

TYRION

They departed Pentos by the Sunrise Gate, though Tyrion Lannister never glimpsed the sunrise. “It will be as if you had never come to Pentos, my little friend,” promised Magister Illyrio, as he drew shut the litter’s purple velvet drapes. “No man must see you leave the city, as no man saw you enter.”

“No man except the sailors who stuffed me in that barrel, the cabin boy who cleaned up after me, the girl you sent to warm my bed, and that treacherous freckled washerwoman. Oh, and your guards. Unless you removed their wits along with their balls, they know you’re not alone in here.” The litter was suspended between eight mammoth draft horses on heavy leather straps. Four eunuchs paced beside the horses, two to either side, and more were trudging along behind to guard the baggage train.

“Unsullied tell no tales,” Illyrio assured him. “And the galley that delivered you is on her way to Asshai even now. It will be two years before she returns, if the seas are kind. As for my household, they love me well. None would betray me.”

Cherish that thought, my fat friend. One day we will carve those words upon your crypt. “We should be aboard that galley,” the dwarf said. “The fastest way to Volantis is by sea.”

“The sea is hazardous,” replied Illyrio. “Autumn is a season rife with storms, and pirates still make their dens upon the Stepstones and venture forth to prey on honest men. It would never do for my little friend to fall into such hands.”

“There are pirates on the Rhoyme as well.”

“River pirates.” The cheesemonger gave a yawn, covering his mouth with the back of his hand. “Cockroach captains scurrying after crumbs.”

“One hears talk of stone men as well.”

“They are real enough, poor damned things. But why speak of such things? The day is too fine for such talk. We shall see the Rhoynar soon, and there you shall be rid of Illyrio and his big belly. Till then, let us drink and dream. We have sweet wine and savories to enjoy. Why dwell upon disease and death?”

Why indeed? Tyrion heard the *thrum* of a crossbow once again, and wondered. The litter swayed side to side, a soothing movement that made him feel as if he were a child being rocked to sleep in his mother’s arms. *Not that I would know what that was like.* Silk pillows stuffed with goose down cushioned his cheeks. The purple velvet walls curved overhead to form a roof, making it pleasantly warm within despite the autumn chill outside.

A train of mules trailed behind them, carrying chests and casks and barrels, and hampers of delectables to keep the lord of cheese from growing peckish. They nibbled on spiced sausage that morning, washed down with a dark smokeberry brown. Jellied eels and Dornish reds filled their afternoon. Come evening there were sliced hams, boiled eggs, and roasted larks stuffed with garlic and onions, with pale ales and Myrish fire wines to help in their digestion. The litter was as slow as it was comfortable, however, and the dwarf soon found himself itching with impatience.

“How many days until we reach the river?” he asked Illyrio that evening. “At this pace, your queen’s dragons will be larger than Aegon’s three before I can lay eyes upon them.”

“Would it were so. A large dragon is more fearsome than a small one.” The magister shrugged. “Much as it would please me to welcome Queen Daenerys to Volantis, I must rely on you and Griff for that. I can serve her best in Pentos, smoothing the way for her return. So long as I am with you, though ... well, an old fat man must have his comforts, yes? Come, drink a cup of wine.”

“Tell me,” Tyrion said as he drank, “why should a magister of Pentos give three figs who wears the crown in Westeros? Where is the gain for you in this venture, my lord?”

The fat man dabbed grease from his lips. “I am an old man, grown weary of this world and its treacheries. Is it so strange that I should wish to do some good before my days are done, to help a sweet young girl regain her birthright?”

Next you will be offering me a suit of magic armor and a palace in Valyria. “If Daenerys is no more than a sweet young girl, the Iron Throne will cut her into sweet young pieces.”

“Fear not, my little friend. The blood of Aegon the Dragon flows in her veins.”

Along with the blood of Aegon the Unworthy, Maegor the Cruel, and Baelor the Befuddled. “Tell me more of her.”

The fat man grew pensive. “Daenerys was half a child when she came to me, yet fairer even than my second wife, so lovely I was tempted to claim her for myself. Such a fearful, furtive thing, however, I knew I should get no joy from coupling with her. Instead I summoned a bed-warmer and fucked her vigorously until the madness passed. If truth be told, I did not think Daenerys would survive for long amongst the horselords.”

“That did not stop you selling her to Khal Drogo ...”

