

Hey all! This was supposed to be out by New Years, but I lost several weekends in terms of fic-time and that pushed back all my works last month, and then Tomon started to get Stallion of the Line back to me. That should be up soon.

Chapter 14: War Comes to the Mountain

As everyone on both sides knew it would, the battle started with a flurry of elfin arrows. With their greater eyesight, the elves of the Unseen Host, the elven rangers, could shoot farther than the best human archers. Although in the case of Bard, that wasn't quite as far as most of the elves around the human's leader would have anticipated. Barely had the goblins acting as the foaming froth of the enemy army's advance come forward another ten paces that Bard fired.

He didn't shoot nearly as quickly as the elves, but he was just as accurate, and from where he was waiting nearby, Harry spotted several elves talking to one another in shock and even a packet of Lembas changing hands between two of them. However, Harry could also see that the goblins were not stopping. They had already lost about a hundred goblins with more wounded, but still, the goblins came on. Lots of them.

Quickly this changed as the goblins reached their own range. Deceptively strong despite their short stature, the goblins could fire just as far as the majority of the humans, and both the humans with the Unseen Host and the goblins opened fire almost at the same time. "We're about to take fire ourselves, boys and ladies," Harry shouted, his words carrying from one end of the skirmish line to another thanks to a *Mufilatio*.

"Down! Into the foxholes!" Bard ordered, and elsewhere lieutenants among the few humans and the rest of the Unseen Host shouted the same thing, including Legolas and Tauriel.

Being in the foxholes slowed the rate of fire, forcing the archers to hold their bows lengthwise or fire upwards at an angle, but that was all right. Even though the foxholes weren't as deep as they would if someone was firing a rifle, they still protected more than half of the archer's bodies and made them a much smaller target.

More goblins pushed forward began to join the ones already engaged with the Unseen Host in an archer duel. At first, despite the enemy's ever-growing numbers, the better abilities and the foxholes made the exchange quite one-sided. But then some enterprising goblin realized why their aimed fire wasn't working. A moment later, the enemies began to arc their massed fire.

Six elves and two humans died, one in the same foxhole as Harry. The elf fell without a cry, two arrows impacting his face and punching through into the elf's brain, killing him before he could even feel the pain. Another fell back with a loud cry, the pain of the arrow in the shoulder causing him to crumble.

"Protego!" Harry shouted, causing a Protego shield over the foxhole like an actual shield, before rushing to either side, aiming his hands out towards the nearest foxholes. With those on either side defended, Harry leaped up and out of his initial foxhole, racing to the next on his left side.

The sight of his magical shield caused consternation among the goblins, but when Harry leaped up, many were quick to fire on him. But Harry was too quick, and he skidded under that foxholes Protego, nearly kicking an elf in the head before the man could get out of his way. "Excuse me," Harry

murmured politely before moving to the other side of the foxhole and once more targeting those holes he could see, creating more Protegos.

“You are made, Istar,” the elf shook his head, staring at the young magic-user. “Mad, I say.”

Harry just chuckled and moved on, racing out into the open again. He did so twice more before the enemy fire got too much for him to attempt it. As he gasped in air, somewhat winded from multiple sprints in a row, he shook his head. “They thought up the idea of arcing fire a little too quickly for my tastes.”

Nearby, one of the other humans, a younger man but one with a scar that ran down the side of his head, shrugged. “Ain’t no one said goblins weren’t clever Master, all you’d have to forget that notion is run into some of their traps. Sides, it ain’t all that impressive, sin’ that be what you do in a siege.”

“True enough, although I think we might’ve underestimated their numbers too. At least among goblins.” The young man shrugged, and Harry looked to the front once more. Doing so, Harry noticed that while lots of the goblins had stopped to trade bow fire with the now defended archer positions, many more began to race forward.

“Hmm, now we can’t have that.” Harry waited a few more seconds, watching a series of small sticks he and Tauriel had placed out there, marking the range Harry could shoot his spells. A moment later, the group of goblins Harry was watching passed one of those sticks. Harry gestured forward with one hand, and the first clump of charging goblins exploded in a burst of offal that covered a goodly portion of a group right behind them in blood and bone matter.

A second group of four took a cutting spell right across their bodies. This dumped their bodies to the ground, fouling up goblins directly behind them.

At that point, the first orcs moved into the contact zone. Like the goblins, these orcs were armed with bows and were quick to follow the example of the goblins. Instead of aiming for the head and shoulders of their opponents that were sticking up out of the foxholes, they began to use arcing fire as well to hammer into the shields that Harry had conjured into being. However, the orcs also did something even more dangerous. They concentrated their fire, bellowing at the goblins to target the foxholes where Harry hadn’t been able to protect.

Screams began to abound as goblin arrows, and the heavier arrows of the orcs began to find their targets. And elves and men began to die.

Legolas and Tauriel were in charge of this aspect of the battle. And once whole foxholes started to be wiped out, Legolas started to shout out the retreat from one side, while Tauriel did the same from the other.

Hearing this, Harry tapped the young man he was currently sharing a foxhole with on the shoulder, gesturing him up and out of the back of the foxhole, where our crude dirt stairs had been formed into the side of the defensive structure. “Let’s get a move on.”

Harry followed the man up, walking backward, using his magic to redirect arrows as they came at him or any of the others who he could see directly retreating to the secondary earthworks. Thanks to

this magical aide on top of Harry's previous work, this move was completed quickly in the center of the skirmish zone.

Soon, the men there began to lay down fire to either side, defending their fellows that Harry had been unable to do much for before this. With Tauriel and Legolas leading them, the rest of the skirmishers retreated while the goblins halted in some confusion. None of Azog's troops had expected the elves and humans to simply pull back like that.

It had never been part of anyone's plan to let the Unseen Host and their human allies in place. Instead, this move, although coming far earlier in the fight than Harry had hoped, had been planned, just like all of the rest of the defensive earthworks that he and Gandalf had helped to construct, adding their magic to the brute force and knowledge of Bard, his humans, and to Thorin and the dwarves. Even the elves had helped in their own way.

The second line of defenses was comprised of larger trenches. There were five of these, three in the center, with two faintly curved in front of the two hill forts on either side of the defensive line where the main elven host had taken position.

This defensive line didn't cover as much area as the foxholes had but were more clever in build, mainly because they started where the hills leading up to the Lonely Mountain began, save the centermost trench, which cut across the road leading to the entrance to Erebor. Beyond that one trench, all of the others were on an angle and so had slight lips at the back to defend from arcing fire to a certain extent.

This retreat had also moved to the Unseen Host and their human fellows close enough to Erebor for them to get some covering fire. The area right in front of them was within the range of the ballista bolts from the seven machines that the dwarves had been reconstructed from the Lonely Mountain's previous defenses in the time allotted. The trenches themselves were also close enough for the Elven archers on either side on the forts' walls to start to fire down at any attacker.

Losses among the enemy began to mount, but still the goblins charged forward, with the orcs following at a more sedate cautious pace, driving the goblins forward instead of going themselves. But as they did, the ballistae began to fire.

As Harry watched, four ballista bolts crashed into the frontrunners, each as long as a man was tall and as thick around as a young tree. The strikes hurled orcs and goblins aside even with glancing blows, while those fully struck by them came apart at the seams.

"Someone get me a headcount," Bard ordered, as Harry finally hopped down into the central trench with his young companion as well as several others. "How many did we lose?"

The answer was that more than eighty Elves and twelve men had been lost, with four lost in the retreat to the second line. The losses among the Unseen Host were far higher than among the men, although that was probably because they had made up the majority of the skirmishers in the first place.

"Does Legolas want to pull your host back and join the rest of your archers?" Harry asked the Elven runner who had reported to Bard. He was making his way along the trenches to report to the various commanders about the losses.

"I do not know, Istar. I do not think we will retreat just yet. We need to blunt their goblin and orc archers more."

Harry nodded, then looked through the scintillating shield he had created over the central trench, staring as more orc archers came forward. Along with them came a few trolls, lugging huge packs over their shoulders filled with troll-fist-sized rocks. Meanwhile, the goblins were still being forced forward, rushing forward in clumps of fifteen or twenty.

The trolls began to hurl their rocks forward like shotputs. Some of them crashed into Harry's shield, which started to flicker after only one shot. The next shattered the spell, forcing Harry to renew it. The rest of the rocks didn't do as much damage. Trolls weren't exactly known for their good eyesight. Still, Harry wondered how many of them were a part of the enemy army. *With their size, even a small number of trolls could be devastating if used right. Not like these.*

Almost following Harry's thoughts, several of the ballistae from Erebor began to target the trolls, specifically in an example of what Thorin had called antibattery fire. Two of the trolls fell, the ballista bolts killing them as if they were goblins struck by an elven arrow. The others continued to hurl their stones forward, towards the forts on the hill this time. But even a troll's prodigious strength couldn't hurl the rocks hard enough to damage the walls of the forts from so far away, and after a second, they retreated, one of them having its arm torn off by a ballista bolt.

Huh, I wonder how they transported the trolls anyway. Keeping them under cover maybe could work but even so...

