

Title of Session: Creating an Effective, Realistic, Mind Blowing Epic Fantasy Battle
Creator: Janet Beasley
Curriculum: ADVANCED

Definition: Epic fantasy battles most usually occur in addition to inner – dual – or smaller battles between characters. Epic battles consist of armies, squadrons, leagues, etc. and can have well in excess of tens of thousands of warriors.

Goals: To effectively write a believable epic battle scene while working around the main characters within the battle.

Tools:

Flip chart or wipe off board and appropriate markers

Ice Breaker:

Divide the enthusiasts into “good guys” and “bad guys”

Have each side devise a short battle plan to win over the other

Have enthusiasts act out their strategies together to see who will really win

Go around the room and ask the enthusiasts how they felt, what were their strong points, what were their weak points, etc.

Where do I start?

There are numerous places to start your battle within your story. Below you will find a list of 4 things to get your imagination moving.

- **Anticipation:** Building anticipation before the battle is considered an added bonus to any battle scene.
 - If you’re going to have spectators you may want to build the anticipation in how the spectators arrive at the scene.
 - If good warriors know that enemy troops are coming, but are not sure when they will arrive, build on the anticipation and anxiousness of those waiting.
 - If a main character is facing their first battle use their feelings and emotions to build on.
 - Wrap it all together by bouncing back and forth between the two sides.
- **Action:** Using your battle scene as your first chapter is an effective way to incorporate action, especially when it comes to your hook line.
- **Back story:** Building your epic battle scene can be done by using back story that leads your readers up to the battle, or sets the scene for the battle to come.
- **Preparation:** Writing about the preparations each side is taking before the battle is an effective way to set the tone of the battle. You can incorporate a gamut of

things: emotions of the warriors and/or the entire “village,” the gathering of supplies (or lack of), family matters, etc.

Important tactics:

- A battle scene should be written in short sentences.
- The pace should be fast.
- Short descriptive beats are more effective than dialogue tags
 - There is not a lot of back and forth dialogue in an epic battle scene, however there is a lot of shouting, yelling, and calling out orders.
- Continuity is a MUST

How important is continuity in an epic battle scene?

Continuity is probably the most important feature overall. Confusing your readers is to be avoided at all costs. For instance, if your characters are laying down waiting for the enemy to come over the mountain top, you certainly don't want your air troops hovering above them. Another example would be if your character is battling another character with a sword you don't want to make the mistake of him or her killing their opponent with a boomerang they never tossed. Character's can't ride in on their horses then dismount their pachyderms.

The bigger the battle, the more complex the continuity will be.

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It depends – if your battle is only between a couple of characters there may be some. However if you are writing an epic battle the character to character dialogue would be kept to a minimum as there is so much going on. Shouting, crying, screaming, calling out orders, and a few quick lines will suffice.

The action packed narrative exposition will carry most of your epic battle scene.

The battle is epic, so should the exposition be the same?

No. You want to write battle scenes using short sentences and keep the written battle moving at a fast pace. These features hold the action and intensity a battle scene needs to be effective. Granted, you don't want to just write, *He died*. An example of what to write instead would be something like: Hanson's mighty sword brought instant death. He bellowed a valiant shout when his nemesis smashed into the bloodied ground.

What are some “outside” things I can do to help get my battle scene to become effective?

- Pull out your favorite epic fantasy DVDs that include battles, or go online, and watch battle scenes from epic movies over and over. Watch them with the sound turned down, then close your eyes and turn the volume up and listen for sounds only, watch it again with visual and sound on, and look for the close ups, mids, and long shots. What are the warriors doing? Are they running, hiding, fighting

with a vengeance, riding horses or catapult carts, what are they fighting with, what are they wearing, and the list goes on.

- Reading epic battle scenes will also help you see many of the things that were discussed in this session.
- View battle artwork and let your imagination run wild.

What should I focus on when writing an epic battle?

