

TYRION

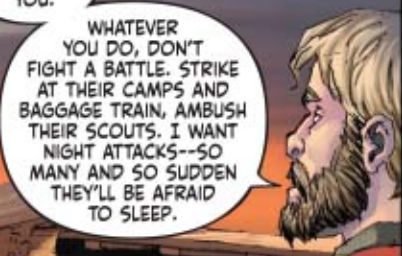


"IF YOU DIE STUPIDLY, I'M GOING TO FEED YOUR BODY TO THE GOATS."

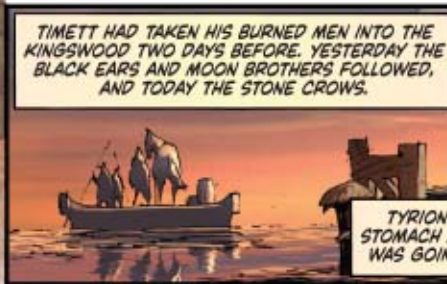


THE HALFMAN HAS NO GOATS.


THEN I'LL GET SOME JUST FOR YOU.




WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T FIGHT A BATTLE. STRIKE AT THEIR CAMPS AND BAGGAGE TRAIN, AMBUSH THEIR SCOUTS. I WANT NIGHT ATTACKS--SO MANY AND SO SUDDEN THEY'LL BE AFRAID TO SLEEP.



TIMETT HAD TAKEN HIS BURNED MEN INTO THE KINGSWOOD TWO DAYS BEFORE. YESTERDAY THE BLACK EARS AND MOON BROTHERS FOLLOWED, AND TODAY THE STONE CROWS.



TYRION FELT A QUEER TWINGE IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH AS SHAGGA FADED IN THE MORNING MIST. HE WAS GOING TO FEEL NAKED WITHOUT HIS CLANSMEN.



HE STILL HAD BRONN'S HIRELINGS, NEAR EIGHT HUNDRED OF THEM NOW, BUT SELLSWORDS WERE NOTORIOUSLY FICKLE.


ASSEMBLE A HUNDRED MEN AND BURN EVERYTHING YOU SEE BETWEEN THE WATER'S EDGE AND THE CITY WALLS.

I WANT NOTHING LEFT STANDING, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

AS IT WAS, STANNIS WOULD HARDLY NEED SCALING LADDERS TO STORM THE WALLS.



THEM AS OWN ALL THIS WON'T LIKE THAT MUCH.



I NEVER IMAGINED THEY WOULD. SO BE IT; THEY'LL HAVE SOMETHING ELSE TO CURSE THE EVIL MONKEY DEMON FOR.



TYRION ONLY WISHED HE COULD AS EASILY MAKE CITY WALLS TWICE AS TALL AND THREE TIMES AS THICK. THOUGH PERHAPS IT DID NOT MATTER.

MASSIVE WALLS AND TALL TOWERS HAD NOT SAVED STORM'S END, NOR HARRENHAL....NOR EVEN WINTERFELL.

HE REMEMBERED WINTERFELL AS HE HAD LAST SEEN IT. NEWS OF THE CASTLE'S FALL HAD COME AS A WRENCHING SHOCK.

NO DOUBT HE SHOULD BE REJOICING. ROBB STARK WOULD HAVE TO TURN NORTH NOW. IF HE COULD NOT DEFEND HIS OWN HOME AND HEARTH, HE WAS NO SORT OF KING AT ALL. IT MEANT REPRIEVE FOR THE WEST, FOR HOUSE LANNISTER, AND YET...

TYRION HAD ONLY THE VAGUEST MEMORY OF THEON GREYJOY FROM HIS TIME WITH THE STARKS. A CALLOW YOUTH, ALWAYS SMILING; IT WAS HARD TO IMAGINE HIM AS LORD OF WINTERFELL.

WINTERFELL IS NOTHING TO YOU, HE REMINDED HIMSELF. BE GLAD THE PLACE HAS FALLEN, AND LOOK TO YOUR OWN WALLS.

THE GOLD CLOAKS HAD NAMED THE TREBUCHETS THE THREE WHORES, BECAUSE THEY'D BE GIVING LORD STANNIS SUCH A LUSTY WELCOME. OR SO WE HOPE.