There was a sudden flash to one side of the battle, and Harry started, realizing his preoccupation with the trolls had made him miss the fact the goblins were still charging forward towards the second defensive line in their disorganized clumps. At first, Harry thought that perhaps that was simply a sign of Azog's disdain for the orcs' lesser cousins. But then he cursed suddenly, realizing what that flash meant even as the main enemy army began to push forward into the initial contact area. "Dammit! Warg-humping son of a rotten ass..."

"What is it, Istar?" One of the nearby elves asked, somewhat nonplussed at the idea of one of the Wise cursing like the coarsest human, while a few humans nearby, including Bard, grinned.

Those grins faded instantly as Harry pointed towards where the sudden conflagration was petering out before sweeping his arm across the front line, ignoring the hail of arrows flashing back and forth. "Those goblins are going to reach my defensive works. Well ahead of the rest of their host."

Bard knew just enough about what Harry had been doing with his red stone-marked defenses to realize that the magic so marked out were one-shot deals. "That is not good," he answered, shaking his head.

Harry's response of, "You could pass for a fellow Brit with that level of understatement, Bard," caused the man to frown in puzzled confusion at what he took to be a compliment. But then both of their attention was riveted to the action in front of them as Harry's words came true.

Runic arrays were usually used as defensive works to hide, conceal, or protect a set area or a building of some kind in various ways. It was hard to create offensive runic arrays, but it was possible.

Those first few goblins whose death warned Harry of the problem had run into the easiest type. The ones that technically were not actually working runic arrays.

There was an activation and the magic gathering rune, but there were some very deliberate mistakes so that the magic within the rune wasn't formed into the proper ward. Instead, when the ward around the stone was tripped, the magic within the array exploded, turning all of its pent-up magic into heat and fury.

As Harry watched, similar traps were tripped. Several dozen goblins were turned into so much offal, while an orc at the back of one group lost one of his arms. The orc had been holding it out along with the bow in that hand while he pulled the string back with his other hand. Only the arm having entered the aerial where the explosion occurred, not that the orc seemed of a mind to be grateful.

Elsewhere, another group of goblins, this one smaller, tripped another ward. Instantly they began to turn into stone, although the effect didn't spread as far as the explosions. Several others were turned into living torches as they crossed over a flame start ward, the kind Harry had seen a version of in his first year used to defend the Philosopher's Stone turned to a deadlier purpose.

Others were not nearly as immediately lethal. Modified repelling arrays simply turned the goblins around, causing them to blink in confusion, Mill about and become easy targets for a single ballista that crashed into a few of them, slaying many of them. Others were slain by arrow fire as they milled about.

To one side, Harry saw another group of goblins walk through wards that had the equivalent of confounding charms as part of their makeup. This caused them to go wild, seeing enemies all around them. While Harry watched with a vicious smile on his face, several orcs who had been chivvying that group forward fell to their blades, even as they hacked down their lesser brethren.

And yet, the goblins were soaking up many of Harry's traps. More than a few of his traps went off only to catch one or two goblins, not clumps, and even those clumps were smaller than Harry had hoped. Within minutes the main enemy host of orcs began to race forward, closing the distance with the second line of defense across the entire front.

At their head were warg riders, several hundred strong, heading not towards the trenches but the intervals between them. *They mean to cut us off from any attempt of retreat.* "Bard..."

Lake-Town's leader nodded, and as the enemy forces came closer, taking losses from the archers all along the line and from the two forts, he waited, firing his own bow only occasionally. Then he gave a single calm command. "Raise the blue flag."

At that order, two men pulled out a large flag from behind where Bard and Harry stood. They raised it above their heads on two large poles above the back of the trench so that it could be seen.

At that signal, two small dwarven catapults that Dain's people had constructed fired from where they were situated behind the fourth line of They were sited along specific lines, being hard to turn with men available back there instead of in the battle on the tertiary line, the real defensive fortification.

And instead of a single solid rock, these shot forth canvas bags containing hundreds of smaller rocks. And each of those stones had been whispered to by Gandalf as Harry had worked on his runic

arrays. Now they crashed into the front ranks of the charging horde, scattering those smaller rocks throughout. The sheer impact killed many of the charging warg riders and their beasts, but the carnage multiplied as the hand-sized rocks exploded on impact with either the ground or the enemy combatants.

Three times more, the two catapults fired, and the orcish host had no response. Their front runners' assault was ruined, and while their archers continued to lay down a deadly hail, the remnants of the skirmishers fell back out of that second line of defense.

As they retreated, Harry caught sight of Tory and Legolas and took a brief moment to wave at them before turning back and using his own magic to help defend the slower runners among the Unseen Host and humans. An arrow sliced past his cheek, nicking his ear and causing him to wince, but the next few smacked into a *Protego*, which Harry left in place as he retreated, gesturing those around him on. "Move, move! None of us want any dead heroes today, people, move!"

Soon enough the skirmishers were pushing themselves up the manmade (dwarf-made) hill that formed the center of their first solid fortification, the line in the sand the orcs would not cross. This hill was made of many of the stones that had fallen on Smaug, dragged out by teams of dwarves, then backed by logs, packed by dirt to create a hill across the road leading up to Erebor, its sides touching the hills leading up to the forts given over to the elven army.

At its top, there was a short parapet, enough to give the Iron Hill dwarves manning it cover from the waist down. At its base a series of ditches lay, lined with stakes.

As Harry and Bard passed over, Harry joined the dwarves, two of them moving aside for the magic user, nodding in welcome to him. Harry had proven himself many times over before this battle had begun, and they had all seen his use of magic this day as well.

On the other hand, Bard continued on, joining with the men standing behind the dwarven line, hidden below the opposite slope of the hill. They were armed with long pikes, but unlike the dwarves, the men looked nervous as the bellows and shireks of the enemy grew closer. These were farmers, crafters and fishermen, few real warriors among them. But as Bard spoke to them, their spines stiffened, and the clump of men who had gathered to greet their fellows spread out once more, backing up the dwarves once more.

It was well they had as, a second later, the first of the goblins reached their line, and as Harry lashed out with another cutting spell, the battle began in earnest.

Scene break

Staring at the battle through the lens of one of Saruman's gifts to the Master, Azog snarled in fury as he saw the humans and elves once more retreat like the cowards they were, and also fury at his own mistake. *They slaughtered my warg riders!!* He only had a bare thousand of those elite riders in his force and had just lost most of them.

Worse, Azog couldn't make out many details of the third, perhaps the only true, line of defensive fortifications that the dwarves and their allies had thrown up, but he had seen the magic of the *Shara'burzum'kar* (Man Born of Darkness) his Master was interested in. The other *Istar's* magic also was visible in the trap they had just sprung on Azog's warg riders.

So he had no doubt those defenses would be formidable. *And I don't have anything that can range like those cursed ballistae!* It was very clear that not only had the enemy known that Azog was coming, but they had known in time to set up truly formidable defenses.

However, that didn't mean that Azog was without recourse. For one thing, he had more than eighty trolls in his army, a truly formidable force. Most were of the weaker cave troll variety, but twenty had been bred and trained in Azog's own home fortress of Gundabad, and they were covered in enough armor and thick cloth to protect them from the sun. They and the cave trolls had been carted during the day, the carts pulled by wargs and covered with tarps. And earlier today, they had been coated with a special salve the Master had given Azog in large quantities to help protect the trolls from direct sunlight.

Rumors abounded that the Master was trying to breed trolls somehow that could be immune to sunlight. Azog did not know the truth of those rumors, nor what went into the foul-smelling concoction that the cave trolls and the faces of the Gundabad trolls were given. But he knew it worked, and they could be his key to victory. *They, and my numbers.*

Azog had left Dol Guldur with a force of six thousand orcs and four thousand goblins. He had met with another three thousand goblins from the Misty Mountains eager to avenge their fellows. So while his losses to this point were severe in terms of his warg riders and perhaps in goblins, his main force had yet to engage.

With a gleeful snarl on his face, Azog reached over and cuffed a goblin nearby, sending him to his knees for but a moment before the runner hopped to his feet quickly. The goblin runner, specially trained for speed, knew that to remain kneeling as the warlord gave his orders would mean his death. And he would be lucky if it was a quick death.

"Run to the leftmost group of trolls. They should have begun their own advance by now, but make certain." As that runner ran off, another one was kicked in the side, causing him to stagger, as he was given the same order for the right. By that point, the third goblin runner was already kneeling, ready for his orders. Azog awarded this by merely smacking him one on the forehead, not even hard enough to leave a mark. "You, order the third rank of orcs to split and reinforce our sides. And tell Krash and Uliz to ignore the drums when they start beating new orders."

The goblin looked confused for a moment, but Azog snarled at it, and he quickly bowed again, repeated his words to show he had heard the order correctly, and then turned, hopping down off of the stand that Azog had ordered set down on a series of carts. This allowed him to see as much of the battle as he possibly could. He then barked orders to the drummers, who in turn rolled out the cadence.

The bulk of his army picked up speed, hurling themselves forward. As they did, Azog too moved forward, watching as the army crashed into the third line of fortifications. Here, at last, the dwarves showed themselves. They formed the core of the defensive line, hacking down at Azog's orcs from the top of a manmade crest set between the two natural hills, their front protected by a berm.