- Focus on getting a full rough draft written first
 - Keep the battle scene intense, effective, and action packed by using short sentences and minimal character-to-character dialogue
 - Do not slow down or stifle the action with too much exposition (detail)
 - In *Hidden Earth Series Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy Book 2 ~ The Battle of Trust and Treachery* the exposition it would have taken to spell out the details of the battle animals and warriors would have slowed the action of the battle itself to a screeching halt. To alleviate the epic exposition within the story, but still have access to it, Janet Beasley's and Dar Bagby's companion illustration book *The Chukkon's Say Ye Need ta Be a-Seein' Maycly* was developed. It became the perfect "tool" to use before, during or after reading Maycly to discover the details of the battle animals and such.
- Second, return to your written battle and envision it on the big screen: re-write your battle adding exposition that represents "close up," "mid," and "long" shots just like a movie uses.
 - When the scene is focusing on 1 or 2 main characters consider the written scene to be a close up shot. NOTE: Unless there is something relative to his or her specific actions at the moment taking place in the background, don't tell anything about what's happening in the background.
 - If 3 or 4 of your main characters are duking it out in the same area a "mid shot," fast paced exposition does the job. It's easy to want to use a lot of dialogue in this setting, however, watch you don't over use it.
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- Third, focus on the continuity
 - When you have your epic battle scene constructed with the added sights, sounds, and such – but still in rough draft form - storyboard the event, paragraph by paragraph. Using 3 x 5 cards, write each paragraph on a separate card, and number the cards in the order you have the paragraphs written. Lay the cards out on the floor or a table and read them through. This will help you with the continuity to make certain all of your "ranking

and flanking” are in the proper order, troops are located where they should be, the pacing is action packed, and that your breaks in the action are “well deserved.” i.e. If an important character is wounded and needs attention or dies don’t belabor the point in the middle of the action, save the epic exposition for after the fact.

- Once you’ve rearranged the cards in the order they need to be, go back in to your battle scene and “cut and paste” away to put it in the right order.

Are all fantasy battles archaic?

No. There are fantasies that are written in a futuristic style. In this case you would possibly want to research modern technology and weaponry.

Can I mix both archaic and futuristic weaponry?

Absolutely...that is if you have both types of groups in your story. If your story is all archaic, or all futuristic, unless the two meet at some point, you need to stick with the kind of weaponry that best suits your era.

Can I have both immortal and mortal characters fighting in the same battle?

Yes. But beware that immortals **do not** die. If this is going to cause a problem you may want to rethink your strategy, create a way they become mortal so they can die, or even consider eliminating them from the battle.

Activity:

From author Janet Beasley in regards to writing her first battle scene in her epic YA fantasy Hidden Earth Series Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy.

- Reading the below verbiage aloud to your enthusiasts will help make an impact, and set the stage for how intense creating an epic battle scene can be.

There I was, cruising through my manuscript. Words were flowing, the story was moving at a great pace. I had the map drawn which had now made every chapter richer with content. Then out of nowhere. . .bam! It was time for the first battle.

I realized I knew nothing about flanking or ranking. Military training hadn’t even entered my mind. Oh sure, I’ve watched the news, and seen the horrific things going on around the world when it comes to war and weaponry, but the archaic world of Maycly had not been designed for such. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks—over half the characters had never seen or experienced battle.

I had lined up the story as such; the warrior characters needed to be trained in secret. Again, another sharp turn of events. I shouted, “Are you kidding me!? Now the map isn’t right!” So, back to the drawing board, and manuscript, I went to create a secret land.

There were also other warriors; all the warriors will be informed about their allies, but won't meet until on the battle field. Nuts! Now I've got to add in a second secret land. I found myself adding chapter after chapter to set the stage leading up to this epic battle. A "well worth it" task I might add.

Needless to say, I had my work cut out for me, to say nothing of the research.

Did I enjoy the challenge? Absolutely!

To wrap it up, please understand this battle scene didn't get written in a day. The first battle chapter alone in Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy took eight months to put together, and that was before proofreading/editing.

The best part for me is that I'm looking forward to writing my next epic battles with a vengeance! My goal is to bring readers some of the most action packed, fast paced, and unique battles they have ever read.

Now it's time for your enthusiasts to build and create their own epic battle.

Have the following elements (NOT the Prompt Notes) already written on your flip chart or wipe off board. Ask enthusiasts to name different things that could be included in each element then ask them to choose the one they want to use to build their epic fantasy battle. Begin to write and create the battle scene as a group with each choice. When done, read it aloud to the enthusiasts and critique.

