

It is a well-known fact that history must be recorded, else the future generations are destined to repeat it. But I do not do this lightly, the burden has fallen to me to transcribe that wretched day all those years ago, I was but a battle scholar and was there to observe and report. But what I saw that day still haunts me, and as I write by this fading candlelight I reminiscence on that day. I shall bore you no further and will tell you a story, a great and terrible story. A story of blood and vengeance, a story of suffering and sacrifice. The story of Cynical versus the mods.

(This entire thing is not meant to be taken seriously and no offence was meant in the writing, purely satirical. Seriously I like everyone and don't want to burn bridges.)

"Fire!" He yelled, immediately before ducking as the great balls of melded steel were thrown from the metallic womb and broke against the castle walls.

"Fire!" Cynical yelled for a second time as the great cannons continued their blistering barrage, he gave control of the guns to his second, Atland. Cynical rushed to his war tent where his generals and I laid in wait for his arrival.

"How many?" He asked one of the men around the table, Logistics captain Ryan.

"Hmmm. 1000 men, give or take 50."

"Units?"

"100 archers, 200 cavalry, the rest are poorly trained militia rounded up from the nearby villages."

"We have them outnumbered then, but we still need a plan of attack. Scholar!" The commander yelled, knocking me out of my stupor, imposed by my head being buried in books and scrolls.

"Yes, Sir."

"Have you found a way in?"

"I... might have sir," I said, almost quivering in front of the general.

"It's a yes or a no, spit it out!"

"I have sir, but it's very risky"

“Go on....”

“I believe the founder of the castle, Blue, and his head builder, Mason, built an escape route in case of treason and mutiny.”

“Then why is it risky?”

“It goes right under the castle, any sound we make will be amplified tenfold.”

I slowly stuttered out as the generals hastily took the scroll I offered them. They discussed the strategy with nodding heads and bated breaths.

“You have done well scholar, but now you must lead my men through the tunnel.”

“Wh.... Why sir?”

“You know the city better than anyone, you used to be the emperor’s scribe.”

“I mean not to question your orders sir, but a whole army will make far too much noise.”

The king and his generals let small, sly smiles cover their face. A rare sight from the military men.

“I’m taking you, a few of my generals and a few hand-picked men.”

“We can’t take a city with that many people sir.”

“We don’t have to, the tunnel leads to the emperor’s throne, a quick assassination will break the will of the defenders and the city will be ours.”

I was but a scholar, an armed scholar, but still a scholar and knew not of the tactics of war. Who was I to question the king’s orders?

We left the tent to see a line of men saluting outside in the dark, ready to die at the behest of their king.

I recognised most of them, Clorox, vownido, Deepdak, orr1 and a strange hooded figure, not saluting.

The man had a sword by his side and a bow on his back, he faced ahead.

“You there!” The king pointed a finger into the man’s chest

“Who. Are. You?”

The shadowy figure pushed the king away and pulled off his hood before the knights could draw swords.

Everyone outside the tent let out a sudden gasp, I was one of them. The man with many names, the broken but whole, the shadow of Arnor and death incarnate. It was the warrior who could turn away armies at the mere mention of his name. It was Tom.

The King quickly shook the solitary figure’s hand and thanked him for joining them, Tom simply nodded. Heavy rain started pouring from the sky and the booming of the cannons was challenged by great claps of thunder from the heavens.

“We should get moving.” Said Clorox

“Follow me,” I said and led the fellowship through the newly ground mud and fallen tree branches behind the encampment that encircled the city.

We eventually reached a tree guarded by two soaked individuals, Goldfish and Hamstah.

They saluted the king and opened a door hidden in the roots of a tree, I lit a lamp and led the way through the barren roots and into a musky stone corridor.

“Are we sure this leads us to the throne room?” Asked vownido, like me he was not a warrior but the king’s personal physician in case of injury.

“I’m sure,” I spoke as my voice echoed through the seemingly never-ending stone corridor, no one else spoke on the way to the exit, they were elite trained men and were highly disciplined. Except Deepdak of course, but that’s a story for another day.

Eventually, an exit came into sight and my party silently slipped through into a large ballroom that I knew to be before the throne room. My momentarily panicked was reinforced by the troops at the other end of the room, guarding the giant door to the emperor’s room.

“Shield wall” Yelled the king quickly as a rain of arrows swept overhead but were stopped by the breacher’s iron resolve and quick thinking. The sound of arrows pinging off the wall rebounded around the room.

“You thought us blind traitors? We know and see all and you were a fool to come here.” Said the apparent commander of the guards, Wxze, with his two lieutenants Imad and imajoke.

“We shall cease this heresy before like one would flick a fly,” Mocked imajoke before a strangled gargle filled the room and the lieutenant fell to the floor dead. An arrow had pierced his throat from Tom’s bow, the shield wall quickly closed again after gaping to allow Tom his shot.

“Impressive shooting.” Said another man as a hidden side door opened and he strolled through, as if not noticing the standoff in front of him.

“And how good to see you again brother, still throwing in your lot with rebels? Oh, what would mother think?” Mocked orr2 at his brother.

“I would ask you the same, siding with the tyrant and betraying everything she stood for.”

“I’ll have your head for that.”

“You,” orr1 said, drawing his sword.

“Will try.”

“Enough talk,” Yelled Cynical.

“Do you want to fight or keep hiding like the cowards you are?”

“So says the man hiding behind a wall of his lessers.”

The king signalled for the wall to drop and the men to rush the defenders who sent a quick volley at them before drawing swords. Deepdak and Goldfish were hit with arrows and fell to the floor in agonising pain.

