIGH LORDS.
I can see that.
Lord Tully is fond of song. I hear no doubt you’ve been to Riverrun?

And Winterfell? Have you traveled north?

Catelyn wondered what Edmure would think of that. A singer had once bedded a girl. Her brother had fancied, and he had hated the breed ever since.

Why would it? It’s all blizzards and bear skins, and the Starks know no music but the howling of wolves.

Innkeeper! We have horses that need stabling, and my lord of Lannister requires a room.

I’m sorry, but we’re full up. Every room, what with the tourney approaching...

My men can sleep in the stable and I don’t require a large room.

You’re welcome to my room, my lord.

Now there’s a clever man.
MY MEN WILL HAVE WHATEVER YOU'RE SERVING. I'LL TAKE ROAST FOWL AND A FLAGON OF YOUR BEST WINE.

MY LORD OF LANNISTER! LET ME SING YOU THE LAY OF YOUR FATHER'S GREAT VICTORY AT KING'S LANDING.

I WAS SORRY TO MISS YOU AT WINTERFELL.

I WAS STILL CATELYN TULLY THE LAST TIME I BEDDED HERE.

IN THE CORNER, IS THAT THE BLACK BATE OF HARRENNHAL I SEE ON YOUR SURCOAT, SER?

IT IS, MY LADY.

THE RED STALLION WAS EVER A WELCOME SIGHT AT RIVERSUN. MY FATHER COUNTS JONOS BRACKEN AMONG HIS MOST LOYAL BANNERS.

OUR LORD IS HONORED BY HIS TRUST.
Lady Stark: I envy your father all these fine friends, but I do not see the purpose of this.

Lord Walder: Is well, my lady. He plans to take a new wife on his nine-nineteen thirty-three day.

Catelyn: This man came a guest into my house, and there conspired to murder my son.

In the name of King Robert and the good lords you serve, I call upon you to seize him and help me to return him to Winterfell to await the king's justice.

Catelyn did not know what was more satisfying: the sound of a dozen swords being drawn as one, or the look on Tyron Lannister's face.
Sansa had attended the Hand's Tourney with Septa Mordane and Tyrion Poole, and it had been better than the songs.

They watched the heroes of a hundred songs ride forth, each more fabulous than the last.
The Kingslayer rode brilliantly, he overthrew Ser Andar Royce and Marcher Lord Bryce Caron as easily as if he were riding at rings. They took a hard-fought match from Barristan Selmy.

Ser Reynly fell to the hound with such violence he seemed to fly off his horse. His head hit the ground with an audible crack that made the crowd gasp, but it was only one golden antler on his helm snapping off.

Later, a Hedge Knight in a chequered cloak disgraced himself by killing Beric Donneros's horse and was declared forfeit. Lord Beric put his saddle to a new stallion and was promptly knocked off it by the warrior Priest Thors of Myr.

Ser Aron Santagar and Lothor Brune tilted twice without result. Ser Aron fell afterward to Lord Caron Mallister, and Brune to John Royce's younger Son Robar.
THE MOST TERRIFYING MOMENT OF THE DAY CAME DURING SER GREGOR CLEGANE'S SECOND JOUST WHEN THE POINT OF HIS LANCE ROSE UP AND STRUCK A YOUNG KNIGHT FROM THE VALE UNDER THE GORGET.

SANSァ HAD NEVER SEEN A MAN DIE. SHE OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CRYING, BUT THE TEARS WOULD NOT COME.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF IT HAD BEEN JORY OR SER RODRIK OR FATHER, SHE TOLD HERSELF. THIS YOUNG STRANGER FROM THE VALE OF AYRWN WAS NOTHING TO HER.

THE WORLD WOULD FORGET HIS NAME NOW. THERE WOULD BE NO SONGS SINGED FOR HIM.

IN THE END IT CAME TO FOUR, THE HOUND AND HIS MONSTROUS BROTHER GREGOR, THE KINGSLAYER...

AND LORAS TYRELL, THE KNIGHT OF FLOWERS.
AFTER EACH VICTORY, SER LORAS WOULD REMOVE
his helm, ride slowly around the fence,
and finally pluck a white rose and throw
it to some fair maiden in the crowd.

When his white mare stopped in front of
her, she thought her heart would burst.

SWEET LADY, NO VICTORY IS HALF SO
BEAUTIFUL AS YOU.

His last match of the
day was against the
younger ser royce. But
sansa’s eyes were only
for ser loras.