“Dothraki neither buy nor sell. Say rather that her brother Viserys gave her to Drogo to win the khal’s friendship. A vain young man, and greedy. Viserys lusted for his father’s throne, but he lusted for Daenerys too, and was loath to give her up. The night before the princess wed he tried to steal into her bed, insisting that if he could not have her hand, he would claim her maidenhead. Had I not taken the precaution of posting guards upon her door, Viserys might have undone years of planning.”

“He sounds an utter fool.”

“Viserys was Mad Aerys’s son, just so. Daenerys ... Daenerys is quite different.” He popped a roasted lark into his mouth and crunched it noisily, bones and all. “The frightened child who sheltered in my manse died on the Dothraki sea, and was reborn in blood and fire. This dragon queen who

wears her name is a true Targaryen. When I sent ships to bring her home, she turned toward Slaver's Bay. In a short span of days she conquered Astapor, made Yunkai bend the knee, and sacked Meereen. Mantarys will be next, if she marches west along the old Valyrian roads. If she comes by sea, well ... her fleet must take on food and water at Volantis."

"By land or by sea, there are long leagues between Meereen and Volantis," Tyrion observed.

"Five hundred fifty, as the dragon flies, through deserts, mountains, swamps, and demon-haunted ruins. Many and more will perish, but those who survive will be stronger by the time they reach Volantis ... where they shall find you and Griff awaiting them, with fresh forces and sufficient ships to carry them all across the sea to Westeros."

Tyrion pondered all he knew of Volantis, oldest and proudest of the Nine Free Cities. Something was awry here. Even with half a nose, he could smell it. "It's said there are five slaves for every free man in Volantis. Why would the triarchs assist a queen who smashed the slave trade?" He pointed at Illyrio. "For that matter, why would you? Slavery may be forbidden by the laws of Pentos, yet you have a finger in that trade as well, and maybe a whole hand. And yet you conspire for the dragon queen, and not against her. Why? What do you hope to gain from Queen Daenerys?"

"Are we back to that again? You are a persistent little man." Illyrio gave a laugh and slapped his belly. "As you will. The Beggar King swore that I should be his master of coin, and a lordly lord as well. Once he wore his golden crown, I should have my choice of castles ... even Casterly Rock, if I desired."

Tyrion snorted wine back up the scarred stump that had been his nose. "My father would have loved to hear that."

"Your lord father had no cause for concern. Why would I want a rock? My manse is large enough for any man, and more comfortable than your drafty Westerosi castles. Master of coin, though ..." The fat man peeled another egg. "I am fond of coins. Is there any sound as sweet as the clink of gold on gold?"

A sister's screams. "Are you quite certain that Daenerys will make good her brother's promises?"

"She will, or she will not." Illyrio bit the egg in half. "I told you, my little friend, not all that a man does is done for gain. Believe as you wish, but even fat old fools like me have friends, and debts of affection to repay."

Liar, thought Tyrion. *There is something in this venture worth more to you than coin or castles.* "You meet so few men who value friendship over gold these days."

"Too true," the fat man said, deaf to the irony. "How is it that the Spider became so dear to you?"

"We were young together, two green boys in Pentos."

"Varys came from Myr."

"So he did. I met him not long after he arrived, one step ahead of the slavers. By day he slept in the sewers, by night he prowled the rooftops like a cat. I was near as poor, a bravo in soiled silks, living by my blade. Perhaps you chanced to glimpse the statue by my pool? Pytho Malanon carved that when I was six-and-ten. A lovely thing, though now I weep to see it."

"Age makes ruins of us all. I am still in mourning for my nose. But Varys ..."

"In Myr he was a prince of thieves, until a rival thief informed on him. In Pentos his accent marked him, and once he was known for a eunuch he was despised and beaten. Why he chose me to protect him I may never know, but we came to an arrangement. Varys spied on lesser thieves and took their takings. I offered my help to their victims, promising to recover their valuables for a fee. Soon every man who had suffered a loss knew to come to me, whilst city's footpads and cutpurses sought out Varys ... half to slit his throat, the other half to sell him what they'd stolen. We both grew rich, and richer still when Varys trained his mice."

"In King's Landing he kept little birds."

