

“Ser Kevan speaks truly, my lords,” the courier said. “We’d built palisades of sharpened stakes around the camps, yet it was not enough, not with no warning and the rivers cutting us off from each other. They came down on the north camp first. No one was expecting an attack. Marq Piper had been raiding our supply trains, but he had no more than fifty men. Ser Jaime had gone out to deal with them the night before... well, with what we thought was them. We were told the Stark host was east of the Green Fork, marching south...”

“And your outriders?” Ser Gregor Clegane’s face might have been hewn from rock. The fire in the hearth gave a somber orange cast to his skin and put deep shadows in the hollows of his eyes. “They saw nothing? They gave you no warning?”

The bloodstained messenger shook his head. “Our outriders had been vanishing. Marq Piper’s work, we thought. The ones who did come back had seen nothing.”

“A man who sees nothing has no use for his eyes,” the Mountain declared. “Cut them out and give them to your next outrider. Tell him you hope that four eyes might see better than two... and if not, the man after him will have six.”

Lord Tywin Lannister turned his face to study Ser Gregor. Tyrion saw a glimmer of gold as the light shone off his father’s pupils, but he could not have said whether the look was one of approval or disgust. Lord Tywin was oft quiet in council, preferring to listen before he spoke, a habit Tyrion himself tried to emulate. Yet this silence was uncharacteristic even for him, and his wine was untouched.

“You said they came at night,” Ser Kevan prompted.

The man gave a weary nod. “The Blackfish led the van, cutting down our sentries and clearing away the palisades for the main assault. By the time our men knew what was happening, riders were pouring over the ditch banks and galloping through the camp with swords and torches in hand. I was sleeping in the west camp, between the rivers. When we heard the fighting and saw the tents being fired, Lord Brax led us to the rafts and we tried to pole across, but the current pushed us downstream and the Tullys started flinging rocks at us with the catapults on their walls. I saw one raft smashed to kindling and three others overturned, men swept into the river and drowned... and those who did make it across found the Starks waiting for them on the riverbanks.”

Ser Flement Brax wore a silver-and-purple tabard and the look of a man who cannot comprehend what he has just heard. “My lord father-”

“Sorry, my lord,” the messenger said. “Lord Brax was clad in plate-and-mail when his raft overturned. He was very gallant.”

He was a fool, Tyrion thought, swirling his cup and staring down into the winy depths. Crossing a river at night on a crude raft, wearing armor, with an enemy waiting on the other side- if that was gallantry, he would take cowardice every time. He wondered if Lord Brax had felt especially gallant as the weight of his steel pulled him under the black water.

“The camp between the rivers was overrun as well,” the messenger was saying. “While we were trying to cross, more Starks swept in from the west, two columns of armored horse. I saw