

## The Best Laid Plans of Rats and Men

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The timbers of the trebuchet creaked under the strain of its load, its mighty stone weight carved with an image of the grail hung ominously above the heads of its motley crew of peasants. The men stood together in an uncomfortable silence as their liege lords were bowed in prayer.

Slowly as the knights rose the peasants began to relax, assured that their protectors were once again blessed by the Lady's fey magiks in the defence of their lands.

As the general began to form his troops into ordered columns that would, in mid charge become the deadly lance formation, a cry went up from the crew of the mighty war machine.

Annoyed by the interruption to his battle plans the general looked in the direction the peasants were pointing, only to see a shadowy cluster of the rat men meld into the trees. At that very moment upon the rise the full force of the Skaven warhost began to assemble.

Now the general began to act quickly, ordering the knights of the quest to the wings of the line and the inexperienced knights errant to the centre, hoping the young knights would show some restraint under the stern gazes of The Ones Who Seek. Already the loose unit of peasant archers began to move up the right-hand side of the field to gain a better vantage to shoot at the foul ratmen.

Shaking his head at the thought of a man willingly wanting to use a ranged weapon instead of facing an opponent face to face brought a sour grimace to the general's face. Still they were a valuable part of his battle plan.

The Bretonnian force was now completely mustered on the rocky slope facing the Skaven horde in loose formation on the other slope. The small river that split the two hills would run with blood before the day was out.

Raising his ancestral sword above his head he signalled the flight of the winged Pegasus knights, as the first glowing green traces that signalled rat snipers began to rend gaping holes in the armour of his core knights.

Dropping his glowing weapon the army began its slow advance down the muddy slope. As the force began to gain momentum the duke spied the small rat unit emerging from the forest and heading towards the trebuchet.

Breaking from his canter the general re directed his unit towards the small troupe of rats; they would make a fine warm up for the things to come. Spurring his roan stallion into a charge the duke reached up and closed his visor as the ground began to shake as his unit bore down upon the dark ratmen.

Sensing their attack had failed the cowardly gutterrunners began to flee back towards the forest that they came from, despite the orders of the assassin in their ranks. The fleeing ratmen were trampled beneath the iron shod hooves of the charging knights.

Reeling his blood spattered stallion the general redirected his knights back towards his main force that by now had begun to bear down on the main Skaven force.

In dismay the general watched as deadly green bullets tore into the front rank of knights, picking off his hand-selected champions. Nonetheless the remaining knights tore down the sloped towards the rats who appeared to be content in waiting in the foot of the valley.

Fools.

Glancing up the duke noticed the rat snipers ready for another volley when suddenly half of the plateau they stood upon fragmented into a thousand stone fragments that tore apart half of their number.

No sooner had this happened, then the general felt the hairs upon the back of his neck stand up straight as the Goddess's chosen grimaced and muttered strange incantations dissipation the evil magiks that would have obliterated the duke.

His zeal restored the duke raised his sword and repeated the cry ringing across the battle field "For the Lady and for our Lands!"

The deformed rat sat perched on his sighting seat, yeas of exposure to warp stone had had an adverse effect on both his mind and body. Screaming at the slaves hauling the deadly warplightning cannon upon which he was mounted to move the warplack engineer nervously chewed the patch of bare skin on his paw that had worn off many years ago from his nervous habit.

"Not long now no not long (sknikt, sknikt) soon, soon" the insane engineer crooned to his deadly machine.

Startled by a loud rush of wind the engineer jumped out of his seat in fright as a large piece of man building crashed into the earth a little to the left of his weapon.

Screaming in rage the engineer righted himself and slammed the firing mechanism into gear, despite the fact that it wasn't fully charged. The machine began to hum as the deadly green charge began to build around the cannon's mouth small forks of green lighting lancing off and burning the slaves directing it. With a cry the engineer flipped the switch and the deadly green beam of pure energy leapt towards the units of men with the shiny sword leading them.

The Jezzail team now decimated to half strength gazed upon the bodies of their fellow team members, each one

suspecting that the grey seer had planned for this to happen. Disregarding the bodies the rats once again began to pick targets in the units of charging knights far below them.

Far above in the sky the unit of Pegasus knights began to circle like vultures above the Jezzail team. Diving into a charge the pegasi folded their wings back along their bodies for maximum speed. Tearing down upon their targets the startled Jezzail team hastily tried to fire upon the diving creatures but found their guns jammed by some strange magiks as the banner in the hands of the lead rider began to glow gold.

The green arc of power tore down the ragged slope towards the duke's unit, with no time to avert his course the duke took the brunt of the surge head on. Still charging down the hill the general was surprised by the fact that only his hair had been burned off. But without further time to consider his incredible luck the general's unit smashed into the row of spears in front of them. The first rank of rats was swept under the hooves of the mighty war chargers even as the knights began to plunge their lances into the chests of the second rank of Skaven.

Further along the field the knights of the quest punched a gaping hole in the Skaven battle line, only to be followed a short time later by the impetuous knights errant who had begun to chase down the now fleeing mass.

The Jezzail team screamed in anguish as their flimsy wooden shields were crushed beneath the hooves of the frenzied pegasi, and their thin leather armour was penetrated by cruel steel lance tips. Sensing the folly of remaining in the proximity of such danger, the greyseer who had recently been standing behind a rock to the right of the crushed Jezzails, disappeared with a loud pop and the acrid smell of sulfur.

Further down the back line of the Skavens quickly fleeing battle front the warlock engineer and his crew mobilized the great weapon and fled into the dark woods into which so many other ratmen were fleeing.

"My Lord we must pursue them their getting away!" protested the unit commander of the knights errant, as the last of the Skaven troops fled into the forest.

"Fear not young Caelem, I have the feeling that these rats will get the sticky ends that they deserve, worry not for these are the out skirts of Athel Loren!" laughed the duke.