PLEADING ILLNESS, LORD GULIAN SWANN HAD REMAINED IN HIS CASTLE, TAKING NO PART IN THE WAR, BUT HIS ELDEST SON HAD RIDDEN WITH RENLY AND NOW STANNIS, WHILE BALON, THE YOUNGER, SERVED AT KING'S LANDING.

AS FOR THE KINGSGUARD, HE APPROVED OF HIS SISTER'S CHOICE OF SER BALON SWANN TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE SLAIN PRESTON GREENFIELD. THE SWANNS WERE MARCHER LORDS, PROUD, POWERFUL, AND CAUTIOUS.

IF HE'D HAD A THIRD SON, TYRION SUSPECTED HE'D BE OFF WITH ROBB STARK. IT WAS NOT PERHAPS THE MOST HONORABLE COURSE, BUT IT SHOWED GOOD SENSE: WHOEVER WON THE IRON THRONE, THE SWANNS INTENDED TO SURVIVE.

IN ADDITION TO BEING WELL BORN, YOUNG SER BALON WAS VALIANT, COURTLY, AND SKILLED AT ARMS. HE WOULD SERVE WITH HONOR AND COURAGE.

ALAS, TYRION COULD NOT SAY THE SAME FOR CERSEI'S SECOND CHOICE. SER OSMUND KETTLEBLACK LOOKED FORMIDABLE ENOUGH. YET LOWBORN, NO MORE THAN A HEDGE KNIGHT, KETTLEBLACK WAS UTTERLY DEPENDENT ON CERSEI FOR HIS ADVANCEMENT--WHICH WAS DOUBTLESS WHY SHE HAD PICKED HIM.

"SER OSMUND IS AS LOYAL AS HE IS BRAVE," SHE'D TOLD JOFFREY WHEN SHE PUT FORWARD HIS NAME.

IT WAS TRUE, UNFORTUNATELY. THE GOOD SER OSMUND HAD BEEN SELLING HER SECRETS TO BRONN SINCE THE DAY SHE'D HIRED HIM, BUT TYRION COULD SCARCELY TELL HER THAT.

SER BOROS BLOUNT HAD BEEN ESCORTING TOMMEN AND LORD GYLES WHEN SER JACELYN BYWATER AND HIS GOLD CLOAKS HAD SURPRISED THEM, AND HAD YIELDED UP HIS CHARGE WITH SUCH ALACRITY THAT HE WAS NOW RESIDING IN A DUNGEON AT ROSBY ON CERSEI'S ORDERS.

A KNIGHT OF THE KINGSGUARD WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE IN DEFENSE OF THE KING AND ROYAL FAMILY. AND YET SHE REPLACES HIM WITH ANOTHER MAN JUST AS HOLLOW.



HALLYNE FLED SO QUICKLY THAT HE ALMOST BOWLED OVER SER JACELYN--NO, LORD JACELYN.

TYRION NEEDED TO REMEMBER THAT.

HOW DOES MY NEPHEW FARE?

PRINCE TOMMEN IS HALE AND HAPPY, MY LORD. HE HAS ADOPTED A FAWN SOME OF MY MEN BROUGHT HOME FROM A HUNT. HE HAD ONE ONCE BEFORE, HE SAYS, BUT JOFFREY SKINNED HER FOR A JERKIN.

HE ASKS ABOUT HIS MOTHER SOMETIMES, AND OFTEN BEGINS LETTERS TO THE PRINCESS MYRCELLA, THOUGH HE NEVER SEEMS TO FINISH ANY. HIS BROTHER, HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT SEEM TO MISS AT ALL.

YOU HAVE MADE SUITABLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIM, SHOULD THE BATTLE BE LOST?

MY MEN HAVE THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

WHICH ARE?

YOU COMMANDED ME TO TELL NO ONE, MY LORD.

I'M PLEASED YOU REMEMBER.

SHOULD KING'S LANDING FALL, HE MIGHT WELL BE TAKEN ALIVE. BETTER IF HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE JOFFREY'S HEIR MIGHT BE FOUND.