To the other
maidens, he
had given
white roses.

She inhaled its
sweet fragrance
and sat clutching it
long after ser loras
had ridden off.

You must
be one of her
daugthers.
you have the
Tully look.

I’m sansa
stark. I have
not had the
honor, my
lord.
SWEET CHILD! THIS IS LORD PETRY BAELISH, OF THE KING’S SMALL COUNCIL.

YOUR MOTHER WAS MY QUEEN OF BEAUTY ONCE.

YOU HAVE HER HAIR.

BY THEN THE MOON WAS WELL UP, SO THE KING DECREED THAT THE LAST THREE MATCHES WOULD BE Fought ON THE NEXT MORNING BEFORE THE MELEE. THE COMMONS BEGAN THEIR LONG WALK HOME, AND THE COURT MOVED TO THE RIVERSIDE TO BEGIN THE FEAST.
Prince Joffrey had not spoken a word to her since the awful thing had happened, and she dared not speak to him.

At first, she'd thought she hated him for what they'd done to Lady. But after she'd wept her eyes dry, she'd told herself that it had not been Joffrey's doing. Not truly.

The Queen had done it. She was the one to hate. Her and Arya.

Nothing bad would have happened except for Arya.

Ser Loras is a true knight. Do you think he will win tomorrow, my Lord?

He was too kind. Ser Loras has a keen eye for beauty, sweet lady.

My dog will do for him, or perhaps my Uncle Jaime.

My Lord, I am old enough to enter the lists. I shall do for them all.

The servants kept the cups filled all night, but she needed no wine. She was drunk on the magic of the night, giddy with glamour.

Courses came and went - a soup of barley and venison, salads of sweetgrass and plums, snails in honey and garlic. And Joffrey was the soul of courtesy.
DO NOT TELL ME WHAT TO DO, WOMAN! I AM KING HERE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
I RULE HERE, AND IF I SAY THAT I WILL FIGHT TOMORROW, I WILL FIGHT!

HA! THE GREAT KNIGHT.

I CAN STILL KNOCK YOU IN THE DIRT. REMEMBER THAT, KINGSLAYER!

AS YOU SAY, MY LORD.

IT GROWS LATE. DO YOU NEED AN ESCORT BACK TO THE CASTLE?

NO. I MEAN TO SAY...YES, THANK YOU. I SHOULD BE GLAD OF SOME PROTECTION.
DOG!

YES, YOUR GRACE?

TAKE MY BETROTHED BACK TO THE CASTLE, AND SEE THAT NO HARM BEFFALS HER.

SMALL CHANCE OF THAT.

COME. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO NEEDS SLEEP. I'VE DRUNK TOO MUCH, AND I MAY NEED TO KILL MY BROTHER TOMORROW.
YOU... RODE GALLANTLY TODAY, SER SANDOR.

SPARE ME YOUR SER’S. I AM NO KNIGHT.

I SPIT ON THEM AND THEIR VOWS.

MY BROTHER IS A KNIGHT. DID YOU SEE HIM RIDE TODAY?

YES. HE WAS...

GALLANT?

NO ONE COULD WITHSTAND HIM. THAT’S TRUE ENOUGH. THAT BOY TODAY, HIS SECOND JOUST. CAN’T SAY THAT, DID YOU?

BOY’S GORSET WASN’T FASTENED PROPER. YOU THINK SER GREGOR’S LANCE RODE UP BY CHANCE?

NO ONE COULD TRAINED YOU WELL. YOU’RE LIKE ONE OF THOSE PRETTY LITTLE BIRDS FROM THE SUMMER ISLES. REPEATING ALL THE PRETTY LITTLE WORDS THEY TAUGHT YOU.

THAT’S UNKIND.
Gregor's lance goes where Gregor wants it to go. Look at me. Look at me!

No pretty words for that girl? No little compliment the Septa taught you?

There's a pretty for you. Take a good long stare. You know you want to. I've watched you turning away all the way down the Kingsroad.

Most of them, they think it was some battle, a siege, a burning tower, an enemy with a torch. One fool asked if it was Dragon's Breath.

I was younger than you, six, maybe seven. A woodcarver set up shop in the village under my father's keep, and to buy favor, he sent us gifts. Toys.

I don't remember what I got, but it was Gregor's gift I wanted. He was five years older than me and already a square. Toys meant nothing to him, so I took it.
There was no joy in it, I tell you. I was scared all the while. And true enough, he found me.

"Only a man who's been burned knows what hell is really like."