“Mice, we called them then. The older thieves were fools who thought no further than turning a night’s plunder into wine. Varys preferred orphan boys and young girls. He chose the smallest, the ones who were quick and quiet, and taught them to climb walls and slip down chimneys. He taught them to read as well. We left the gold and gems for common thieves. Instead our mice stole letters, ledgers, charts ... later, they would read them and leave them where they lay. *Secrets are worth more than silver or sapphires*, Varys claimed. Just so. I grew so respectable that a cousin of the Prince of Pentos let me wed his maiden daughter, whilst whispers of a certain eunuch’s talents crossed the narrow sea and reached the ears of a certain king. A very *anxious* king, who did not wholly trust his son, nor his wife, nor his Hand, a friend of his youth who had grown arrogant and overproud. I do believe that you know the rest of this tale, is that not so?”

“Much of it,” Tyrion admitted. “I see that you are somewhat more than a cheesemonger after all.”

Illyrio inclined his head. “You are kind to say so, my little friend. And for my part, I see that you are just as quick as Lord Varys claimed.” He smiled, showing all his crooked yellow teeth, and shouted for another jar of Myrish fire wine.

When the magister drifted off to sleep with the wine jar at his elbow, Tyrion crept across the pillows to work it loose from its fleshy prison and pour himself a cup. He drained it down, and yawned, and filled it once again. *If I drink enough fire wine*, he told himself, *perhaps I’ll dream of dragons*.

When he was still a lonely child in the depths of Casterly Rock, he oft rode dragons through the nights, pretending he was some lost Targaryen princeling, or a Valyrian dragonlord soaring high o’er fields and mountains. Once, when his uncles asked him what gift he wanted for his name-day, he begged them for a dragon. “It wouldn’t need to be a big one. It could be little, like I am.” His uncle Gerion thought that was the funniest thing he had ever heard, but his uncle Tygett said, “The last dragon died a century ago, lad.” That had seemed so monstrously unfair that the boy had cried himself to sleep that night.

Yet if the lord of cheese could be believed, the Mad King's daughter had hatched three living dragons. *Two more than even a Targaryen should require.* Tyrion was almost sorry that he had killed his father. He would have enjoyed seeing Lord Tywin's face when he learned that there was a Targaryen queen on her way to Westeros with three dragons, backed by a scheming eunuch and a cheesemonger half the size of Casterly Rock.

The dwarf was so stuffed that he had to undo his belt and the topmost laces on his breeches. The boy's clothes his host had dressed him in made him feel like ten pounds of sausage in a five-pound skin. *If we eat this way every day I will be the size of Illyrio before I meet this dragon queen.* Outside the litter night had fallen. Inside all was dark. Tyrion listened to Illyrio's snores, the creak of the leather straps, the slow *clop clop* of the team's ironshod hooves on the hard Valyrian road, but his heart was listening for the beat of leathern wings.

When he woke, dawn had come. The horses plodded on, the litter creaking and swaying between them. Tyrion pulled the curtain back an inch to peer outside, but there was little to see but ochre fields, bare brown elms, and the road itself, a broad stone highway that ran straight as a spear to the horizon. He had read about Valyrian roads, but this was the first he had seen. The Freehold's grasp had reached as far as Dragonstone, but never to the mainland of Westeros itself. *Odd, that. Dragonstone is no more than a rock. The wealth was farther west, but they had dragons. Surely they knew that it was there.*

He had drunk too much last night. His head was pounding, and even the gentle swaying of the litter was enough to make his gorge rise in his throat. Though he said no word of complaint, his distress must have been plain to Illyrio Mopatis. "Come, drink with me," the fat man said. "A scale from the dragon that burned you, as they say." He poured for them from a flagon of blackberry wine so sweet that it drew more flies than honey. Tyrion shooed them off with the back of his hand and drank deep. The taste was so cloying that it was all he could do to keep it down. The second cup went down easier, however. Even so, he had no appetite, and when Illyrio offered him a bowl of blackberries in cream he waved it off. "I dreamed about the queen,"

he said. "I was on my knees before her, swearing my allegiance, but she mistook me for my brother, Jaime, and fed me to her dragons."

"Let us hope this dream was not prophetic. You are a clever imp, just as Varys said, and Daenerys will have need of clever men about her. Ser Barristan is a valiant knight and true; but none, I think, has ever called him cunning."

"Knights know only one way to solve a problem. They couch their lances and charge. A dwarf has a different way of looking at the world. What of you, though? You are a clever man yourself."

