

through the thin metal around the joint. His axe was gone, as fast as that. He clawed for his sword, but the morningstar was circling again, coming at his face. A sickening crunch, and he was falling. He did not recall hitting the ground, but when he looked up there was only sky above him. He rolled onto his side and tried to find his feet, but pain shuddered through him and the world throbbed. The knight who had felled him drew up above him. "Tyrion the Imp," he boomed down. "You are mine. Do you yield, Lannister?"

Yes, Tyrion thought, but the word caught in his throat. He made a croaking sound and fought his way to his knees, fumbling for a weapon. His sword, his dirk, anything...

"Do you yield?" The knight loomed overhead on his armored warhorse. Man and horse both seemed immense. The spiked ball swung in a lazy circle. Tyrion's hands were numb, his vision blurred, his scabbard empty. "Yield or die," the knight declared, his flail whirling faster and faster.

Tyrion lurched to his feet, driving his head into the horse's belly. The animal gave a hideous scream and reared. It tried to twist away from the agony, a shower of blood and viscera poured down over Tyrion's face, and the horse fell like an avalanche. The next he knew, his visor was packed with mud and something was crushing his foot. He wriggled free, his throat so tight he could scarce talk.

"yield..." he managed to croak faintly.

"Yes," a voice moaned, thick with pain.

Tyrion scraped the mud off his helm so he could see again. The horse had fallen away from him, onto its rider. The knight's leg was trapped, the arm he'd used to break his fall twisted at a grotesque angle. "Yield," he repeated. Fumbling at his belt with his good hand, he drew a sword and flung it at Tyrion's feet. "I yield, my lord."

Dazed, the dwarf knelt and lifted the blade. Pain hammered through his elbow when he moved his arm. The battle seemed to have moved beyond him. No one remained on his part of the field save a large number of corpses. Ravens were already circling and landing to feed. He saw that Ser Kevan had brought up his center in support of the van; his huge mass of pikemen had pushed the northerners back against the hills. They were struggling on the slopes, pikes thrusting against another wall of shields, these oval and reinforced with iron studs. As he watched, the air filled with arrows again, and the men behind the oak wall crumbled beneath the murderous fire. "I believe you are losing, ser," he told the knight under the horse. The man made no reply.

The sound of hooves coming up behind him made him whirl, though he could scarcely lift the sword he held for the agony in his elbow. Bronn reined up and looked down on him.

"Small use you turned out to be," Tyrion told him.

"It would seem you did well enough on your own," Bronn answered. "You've lost the spike off your helm, though."

Tyrion groped at the top of the greathelm. The spike had snapped off clean. "I haven't lost it. I know just where it is. Do you see my horse?"

By the time they found it, the trumpets had sounded again and Lord Tywin's reserve came sweeping up along the river. Tyrion watched his father fly past, the crimson-and-gold banner of