

Bran's fingers started to slip. He grabbed the ledge with his other hand. Fingernails dug into unyielding stone. The man reached down. "Take my hand," he said. "Before you fall."

Bran seized his arm and held on tight with all his strength. The man yanked him up to the ledge. "What are you doing?" the woman demanded.

The man ignored her. He was very strong. He stood Bran up on the sill. "How old are you, boy?"

"Seven," Bran said, shaking with relief. His fingers had dug deep gouges in the man's forearm. He let go sheepishly.

The man looked over at the woman. "The things I do for love," he said with loathing. He gave Bran a shove.

Screaming, Bran went backward out the window into empty air. There was nothing to grab on to. The courtyard rushed up to meet him.

Somewhere off in the distance, a wolf was howling. Crows circled the broken tower, waiting for corn.