- **Weather and Weather Related**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Rain
 - Snow
 - Humidity
 - Sleet
 - Wind
 - Extreme Cold
 - Extreme Heat
 - Extreme Dryness
 - Fire
 - Hurricane
 - Tornado
 - Earthquake
- **Terrain**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Mountainous
 - Flat

- Desert
 - On top of the water
 - Beneath the water
 - Valley
 - Rolling hills
 - Forest
 - Grassy
 - Burned
 - Icy
 - Outer space

- **Time of Day**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Daylight
 - Dark
 - Dusk
 - Dawn
 - Mid Afternoon
 - Middle of the night
 - **A set certain hour of relevancy**

- **Number of warriors**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - What ever number you choose, you need to keep track of the losses in case you end up referring back to the battle in another chapter. For this exercise use at least 5000 warriors to make it epic.

- **Battle duration**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - A day
 - Several days
 - A week
 - A month
 - Ongoing

- **Medical**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - If your battle is going to last for more than a day you may want to consider “building in” a medical area to treat the warriors

- **Food**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - If your battle is going to last for more than a day, you may want to consider adding in a food source. This could be items the warriors carry, or find on the battle field.

- **Battle armor / clothing / accessories**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Archaic battle clothing and armor will be different from that of a futuristic fantasy. The following list contains both. A = archaic, F = futuristic
 - Chain maille = A
 - Leather breast plates = A
 - Metal helmets = A
 - Leather helmets = A
 - Leather overskirts = A
 - Sandals = A
 - Lace-up boots = A
 - Leather arm bands = A
 - Capes = A
 - Knight style armor = A
 - Camos = F
 - Baggie pants = F
 - Metal breast plates = F
 - Metal arm coverings = F
 - Metal leg coverings = F
 - Sleek helmets with plexi-glass shields = F
 - Metal gloves = F
 - Lace up military boots = F
 - Boots with weapon slots = F
 - Heavy duty gear belt = F
 - Fatigues = F
- **Weaponry: If enthusiasts have questions regarding weaponry names, suggest they do a search online for images to get real names of weapons, or they can create their own.**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - As with clothing and armor, weaponry will vary between archaic and futuristic. A = archaic, F = futuristic
 - Swords = A or F: Archaic swords are more so thought of as those used by knights. A futuristic sword may have numerous blades, light up, or shoot sparks.
 - Bows & Arrows = A
 - Shields = A or F: An archaic shield example would be that of a wooden Viking's or knight's. A futuristic shield is usually metal and can even be created to collapse and expand as needed.
 - Catapult = A: Usually built on a rolling, wooden framed structure.
 - Trebuchet = A: Type of catapult

- Ballista = A: Type of “missile” launcher for extra large arrows or spears
 - Spears = A
 - Battle axes = A or F: A futuristic battle ax would be different in that it would most likely have a titanium handle as opposed to wood.
 - Flame throwers = A or F: Archaic flame throwers would be in the category with wagon catapults. Futuristic flame throwers would be more high tech and most likely handheld.
 - Macer = A
 - Club = A
 - Battering Ram = A or F: Archaic battering rams are large logs and are sometimes built on enormous wooden rolling carts, where futuristic battering rams are made of durable metal and can be used effectively by a few men at a time.

- **Mortal or immortal**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - If you have immortal warriors in the battle you will need to make sure they DO NOT die, unless there is a reason that the immortality has been broken. You will have to get creative in ways these ever-living characters can be defeated.

- **Training**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - If you are writing about warriors that entail training you need to think about how long it will take, where will they train, etc.

- **Sounds**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Weapons
 - Animals
 - Warriors
 - Weather
 - The initial colliding point of warriors, animals, etc.
 - The actual battle going on

- **Smells**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Animals
 - Warriors (may not have bathed for weeks)
 - Forests
 - Shore or beach (salty air)
 - A loved one’s special item such as a scarf or handkerchief
 - Stench of evil warriors

- Sulfur
 - Brimstone
 - Rotting flesh (if battling for days)
 - Blood
- **Magic**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Must be realistic
 - Continuity must be maintained
 - Must adhere to the laws you have set in place
 - One wand can't fix it all or destroy it all, but it can assist
 - Who possesses it? The entire army, or only a select few?
 - Is it clean or dirty magic, or both?
 - Possession of magic can be known or unknown
- **Spectators**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Watching openly
 - Watching in secret
 - Masses
 - A few key characters
 - Adults
 - Children
 - Elderly
 - Not human (elvin, orc-ish, etc.)
- **Obstacles**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Trees
 - Other ships
 - Dead bodies
 - Rocks
 - Roots
 - Mountains
 - Water
 - Ice
 - Quick sand
 - Land mines
 - Traps
 - Swamp
 - Mangroves
 - Beasts
 - Protected Territories
 - Mud
 - Fortresses
 - Motes