Even as more magical attacks began to hit his main force, Azog smiled at the sound of the fighting rising ever higher as more of his troops surged into contact. *That will keep their attention on their front instead of their flanks. Which will let my trolls do their part.*

Scene break

From where he watched the battle high above the ruined entrance to his kingdom in a redoubt hewn out of the rock of the mountain, Thorin scowled, tugging at his beard thoughtfully. "Have you seen aught of any more trolls? Those beasts were a shock to see in the daytime, cloudy though it is."

"No, Uncle," Kili answered quickly, using a spyglass nearby. He had far better eyes than Thorin at the best of times and preferred to fight as an archer anyway, so Thorin had made him the commander of the ballistae. "Do you want me to order the ballista is on antibattery duty to start targeting the main host? Or maybe signal the catapults to resume fire?"

Even as he spoke, the four ballistae already on that duty fired one after another. Inexperienced though the dwarves manning them were, the ballista bolts were still deadly, smashing small furrows through the enemy's ranks.

Thorin thought about it for a moment, staring as the battle became general across the front. Then he shook his head. "No on the catapults. We only have two more rounds of Gandalf's magically enhanced loads. Best to keep them in reserve. As for the ballistae, keep two in reserve, and I want watchers on the flanks. Azog is a crafty pile of rust and leavings. Right now, he's coming straight at us, doing precisely what we want him to do, and I don't like it."

"What else could he do? The other sides of the hills protecting the hillforts are too strong for them to get around. That means he's got to come straight at us, right?"

Scoffing, Thorin cuffed his nephew lightly on the back of the head. "Never assume about your opponent. We were almost prepared to do that with Smaug before I met with Harry, and none of us would have left Erebor alive if we had continued to do so. Besides, and speaking of Harry, many of the traps he's laid out there have already been overwhelmed or bypassed without having a marked impact on the battle as a whole. And the enemy still outnumbers us better than four to one."

"Thorin, Dwalin requests that you let him and the others move forward to join the battle," Bilbo announced from behind the two dwarves

He had just run up nearly 18 flights of steps and stood there barely winded, something Bilbo became shocked by as he stood there, looking over his shoulder a moment before turning to look at Thorin. *My word, if I still thought I was the same hobbit that left his hole so long ago, that would surely have cured me of the notion. I wonder what my neighbors and those Sackville-Bagginses will think when they see me.*

Thorin looked over at Bilbo and was surprised that beyond his bow and arrow, the hobbit was wearing the gift that Thorin had given him a few days ago, a mithril scale shirt. The workmanship on it was so fine that it looked almost like a silk shirt and was so big on the hobbit that it came down to mid-thigh. But that Mithril scale would be proof against any kind of weapon. Thorin believed that it would even stop a blow from a troll. And at his side, Bilbo held staying, in its sheath, while a small buckler resided on his back next to his unstrung bow and quiver.

"Tell Dwalin to be patient. All of us will go forward along with the emergency reserve of the humans when we are needed to plug the holes. But let our cousins earn their gauntlets first."

Bilbo looked confused, but Kili nodded, understanding what his uncle was speaking about. Dain and his people had come here to fight for the Lonely Mountain not just because of familial connection

but because many of them too had families within Erebor when it fell. Families whose survivors would no doubt wish to move back, with many a person in Dain's army eager to earn the right to join them, influenced by the tales of Erebor at its height, the greatest of dwarven kingdoms remaining on Middle Earth. And what better way to earn their place in the new kingdom than by defending Erebor in its time of great need?

Thorin then moved to grasp Bilbo's shoulder, squeezing lightly. "And even if we do go forward, I would not have you with us. The front lines are not a place for you, Mister Baggins, Bilbo. You have more than earned your reward many times over, and your friendship humbles me even now. But you do not have to stand with us out there today."

"Even so, I will fight as best I may," Bilbo answered firmly. "I agree I am not a swordsman, nor any kind of frontline fighter, but I am certain that my bow and arrow can make a difference." He then smirked wickedly, causing answering smiles to appear on the nearby dwarves' faces. "And who knows, as small as I am, perhaps the orcs and goblins will overlook my little Sting, right up until I skewer a few of them in the fundament."

Thorin and Kili both laughed aloud at that while the other nearby dwarves, who were working on the siege engines or shouting out corrections to the ballista teams, nodded in something approaching approval, despite momentary anger at seeing someone not of their race wearing Mithril mail of such fine quality. But it was evident to all of them, few of whom had interacted with Bilbo since the army's arrival, that the little hobbit had earned a certain reputation with the king.

In actuality, Bilbo had been tempted to use the ring to try and get close to Azog to assassinate him. It wasn't an honorable thing to do, but if he had learned nothing else on this journey, Bilbo had learned that in battle, honor had to be forgotten unless your opponent was just as honorable as you. A circumstance that had not, in point of fact, occurred at any time since Bilbo left the Shire.

However, Bilbo had given it up when he saw just how large the host was and how many other enemies were always around Azog. While the ring made him invisible and even hid his scent, to a certain degree, that didn't mean that people couldn't simply bump into him, discovering him that way.

At that moment, a shout from one of the watchers stationed on the left flank caused Thorin to race towards him, forgetting Bilbo for a moment. "What is it?"

The dwarf, who was using one of the spyglasses that Dain had brought with him, handed the device over to Thorin, pointing out into the distance. A large group of trolls had been gathered in the lee of the hill and were now moving to attack the Elven fortress on the right flank where Gandalf was commanding. A large force, at least ten to fifteen strong, more trolls than Thorin had seen since the penultimate battle against Azog in the War of Dwarves and Orcs.

"Good catch!" Thorin congratulated the young dwarf, smacking him on the back and then shouting to the nearest ballista teams to turn their weapons in that direction. One, the one on this end of the redoubt that had remained quiescent, fired almost instantly, killing a troll with a blow to its upper chest. The other took time, but soon it too was firing.

However, a shout from the other end of the stone-covered palisade caused Thorin to rush in that direction before he could see the result of the second shot. There, the same thing was occurring, although there were fewer trolls on this side.

“Runner!” A young dwarf came forward from the entranceway onto the palisade, saluting Thorin crisply with fist to chest. “Find another of your fellows below. I want a message sent to both Elven camps. They are to prepare to be engaged closely with trolls. The enemy is trying to flank us on both sides.”

“That’s not all!” It was Bilbo’s voice who shouted, but he was joined a moment later by Kili, and the keening set to the song of the thrush, which had so helped them to find the secret entrance as it raced inside the Mountain, leading several hundred of its fellows over their heads.

Thorin was about to shout angrily after them, but he caught his nephew’s look and instead moved to join him and Bilbo. He then stared not at the action below them but almost straight ahead and above where a massive cloud of birds had begun to descend.

“Fire! Put braziers and other fire near the openings!” Bilbo shouted even as he strung his bow and prepared an arrow, staring up at the incoming horde of birds. “Fire arrows too! We’re never going to dent that stampeded on wings with simple arrows, but we might frighten them off.”

Scene break

With Harry and Bard joining Balin in command of the dwarven and human line, Legolas had left Tauriel to pull the Unseen Host behind the tertiary fortification. There she and the others would provide further archer fire from the center while Legolas moved to help Gandalf command the rightmost fort on his father’s orders. Thranduil knew precisely how few of his officers had command experience on this scale, and he trusted his son to command more than any who did, despite their recent differences of opinion.

After a few moments of conferring with a few of the officers, Legolas took position on the fort wall closest to the action, commanding the archers as they fired. Although the regular troopers were not as skilled at moving unseen or tracking the enemy, their archery was almost as good as the men and women of the Unseen Host. They took a terrible toll on the enemy, who had to shoot up the hill and to the top of the wall that Harry had raised to get the archers. It wasn’t entirely one-sided, but they were giving far better than they were getting, and below, the bodies were piling up in front of the main battle line, with none of the enemies even coming close to the forts as yet.

Legolas paused for a moment, letting his bow go slack as he looked over at the right wall of the fort, having heard something from that direction, a sound like a large meat cleaver hitting flesh. Looking over there, he could see the archers there and on the wall facing the fort’s front towards the enemy had begun to fire even more hurriedly at something over there.

Before he could send a runner to discover what was going on, there was a cry from one of the elves. “Brethren, the sky! Look to the skies!”

Legolas did so instantly, firing an arrow from his bow upwards into a large raven that had been about to descend into his face. But behind it came hundreds, thousands, uncounted flocks of ravens, crows and other fell birds. Normally these carrion eaters would only come out after the battle. But they

were not waiting for their meals now. Instead, they were attacking with talon and beak all over the battlefield, blocking the view of the archers all around Legolas and on the other hill while also blotting out the sun still further on this already cloudy day.

“Shields up, shields up!” Legolas shouted, then shouted further orders, trying to use fire to scare the birds away. But there were so many of them! Soon elves began to fall to their claws, screaming as claw or beak found eyeball or flesh, tearing away. Legolas even lost an ear to this assault, while an elf next to him fell, screaming as his eye was torn from its socket. Legolas slew the creature, but that was scant comfort

From where he had moved to stand in the center of the fortress camp, Gandalf had been seeing to the wounded before this, the majority of the wounded from the Unseen Host having been sent to him here. Now he growled, a sound that sent a shiver through the air, not just along the spine of nearby elves.

