Brant, are you ready?

Yes, Robb.

Let's ride, then.

The saddle the Imp had designed for him would not let him fall, and it meant he could join his brother in the hunt.
WITH HIS LEGS UNABLE TO GRIP, THE SWAYING MOTION OF THE HORSE MADE BRAN FEEL UNSTEADY AT FIRST. BUT AFTER A TIME, THE RHYTHM BEGAN TO FEEL ALMOST NATURAL.

THERE WERE FEW PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE OUTSIDE WINTERFELL'S WALLS.

OLD NAN SAID THAT WHEN THE SNOW FELL AND THE ICE WINDS HOWLED DOWN FROM THE NORTH, FARMERS LEFT THEIR FIELDS AND WOOL DRAFTS, AND THE WINTER TOWN CAME ALIVE.

WINTER IS COMING.

SWEET KYRA! SHE SQUIRMS LIKE A WEASEL IN BED, BUT SAY A WORD TO HER IN THE STREET AND SHE BLUSHES LIKE A MAID.

DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT THE NIGHT THAT SHE AND BESSA-

NOT WHERE MY BROTHER CAN HEAR, THEON.

YOU ARE DOING WELL, BRAN.
I WANT TO GO FASTER.

AS YOU WILL.

I CAN RIDE!
I'd best go. Bring them back. Wait here. Theon and the others should be along shortly.

Summer!

And Grey Wind. They've made a kill.

I want to go with you.

I'll find them faster by myself.

With Robb gone, the woods seemed to close in around him. He could not feel his legs. But the strap around his chest was tight and chafing. The melting snow had soaked through his gloves to chill his hands. He wondered what was keeping the rest.

All alone are you?
LOST IN THE WOLFPACK, POOR LAD. AND IS THAT A SILVER PIN I SEE THERE ON YOUR CLOAK?

PRETTY.

WE'LL TAKE THE HORSE TOO. GET DOWN, AND BE QUICK.

I CAN'T...

YOU CAN AND YOU WILL, IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, LORDLING.

STRAPS? THERE'S WAYS TO DEAL WITH STRAPS.

YOU SOME KIND OF CRIPPLE, BOY?

LOOK HOW HE'S STRAPPED ON. MIGHT BE HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.

I AM BRANDON STARK OF WINTERFELL, AND YOU WILL LET GO OF MY HORSE OR I'LL SEE YOU DEAD!
The boy's stark, true enough. Only a Stark would be fool enough to threaten when smarter men would bes.

His life is forfeit if he is taken. He will not flinch from any crime.

Cut off his cock and stuff it in his mouth. That'll shut him up.

You're stupid as you are ugly, Hal. Boy's worth nothing dead. Think what Mance would give for Benjen Stark's own blood to hostage!

Bran realized with a start that the man wore black rags. A deserter from the Night's Watch. He remembered his father saying that no man was more dangerous.

You want to go back there, Osha? More fool you.

Think the Wall Walkers will care that you have a hostage?

The cut was quick and careless. Blood flowed, but there was no pain. Not even a hint of feeling.
STAND AWAY FROM MY BROTHER. PUT DOWN YOUR STEEL NOW AND I PROMISE YOU A PAINLESS DEATH.

HE'S A FIERCE ONE, HE IS. YOU MEAN TO FIGHT US, BOY?

DON'T BE A FOOL, LAD. YOU'RE ONE AGAINST FOUR. WE'LL THANK YOU FOR YOUR HORSE AND YOUR VENISON, AND YOU AND YOUR BROTHER CAN BE ON YOUR WAY.

DIREWOLVES...

DOGS. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A WOLFSKIN CLOAK TO WARM A MAN.

TAKE THEM.
WINTERFELL!
BACK AWAY! CALL OFF THE WOLVES, OR THE CRIPPLE BOY DIES!

Osha! Kill the wolves and get his sword.

Summer. Grey wind. To me.

Kill them yourself. I'll not be getting near them.

STARKS BLOODY STARKS.

You! You want your brother alive. You'll do as I say. Get off your horse!

GOOD. NOW KILL THE WOLVES.

No! You shut your mouth, cripple! You hear me?

THUK
Mercy, my lord.

Are you hurt?

He cut my leg, but I couldn't feel it.

A dead enemy is a thing of beauty.

Jon always said you were an ass. I ought to chain you in the yard and let Bran take practice shots at you.

You should be thanking me for saving your brother.

What if you'd missed the shot? Or only wounded him? What if his hand had jibbered? You only saw his back. What if he'd had a breastplate?
Shall we bury them, my lord?

They would not have buried us.

I broke no oaths. The black crows got no place for women. Give me my life, my lord of Stark, and I am yours.

Two wore black. Hack off their heads, we'll send them back to the wall. Leave the rest for the crows.

Give her to the wolves.

She's a woman.

A wildling. She said they should keep me alive so they could take me to Mance Rayder. They called her Osha.

We might do well to question her.