- **Supplies**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Ammunition
 - Medical
 - Food
 - Armor
 - Weapons
 - Tents
 - Matches
 - Cooking utensils
 - Shields

- **Transportation**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Space ships
 - Wagons
 - Carts
 - Horses
 - Dragons
 - Fantasy beasts
 - Rockets
 - Escape pods
 - Water craft
 - Train
 - Creations of the author

- **Vulnerability/Weak Spots**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Armor
 - Terrain
 - Head quarters
 - Transportation
 - Weapons
 - Magic wands
 - Can only go a few hours without sustenance
 - Water
 - Extreme heat
 - Extreme cold
 - Specialty items (think kryptonite)

- **Animals**
 - **Prompt Notes**
 - Real
 - Mystical
 - Dragons

- Author creations
- Big
- Small
- Mammoth
- Legs / no legs
- Amphibious
- Insects
- Nocturnal
- Burrowing
- Fowl
- Reptile
- Mammal

Discussion:

- Which elements do you think might affect one another when planning your battle scene? For example, temperature may affect clothing, terrain may affect vulnerability, etc.
- What do you see as differences between archaic and futuristic epic fantasy battles?
- If you could design a brand new battle armor for your character(s) to wear, what would it be made of? How would it hold up in battle? Would it have a vulnerable spot? Would it be heavy, light, or invisible?

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What are some things to consider regarding the elements when developing an epic battle scene? Fill in some details of each. If you think of other elements be sure to add them to the list.

- **Weather**
- **Terrain**
- **Time of Day**
- **Number of warriors**
- **Battle duration**
- **Medical**
- **Food**
- **Battle armor / clothing / accessories**
- **Weaponry**
- **Mortal or immortal**
- **Training**
- **Sounds**
- **Smells**
- **Magic**
- **Spectators**
- **Obstacles**
- **Supplies**
- **Transportation**
- **Vulnerability**
- **Animals**

To read an example utilizing many of the above tactics can be found in the battle scene taken from *Hidden Earth Series Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy Book 2 ~ The Battle of Trust and Treachery* is included in the additional handout – ask your Overseer for a copy.

Additional Handout

Hidden Earth Series Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy Book 2 ~ The Battle of Trust and Treachery. Taken from Chapter 33 The Day of Reckoning

Copyright: Janet Beasley

As the moons and suns traded their light and morning came upon the valley, movement began amongst the campers. Aromas of sweet rolls, fruit breads, hot chocolate, and coffee warming over wood fires wafted throughout the campsites. SUL returned to the stately appearance He had held before He left the castle. He glowed from the Alps, brightening the entire valley. Before breakfast was served, He greeted the spectators. “I welcome you who have traveled from near and far to witness this grand event. Enjoy the breakfasts I have provided. Eat well and nourish your bodies, for in one hour I shall call you to take your places.” Everyone responded with the traditional acknowledgment of reverence and kept their hands in the prayerful position as they said a special blessing of thanks for their food.

As the smells of breakfast dwindled the busy sounds of tidying up were added to the chit chat. In exactly one hour SUL called the spectators to take their places on the edges of the western ridge. Once all were settled SUL addressed the crowd in song. “This is a day that I had hoped would never come. But this is a day that *had* to come. Hold tight to My prophecy.” The spectators applauded. “Chukkons of Maycly, I commend you for your strength in carrying on without your loved ones. It has been many years since you have seen your families and friends, but it has been for the sole purpose of preparing for the restoration and preservation of Good.” Again the spectators performed the traditional acknowledgment.

SUL took in a deep breath, and His words rang out. “Behold! I present to you your chukkon army!” The sound of several hundred uilleann bagpipes and bodhran drums flooded the valley.

A spectator pointed to the north and shouted, “Look!” The message quickly rippled through the crowd, and all heads turned. Mighty cheers erupted from the ridge when the chukkon warriors came into view, marching to the impressive cadences. The front line carried the largest flag of Maycly anyone had ever seen.

