

Seven Long Years, One Short Battle

For seven long years this war has raged, each day losing ground just to gain it back again, or gaining ground just to lose it all the same. Each step forward was ground lost, each flag raised would soon stand half-mast. A soul for a soul, an eye for an eye, back and forth, for seven long years.

The D'Red army, seen as strong-willed, brave, and steadfast, whose men dawned orange and red and white cloth, had been defending their homeland and title as an unwavering nation for the length of this war. Their seal, a shield separated into five sects with concentric circles, was branded on flags with the same dyes used by their men. Their commander, Lord Gareth, told all men who operated on the field what to do and when or where to do it. The only thing they had wanted for the duration of the war was to be left alone, but they were needlessly attacked.

The Bluum army was seen by their few people as intelligent and thorough. Their men dawned cobalt, violet, and blue, like the night sky reflected onto a clear lake. When the war had begun the army was short on men. However, no other army had similar ability, for each of their men was unbreakable, his strength would not falter, his mind was sharper than even his sword, and his motive was just as straight. Just one of their men was tenfold the strength of another. Their leader, Sir Stanislov, demanded this strength. Bluum attacked D'Red army out of desperation. Bluum needed more land due to their crops, economy, and population all failing, and knew that war was their only option. They needed a victory more than the D'Red army could know.

Despite their disagreements, both armies knew that this fight would go nowhere. So, Lord Gareth and Sir Stanislov came to an agreement. They would send two troops of their best men to command machines of war in a simple battle with simple rules. Through various methods, whoever obtained the most gold coins, representing their "points", would gain control of the contested land.

They would fight this battle over two hours, the first fifteen minutes would leave the men to act without direct instruction, and the remaining hour and forty-five minutes would be left up to the commander to direct his men. The army that scored the most gold during this "autonomous" period would receive ten additional coins. By owning both flagpoles on their side, as well as scoring twice in their respective tower, they would earn an additional silver coin called a "win coin". They would play in a twelve hundred by twelve hundred foot field, with two

towers at opposite corners of the field. Each army would gain gold by aiming and shooting into one of these, awarding five coins. However, if they missed the target, there was a fence perimeter beneath the towers which would award one coin to the opposing army if scored in. Sixty small boulders, used as ammunition for their machines, would be laid out in a pattern along the ground. Along the perimeter of this area were four flag poles, each one having both armies' flags at half mast. Whichever army's flag was raised at full mast owned that flagpole, worth ten gold coins, until the battle ended or until it was claimed by the opposing army. During the final ten minutes of the fight, troops were free to scatter their men, and for each two hundred by two hundred foot plot they were present in, they would be awarded three gold coins. The winner would also be awarded two silver coins, representing the battle won. If both armies earned the same number of points, each army would earn one of these coins.

With all of these rules set in stone, the armies sent their best troops and machines onto the field. The Bluum army sent two cannons, and the d'Red army sent two catapults. Each machine had a troop of men accompanying it, each responsible for loading the machine, firing it, moving it, capturing flags, or expanding. Both armies waited for time to begin, and within the first fifteen minutes the Bluum army's second cannon had managed to position themselves in the middle of the field and fire once, their shot landing within the blue tower. The D'Red army did not move, for they were not given prior commands. Then, the battle truly started. Bluum's first cannon moved next, picking up cannonballs that laid on the ground and loading them. Bluum's second canon approached one of D'Red's flags, but the first catapult intercepted it, blocking the cannon. The second catapult moved to the first flag, sending their flag up the mast, then loaded a boulder and moved to the center of the field, firing a boulder at their tower to score. However the boulder missed, causing the men to all groan. Their battle would continue on like this, the D'Red army would focus mainly on scoring in the towers, while Bluum would focus on other elements, like sending up flags and moving cannon balls into their scoring areas on the ground. This went on, back and forth, for the full two hours. During the final ten minutes the men ran as far as they could from their machines, covering all the ground they could. At the end, both generals tallied their scores and met in the center of the battlefield. Stanislov held out a silver coin to Lord Gareth, who held his own coin out. They stared at each other for what felt like hours before either one moved. Eventually Gareth, mustering up all his will, slapped his coin down into Sir Stanislov's hands, who turned to his own men and yelled loud enough to feel his lungs contract, and all his men cheered with him. Gareth turned to his men, simply nodded his head, and turned back to Stanislov's army, cheering for them. A battle well fought, if nothing else.