Bind her hands. She'll come back to Winterfell with us and live or die by the truths she gives us.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A VERY GOOD TIME TO KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT AND HIS HEAD BOWED, BUT HIS MIND WAS TOO FOOL FOR SENSE.

IS THAT THE BAD MAN, MOTHER? HE'S SO SMALL.

HE HAD FALTERED DURING THE LAST LEGS OF THEIR CLIMB, AND BRUNN HAD CARRIED HIM THE REST OF THE WAY. THE HUMILIATION POURED OIL ON THE FLAMES OF HIS ANGER.

THIS IS TYRIQN, THE IMP WHO MURDERED YOUR FATHER.

HE KILLED THE HAND OF THE KING!

OH, DID I KILL HIM TOO? IT WOULD SEEM I HAVE BEEN A BUSY LITTLE FELLOW. I WONDER WHEN I FOUND TIME TO DO ALL THIS SLAYING AND MURDERING.

YOU WILL SPEAK POLITELY TO MY SON OR HAVE CAUSE TO REGRET IT. THESE ARE TRUE KNIGHTS OF THE VALE AROUND YOU. EVERY ONE OF THEM WOULD DIE FOR ME!

AND SHOULD HARM COME TO ME, MY BROTHER WILL SEE THAT THEY DO.

CAN YOU FLY? DOES A DWARF HAVE WINGS? IF NOT, YOU WOULD BE WISE TO SWALLOW YOUR THREATS.

I MADE NO THREATS, THAT WAS A PROMISE.
The Arays kept the only dungeon in the realm where the prisoners were welcome to escape at will. Sky was six hundred feet below with nothing between but empty air.

It was cold in the cell. The wind screamed night and day. And worst of all, the floor sloped. He was afraid to close his eyes. Afraid that he would roll in his sleep and wake as he went sliding over the edge.

Some previous tenant had written gods save me, the blue is calling in what looked like blood.

Small wonder the sky cells drove men mad.


Ah, Mord. Must we play the same fool's game with every meal?
HE WAS NOT ABOUT TO STEP THAT CLOSE TO THE EDGE. A QUICK SHOVE OF THE TURKEY'S HEAVY WHITE BELLY, AND TYRION WOULD END UP A FUCKING RED SPLOTCH ON THE STONES OF SKY.

COME TO THINK ON IT, I'M NOT HUNGRY AFTER ALL.

HA HA HA...

YOU FUCKING SON OF A POX RIDDEN AGG! I HOPE YOU DIE OF THE BLOODY FLUX!

YOU FLY, TWENTY DAY, THIRTY, FIFTY MAYBE. THEN YOU FLY.
I take it back, no flux for you, Mord. I'll kill you myself!

His father, his sister, his brother. He wondered which had sent the footpad to kill the Stark boy, and if they'd arranged the death of Jon Arryn.

If Arryn had been murdered, it was deeply done. Sending an oaf with a stolen knife was clumsy.

At first, he had consigned himself that they wouldn't dare kill him out of hand. Now he was no longer certain. With every day, he grew weaker.

And wasn't that peculiar.

Perhaps the Direwolf and the Lion were not the only beasts in the wood. If so, someone was using him as a cat's paw, and Tyron hated being used.

Well, his mouth had gotten him into this cell. It could damn well get him out.

Mord! I want you! Mord!

Making noise.

How would you like to be rich, Mordy?

It took some time before he heard the footsteps.
CRACK

That was a stiff one. I could use a strong man like you.

Rich as the Lannisters. That's what they say, Mord. More bold than you'll see in a lifetime.

Is no gold.

They took my purse when they captured me, but the gold is still mine. Deliver a message for me, and it's yours.

Message?

Only carry my word to your lady. Tell her... tell her I wish to confess my crimes.
It was night before they bore him to the high hall. Lady Arryn had gathered all her retainers and the lords of the Vale to bear witness.

As he had hoped she would.

You wish to confess your crimes, we are told?

Yes, where to begin?

I am a vile little man.

I have lain with whores hundreds of times.

I have wished my own father dead, and my sister, our gracious Queen.

I have gambled, even cheated.

Once, I-

You are accused of sending a hired knife to slay my son in his bed and of conspiring to kill Lord Jon Arryn.

Those crimes I cannot confess. I fear I know nothing of them.
I will not be made mock of. Take him back to the dungeon, but find him a smaller cell with a floor more sharply sloped.

Is this how justice is done in the Vale? Does honor stop at the bloody gate? You accuse, I deny, and you throw me in an open cell to freeze and starve?

I demand a trial! Let me speak and my truth or falsehood judged in the sight of gods and men!

Very well. My son will listen to whatever you care to say, and you shall hear his judgment. Then you may leave... by one door or the other.

I see no need to trouble Lord Robert. The gods know my innocence, I will have their verdict.

I demand trial by combat.
TYRION FOUND IT DISHEARTENING TO REALIZE SO MANY STRANGERS WERE EASIER TO KILL HIM. THIS MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN THE WISEST PLAN AFTER ALL.

