

Ned had to know the rest. “Who gave him the poison?”

“Some dear sweet friend who often shared meat and mead with him, no doubt. Oh, but which one? There were many such. Lord Arryn was a kindly, trusting man.” The eunuch sighed. “There was one boy. All he was, he owed Jon Arryn, but when the widow fled to the Eyrie with her household, he stayed in King’s Landing and prospered. It always gladdens my heart to see the young rise in the world.” The whip was in his voice again, every word a stroke. “He must have cut a gallant figure in the tourney, him in his bright new armor, with those crescent moons on his cloak. A pity he died so untimely, before you could talk to him...”

Ned felt half-poisoned himself. “The squire,” he said. “Ser Hugh.” Wheels within wheels within wheels. Ned’s head was pounding. “ Why? Why now? Jon Arryn had been Hand for fourteen years. What was he doing that they had to kill him?”

“Asking questions,” Varys said, slipping out the door.