

His sister peered at him with the same expression of faint distaste she had worn since the day he was born. "The king has not slept at all," she told him. "He is with Lord Eddard. He has taken their sorrow deeply to heart."

"He has a large heart, our Robert," Jaime said with a lazy smile. There was very little that Jaime took seriously. Tyrion knew that about his brother, and forgave it. During all the terrible long years of his childhood, only Jaime had ever shown him the smallest measure of affection or respect, and for that Tyrion was willing to forgive him most anything.

A servant approached. "Bread," Tyrion told him, "and two of those little fish, and a mug of that good dark beer to wash them down. Oh, and some bacon. Burn it until it turns black." The man bowed and moved off. Tyrion turned back to his siblings. Twins, male and female. They looked very much the part this morning. Both had chosen a deep green that matched their eyes. Their blond curls were all a fashionable tumble, and gold ornaments shone at wrists and fingers and throats.

Tyrion wondered what it would be like to have a twin, and decided that he would rather not know. Bad enough to face himself in a looking glass every day. Another him was a thought too dreadful to contemplate.

Prince Tommen spoke up. "Do you have news of Bran, Uncle?"

"I stopped by the sickroom last night," Tyrion announced. "There was no change. The maester thought that a hopeful sign."

"I don't want Brandon to die," Tommen said timorously. He was a sweet boy. Not like his brother, but then Jaime and Tyrion were somewhat less than peas in a pod themselves.

"Lord Eddard had a brother named Brandon as well," Jaime mused. "One of the hostages murdered by Targaryen. It seems to be an unlucky name."

"Oh, not so unlucky as all that, surely," Tyrion said. The servant brought his plate. He ripped off a chunk of black bread.

Cersei was studying him warily. "What do you mean?"

Tyrion gave her a crooked smile. "Why, only that Tommen may get his wish. The maester thinks the boy may yet live." He took a sip of beer.

Myrcella gave a happy gasp, and Tommen smiled nervously, but it was not the children Tyrion was watching. The glance that passed between Jaime and Cersei lasted no more than a second, but he did not miss it. Then his sister dropped her gaze to the table. "That is no mercy. These northern gods are cruel to let the child linger in such pain."

"What were the maester's words?" Jaime asked.

The bacon crunched when he bit into it. Tyrion chewed thoughtfully for a moment and said, "He thinks that if the boy were going to die, he would have done so already. It has been four days with no change."

"Will Bran get better, Uncle?" little Myrcella asked. She had all of her mother's beauty, and none of her nature.