The birds who had been attempting to attack him fled instantly. It didn't save them.

Slamming his staff into the ground, Gandalf gripped it with both hands as he began to enchant a spell. The air began to move all around him, the movement slowly reaching upward and then shifting in both power and speed. A thin cylinder almost of fast-moving air began to coalesce into being over the defenders. This pushed up and away at the birds, sending them flying, disrupting their attack, breaking wings, and generally keeping them away from the army.

It didn't rise very far and couldn't protect the defenders stationed in Erebor. But there, Bilbo's ideas of multiple small fires made to send the smoke up and away into the sky had worked well enough. Only three dwarves had died before the fires and the smoke scared the birds away.

At this point, Harry was near the front line, standing on top of a makeshift hill made of wooden logs and boulders covered with dirt, at the bottom of which was a long ditch. Around him, the dwarves stood in close formation, lashing out and down at the attacking orcs and goblins, while behind them, human men lashed down with long pikes, disrupting the enemy before they could reach the dwarves.

He and the rest of the front line had not as yet come under attack from the birds, but they had seen it and had obviously noticed the decrease in fire from the Elven forts.

“You think you can do anything about that, Harry?” Bard asked. He still clung to his bow, sending out arrows towards any orc which seemed larger than usual or looked to be giving out orders.

“Maybe,” Harry answered, slicing at the head of one orc. The tiny cut began to fester as he watched, the skin cracking and blood oozing black from the cut as the orc screamed, rolling backward, holding its head with both hands. It was dead before it hit the ground, the poison within the sword of Gryffindor making short work of the orc.

As it wasn't the first time they had seen this, none of the surrounding dwarves or humans commented. Instead, two dwarves moved forward at Harry's gesture to take his place, and Harry retreated from the front line, staring up at the contained cyclone of air above them. It didn't seem to be moving as fast as it should for a cyclone, but Harry didn't have any other words to describe it. *I've never studied meteorology after all.* However, one thing Harry did know about the air was that it could carry quite a lot of fire.

He grabbed up handfuls of soil, asking a few of the nearby humans to do the same, and then changed the soil into very fine flour, shaking his head at the impact doing so had on his reserves even now. Even with his connection to The Song of Arda, this world did not like transfiguration very much.

Regardless, he then used another spell to send the particles up into the air, where Gandalf's wind caught them, swirling the flour up and away. Then Harry used a second spell, sending a thin rope of flame lancing upwards.

The particles took fire within the wind and were carried everywhere, creating a vast conflagration a mere meter above the elves on the fort walls to either side of the main battle line. The fire was so hot that many elves cried out, dropping to their knees, but this was nothing compared to what happened to the birds. Thousands of them were burnt to a crisp in an instant, while others simply were turned to ash instantly. Those that survived already being above their fellows rose still higher.

However, the damage had already been done. Several hundred elves had fallen to the birds, particularly on the left, where Gandalf's wind had been slowest to reach. And now, more and more orcs were hurling themselves up the small hill against the defensive line, and dwarves and men began to die even as Harry leaped forward, using more magic to aid the defenders.

Yet the front of the dwarf and human defensive line was but a side show for the moment. While the bulk of his army was engaged along that front, Azog's Sunday punch arrived on the forts' outermost sides. The going had slowed those attacks down tremendously, and they had taken losses from the distant dwarven ballista. Still, the trolls were now within reach of the walls and carried with them massive chained grappling hooks to tear those walls down.

Scene break

The trolls hurled their massive grapnels forward on top of the forts' walls. As strong as the stone might have been, it was not a match for over a dozen trolls pulling at it from various intervals. The elves on top recovered from the onslaught of the birds and began to fire down into them, causing the beasts to roar and snarl in anger. The arrows slammed into their armor or bits of their flesh but did no real damage.

Thranduil was in charge of this fort and had pulled many of his people off the walls and down into the fort itself better to try and combat the birds. But when they had been forced back into the air by Gandalf's magic, he had been quick to order his men back up onto the walls. Now Thranduil stood there, directing the archers around him coolly and efficiently. He barely glanced aside as one of the troll's grapnels caught an elf in the face, smashing it to a bloody pulp, before falling with a clang to the wall.

He merely flicked his blade down, cutting through the rough iron, causing the troll to pull the now grapnel-less chain back over the parapet. The troll below pulled the grapnel back, then seemed confused to find no grapnel on the end. Then one better than average archer caught the beast straight through one of its eyes. The arrow didn't penetrate enough to kill the beast, but it certainly caused it to go berserk, screaming and falling back, lashing out at a few nearby orcs until one of its fellows punched it hard in the head, sending it to the ground.

But that worthy died an instant later as two black arrows struck his chest, punching through his armor, causing him to collapse without a sound, heart and stomach perforated. Another elf was torn off the wall by one of the grapnels, hitting his shoulder and neck armor at just the right angle to not kill him but grab onto his shoulder. The next instant, he was pulled off the wall as easily as a fisherman would pull in his line.

“Ignore the orc archers for now. Every twenty archers, choose a different troll target. Aim for the heads! The eyes and mouth are their only real weaknesses,” Thranduil said calmly, but somehow his voice carried to the entire wall facing the trolls. Elsewhere, the archers kept on firing down into the mass of the main battlefield, but more orcs were moving to back up the trolls even so.

And even as Thranduil tried to wrest control of the chaos, the first portion of the fort’s wall came down, a giant chunk of the top of the wall pulled away by one of the trolls. Instantly several orcs charged forward, clambering over the breach. They were met by a small line of elven warriors. Their long, thin halberds flicked out as they tried to climb down the now ruined wall. Steel crunched into steel or orcish guts, slaying many, and soon bodies further clogged the hole.

But soon others, joined the first as the trolls kept pulling back on their grapnels, then hurling them forward again and again, tearing out chunks of the wall. Three of their number had died so far, but not enough, and Thranduil’s elves had lost more than seventy dead to enemy archer fire.

Another larger hole was quickly made, and Thranduil stared at it from nearby, then shook his head and moved to the wall above it before leaping down to place himself in the center of the opening right before several orcs were about to reach it. His blade lashed out lightning, not stabbing but slicing. One slice took an orc across the throat, causing him to fall, dropping his weapon to grab at his throat in a vain attempt to stop the bleeding.

Another slice opened up the side of an orc’s stomach, causing his intestines to slowly slide out as the orcs screamed in agony. A third orc was cut across his wrist as he thrust his ungainly, crude sword forward. Thranduil moved lightly to one side, letting it barely pass him before Thranduil lashed out, and the sword fell from suddenly nerveless fingers as, like his fellow, the orcs tried to stanch the blood from his slit throat.

Four more came on behind them and behind them still more. “Fall back from the southernmost wall. Retain control of the others, fire into the breeches as they are made. Form a shield wall inside,” Thranduil ordered.

Around him, Thranduil’s people obeyed quickly, although more had already fallen since Thranduil had moved to protect that one breach among several now. Thranduil fell back, moving through the shield wall as it formed and then began to sing. It was not happy this song, a song of the ancient past or beautiful places. No, this was a magic spell woven into music, an enhancement spell that gathered the earth’s energy below and began to imbue it into the elves around Thranduil.

This stood the shield wall in good stead as the orcs crashed into it, pushing through the various holes in the wall quickly. The line stood strong, and the orcs couldn’t quite reform into an attack line of their own to force the elves back. The advantage in numbers on the ground inside the fort was on the elven side, and they held. But behind the orcs rushing forward, still more portions of the wall were coming down thanks to the trolls and still more orcs.

One of those trolls disappeared as a ballista bolt from the Lonely Mountain crashed into its side. Another lost his head to a similar bolt, but a third bolt crashed into the corner of the fort, punching through the wall and causing a large collapse, an even larger hole for more orcs to pour over once the rubble settled.

Damn those dwarfs! Can they do nothing right? Thranduil snarled internally, although he kept up his song even so, and the bodies began to pile up in front of the halberd-wielding elven shield wall.

A similar story was occurring on the other side. But there, Legolas took longer to realize the threat of the trolls to the wall itself, and his people had taken more damage from the bird assault. But here, they had Gandalf.

The elves looked on in awe as the old and human-seeming Istar crashed his staff down onto the ground and summoned forth a lightning bolt that took an armored troll in the face before jumping to another one, then a third and then out of sight. As it did, Gandalf whirled on the nearby elves. "What are you waiting for, you fools! Off the wall!"

"Listen to Mithrandir! Form a shield wall in the camp!" Legolas shouted in turn.

As ordered, the others quickly began to form a solid line of shields and halberds with their officers calling the cadence. The orcs charged forward's, smashing into that wall, and then at the officer's orders, the shields slipped slightly to the side, and the halberds flicked out in upwards sweeping motions, gutting or dismembering orcs by the dozen.