"It took three men to drag him off me."

My father told everyone my bedclothes had caught fire. Our master gave me ointments.

Gregor got his ointments too.

"Four years later, they anointed him with the seven oils. He recited his knighthly vows. And Rhaegar Targaryen tapped him on the shoulder and said arise, Ser Gregor."
HE WAS NO TRUE KNIGHT.

NO LITTLE BIRD, HE WAS NO TRUE KNIGHT.

THE THINGS I TOLD YOU TONIGHT. IF YOU EVER TELL JOFFREY...

I WON'T.

...YOUR SISTER, YOUR FATHER, ANY OF THEM...

IF YOU EVER TELL ANYONE, I WILL KILL YOU.
Hugh was Jon Arryn’s squire for four years. The king knighted him in Jon’s memory. I fear the lad was not ready.

Eddard wondered whether it was for his sake the boy had died, slain by a Lannister bannerman before Ned could speak with him. Could that be mere happenstance?

None of us is.

For knighthood?

For death.

This was needless. War should not be a game.

And yet the king means to fight in the melee today.

They say the children of wine are often disowned in the morning light.

They say so, but not of Robert.
SEVEN HILLS, LANCELOT! DO I HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING MYSELF?

YOUR GRACE, IT'S MADE TOO SMALL. IT WON'T GO.

LOOK AT THESE QAFS, NED! MY WIFE INSISTED I TAKE THESE TWO TO SQUIRE FOR ME.

SQUIRES! I SAY THEY'RE SWINEHERDS DRESSED UP IN SILK.

THE BOYS ARE NOT AT FAULT. YOU'RE TOO FAT FOR YOUR ARMOR, ROBERT.

FAT? FAT? IS THAT HOW YOU SPEAK TO YOUR KING?

DAMN YOU, NED. WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS RIGHT?

YOU HEARD THE HAND. I NEED A BREASTPLATE STRETCHER. NOW! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

TALK IS YOU AND THE QUEEN HAD ANGRY WORDS LAST NIGHT.

THE WOMAN TRIED TO FORBID ME TO FIGHT IN THE MELEE.

YOU NEVER KNEW LYANNA AS I DID, ROBERT. YOU SAW HER BEAUTY, BUT NOT THE IRON UNDERNEATH IT.

LYANNA WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU THAT YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS IN THE MELEE.

YOUR SISTER WOULD NEVER HAVE SHAMED ME LIKE THAT.
YOU TOO? YOU ARE A SOUR MAN, STARK.

YOUR GRACE, IT IS NOT SEEMLY THAT THE KING SHOULD RIDE INTO THE MELEE. IT WOULD NOT BE A FAIR CONTEST, WHO WOULD DARE STRIKE YOU?

NED SAW AT ONCE THAT SELMY HAD KIT THE MARK. THE DANGERS OF THE MELEE WERE ONLY A SAVIOR TO ROBERT, BUT THIS TOUCHED HIS PRIDE.

WHY, ALL OF THEM, DAMN IT, IF THEY CAN, AND THE LAST MAN LEFT STANDING...

THERE'S NOT A MAN IN THE SEVEN KINGDOMS WHO WOULD DARE RISK HURTING YOU.

ARE YOU TELLING ME THOSE PRANCING CRAVENS WILL LET ME WIN?

FOR A CERTAINTY.

GET OUT! GET OUT BEFORE I KILL YOU.

NOT YOU, NED.
Damn you, Ned Stark. You and Jon Arryn. I loved you both, and you put me on a throne. Look at what kingsing has done to me. Gods, too fat for my armor. How did it come to that?

I swear to you, I was never so alive as when I was winning the throne and never so dead as now that I've won it.

And Cersei. She's lovely to look at, but she's cold.

I'm sorry for your girl, Ned. About the wolf. My son was lying, I'd stake my soul on it.

More than once, I've dreamed of giving up the crown. Take ship for the free cities with my horse and my hammers. You know what stops me? The thought of Joffrey on the throne with Cersei standing behind him.

How could I have made a son like that?

Ah, Ned, say I'm a better king than Jereys and be done with it. You never could lie for love nor honor.

Perhaps you're right. Jon despised of me often enough, yet I grew into a good king.

So who do you think our champion will be today? Have you seen Mace Tyrell's boy? The Knight of Flowers, they call him.

Now, there's a son any man would be proud to own to.
They broke their fast on black bread and goose eggs and bacon. All talk of the melee was forgotten, and that breakfast tasted better than anything Eddard Stark had eaten in a long time.