Behind the chukkon warriors followed battle animals of all sorts, some walking and some flying, all in orderly fashion. Their behavior expressed dedicated obedience with respect for their trainers and grooms. They displayed hair-raising discipline, their ranks tight and their battle clothing neatly worn. Specially made armor covered the bodies of those animals that were the most vulnerable. Every creature’s head and face was covered with protective gear that glistened with the pageantry of polished silver and rare gems found only in Tuttleworth along the shores of Tuttle Splash. Dangling from the sides of facial guards were tassels of every color ever known; they swished back and forth with every step. The warrior baskets that were strapped to the aerial battle animals had been woven with sturdy branches and leaves from the Tree of Breathing and Being, a gift SUL had sent to them in The Training Village. Immense carts carrying the catapults were pulled by towies whose snout horns had been decorated with vibrant patterns of rich

colors of paint made from berries native to The Training Village and surrounding Mare's Tail Slopes.

"Momma, look...tis Papa!" Dittle could hardly contain himself at the sight. Marlen and Denton, seeing Charleo on the leaders' wagon, cheered even louder. Marlen, not able to hide her tears, took both boys by their hands and lifted them almost off the ground as she threw her arms up into the air with jubilation.

"Who be a-ridin' with Charleo?" shouted Jobi.

"Me Keegan! Me dear Keegan!" Mitzy lifted their two daughters, Maye and Karla, off their toes just like Marlen had done with Denton and Dittle. The four had a good laugh together as they bounced up and down at their mommas' wills.

"And Artie! Tis Artie!" Many of the young chukkons who had known Artie as the leader of the Terrain Masters, and others who had loved visiting him in Glammisswinde to play games and listen to him make up stories, cheered and whistled at the sight of him. Artie heard their voices and waved big to his small fans. The chukkon warriors came to a halt several hundred yards from the center of the battlefield. Etherealiens arrived and hovered above the chukkon warriors.

SUL sang over the cheering. "Cast your sight to the south end of the valley. Behold! I present to you your wightling army!" The wightlings' cadence resounded with a colonial feel, and the spectators' responses spilled like a broad waterfall into the valley as their wightling army marched with confidence.

First came the wightling warriors carrying an enormous flag of Maycly, twin to the one the chukkons carried. They were followed by the wightling battle animal infantry. The stately mammals were harnessed with the finest materials provided by SUL. The heavy war horses wore chain mail caparisons covered with fabric caparisons boasting Maycly's colors. Solid gold chanfrons etched with intricate detail graced their muzzles presenting an intimidating sight. The tails of many were braided and adorned with colorful beaded garlands. Others' tails had been doubled and redoubled on themselves and were wrapped with bejeweled straps, while the tails of still others gracefully trailed behind them unembellished. Magnificent leopards wearing shiny brown harnesses studded with diamonds pulled the carts that carried the wightling riders of the aerial animals. Each rider was sporting his impressive great helm and suit of armor. Kodiak bears pulling the weaponry carts wore chanfrons fashioned from sterling silver and ankle cuffs of pewter. There was a large herd of winged horses, specific to Trote Waters, serving as additional aerial animals. During flight their shiny coats of white changed to black, and their long white manes, tails, and flowing fetlock hair glowed. Fiery castle sentinels, unattended, flew to the battlefield above the etherealiens, riders permitted to mount them only at the leaders' commands.

The riders of the elephants, llamas, zebras, and elk were strapped into sturdy saddles. Each wielded a sharp lance, another gift from SUL. Each lance's hand-guard was inscribed with the warrior's surname. Each animal wore a custom chanfron and caparison, which coordinated with their rider's armor. The wightling army halted a few hundred yards from the center of the battlefield, opposite the chukkon warriors. More etherealiens loomed gallantly over the wightling warriors' heads.

On SUL's command all of the etherealians combined and made a swooping circle over each battalion, then they rose to the ridge tops. As they passed from north to south, the spectators could feel the long silken etherealian robes gently slide across their heads. Eventually the etherealians came together and formed three rings above the center of the battlefield, rotating in the pattern that the three suns of Maycly once had.