Gandalf found himself ahead of this unit, protected by the charging orcs by a portion of the wall that still stood and fell back slowly, staff in one hand sword in the other. He whirled, bringing Glamdring around to block a blow from an orchid, while his staff lashed out at another orc's foot, smashing into it with all the force of a hammer blow, dumping the orc on the ground.

A quick stomp from the staff and the orc died, as Glamdring sang in Gandalf's other hand, decapitating another orc. Once more released on the enemies it had been crafted to slay, it sought out gut, chest, stomach and face with impunity. Five more orcs died in as many seconds as Gandalf retreated slowly towards the shield wall, moving forward now to meet him.

Legolas was the last off of the ruined portion of the wall, and he leaped down onto one of the trolls, stabbing with his long hunting dagger down into his neck. Blood spurted over his hand, and he grimaced in distaste even as he was flung away by the troll's mad flailing. He rolled as he hit but heard the snap of his bow underneath them as he did, causing him to curse in elven before divesting himself of his now useless quiver, grabbing up a shield from a fallen orc and using that as a defense against the blow from another orc.

He redirected the blow, then ducked underneath a second one, his dagger flicking out, stabbing deep into the orc's thigh before he pulled it out. Legolas blocked another blow and took the orc through the chain up into his brain. Kicking that orc away, he too fell back as arrows thudded into the orcs all around him.

"Get clear, my Prince!" Shouted one of the army's officers. "Get clear, Mithrandir! You cannot hold them there on your own!"

The Istar seemed to disagree with that for a few seconds, waiting until a troll had pushed its way into one of the breeches before intoning a simple word in Valarin. “**Push.**”

At his word, the air within the fort coalesced into a battering ram of force. It lifted the troll up off of the ground by a few inches and hurled it back into its fellows, where it began to flail and cry out in anger and panic. “For some reason, trolls always panicked when hurled onto their backs like that. No amount of breeding has been able to get rid of it, I see...” The old man murmured even as she turned and ran towards the waiting shield wall.

He and Legolas reached the shield wall simultaneously and were allowed through, elves moving aside for them, before reforming as more orcs pushed through the breaches despite all the best the archers could do. And behind them came the trolls. They disdained to continue to destroy the outer wall as they were doing against Thranduil. Instead, these trolls moved into the fort as quickly as possible, even trampling some of the orcs underneath her feet as they did to close with the elves.

The reason for this was the truly deadly fire coming from the Lonely Mountain. Legolas watched as another ballista bolt crashed down, not hitting one troll, but two of them, taking the arm off one, before smashing into the other so hard Legolas could hear its chest plate shatter under the blow, along with several of its ribs no doubt. It fell wheezing, gasping, clawing at its chest to remove the damaged chest plate, but getting nowhere.

However, he turned away from the most pleasant view as a cry from one of the walls redirected his attention that way. Arrows were flying up towards the top of the rightmost wall of the fort. Before Legolas could do anything, the archers up top split their fire. This seemed to help suppress the orc archers, but it allowed more orcs forward inside the fort, and with them came the trolls.

Legolas exchanged a glance with Gandalf, who looked back, then shook his head and lashed out with another lightning spell at one particularly large, ugly troll with a full face covering helmet as it charged forward, dragging its chain behind it, about to launch it forward. That troll fell, his helmet turned into molten metal by the lightning strike, possibly killed by the pain while Legolas shouted an order. “Fall back! Fall back through the camp! Do not let the trolls reach the line!”

Scene break

Thorin scowled angrily as he took in the battlefield. There were more trolls than anyone had expected out there, and the terrain guarding the right and leftmost flanks of the army had proven no true barrier. It had slowed the enemy down and had perhaps funneled a large portion of the orcs on those flanks further to the center, but the trolls had been able to ignore it to a certain extent.

“Sir, we can’t target the trolls attacking the right fort any longer. From this angle, we’d be smashing down the walls to get at them even if we could see them.”

Thorin tugged on his beard hard, staring in that direction, and then twisting around slightly, staring at the battlefield, but actually at the wall in the direction through the Lonely Mountain to where Dain’s warthog riders were waiting. *Should I order them to attack the enemy’s flank? They could at least disrupt the attack on Thranduil. Curse him for making me need to rescue him to save this battle!*

However, before he could say anything, there came a cry from Kili. Thorin turned back, only to stare in shock at the center of the battlefield.

Scene break

The trolls had not only been sent to the flanks to attack the Elven forts. Most of them had, but the trolls of Gundabad, the largest, most heavily armed of the lot, had been husbanded by Azog to smash the center of the dwarves and human defenses.

Those defenses had held up to this point. The use of the slope and the ditch at the bottom had given the defenders a marked advantage, coupled with the heavy armor and shields of the dwarves. The humans' use of long pikes to back up the dwarves was paying off dividends. Harry, too, was using math so profligately that he knew he would have been unconscious at least twice over before earning Arien's as his patron.

As the battle continued, Harry noted that fire spells seemed to be coming easily to him and drained far less of his energy than any of his other spells. *Is that a sign of Arien's favor?* He mused as he sent a bolt of fire down and into a group of orcs trying to race up the small slope towards the embattled line of defenders.

All of them were reduced to so much ash, while those around the fireball screamed at the heat or were lit up on fire by the tiny licks of flame that reached them. *And is it just me, or is my fire acting as if these orcs are made out of petrol and dry thatch?*

A thought struck him then, and he frowned, thinking about it. *I know that the orcs and other dark creatures create a kind of suppression field around them for magic based around the Valar, but is the opposite true? That spells based on the Valar can damage these creatures more than would otherwise be the case? Or is it just Arien's influence? I know these creatures are supposed to fear the sun, and we can see in the sunlight the longer they are out in it. I had discounted that because, you know, this whole army had marched here day and night. But if that is the case...*

However, a shout from Bard drew Harry's attention away from his musings and the cutting and fireball spells that he was idly sending down into the attacking army. Above the attackers' heads, several large logs flew through the air like someone had thrown a particularly large branch for a dog, twirling end over end through the air towards the defenders. If those hit, they would crush dozens of the defenders, and if they moved to avoid them, they would create weaknesses in the dwarven infantry line.

Harry desperately twisted around, pointing his sword towards one of them, using the sword of Gryffindor to direct his spell towards it. The fire spell crashed into the log and did not burn it entirely to ash as Harry had hoped. The impact of the fireballs slowed the piece of log and set it on fire, but it still crashed down into the top of the hill, sending several of the dwarves back with bellows of fury and pain as the fire licked at them.

Those curses turned into shouts of amusement as the burning log rolled back down the slight incline, smashing into still more orcs and goblins. And when the logs stopped in place, the fires started to set the individuals nearby to light, forcing them to retreat. This let the log continue down into the ditch, where it crushed more orcs and goblins.

Elsewhere, there were no shouts of amusement as the thrown logs crashed down unimpeded, smashing armor-plated dwarves off of their feet, crushing dozens, and then killing several humans as the logs rolled down the opposite side of the hill, opening up a hole in the line. Quickly, the dwarves on

either side of the holes moved to cover them, but the damage had been done. Unmindful of their own safety, goblins and orcs on that side of the line pressed in hard, getting in among the reinforcements and enlarging several of the holes.

Trusting the humans and the dwarves to do what they could there and unable to see through the press of bodies anyway, Harry turned his attention over the battlefield to the creatures that had thrown those logs. Twenty trolls came on like medieval tanks, moving through the court, bellowing and roaring, shifting their attention now towards Harry at some bellowed command he couldn't hear over the tumult of battle.

Harry watched them thoughtfully, knowing that he didn't have any spell in his repertoire that could reach that far through that many bodies. *Unless... unless I'm right about giving my allegiance to Arien. But her power isn't just about fire. It's about light too. And Gandalf always made a point of saying that light spells were among the deadliest to the creatures created by the greater darkness. Time to see if that is true.*

With that, Harry began to craft a spell. It was essentially a light spell, like a Lumos, at least initially. But instead of creating light out of nothing in his hand, Harry gathered the sunlight from above. This was a different type of spell, an older version in point of fact from what he remembered reading about it. It was mainly used for ritual work when the wizard used actual sunlight rather than regular old magical light.

And then Harry gestured. From the two fingers of his free hand, a beam of hot red light lanced out, impacting one of the trolls in the head, searing through metal skin and bone before burning out the other side. A neat hole had been made in the creature, right in the center of its brain. Although the trolls were so stupid, it took the troll several minutes to realize that it was dead before it collapsed and fell onto his side, crushing several goblins underneath it.

Harry gawked, taking a blow to his side that sent him stumbling and would have killed him if not for a dwarf, who stepped in and took the blow on his shield. It had been the dwarf's shield that had hit Harry's side, not the blade. "That was magnificent, human, but get your head back in the game!"

"Right, right." Harry stumbled back, leading to other dwarves moving to his former position. And then he stood up behind them, gesturing over their heads as he began to craft the same spell again, only larger. Above him, the clouds began to part, sunlight visibly pulled down from above them through the intervening clouds.

At that, every troll across the battle paused, staring up in horror and fear.