"You flatter me." Illyrio waggled his hand. "Alas, I am not made for travel, so I will send you to Daenerys in my stead. You did Her Grace a great service when you slew your father, and it is my hope that you will do her many more. Daenerys is not the fool her brother was. She will make good use of you."

As kindling? Tyrion thought, smiling pleasantly.

They changed out teams only thrice that day but seemed to halt twice an hour at the least so Illyrio could climb down from the litter and have himself a piss. *Our lord of cheese is the size of an elephant, but he has a bladder like a peanut*, the dwarf mused. During one stop, he used the time to have a closer look at the road. Tyrion knew what he would find: not packed earth, nor bricks, nor cobbles, but a ribbon of fused stone raised a half foot above the ground to allow rainfall and snowmelt to run off its shoulders. Unlike the muddy tracks that passed for roads in the Seven Kingdoms, the Valyrian roads were wide enough for three wagons to pass abreast, and neither time nor traffic marred them. They still endured, unchanging, four centuries after Valyria itself had met its Doom. He looked for ruts and cracks but found only a pile of warm dung deposited by one of the horses.

The dung made him think of his lord father. *Are you down in some hell, Father? A nice cold hell where you can look up and see me help restore Mad Aerys's daughter to the Iron Throne?*

As they resumed their journey, Illyrio produced a bag of roasted chestnuts and began to speak once more of the dragon queen. "Our last news of Queen Daenerys is old and stale, I fear. By now she will have left Meereen, we must assume. She has her host at last, a ragged host of sellswords, Dothraki horselords, and Unsullied infantry, and she will no doubt lead them west, to take back her father's throne." Magister Illyrio twisted open a pot of garlic snails, sniffed at them, and smiled. "At Volantis, you will have fresh tidings of Daenerys, we must hope," he said, as he sucked one from its shell. "Dragons and young girls are both capricious, and it may be that you will need to adjust your plans. Griff will know what to do. Will you have a snail? The garlic is from my own gardens."

I could ride a snail and make a better pace than this litter of yours. Tyrion waved the dish away. "You place a deal of trust in this man Griff. Another friend of your childhood?"

"No. A sellsword, you would call him, but Westerosi born. Daenerys needs men worthy of her cause." Illyrio raised a hand. "I know! '*Sellswords put gold before honor*,' you are thinking. '*This man Griff will sell me to my sister*.' Not so. I trust Griff as I would trust a brother."

Another mortal error. "Then I shall do likewise."

"The Golden Company marches toward Volantis as we speak, there to await the coming of our queen out of the east."

Beneath the gold, the bitter steel. "I had heard the Golden Company was under contract with one of the Free Cities."

"Myr." Illyrio smirked. "Contracts can be broken."

"There is more coin in cheese than I knew," said Tyrion. "How did you accomplish that?"

The magister wagged his fat fingers. "Some contracts are writ in ink, and some in blood. I say no more."

The dwarf pondered that. The Golden Company was reputedly the finest of the free companies, founded a century ago by Bittersteel, a bastard son of Aegon the Unworthy. When another of Aegon's Great Bastards tried to seize the Iron Throne from his trueborn half-brother, Bittersteel joined the revolt. Daemon Blackfyre had perished on the Redgrass Field, however, and his rebellion with him. Those followers of the Black Dragon who survived the battle yet refused to bend the knee fled across the narrow sea, among them Daemon's younger sons, Bittersteel, and hundreds of landless lords and knights who soon found themselves forced to sell their swords to eat. Some joined the Ragged Standard, some the Second Sons or Maiden's Men. Bittersteel saw the strength of House Blackfyre scattering to the four winds, so he formed the Golden Company to bind the exiles together.

From that day to this, the men of the Golden Company had lived and died in the Disputed Lands, fighting for Myr or Lys or Tyrosh in their pointless little wars, and dreaming of the land their fathers had lost. They were exiles and sons of exiles, dispossessed and unforgiven ... yet formidable fighters still.

"I admire your powers of persuasion," Tyrion told Illyrio. "How did you convince the Golden Company to take up the cause of our sweet queen when they have spent so much of their history fighting *against* the Targaryens?"

Illyrio brushed away the objection as if it were a fly. "Black or red, a dragon is still a dragon. When Maelys the Monstrous died upon the Stepstones, it was the end of the male line of House Blackfyre." The cheesemonger smiled through his forked beard. "And Daenerys will give the exiles what Bittersteel and the Blackfyres never could. She will take them home."