A hundred dragons on the Kingslayer!

Done! The Hound has a hungry look about him this morning.

Eddard would have liked nothing better than to see both of them lose, but Sansa was watching all moist-eyed and eager.

He had promised to watch the final lists with her, as Septa Mordane was ill.

BAM

If you know who's going to win the second match, speak up now before Lord Renly plucks me clean.

I knew the Hound would win!
Ser Gregor Clegane was called the Mountain that Rides. Some said it had been Gregor who’d dashed the skull of the infant Aegon Targaryen. It was whispered that he had raped the mother before pulling her to the sword.

Ooh, he’s so beautiful. Don’t let Ser Gregor hurt him, Father.

These things were not said in his hearing.

Now, however, Ser Gregor was having trouble controlling his stallion.

And it began.

The Mountain’s stallion broke into a hard gallop, plunging forward wildly. Loras Tyrell’s mare charged forward as smooth as silk.

CRASH

RAH!
NED SHOUTED "STOP HIM!" BUT HIS WORDS WERE LOST IN THE ROAR. EVERYONE ELSE WAS SHOUTING AS WELL.
IN THE NAME OF THE KING, STOP THIS MADNESS!

IS THE HOUND THE CHAMPION NOW?

I OWE YOU MY LIFE. THE DAY IS YOURS, SER.

I AM NO SER.

RAH!

Tyrell had to know that Mare was in heat. I swear the boy planned the whole thing. Ser Jorah was always favored. He fought huge, ill-tempered stallions with more spirit than sense.

There's small honor in tricks.

Small honor and twenty thousand gold.

That afternoon a boy named Aemon, a unheralded commoner from the Dornish marches, won the archery competition.

The melee went on for three hours. Nearly forty men took part. They fought with blunted weapons, in a chaos of mud and blood until only the red priest, Thoros of Myr, was left standing.

The king did not fight.
Much later, after he'd taken the girls back to the city and seen them both back in bed, he ascended to his rooms in the Tower of the Hand.

The hour was well past midnight, down by the river. The revels were only beginning to dwindle.

Tyron Lannister's Dagger. Bran's fall. The death of Jon Arryn. All of it was linked, but the truth was as clouded now as when he'd started.

Send him in.

A man to see you, My Lord. He won't give his name.

Who are you?

A friend. We must speak alone.

Leave us, Jory.

Lord Varys?

I will not keep you long, My Lord. But there are things you must know.
Today was a near thing—th' Lannisters had hoped to kill th' king in the melee.

Who had?

If I need to tell you that, you're a bigger fool than Robert, and I am on the wrong side.

The Lannisters. But Cersei... she forbade him in front of his brother, his knights, and half the court. Do you know a surer way to force the king into the melee?

Amidst the chaos, who could name it? Murder if some chance blow felled his grace?

You knew of this plot, yet you did nothing. You might have come to me earlier.

I was curious to see what you would do. I did not trust you, my lord.

You did not trust me?

The Red Keep has men who are loyal to the realm and those who are loyal to themselves. Until this morning, I could not say which you might be.

Now that I know, I begin to comprehend why the queen fears you so much.
ROBERT MUST BE TOLD.

AND WHAT PROOF SHALL WE LAY BEFORE HIM? PRAY SEND FOR SER ILYN DIRECTLY TO TAKE OUR HEADS, AND BE DONE WITH IT.

YOU ARE MAKING THEM MOST ANXIOUS, LORD EDDARD. BUT TOGETHER WE MAY BE ABLE TO FORESTALL THEM.

THANK YOU FOR THE WINE. WHEN YOU SEE ME NEXT AT COUNCIL, BE SURE TO TREAT ME WITH YOUR ACCUSTOMED CONTEMPT.

VARYS!

HOW DID JON ARRYN DIE?

JON ARRYN HAD BEEN HAND FOR FOURTEEN YEARS. WHAT WAS HE DOING THAT THEY HAD TO KILL HIM?

THE TEARS OF LYS, THEY CALL IT. CLEAR AND SWEET AS WATER, AND IT LEAVES NO TRACE. GIVEN HIM BY SOME SWEET FRIEND WHO OFTEN SHARED MEAD AND MEAT WITH HIM. NO DOUBT, HIS SQUIRE. PERHAPS...

A PITY SER HUGH DIED BEFORE YOU COULD SPEAK WITH HIM.

ASKING QUESTIONS.