

The Challenge at Paladin's Keep

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It had been a long war, each day the evil would creep upon us like shadows in the night. It was true what they say... evil never sleeps. The tragic loss of land only decreased our morale more as we fought on. Not for glory nor honor, but for life.

F.Y.I There is a fluff on this challenge already on the Twilight War site so I give credit to theDarkGeneral for writing the original, so now I write my view on it and add a little more.

It was a cold war for the Good side. The Council of Light demanded again and again under a central leadership to prepare the defenses, the most hated words to be uttered from their mouths.

I'm sure I was not known in these parts, unlike I was back home in bretonnia, but many of my friends had also set out on this journey to free the great lands of Lumbria from the grasp evil had claimed on it.

War had not stopped, the chaos had pushed us back and forth again and again as when we saw light and hope it would only be diminished nder the blanket of despair as they would perform a mighty defense.

The battles: epic, the fighting: cruel, as the war would never stop, chaos would always have their hunger for more bloodshed. I bring you to a tragic defeat now. At a time where the council had woe for the loss of Lumbria itself. The noble fortresses within the Elven forest of Brightwood and the Mountains held by the dwarfs in the east had fallen.

The seas were crippled by our forces as we would keep the attack but the battle for Lumbria was at the Paladin's Keep. A mighty fortress which, upon its walls, it held a mighty burden to hold out until the siege was over. This was seen as impossible.

Among the ranks I could be seen, Jean Marcel le Honorable was my name. I fought beside the Elves, beside the Bretonnians whom are my brethren, and beside even the Imperials of the east and the Dwarfs of the mountain passes. Even in this time of loss our will to survive and win, to quell the evil, was reigning supreme. But none-the-less, our willpower could not stop the ultimate siege of this great fortress.

It had been a long time since I had experienced such a grand war. Mighty generals of the Dark Gods had come to this day to slaughter us in hatred. I can still recall the day we lost our hope, yes, it is coming back to me.

I stood upon the walls as they would fire their chaotic weapons at us. Many assembled before the keep. Dark elves of Naggaroth, Ogres from distant lands, Orcs and Goblins ready to burn and slaughter, the vile Skaven of the underworld that wished to let loose disease among humankind, the dwarfs that had laid deep in the mountains... ultimately succumbed by chaos, and the very dark lords of the Northern Wastelands themselves: the Hordes of Chaos.

Time and time again we rode out in hopes of a victory and came back with many dead as we could only hope to have the siege stopped with each passing day. It was in our dire time of hope as they kept pushing the attacks forward I decided that there was only one chance for survival.

To lower the enemy's morale, to show the Council some hope and that there was still glory in it for us, that we could push back the tides of darkness. I would stall for the Keep's sake, I would challenge a lord of chaos.

After the months of fighting, there had been one general who would march his armies onto the battlefield before me time and time again and victory had its turns and so did loss, but it was he who I wished to show death, it was he who I would push back into the afterlife and bring glory and hope to the side of Good.

He only went by a name given to him by his fellow comrades. The Dark General. He had no name, neither did the chaotic scum deserve one. His despicable army before us lay siege with the others.

A grave night it was, many lives were lost as the walls were breached at one point... they entered and many defended, the blood of too many spilt that day. Upon the battle, it was I who pushed forward the attack into the depths as people saw to me as a madman. My blade cut asunder the foes that had crept out from the dark and I sent them back to the abyss.

Upon fighting the dark ones noticed my efforts to slay them all until the last man. The very army of the Dark General was the one I chose out to puncture my lance through the ranks of, with this his anger rose charging forth in the night. Too much had gone to slaughter as the charge of the elven and dwarven alliances could not be beaten back, their stubbornness proving to be a key element of victory.

My blade rose to meet the Dark General's and they clashed. Steel on steel could be heard throughout the halls of the Keep during the fight that had ensued for the whole night thus far. The words that night were relieving, as our battle did not end, hearing the evil side screaming "Fall Back! Fall Back!"

But before such a cowardly move was made the Dark General turned and swore his return. He issued me a challenge to decide the fate of my life, it would redeem himself from falling back to the woods, and avenge his fallen foul followers.

My heart pumped with a quick speed, my nerves tingling as I nodded my head in agreement to it. He pulled his sword away and marched back with haste to prepare. This day... it could be called the closest thing to a victory we have experienced for a while.

The next morning, the mist crept from the moat that surrounded our fair Keep, the armies of the enemy marched outside of the woods and just on the outskirts, surrounding the keep. My hands were shaking in fear of the next 6 words that shattered the silence...