"In the name of Manwë, Aulë, and Arien, begone from this land!" With each name, Harry felt power flowing from the world around him and into his spell. He even felt Ariens delight and sudden interest in what Harry was doing, not understanding the how of it, but knowing Harry was calling to her power to craft an attack spell. *Never let it be said that Arien doesn't hate the creatures of Morgoth as much as they hate her...*

Light from on high shown down on Harry for just a moment, coalescing into his hand, which gleamed almost like a reflecting mirror, containing and directing the energy. Then he gestured forward with the same two fingers sending that energy out like a beam, which Harry worked from one end of the

battlefield to another. Where that beam went, orcs heads were sliced off as easily as if by a red-hot blade and trolls died cut in half. Half of the army facing the center of the defensive fortifications died instantly.

This was not without cost to Harry, however. Even as the enemy army recoiled, Harry fell back, gasping, slumping to the ground and rolling down the defenders' side of the small man-made hill.

Scene break

Thorin stared at the damage that Harry's magic had dealt. From his vantage point, Thorin could see that whatever his friend had done, it hadn't cut cleanly through the entire horde but had carved a goodly portion of it. And now, the center of the defensive line wasn't getting pressured at all. Indeed, the forces there were falling back, horror and shock and fear going through them. But they would recover.

Still, this was a chance, and Thorin grabbed it, turning and racing towards the entrance to take them downstairs through the mountain to the entrance to Erebor.

"Find the rider designated to the warhog riders. I want them moving now!" As he ran, he sketched out a brief message, along with visual instructions of where he wanted Dain to strike. "Then tell the catapults to load up another set of Gandalf's specially prepared loads. I want them aimed at this point!"

Again, Thorin added an image of what he wanted and more instructions before he burst out of the stairwell onto the main road through Erebor. "We will break them in the center and then split off to the right flank as Dain, and his riders hit the other. We have a chance to end this whole battle now if we can but get there in time before the enemy can regroup."

Scene break

While the center of the attacking army recoiled from the horror of Harry's attack, that was not the case on the two sides. Legolas was losing more men as he fought his way back through the small camp inside the fort towards the other side. With his archers dueling with the orc archers, they couldn't lay down enough firepower to stop the orcs from continually smashing into his line, and behind them came the trolls. He was holding it together, but barely, and only because of Gandalf and the raw courage of his men.

"Continue to fall back!" Legolas shouted as he fired an arrow, finally hitting one of the eyes of a troll after having expended six arrows on the attempt.

The creature's massive flail, which it had been spinning around its head, flew sideways, crashing into several orcs, slaying many of them. "Continue to fall back, reform the shield line on the other side of the back wall!" He looked over at one of the elves who had been following him and ordered that he hold up a pennant with a green and light gray checkerboard pattern on it.

At that predetermined signal, the men and women on the walls, who could never have heard his orders, began to come down. Several joined the melee, while others continued to fire into the horde over their fellow's heads, now turning their bows on the trolls.

Running out of arrows, Legolas grabbed up a sword from a fallen elf and joined in the hand-to-hand combat, ducking around a tent and lashing out with his sword into the side of an orc who was just about to finish off the wounded elf. He grabbed the elf, shoving him behind Legolas, as he duelled with two more orcs as they rushed at him. Both fell, but another wounded troll lumbered through the camp towards him, smashing through tents. It held no weapon, but a troll did not need a weapon to crush someone into a bloody pulp.

Pushing the wounded soldier behind him, Legolas waited and then dodged to one side of the troll's mad rush, his sword flicking out. The troll stumbled a few more times, but his leg gave out, the tendons in his knee having been severed. It twisted around, trying to lash out with a fist, but Legolas dodged under it, his sword slashing up and into the creature's armpit, causing it tremendous pain and for the troll's arm to go limp in turn.

Then Legolas was behind it, leaping up onto its back and stabbing down. Good elven steel sliced straight into its back, severing its spine and causing the whole troll to go limp, falling forward onto its face as it gave a keening wail.

Legolas leaped off of it but found himself surrounded by orcs. He took several slashes to his shoulders and leg, none serious as he ducked and dodged, using his sword defensively, having no chance to reply, until two of his fellows pushed into the perimeter of the circle, killing two of the orcs in turn. Legolas killed a third and joined them in, falling back before pausing. The elf he had tried to save a moment ago lay dead in the camp's dirt, a dead goblin next to it. The goblin's sword was buried in the elf's guts.

Suddenly there was a crashing blast of lightning from the clear sky, and several of the elven tents were set off on fire, causing the orcs and trolls, of which there were only three remaining inside the camp, to stumble to a halt for a second. "Retreat, idiots!" Gandalf's voice bellowed.

"I do believe that Mithrandir's advice is good, gentlemen." Legolas kept his voice deliberately light, trying not to show any sorrow or shock at what he had just seen, knowing that that elf, whose name Legolas hadn't even known, was but one of hundreds of casualties on this grim day. "Let's get out of here."

Legolas found the signaler and ordered the last wall to pull back to the ground as he fell back. The wall facing the center of the battlefield was reluctant, but eventually, they were reformed and moved backward and down the interior line of the hill towards the last line of defense in front of Erebor.

The orcs and rearing trolls came after them, but as they did, the catapults that the Iron Hill folk had crafted began to open fire on them and the wall of the force behind them. Several of the ballista from above Erebor's entryway also began to fire, killing the last of the trolls. Human men and women rushed toward the retreat during elves, carrying more arrows and litters for the wounded regardless of arrows sent their way from the advancing orcs.

Unfortunately, while his losses were not nearly as heavy as Legolas's, Thranduil wasn't as organized. The trolls hadn't entered his fort, instead concentrating on demolishing enough of the outer wall to assault Thranduil and his men from two sides. And it was only thanks to the ballista fire from Erebor that had stopped them from adding a third, coming up behind the fort's rear, cutting it off entirely from any hope of retreat to the last line of defense.

Thranduil had also lost two of his officers, leaving him lacking subordinates who could help organize things. Unlike Legolas, Thranduil ordered the tents be stored away before the battle truly began. This gave them more room to move, and his people formed a square in the center of the force. The archers in the center sent out arrows into the attackers, making certain that none of them began to climb up the wall and use the ramparts against them.

As his earlier invigorating enhancement began to falter, Thranduil started another, looking around as he tried to determine what to do. At the same time, his sword flicked out, slicing into an orc's chest, leaving him open to be finished off by one of Thranduil's men before Thranduil his sword flicked the other way, taking another orc across the eyes, blinding him.

By the time he flicked the blood off of his sword and stepped back to allow another elf to take his place in the front line, Thranduil knew what to do. "Right flank, fall back, lockstep. Front line, shift slowly to that side. Archers, shift fire, suppression fire to the left and rear."

Previously, the archers in the center of the square of elves had been firing at any target they could, mostly disorganized, but mainly attempting to keep the orc archers from adjoining the battle, keeping the walls clear, and harassing any troll that still survived on this flank. Thankfully there weren't many of those. The trolls on this side had foolishly stayed outside the fort, where they had been cut down by the dwarves in the ballista almost to an individual.

But they had smashed large portions of the wall before dying, and the orcs were now slowly enveloping Thranduil's people, hence the retreat he had ordered. *For every four we kill, six more take their place. We are more organized and better in nearly every way imaginable. But we are not as tough as the orcs, whose whole life is pain, and they outnumber us like leaves on the wind.*

The last of their arrows expended, the elves on archery duty dropped their bows, some of them pulling out swords. Most had lost their shields and were forced to take some from their dead fellows as the disciplined elven square started to retreat.

More elves died during this maneuver, which was difficult, especially without any lesser officers who could organize each position in turn. Thranduil stayed within the front line, where the fighting was thickest. He took several injuries himself, including one that nearly broke the spell on his face, allowing the horrible dragon fire scars to be revealed for a moment before the spell resumed.

For a moment there, Thranduil panicked, one hand flying to his face, hiding his grotesque wounds from his people, falling back through the line. For elves died as orcs surged into the momentary In their line before it was reformed, and then, the elves were starting to move through the hole in the fortress walls, reforming outside.

As they did, Thranduil could finally take in the rest of the battle. Even from a vantage point such as this, the eyes of an elf could see far more than any human would've believed. It was the limit of their arms and the strength of their bows that limited the range an elf could shoot, not sight, and so Thranduil could see from one side of the battle to another. He saw his son's portion of their army retreating in good order to the last line of defense. He saw the center looking as if it was going to be overrun, although there were **far** more bodies in front of it than he would've credited. And yet, behind those windrows of the dead, came still more of the enemy, although they had halted, presumably to reform their lines.

Weakened by his wounds as they had been by poisoned blades and thrown by his recent moment of shock and dismay, Thranduil thought about the march towards the last line of defense. While the orcs in the camp began to boil out after his men, pushing them hard, slaying many of the rearguard. Their steps were no longer as certain as they moved over the rubble, breaking the shield wall in small places.

