

Xanthar Lo'Raqgis was a decorated soldier, banner-man to the Raven King's own guard, and as fearsome a warrior as you'd hope not to meet across a battlefield. He was also, at the present time, hiding in a ditch.

He sighed, shifting slightly to ease the pain from a dozen small wounds, then shifting again when the water that covered the bottom of his hiding place began to seep through his clothing. The day had started well and ended badly. Worse than badly. Catastrophically. If Xanthar had experienced a worse day he really couldn't recall.

Tears pricked his eyes, not as a result of his wounds but at the thought of his lost comrades. Treachery had been the order of the day and only Xanthar had escaped the slaughter.

He thought back to that morning and tried to work out when it had all gone wrong.

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'A nice day for a fight, eh Xanth?' Kardan, the Raven King, Lord and Master of the Three Kingdoms, swayed gently in his saddle, moving with the rhythm of his mount, as he looked across at his banner-man and most loyal soldier.

The King was still a young man. Well, young enough, and fighting fit. There was a light in his eyes as he rode out to war. Not at the prospect of battle itself, he was an accomplished warrior but did not delight in the death of other men as some do, but at the freedom he felt. A campaign was an opportunity to escape the round of stuffy diplomatic meetings that would normally be his day and to get out in the fresh air, on horseback, and see what was over the horizon. The King had an adventurous spirit and found the restrictions of his position chafing.

'Yes, sire,' Xanthar grunted, 'it's a shame it has to be against some of our own.'