"Jean Marcel," the voice spoke out, "I've come... for you." I had no choice... I had to do it for the people... to stop the siege on the Keep even for a moment... even if it cost my life. I had to try to bring glory to our side once again and honor to L'Anguille.

I grabbed my greatsword... inscribed in it was the saying "I shall Forever fight for the Lady", and I walked to the drawbridge. Our leader... Nagathi they called him, put his hand on my shoulder and spoke.

"May you push the tides of chaos back, in life or death may your heart always be pure, you fight the hated foe not for yourself, but for the men here and the people of Lumbria. May the Gods be with you."

Many others shouted out words of hope towards me and as I crossed the bridge, people above wept in thoughts of despair and loss. I too felt the sadness as the radius of darkness from the general before me crippled my morale.

His eyes a fiery red and his weapon before him big enough to cut a man in half. His steed a dark strong steed of the North. His face had drawings of the 8 pointed star of Chaos and many markings upon his armor. His steed neighed in a fierce manner at the sight of me as many of the evil generals began to mumble viscious things about torture and hatred as their eyes followed me out.

He rose his blade and pointed at me. "At long last, Jean Marcel, I will finally have your head to add to the throne of skulls for Khorne. At last I will be done with you and your soul shall be forever in the Dark Gods' hands to torment you for your many sins, for your destruction of chaos.

I looked at him with little fear but also with a stubborn heart as I spit on the ground and did not speak a word. I drew my greatsword and my steed looked towards the enemy before me with a hated resolve.

A small kick on the sides of the horses were given as both of us began to gallop towards eachother, my heart calm and

his, should he have had one, only showing lust for blood for his God.

The distance between us closed as finally our blades struck against each other. The duel commenced and my blade swung left and right upon my steed as he parried each blow with ease, thereafter bashing me with his shield throwing me off balance.

"You should have died a long time ago, Jean." He yelled out with a slight cackle at the end of it.

"The day I die is the day chaos reigns supreme." I spoke out to him, our blades once again clashing.

My horse gave way and we moved forward as I turned him around to charge back into the General. His blade rose for a downward swing as I raised to block it until his horse charged forth in a last second which threw me off, his blade swinging down into my stomach, leaving a deep gash in it.

"I can not fall..." were the only words my mouth could mutter as the General laughed and claimed as it was too late for such.

Our fight continued as I held my weapon close, he swung again and again for me as each blow was met by my blade, blessed by the lady. I swung a left swing across him as he blocked it but gravity had its way and pulled the sword around me as I let go of it with one hand and swung it around my backside to my other, leaving an unexpected blow to his side as even the Khornate lord gave out a cry in pain as I grabbed his sword and swung twice more at him, each one cutting through him, piercing his armor and skin. The black blood did flow.

But nay, my fellow readers. He did not fall, the very wounds I struck upon his foul body glowed with a stream of red light and closed up before my very eyes. The Dark Gods had blessed this man, although it was very unlikely he deserved it.

And so, my heart began to beat faster... my nerves now shot and my morale and thought of victory crushed beneath his blade as in my next swing his shield pushed my blade back and I felt his sword puncture my ribs, the glowing of my insignia on my chest did nothing to prevent my fall.

I fell to the ground in pain, off my horse which he killed instantly after I had fallen. He rose his sword up for a final blow on me and I spat in his face. Wiping it off clean, he shook his head in hatred for me as before his swing, horns were sounded.

Knights of Bretonnia rode forth past me, not wanting to see me fall. My banners were the very ones flying from their hands as they pushed into the Dark General delaying his attack as he swept his blade clean through two of the

impetuous errants before me, the armies of evil chanted in anger for this account.

My eyes closed and I could feel nothing but pain and the very taste of blood that was beginning to fill my mouth as I coughed it up. I could feel, seconds later during the battle, hands had grabbed me... I was being picked up and dragged off the field. When my eyes opened I had found myself resting safely inside the Keep, before me sat Nagathi and a few other elves.

"What happened...?" I mumbled out with grogginess.

"The errants, after their charge... they were slaughtered by the forces of evil, Jean, but we were able to get you out before he had taken your life. Before you sit the very elves that had grabbed you from the field." Nagathi said.

I turned and looked at them with a shock of good fortune. "Thank you... my friends."

They gave a quick nod and in silence they could sense my feeling of happiness that went beyond the pain of my wounds. There was still a battle to fight for the Keep. My loss had gained us a single day of peace and time to prepare... but the war was not over. I would rise again at one time or another and I would avenge myself against this foe... but it was not this day... nor the next. Only time could tell when it would come.

Until then, I drew my blade and swore to defend justice, to defend the hopes and dreams of the people before me, and to defend Lumbria until death takes me.

That was a challenge that would fight on forever.