

“No,” said Jon, smiling, “but Grenn held his own against Halder this morning, and Pyp is no longer dropping his sword quite so often as he did.”

“Pyp?”

“Pypar is his real name. The small boy with the large ears. He saw me working with Grenn and asked for help. Thorne had never even shown him the proper way to grip a sword.” He turned to look north. “I have a mile of Wall to guard. Will you walk with me?”

“If you walk slowly,” Tyrion said.

“The watch commander tells me I must walk, to keep my blood from freezing, but he never said how fast.”

They walked, with Ghost pacing along beside Jon like a white shadow. “I leave on the morrow,” Tyrion said.

“I know.” Jon sounded strangely sad.

“I plan to stop at Winterfell on the way south. If there is any message that you would like me to deliver...”

“Tell Robb that I’m going to command the Night’s Watch and keep him safe, so he might as well take up needlework with the girls and have Mikken melt down his sword for horseshoes.”

“Your brother is bigger than me,” Tyrion said with a laugh. “I decline to deliver any message that might get me killed.”

“Rickon will ask when I’m coming home. Try to explain where I’ve gone, if you can. Tell him he can have all my things while I’m away, he’ll like that.”

People seemed to be asking a great deal of him today, Tyrion Lannister thought. “You could put all this in a letter, you know.”

“Rickon can’t read yet. Bran...” He stopped suddenly. “I don’t know what message to send to Bran. Help him, Tyrion.”

“What help could I give him? I am no maester, to ease his pain. I have no spells to give him back his legs.”

“You gave me help when I needed it,” Jon Snow said.

“I gave you nothing,” Tyrion said. “Words.”

“Then give your words to Bran too.”

“You’re asking a lame man to teach a cripple how to dance,” Tyrion said. “However sincere the lesson, the result is likely to be grotesque. Still, I know what it is to love a brother, Lord Snow. I will give Bran whatever small help is in my power.”

“Thank you, my lord of Lannister.” He pulled off his glove and offered his bare hand. “Friend.” Tyrion found himself oddly touched. “Most of my kin are bastards,” he said with a wry smile, “but you’re the first I’ve had to friend.” He pulled a glove off with his teeth and clasped Snow by the hand, flesh against flesh. The boy’s grip was firm and strong.

When he had donned his glove again, Jon Snow turned abruptly and walked to the low, icy northern parapet. Beyond him the Wall fell away sharply; beyond him there was only the darkness and the wild. Tyrion followed him, and side by side they stood upon the edge of the world.