With fire and sword. It was the kind of homecoming that Tyrion wished for as well. "Ten thousand swords makes for a princely gift, I grant you. Her Grace should be most pleased."

The magister gave a modest bob of his head, chins jiggling. "I would never presume to say what might please Her Grace."

Prudent of you. Tyrion knew much and more about the gratitude of kings. Why should queens be any different?

Soon enough the magister was fast asleep, leaving Tyrion to brood alone. He wondered what Barristan Selmy would think of riding into battle with the Golden Company. During the War of the Ninepenny Kings, Selmy had cut a bloody path through their ranks to slay the last of the Blackfyre Pretenders. *Rebellion makes for queer bedfellows. And none more queer than this fat man and me.*

The cheesemonger woke when they stopped to change the horses and sent for a fresh hamper. “How far have we come?” the dwarf asked him as they stuffed themselves with cold capon and a relish made of carrots, raisins, and bits of lime and orange.

“This is Andalos, my friend. The land your Andals came from. They took it from the hairy men who were here before them, cousins to the hairy men of Ib. The heart of Hugor’s ancient realm lies north of us, but we are passing through its southern marches. In Pentos, these are called the Flatlands. Farther east stand the Velvet Hills, whence we are bound.”

Andalos. The Faith taught that the Seven themselves had once walked the hills of Andalos in human form. “The Father reached his hand into the heavens and pulled down seven stars,” Tyrion recited from memory, “and one by one he set them on the brow of Hugor of the Hill to make a glowing crown.”

Magister Illyrio gave him a curious look. “I did not dream my little friend was so devout.”

The dwarf shrugged. “A relic of my boyhood. I knew I would not make a knight, so I decided to be High Septon. That crystal crown adds a foot to a man’s height. I studied the holy books and prayed until I had scabs on both my knees, but my quest came to a tragic end. I reached that certain age and fell in love.”

“A maiden? I know the way of that.” Illyrio thrust his right hand up his left sleeve and drew out a silver locket. Inside was a painted likeness of a

woman with big blue eyes and pale golden hair streaked by silver. “Serra. I found her in a Lysene pillow house and brought her home to warm my bed, but in the end I wed her. Me, whose first wife had been a cousin of the Prince of Pentos. The palace gates were closed to me thereafter, but I did not care. The price was small enough, for Serra.”

“How did she die?” Tyrion knew that she was dead; no man spoke so fondly of a woman who had abandoned him.

“A Braavosi trading galley called at Pentos on her way back from the Jade Sea. The *Treasure* carried cloves and saffron, jet and jade, scarlet samite, green silk ... and the grey death. We slew her oarsmen as they came ashore and burned the ship at anchor, but the rats crept down the oars and paddled to the quay on cold stone feet. The plague took two thousand before it ran its course.” Magister Illyrio closed the locket. “I keep her hands in my bedchamber. Her hands that were so soft ...”

Tyrion thought of Tysha. He glanced out at the fields where once the gods had walked. “What sort of gods make rats and plagues and dwarfs?” Another passage from *The Seven-Pointed Star* came back to him. “The Maid brought him forth a girl as supple as a willow with eyes like deep blue pools, and Hugor declared that he would have her for his bride. So the Mother made her fertile, and the Crone foretold that she would bear the king four-and-forty mighty sons. The Warrior gave strength to their arms, whilst the Smith wrought for each a suit of iron plates.”

“Your Smith must have been Rhoynish,” Illyrio quipped. “The Andals learned the art of working iron from the Rhoynar who dwelt along the river. This is known.”

“Not by our septs.” Tyrion gestured at the fields. “Who dwells in these Flatlands of yours?”

“Tillers and toilers, bound to the land. There are orchards, farms, mines ... I own some such myself, though I seldom visit them. Why should I spend my days out here, with the myriad delights of Pentos close at hand?”

“Myriad delights.” *And huge thick walls.* Tyrion swirled his wine in his cup. “We have seen no towns since Pentos.”

“There are ruins.” Illyrio waved a chicken leg toward the curtains. “The horselords come this way, whenever some khal takes it into his head to gaze upon the sea. The Dothraki are not fond of towns, you will know this even in Westeros.”

