

The wind tugged at his blanket with gusts sharp as talons. His cell was miserably small, even for a dwarf. Not five feet away, where a wall ought to have been, where a wall would be in a proper dungeon, the floor ended and the sky began. He had plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and the moon and stars by night, but Tyrion would have traded it all in an instant for the dankest, gloomiest pit in the bowels of the Casterly Rock.

“You fly,” Mord had promised him, when he’d shoved him into the cell. “Twenty day, thirty, fifty maybe. Then you fly.”

The Arryns kept the only dungeon in the realm where the prisoners were welcome to escape at will. That first day, after girding up his courage for hours, Tyrion had lain flat on his stomach and squirmed to the edge, to poke out his head and look down. Sky was six hundred feet below, with nothing between but empty air. If he craned his neck out as far as it could go, he could see other cells to his right and left and above him. He was a bee in a stone honeycomb, and someone had torn off his wings.

It was cold in the cell, the wind screamed night and day, and worst of all, the floor sloped. Ever so slightly, yet it was enough. He was afraid to close his eyes, afraid that he might roll over in his steep and wake in sudden terror as he went sliding off the edge. Small wonder the sky cells drove men mad.

Gods save me, some previous tenant had written on the wall in something that looked suspiciously like blood, the blue is calling. At first Tyrion wondered who he’d been, and what had become of him; later, he decided that he would rather not know.

If only he had shut his mouth...

The wretched boy had started it, looking down on him from a throne of carved weirwood beneath the moon-and-falcon banners of House Arryn. Tyrion Lannister had been looked down on all his life, but seldom by rheumy-eyed six-year-olds who needed to stuff fat cushions under their cheeks to lift them to the height of a man. “Is he the bad man?” the boy had asked, clutching his doll.

“He is,” the Lady Lysa had said from the lesser throne beside him. She was all in blue, powdered and perfumed for the suitors who filled her court.

“He’s so small,” the Lord of the Eyrie said, giggling.

“This is Tyrion the Imp, of House Lannister, who murdered your father.” She raised her voice so it carried down the length of High Hall of the Eyrie, ringing off the milk-white walls and the slender pillars, so every man could hear it. “He slew the Hand of the King!”

“Oh, did I kill him too?” Tyrion had said, like a fool.

That would have been a very good time to have kept his mouth closed and his head bowed. He could see that now; seven hells, he had seen it then. The High Hall of the Arryns was long and austere, with a forbidding coldness to its walls of blue-veined white marble, but the faces around him had been colder by far. The power of Casterly Rock was far away, and there were no friends of the Lannisters in the Vale of Arryn. Submission and silence would have been his best defenses.