Thranduil wavered, and then he looked to the south and saw nothing there. The enemy had yet to fully envelop the position, and his thoughts moved like quicksilver. *We could retreat that way. Keep my men together, pull away from the rest of the battle. If we appear to be retreating, the enemy will leave us be, turning inward on the dwarves and men, cut off the tertiary defensive lines from the last line of defense.*

The thought was appealing. *Why should I care about the doings of humans and dwarves? I am only here because I was forced to be due to Council and its representative, Mithrandir. How dare they make demands of me, a King! I could let the dwarves and men further weaken this host, then come back in, attack and finish it off myself once it has been thoroughly weakened.*

For a moment, Thranduil opened his mouth to give that order. And then, arrows began to thud into the orcs and goblins facing his men. A second later, Tauriel was there, along with the surviving Unseen Host, having pulled them out of the center of the battle and to the side flank to give Thranduil cover fire. "Retreat!" Tauriel shouted. "You have done enough here. Retreat to the last line."

In the distance, Thranduil could hear the dwarves, the last of their reserves being pushed forward into the mainline. But they weren't falling back. No, the dwarves were charging out into that abattoir, Thorin and his band in the lead.

And turning back to the south, Thranduil saw something else. The husbanded, if somewhat ridiculous looking, warhog riders of the dwarves were moving in the distance, circling around. *They are going to hit the enemy's flank... Here. To defend me and mine.* The thought shamed Thranduil, and he instantly began to command the retreat to the last line of defense.

And then, Thranduil felt the searing pain in his side. Looking down, he saw a black-fledged arrow and turned to stare out over the battlefield. An orc larger than his fellow stood at the far range of his bow, snarling in victory at the elven king.

Scowling angrily, Thranduil reached down and pulled the barbed arrow out of his side, unthinking for a moment in his fury that such a lowly creature had harmed him that Thranduil forgot that the arrows of the orcs were not only poisoned but barbed. There was a searing sense of pain and agony for a moment, and Thranduil collapsed, falling onto his side, his vision, which had previously been so clear and certain, clouding over.

Tauriel stared at where her king had once stood as a wail went up from the surrounding elves. Several of them retreated towards the king, leaving their position in the battle lines, leaving some of their fellows to die even as the Unseen Host sent another hail of arrows into their foes. "Keep your courage! Keep your courage and keep moving back!"

But there was no more courage in the elves on this flank. Their king had fallen, they had taken so many losses against the orcs within the camp, and there was still more fighting to do. The elven host began to break, and no amount of arrows from Tauriel and the unseen host were going to prevent it.

But something else did. From the orc's flank, there was a bugle cry, and the orcs shifted their attention that way, slowly at first, but with more and more of them looking in that direction, staring as a group of dwarves riding warthogs, fifty abreast, came over the rest of the hills. The dwarves lowered massive lances without pause and charged down the hills.

The orcs couldn't get organized fast enough, couldn't pull back from the elves fast enough, and were completely unprepared for the hammer blow of the warthogs. Dozens were smashed off their feet, more pinned by lances, and then, the warthogs were in and among them. Their tusks were covered with steel as they tore and gored, their riders lashing out with massive Warhammers or Lochaber axes, huge things that relied on counterweights at the bottom of her almost as deadly as the accident themselves.

Dain led them, bellowing orders and war cries indiscriminately, shouting at his dwarves to always be aware of orcs trying to get underneath their beasties or behind them. But there was no need. The sudden reversal of fortune completely shattered the orcs and goblins on this portion of the battlefield, and panicky survivors began to retreat back and around the way they came.

Scene break

"Up Harry, we must seize the moment!" Thorin bellowed as he rushed past Harry with most of his company around him. As he looked up from where Elladan was feeding him Lembas, Harry woozily wondered where Kili and Balin were, before remembering Kili was in charge of the ballistae, and Balin in charge of the dwarves in the main fortification. And... "Bilbo?"

Bilbo smiled over at Harry patting his foot before he finished stringing his bow. "Ah, well, I'm not about to charge with the rest, but I can still do my part."

Elrohir smiled, and Harry chuckled, before wearily getting to his feet. By the time he and the two elven brothers had gotten to the top of the manmade mound, Thorin and company had rallied the dwarves and men and charged down the slope. If the enemy had been organized at all, the few areas where a ditch hadn't been dug would have been deadly chokepoints. But the enemy was still reeling from Harry's lazer spell, and the dwarves reformed on the other side into a wedge with Thorin at it's point, slaughtering the orcs and few remaining goblins who hadn't already begun

But from this higher vantage point, Elladan realized that Thorin's attempt to break the enemy host wasn't going to work. beyond the area between the two defensive lines, Azog had reformed his troops and now they were forming an actual battle line. "Harry, look! Can you do something about that? I fear Thorin and the dwarves will be overwhelmed if not."

"Now that just isn't on. Let's see..." Having recovered somewhat thanks to the Lembas and a flask of water from Rivendell, Harry called upon his newfound powers over fire and light, throwing both of his hands forward, dropping the sword of Gryffindor to the ground for a moment. Harry didn't have enough power left for another attack like that. Instead, twin suns erupted over the host of orcs.

They didn't last for long, but they blinded many of the enemy, and further caused dismay and horror among them. Many of the remaining goblins hurled their weapons away, turning to flee the battlefield entirely. Orcs covered their eyes with one hand, or cowered in place, fearful of the twin sons above them.

At the front of his people, Thorin saw what Harry had done, and bellowed out, "See, even the light of Anar has come to war with us. Bharuk Khazad, Khazad Ai Erebor!!"

His roar was answered by hundreds of throats all around him, as the dwarves of the Iron Hills and his company **hammered** into the front of the enemy. There was a thunderous sound that almost defied description as the formed units of the dwarven army and the orcish host crashed together, the sound filling the world, louder than all the sounds that had come before it beyond the loud 'fzzweee' sound that Harry's laserlike spell had created earlier.

The dwarves did not have as good discipline as the elves especially on the attack. After that first point of contact against the organized portion of the enemy army they struggled with keeping a set line. But they were far more heavily armored, far stronger, and more robust than the elves. Bruises and cuts were nothing to the dwarves. The orcs threadbare organization fell apart, and the orcs began taking losses as they tried to recover from the impact of Harry's spell work.

"Well. I think that worked," Harry murmured, then noticed that Elrond's sons had left him behind, racing towards the battle, swords flicking out to slay any orc or goblin lucky enough to have survived the dwarve's advance. "Oy, you wankers, wait for me!"

The fighting was frantic and frenetic at the front of the battle. Thorin lashed out with Orcrist, bellowing orders, shouting at his people to keep into a semblance of formation if not a real battle line, but it was for naught as the dwarves kept cutting deeper into the enemy horde, with more and more enemies around them.

Thorin even lost sight of his companions, but he could not dwell on them. He had to defend himself after all, and even as Thorin realized he couldn't see any of the others, Orcrist blocked one orc's blade as his shield caught two more blows as a fourth hammered into his back. Orcs were no goblins, and that strike hit with bone punishing force. *I am going to be a mass of bruises after this, perhaps Harry's idle musing on some kind of shock absorption material underneath our armor would've been a good idea. The undercoat are most decidedly not doing enough*, Thorin mused as he leaped backward over a rock, letting the roc in front of him stumble over it before Orcrist sliced across his face, blinding him.

A blow crashed into Thorin's side, sending him staggering. But it didn't break his armor, the Mithril plate he was wearing proof against any Orcish weapon. His return strike disemboweled that orc, and then he was twisting around, using his shield to redirect another blow, his sword flicking up over his shield's edge and into the chest of another orc, stabbing in just far enough to puncture the orc's chest.

Then he was back facing forward, his shield smashing into that of an orc twice his own size. This orc was a true monster of his race, and yet Thorin's short charge smashed him backward, sending the orc onto his heels, his shield going wide, opening him up for a strike from Thorin.

Nearby, Fili and Dwalin had stayed together, forging through the enemy, with Fili handling defense mostly and Dwalin using his hammer and axe to slaughter orcs around them. They came within sight of Thorin once more at this point, and Fili could only stare for a second at this show of strength from his uncle. "Behold, Thorin, King under the Mountain! Holder of the Arkenstone of Aulë!"

Kili knew that Thorin was a deadly combatant but that kind of strength and speed was beyond even him. It was a sign that the Arkenstone favored Thorin

"Oakenshield, Oakenshield!" Came the answering cry from the surrounding Iron Hill dwarves, and the rest of the company. Even the humans who had charged forward with the dwarves, a bare dozen hardy folk like Bard and Artur, took up the shout, adding their own "for Dale, for Dale!" to it.

The orc host wavered, falling back, their barely reformed organization and morale now coming apart entirely at the impace of the dwarves. But they did not give way. They still had the numbers advantage, and they still had Azog's will driving them.

Now Azog led his reserves into the battle. This was a thousand orcs of his own clan. Larger, more heavily armored and armed than the orcs from Dol Guldur, they bolstered the host, halting its collapse and looking to envelop the charging dwarves from all sides. They were aided in this by Azog calling back the portion of his force that had attacked the right most fort, the orcs there rushing down the side of the hill there, getting behind the dwarves, between them and any retreat.

However, while this began to work, Azog began to ignore the rest of the battle in favor of searching for his own hated enemy.