I THANK YOU, MY LORD, WOULD THAT I COULD GRANT YOU ALL THIS HONOR YET I CAN CHOOSE ONLY ONE.

SER VARDIS EGG, YOU WERE EVER MY HUSBAND’S GOOD RIGHT HAND. YOU SHALL BE OUR CHAMPION.

MY LADY, PRAY GIVE THIS BURDEN TO ANOTHER. THAT MAN IS A DWARF HALF MY SIZE AND LAME IN THE LEGS. IT WOULD BE SHAMEFUL TO SLAUGHTER SUCH A MAN AND CALL IT JUSTICE.

I AGREE.

AND NOW I DEMAND A CHAMPION, JUST AS YOU HAVE CHOSSEN ONE. MY BROTHER JAIME WILL GLADLY TAKE MY PART. SEND A BIRD FOR HIM, AND I WILL WAIT HIS ARRIVAL.
NO, YOU WILL FACE SER VARDYS ON THE MORROW.

SINGER! WHEN YOU MAKE A BALLAD OF THIS, BE CERTAIN YOU TELL THEM HOW LADY ARISYN DENIED THE DWARF A CHAMPION, AND SENT HIM FORTH BRUISED AND HOBBLING TO FACE HER FINEST KNIGHT.

I DENY YOU NOTHING! NAME YOUR CHAMPION, IMP. IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FIND A MAN TO DIE FOR YOU.

I'D SOONER FIND ONE TO KILL FOR ME.

NO ONE MOVED OR SPOKE OR MET HIS GAZE FOR A LONG MOMENT. TYRION WAS SURE HE'D MADE A COLOSSAL BLUNDER.

I'LL STAND FOR THE DWARF.

AH, WELL...
ROBERT WILL NEVER KEEP TO ONE BED, LYANNA HAD TOLD HER ON THE NIGHT WHEN THEIR FATHER HAD PROMISED HER HAND TO THE YOUNG LORD OF STORM'S END.

AND HER WORDS HAD PROVED TRUE.

I'VE NAMED HER BARRA.

SHE LOOKS LIKE HIM, DOES SHE NOT, M' LORD?

SHE DOES.

TELL HIM, WHEN YOU SEE HIM, TELL HIM HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS, AND I HAVEN'T BEEN WITH NO ONE ELSE. CHAYAYA SAID I COULD HAVE HALF A YEAR OFF FOR THE BABY AND FOR HOPING WE'D COME BACK.

YOU'LL TELL HIM I'M WAITING, WON'T YOU? I DON'T WANT NO JEWELS OR NOTHING, JUST HIM.

I WILL TELL HIM, CHILD, AND I PROMISE YOU, BARRA SHALL NOT GO WANTING.
It's time we took our leave, my business here is done. As you will, my lord, I'll help Wyll get the horses.

He's acknowledged that boy at Storm's End, but he'd have to. The mother was a Florent, and I've heard there were a pair of twins on a serving wench at Casterly Rock three years ago. Cersei had them killed and, the mother sold to a passing slaver, an affront to Lannister pride.

Lord Baratheon, what do you know of Robert's bastards? That he has more than you do, for a start.

Why would Jon Arryn take an interest in Robert's bastards' children? And why kill him for it? He learned that his grace had filled the bellies of some whores and fishwives, and for that had to be silenced.
LET A MAN LIKE THAT LIVE AND NEXT HE'LL BLURT OUT THAT THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST.

MY LORD! SOLDIERS!

MAKE WAY OR DIE!

WHAT IS IT THE MEANING OF THIS? THIS IS THE HAND OF THE KINGS!

WA$ THE HAND NOW, TRUTH BE TOLD, I'M NOT SURE WHAT HE IS.

LANNISTER, LET US PASS. THIS IS MADNESS!

NO, HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.

QUITE TRUE. I'M LOOKING FOR MY BROTHER. YOU REMEMBER MY BROTHER, DON'T YOU, STARK? FAIR-HAIRED, SHARP-TONGUE, MISMATCHED EYES.

A SHORT MAN.
I remember him well...

It would seem he met some trouble on the road. My lord father is quite vexed.

You would not perchance have any notion of who might wish my brother ill. Would you?

Your brother has been taken at my command to answer for his crimes.

Show me your steel, Lord Eddard. I'll butcher you like Aerys if I must, but I'd sooner you died with a blade in your hand.

Lord Baelish? I'd leave in some haste if I didn't want bloodstains on my costly clothing.

I'll bring the City Watch.
Kill me and Catelyn will most certainly slay Tyrion.

Would she? The noble Catelyn Tully of Riverrun murder a hostage? I think not.

But...

I am not willing to risk my brother's life on a woman's honor. So I suppose I'll let you run back to Robert to tell him how I frightened you. I wonder if he'll care.

See that no harm comes to Lord Stark.

Yes, m'lord.

Still, we wouldn't want him to leave entirely unchastened.

Kill his men.
NO!
JORY, AWAY!