

Lannister rippling over his head as he thundered across the field. Five hundred knights surrounded him, sunlight flashing off the points of their lances. The remnants of the Stark lines shattered like glass beneath the hammer of their charge.

With his elbow swollen and throbbing inside his armor, Tyrion made no attempt to join the slaughter. He and Bronn went looking for his men. Many he found among the dead. Ulf son of Umar lay in a pool of congealing blood, his arm gone at the elbow, a dozen of his Moon Brothers sprawled around him. Shagga was slumped beneath a tree, riddled with arrows, Conn's head in his lap. Tyrion thought they were both dead, but as he dismounted, Shagga opened his eyes and said, "They have killed Conn son of Coratt." Handsome Conn had no mark but for the red stain over his breast, where the spear thrust had killed him. When Bronn pulled Shagga to his feet, the big man seemed to notice the arrows for the first time. He plucked them out one by one, cursing the holes they had made in his layers of mail and leather, and yowling like a babe at the few that had buried themselves in his flesh. Chella daughter of Cheyk rode up as they were yanking arrows out of Shagga, and showed them four ears she had taken. Timett they discovered looting the bodies of the slain with his Burned Men. Of the three hundred clansmen who had ridden to battle behind Tyrion Lannister, perhaps half had survived.

He left the living to look after the dead, sent Bronn to take charge of his captive knight, and went alone in search of his father. Lord Tywin was seated by the river, sipping wine from a jeweled cup as his squire undid the fastenings on his breastplate. "A fine victory," Ser Kevan said when he saw Tyrion. "Your wild men fought well."

His father's eyes were on him, pale green flecked with gold, so cool they gave Tyrion a chill. "Did that surprise you, Father?" he asked. "Did it upset your plans? We were supposed to be butchered, were we not?"

Lord Tywin drained his cup, his face expressionless. "I put the least disciplined men on the left, yes. I anticipated that they would break. Robb Stark is a green boy, more like to be brave than wise. I'd hoped that if he saw our left collapse, he might plunge into the gap, eager for a rout. Once he was fully committed, Ser Kevan's pikes would wheel and take him in the flank, driving him into the river while I brought up the reserve."

"And you thought it best to place me in the midst of this carnage, yet keep me ignorant of your plans."

"A feigned rout is less convincing," his father said, "and I am not inclined to trust my plans to a man who consorts with sellswords and savages."

"A pity my savages ruined your dance." Tyrion pulled off his steel gauntlet and let it fall to the ground, wincing at the pain that stabbed up his arm.

"The Stark boy proved more cautious than I expected for one of his years," Lord Tywin admitted, "but a victory is a victory. You appear to be wounded."

Tyrion's right arm was soaked with blood. "Good of you to notice, Father," he said through clenched teeth. "Might I trouble you to send for your maesters? Unless you relish the notion of having a one-armed dwarf for a son..."