Slicing a leg off one orc, Thorin smiled thinly as he saw a blast of some kind of magic envelope several others. Turning slightly he saw Harry and the two elven brothers joining the battle. But as Thorin took a brief second to watch them, he saw Harry was obviously not fully recovered from whatever that spell had been. His movements were slowed, far less than his normal snake quick movements.

Yet his sword was still deadly. Any touch of that blade, and an orc or goblin cried in agony, doing still more to dampen the enemy's morale, and Thorin knew that was important. Even now, the enemy outnumbered them at least two to one, thanks to the losses the elves humans and dwarves had sustained. "Rally, Rally!" he bellowed. "Keep together lads!"

Harry saw what Thorin was doing, and hit him with a spell that allowed his voice to carry through the tumult of the battle. Thorin's call worked, and thanks to it and the scattered company, the Iron Hills dwarves started to work together once more rather than several hundred individuals. Circles and swaures began to form as the momentum of the battle turned against the dwarves, and the local commanders started to order a slow retreat. The sheer number of the enemy and it's new blood meant there would be no victory here.

But while this was going on, all thought of the overall tactical picture left Thorin's mind, as a flash of white caught his attention. He turned in the opposite direction from where Harry and the two elves were falling back, and gasped in fury and grief. "Bombur!"

Past several other orcs, Thorin saw Azog his blade having just punched through Bombur's stomach. Through the melee he caught Thorin's eyes, and with a sneer flicked his sword to one side, sending the fat dwarf collapsing there, leaking his life blood onto the mud of the battlefield.

“Khazad Ai Erebor!” Thorin howled, launching himself forward, disdaining any attempt to guard his own flanks or rear. All that was in his mind now was the need to kill the white orc.

Several other orcs attempted to cut into Thorin from the side, or get behind him. But behind Thorin, Dori and Nori saved him from that fate, cutting one of them several down as arrows from behind took more in the back or sides, slowing them or killing them outright. Then the two chieftains clashed, their blades slamming together. “Thank you Mister Baggins!” Nori shouted, before he too was engaged again, this time with four goblins who tried to circle him, forcing him back and away from his king using their greater speed to try and nip around his shield and sword.

From behind the group of dwarves, Bilbo paused in firing arrows into any orc he saw threatening one of his companions, grief swelling up within him as he too had seen Bombur’s body. But Bilbo knew he couldn’t dwell on that, he could only do what he was able to in order to defend those he could see, and the sight should not have made him pause.

No, what had caused the Hobbit to stop and stare was in the air above them.. For there, Bilbo saw aid arriving unlooked for. “The eagles, the eagles!”

From high above, the Eagles came. Called by Gandalf, they arrived in numbers unseen in Middle Earth since the War of Wrath ages past. From high, high above where any other bird could fly they lanced down through the remaining clouds of lesser birds. They didn’t kill many, small birds were notoriously hard to catch after all, but they shattered what little cohesion the birds had, causing them to flee in every direction from their larger brethren as the eagles struck down into the orcish host. Claws and talons sliced, slew and lifted up into the air and then dropped orcs as from behind the Orcish Army, further aid arrived, dooming what remained of Azog’s army.

From behind the orcish army having taken the same route as Azog’s host a new army appeared, small, but only in actual numbers. In sheer weight of flesh, it was massive, for it was an army made entirely of bears. Bears of all types and sizes charged forward into the back of Azog’s army, led by a Kodiak bear so large it looked like it came from the prehistoric era, larger and stronger than any of its fellows. It led the charge into the back of the Orcish host, catching them between the dwarves, and their own claws and fangs.

Perhaps if the orcs had been an organized force they could still have rallied. Perhaps if they still had the numbers Harry had cut down with his laser spell, they could have absorbed even that shock. But it was doubtful.

And as the orcs fell back, the elves had rallied, returning to the forts on the hills. Arrows started to rain down, and from the left flank, Dain and his warthog riders appeared, flushed with victory over the flanking force on that side, and now hammering down into the central most horde.

In the middle of the battle, Harry heard Bilbo’s cry, and whooped in delight, his sword flashing out, lightly nicking several orcs around him, before coming back into the defense, blocking an orc’s sword. His victims died screaming, and the orcs who had tried to best Harry in a contest of strength fell, a sword impacting the side of its neck and nearly hewing it off, before Elladan recovered, and he and his brother continued to forge forward alongside Harry. T

hey were now joined by several of the company, and Harry could feel it. Could feel the last gasping efforts of the orcs disappear. "They are broken now!" He shouted. "Press them, press them!"

Nodding his head, Elrohir added his own voice to Harry, somehow projecting his voice without any need of magic through the noise of the battle. "The morale is broken, and they have no place to go brothers! Now comes the killing time!"

His words were spoken in common, understood by all, and the dwarves took up the cry, adding it to their war cries as they continued to hue and slay. The humans, even Bard, had begun to flag, but now took further heart, seeing these new allies arriving, seeing several of the elves also moving forward from the fortresses and down into the battle behind them, the shrieks of the eagles.

It was all too much. The orcs finally broke. The goblins had long since begun to flee in smaller numbers, but now, that fleeing became a massive rout as the remaining goblins tried to retreat, all thoughts of fighting leaving them, tossing down anything that could hamper their flight. The orcs were made of sterner stuff, but even they were now fleeing mostly, their battle frenzy broken. Here and there clumps of the hardiest tried to make a stand, but those were the minority. The vast majority simply tried to flee.

They failed. Bear, dwarf, elf, eagle, human, none of the orc's enemies were willing to let them flee. And as Harry had learned in studying history, it was when an army broke and ran that the true killing began. Thanks to his earlier spell that wasn't really the case here, but it didn't matter.

One of the clumps that began a grim last stand was around where Thorin and Azog were hammering into one another. Nothing else mattered to either chieftain now, all that mattered was putting their personal demons to rest once and for all.

The Orcish warlord was quick and well armored for an orc. Twice, his armor had withstood a blow from Orcrist turning the Elven blade, even as it sliced chunks out of the armor. In return, Azog had hammered Thorin's shield into uselessness, causing the dwarven king to hurl it aside. Azog had disdained a shield, and now both were dancing around one another, their swords smashing into one another again and again.

And around Azog, the orcs of Gundabad continued to fight grimly on, determined to kill as many of the dwarves as they could before they died. For them, death held no fear so long as they were obeying their Dread Master.

Thorin stumbled, one foot tripping over the chopped off leg of an orc and Azog was on him instantly. A blow got through Thorin's defenses to smash into his chest, nearly taking Thorin entirely off of his feet. But somehow, almost certainly thanks to the Arkenstone's influence, Thorin was able to move with the blow. And before Azog could recover, Orcrist slashed in a short arc, aiming at Azog's arm right behind where he was holding his sword.

The orc wasn't fast enough to pull back or twist his arm aside, and once more, Azog lost an arm to Thorin, blade and hand going flying as elven steel sliced cleanly through the limb.

The orcs bellow of pain and fury reverberated around him, and the fact that the same thing occurred to him before when facing Thorin was not lost on the white-skinned orc. It only made him

matter, and with a flash of sudden cunning, Azog wildly flicked his stump of an arm, sending blood flying into Thorin's face, blinding the dwarf.

Thorin stumbled once more, one hand going up to try and clear his face.

The hook on Azog's other hand instantly flashed forward reaching for the dwarf's throat, but before he could reach THorin, Bofur pushed aside one of the other Gundabad orcs. Bifur's axe sought Azog's side, forcing the orc to stop and defend himself, dancing around the blow and lashing out with a kick that caught the dwarf in the knee, causing him to stumble. Then, another orc stabbed Bifur in the back, killing him instantly.

But more dwarves were pushing against his people hard and seeing that he would soon lose any chance at his vengeance, Azog snarled and hurled himself bodily into Thorin, bearing him to earth, knocking Orcrist out of Thorin's hand. Azog stabbed down with his hooks, but Thorin twisted his head to one side, his vision no longer clouded by the orcs blood and reached upwards, grabbing at the orcs throat with one hand, the orc's arm with the other.

Azog was strong, but was losing blood swiftly, and Thorin wasn't. Even as Azog lunged down desperately trying to bring his fangs to bear on Thorin's face, Thorin tightened his grip on the orcs throat and kept his face at a distance. For a timeless moment the two enemies strained against one another, then Thorin bellowed a roar of near mindless rage, as he pushed with all of his might with the hand clasped around Azog's throat.

There was a moment of strain and then with sickening snap Azog's neck broke, his whole body going limp.

Thorin heaved the dead weight of the orc to one side, staring at it for a brief second as he stared at the hate and rage in the creature's face before it went slack with death. Then the King Under the Mountain, pushed to his feet, grabbed up Orcrist as he rose. On his feet, Thorin raising the elven blade in the air with another bellow as the last vestiges of the Orcish host fell to the vengeful weapons of their enemies. "Azog is dead! For Erebor! Khazad ai Durin Nur!"

From nearby, Harry saw Thorin standing up, shouting his victory to the sky. He could see all around, the last of the orcs and goblins being cut down, and sighed, letting his sword fall to his side, turning aside and moving to where Bilbo was also pulling back from the battle.

The Battle of the Lonely Mountain was over.

End Chapter