“Fall upon one of these *khalasars* and destroy it, and you may find that the Dothraki are not so quick to cross the Rhoyme.”

“It is cheaper to buy off foes with food and gifts.”

If only I had thought to bring a nice cheese to the battle on the Blackwater, I might still have all my nose. Lord Tywin had always held the Free Cities in contempt. *They fight with coins instead of swords,* he used to say. *Gold has its uses, but wars are won with iron.* “Give gold to a foe and he will just come back for more, my father always said.”

“Is this the selfsame father that you murdered?” Illyrio tossed his chicken bone from the litter. “Sellswords will not stand against Dothraki screamers. That was proved at Qohor.”

“Not even your brave Griff?” mocked Tyrion. “Griff is different. He has a son he dotes on. Young Griff, the boy is called. There never was a nobler lad.”

The wine, the food, the sun, the sway of the litter, the buzzing of the flies, all conspired to make Tyrion sleepy. So he slept, woke, drank. Illyrio matched him cup for cup. And as the sky turned a dusky purple, the fat man began to snore.

That night Tyrion Lannister dreamed of a battle that turned the hills of Westeros as red as blood. He was in the midst of it, dealing death with an axe as big as he was, fighting side by side with Barristan the Bold and Bittersteel as dragons wheeled across the sky above them. In the dream he had two heads, both noseless. His father led the enemy, so he slew him once again. Then he killed his brother, Jaime, hacking at his face until it was a

red ruin, laughing every time he struck a blow. Only when the fight was finished did he realize that his second head was weeping.

When he woke his stunted legs were stiff as iron. Illyrio was eating olives. “Where are we?” Tyrion asked him.

“We have not yet left the Flatlands, my hasty friend. Soon our road shall pass into the Velvet Hills. There we begin our climb toward Ghoyan Drohe, upon the Little Rhoyme.”

Ghoyan Drohe had been a Rhoynar city, until the dragons of Valyria had reduced it to a smoldering desolation. *I am traveling through years as well as leagues*, Tyrion reflected, *back through history to the days when dragons ruled the earth.*

Tyrion slept and woke and slept again, and day and night seemed not to matter. The Velvet Hills proved a disappointment. “Half the whores in Lannisport have breasts bigger than these hills,” he told Illyrio. “You ought to call them the Velvet Teats.” They saw a circle of standing stones that Illyrio claimed had been raised by giants, and later a deep lake. “Here lived a den of robbers who preyed on all who passed this way,” Illyrio said. “It is said they still dwell beneath the water. Those who fish the lake are pulled under and devoured.” The next evening they came upon a huge Valyrian sphinx crouched beside the road. It had a dragon’s body and a woman’s face.

“A dragon queen,” said Tyrion. “A pleasant omen.”

“Her king is missing.” Illyrio pointed out the smooth stone plinth on which the second sphinx once stood, now grown over with moss and flowering vines. “The horselords built wooden wheels beneath him and dragged him back to Vaes Dothrak.”

That is an omen too, thought Tyrion, *but not as hopeful*. That night, drunker than usual, he broke into sudden song.

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*He rode through the streets of the city, down from his hill on high,
O'er the wynds and the steps and the cobbles, he rode to a woman's sigh.
For she was his secret treasure, she was his shame and his bliss.
And a chain and a keep are nothing, compared to a woman's kiss.*

Those were all the words he knew, aside from the refrain. *Hands of gold are always cold, but a woman's hands are warm.* Shae's hands had beat at him as the golden hands dug into her throat. He did not remember if they'd been warm or not. As the strength went out of her, her blows became moths fluttering about his face. Each time he gave the chain another twist the golden hands dug deeper. *A chain and a keep are nothing, compared to a woman's kiss.* Had he kissed her one last time, after she was dead? He could not remember ... though he still recalled the first time they had kissed, in his tent beside the Green Fork. How sweet her mouth had tasted.

He remembered the first time with Tysha as well. *She did not know how, no more than I did. We kept bumping our noses, but when I touched her tongue with mine she trembled.* Tyrion closed his eyes to bring her face to mind, but instead he saw his father, squatting on a privy with his bed-robe hiked up about his waist. "Wherever whores go," Lord Tywin said, and the crossbow *thrummed*.

The dwarf rolled over, pressing half a nose deep into the silken pillows. Sleep opened beneath him like a well, and he threw himself into it with a will and let the darkness eat him up.