

## Old wolves don't last

The ringing of metal on metal echoed through the damp field like an endless rainfall of solid iron. Dozens of good men already laid dead or dying on the muddy ground.

In The midst of the skirmish stood a men seemingly as unfit for the battleground as a princess on a plough.

Yet he wielded his sword with an impressive speed and accuracy. His helmet, which he had already lost in the heat of the battle, revealed the face of an old man. His hair was as grey and dirty as a sheep's wool. His face was littered with scars and burn marks and the moustache above his lips was long and cut unevenly. Clearly this was a man long past his prime, yet he found himself in a battle once again and no matter his age, he still managed to cut down enemy after enemy.

In a moments rest he locked eyes with his next opponent, maybe a third of his age and about twenty-five feet away. A young man with long golden hair. Guarded by his thick plate mail, with the golden bear of King Verezil shinning on his chest.

“ that boy is going to butcher me like a pig” the old man thought as both men came into reach of each other. Immediately, he felt the Collison of their swords in every bone of his body. His heart began pounding, and his hands began to shake; he was uneasy.

Quickly, way quicker than the old men, the young soldier swung his blade again, diagonally at the old man's face, who barely managed to jump back fast enough. Using the momentum of his blade, the young soldier lunged at the old one with the tip of his shining sword.

The loud, deafening, screeching of metal carving into metal could be heard, as the old men deflected the stabbing attempt with his own sword. He looked down on his chest for a moment, to check if he had been injured in the attack, but only a scratch in his armour was visible. “too close”

there was no time to think, because the young soldier was already back upon him, “dodge, parry, strike” like a swordsmen training a recruit, the old soldier shouted commands in his mind that his body was just not quick enough to follow upon. The dodge was unclean and interfered with his footwork, the parry wasn’t quick enough so that the force of the blow nearly pushed him off his feet, and the strike was so drained of power, that the young soldier dodged it swiftly with a half pirouette.

In a single motion he danced around the old man and slashed him across the backside of his legs. The old soldier muffled a scream, as he felt the burning sensation of blood dripping down the back of his knee and thigh. “ that’s it “ he spat, “ I’m finished”.

Desperately he tried to land a hit at the man who was about to end his life. Striking at his, head, knee and throat. But he just ducked, dodged backwards and ducked again. The old man’s swings where no longer fuelled with precision and tactic, but with the desperation and fury of a dying animal grasping for any chance of survival.

And against all odds, he got a chance. Filled up to his chest with self-assurance and certainty that he won the fight, the young soldier made a crucial mistake. Going for an overhead blow to finish his opponent, the young man pulled his blade back way to far, backing his swing with way more force than necessary.

This was the chance the old man had needed. As the young soldier finally brought the sword down, on his barely standing enemy, the old man used his last remaining energy, to raise his sword high above his head, taking the blow and deflecting it alongside his left arm. The enormous and unexpected momentum that went with it, shifted the young soldiers balance, and a simple bump with his chest was enough to lift the young soldier off his feet and face first onto the muddy ground.

The old man, not underestimating his opponent, not filling himself with certainty, self-assurance or ease, took hold of the edge of his sword and with a powerful swing above his head, buried the cross-guard deep into the back of the young soldier.

The sound of metal bursting emanated, as the cross-guard penetrated the plate armour, followed by a crunchy sound as it crushed the young man's spine. He never rose from the muddy ground, never learned from his mistake, he was just gone, uttering nothing but a quiet whimpering before falling silent.

The heavy breaths of the old man pounded in his lungs, as if about to burst. Pain radiated from every spot in his body, his bones, his muscles, his skin, everything ached. His socks were warm and soggy, filled with the blood that kept on dripping down his legs.

He felt as if about to pass out, and in that moment as he looked around the battlefield, he locked eyes with a young man, about twenty-five feet away, maybe a third of his age, marching directly towards him. "That boy is going to butcher me like a pig" he thought as he grabbed his sword more tightly, and readied himself for his next opponent.