The two sides clashed with the defenders outnumbering the Siegers 3 to 1, but the attackers were much better trained. Off to the side the brothers were engaged in a fierce duel of their own, both evenly matched, Orr1 looked over to the king quickly who nodded, a sign of some sort.

Orr2 went in for a direct thrust which pierced Orr1 straight through his chest, he spat blood out of his smiling mouth, he pulled the dagger off his brothers’ belt and

stabbed him through the back. Both brothers fell to the floor, both with pieces of metal sticking out of them. Even in death, they were even.

The attackers were slowly gaining the upper hand but a strike from an axeman sent Clorox to his knees and his head was promptly sliced in half. A savage yell and swift sword strike from Hamstah avenged Clorox's death. Imad was engaged in a fierce duel with Tom who kicked the sword out of his hand and stabbed him through the heart.

Wxze and Cynical locked swords and stared with pure malice into each other's eyes, years of warring against each other had left hearts of hate where once good men stood. The malice in the eyes of Wxze slowly turned to confusion then went blank as his grip on his sword weakened and he fell to the floor, an arrow sticking out of his back.

We assessed our losses before throwing our weight against the door and heaving it open to the sound of metal on metal, it was a vast room with the emperor sitting smugly on his throne while four figures battled in the middle, two on each side. On one side were the assassins that the king had sent earlier, maxirobe and Ace versus the king's royal guard Violet and susy.

"About damn time," Maxi grunted out as he deflected a knife strike from susy. Tom immediately began firing arrows at the emperor but was out of range.

"Charge!" Yelled the king as him, hamstah and Tom drew swords and ran to help the beleaguered assassins. The king's henchman noticed and susy fainted then stabbed Ace through the gut before turning her attention to maxi who was now versing two opponents, he defended as best he could before the cavalry arrived and engaged the royal guards, the fight was being pushed to the throne, as the attackers used sheer force of weight on the royal guardsmen. Violet got a stab into hamstah's heart before her arm was cut off by Tom and her head promptly removed from her body. Susy quickly realised she was outmatched and jumped onto Maxi, dragging them both to the floor as susy quickly stabbed a blade many times into Maxi's chest before getting a sword in the gut from the behind. Now it was just the king, me, vownido and Tom.

"Brave of you to come here. Foolish, but brave."

"You have sat upon the throne for too long, your tyranny ends today."

“You think you can defeat me? Then you really are a fool.” Said the Emperor mockingly, rising from his throne.

“Prepare for de- “The emperor used his speech to distract the attackers and drew a spear from his back which he threw at Cynical who dodged it easily.

“Is that the bes- “A gargled choke cut him off as the group looked around to see vownido impaled by a spear.

“I wasn’t aiming for you.”

The king let out a roar of rage and ran at the emperor with Tom behind him. The emperor drew two swords from behind his throne and raced to meet them. The sound of steel on steel raked the chamber again as the emperor used his strength and training to fend off the two warriors. The combatants danced around the room in an almost synchronised manner, such was their skill. The Emperor was evenly matched by the king and the shadowy warrior and soon realised he could only win through trickery.

As Tom went for a sideways swing the emperor ducked which knocked Tom off balance who the emperor kicked away before reengaging with the king. The two fought and clashed until sweat coated every part of them and blood flowed more than the wine served at banquets in the castle. I realised I had to do something and tried to scurry around the emperor who was too busy fighting the king to notice a lowly scholar, a battle scholar mind you. I had slowly made my way behind the emperor and drew my short sword, waiting for the kings’ signal. The king went for an overhead stab and nodded, I thrust my sword and the emperor noticed and blocked Cynical’s thrust then mine, instinctively turning to face me, Cynical quickly stabbed him through the back and right through the heart.

“Your reign is over, Beach.”

The former ruler fell to the floor with the king’s blade still in him, I went over and shook Tom out of unconsciousness as the king went to the balcony and looked over the city. I went to join him but heard choked laughter from behind me, I turned and saw Tom rifling through the emperor robes until he found a letter.

“You have lost that which can never be regained warrior, you will never find it again.” The emperor let out a few more chuckles before falling silent.

Tom just took the paper slip and looked down at the king as light poured through the room, a new day rising for the kingdom, both physically and metaphorically.

“You are wrong,” Tom said to the lifeless tyrant and removed his dark robes revealing a plain undershirt and breeches.

“It’s not difficult to find,” He said and opened the paper envelope, for the first time since I had met him a smile creased his face.

“In fact, you led me right to it.”

I found it peculiar he was still talking to the dead body.

Tom walked out of the throne room in civilian clothes, I would see him again, but that too is a story for another day.

I joined the king on the balcony and looked out at the city, his flags had been raised on every rampart and barrack. Soon we heard metallic footsteps behind us and turned to see general shredded at the head of a company of men.

He studied the scene and raced to the king.

“Are you alright sir?”

“I’m fine general really, has the castle been cleared?”

“General Adam-Tisitc is working on it right now Sir.”

“Go help him then, I’m fine.”

“But Si- “

“That’s an order general.”

“Right away sir.”

The general left half his company to guard the king and ran again to help with the clean-up of imperial soldiers.

The king turned to me.

“Thank you, scholar, you have done your kingdom a great service.”

“I did what had to be done, Sire.”

“Not many men can claim the same.”

I bowed and left the king to his musings; I was eager for a hot plate of beef and a nice comfy bed to sleep in that night.

As I walked back through the palace, I saw the bodies of my comrades strewn across the floor, dead. I wondered if all this bloodshed was really worth it.

Had I been part of a righteous revolution?

Or simply turned the throne over to another tyrant.