SUL opened His mouth, and from His breath appeared a visible score of Maycly's anthem in the sky above the Alps. All joined SUL in singing the anthem. When it ended the score vaporized and the etherealians dispersed; one third landed behind the chukkon army, one third landed behind the wightling army, and the remaining third formed a border around the valley. As the etherealians glowed brilliantly their luminous appearance gave courage to all of the warriors.

Like a proud father SUL announced, "Behold your generals, Charleo and Philip!" Each waved to the crowd. "And with General Charleo ride Major Artie and Lieutenant Keegan." Keegan waved while Artie whistled through his fingers and whirled his other fist in the air like he had always done during a Terrain Masters outing. The young ones jumped up and down and whistled back.

"Look Hilda! Philip Roberts is the wightling general. I knew he could do it." Grampa Lawrence shouted praises to their wightling army leader.

Gramma Hilda's emotions seeped from her eyes. "Their faces, they hold such bravery. A level far above any I've ever seen. But I'm afraid for the warriors, Lawrence. I've never felt such fear as I do now, not only for our warriors, but for all of us."

Taking Gramma Hilda's hand, Grampa Lawrence pulled her close and whispered, "It'll all be fine Hilda. Remember what you've read in *The Book of Good and Evil*. The prophesied period of sorrow is upon us. But SUL promised that in time our joy will return. Cling to His promise. Uphold the truth of His prophecy." Grampa Lawrence pulled Gramma Hilda closer still.

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With His back toward the valley and His arms extended out and down in front of Him, SUL spoke a raging command. An enormous cracking explosion from the east jarred the ground. Everyone hushed, looked toward the Alps, and saw dark smoke rise from behind the snowy peaks. SUL had used a portion of His magical powers to blast a hole in the molten, charred outer crust of the volcanic mountain that housed Tarnnin's lair. He took aim, snapped His wrists, and caused a second blast to blow a tunnel through the base of the Alps. As the smoke cleared, the opening presented a frightening view of Targrum.

Tarnnin could not believe what he was hearing. He rushed to the window of his throne room and panicked when he realized that the blasts were the sign from SUL that it was time for battle. He immediately demanded his brood of Evil to hasten to the battlefield. In no certain fashion or order they began to ooze from the jagged opening in the lair. The chukkons-on-watch sounded their alpenhorns; tall spiral flames swirled upward from the horns' bells. The warriors now knew Evil was in sight. Chukkon and

wightling warriors readied themselves. They stood at severe attention listening to the first round of Evil tramping to the tunnel from Targrum.

Marlen, Denton, and Dittle recognized the intensifying rumble of off-beat vibrations, the same vibrations they had experienced on the Bridge of Revealing. Marlen hugged Denton and Dittle to her as close as she could. She heard Dittle snuffle and felt his head turn into her side. "Remember how brave ye were that day on the bridge? And just how proud Denton and I were of ye?"

"Aye. But this...tis too much." Dittle clutched Marlen's dress a bit tighter as he looked up into her eyes for comfort.

Marlen smiled with love and confidence. "'Tis no different. If we could beat 'em once, we can beat 'em again. Yer papa needs ta know ye were brave fer him. Can ye be?"

Dittle searched for any courage he could find. "Aye. I'll be a-doin' it fer Papa."

"That be me boy. Now be a-bringin' yer eyes back ta the happenin's. I've got ye tight ta me side, so ye've nothin' ta worry about." Dittle faced the battlefield but kept his arm around Marlen. His eyes were almost closed. Denton reached his arm behind Marlen far enough to hold Dittle's hand.

All of the chukkons from Bailiwick had shared stories about the Day of Reckoning, but very few had put together that today was that day. Word spread at the rapidly growing revelation of those few, and family by family the chukkons came to terms with the terrorizing fact that their loved ones, who had been gone for six years, had been building and training as part of the chukkon army SUL had had Ensio scribble about in *The Book of Good and Evil*.

Evil etherealians broke over the Alps. They dropped and sped toward the western ridge, causing screams and shouts from the viewers.

"Hang on wee ones!" Jit and Giddy did as Charleo said and clenched Halo's and Scepter's ears with all their might. A foul wind ruffled their tiny wings.

Tarnnin's evil etherealians made several overly confident passes above the spectators. Their numbers blanketed the light of the three suns, darkening the Valley of Battles. Without warning, they scattered, and the instant flash of bright light from the suns was temporarily blinding. Instead of the pleasant aromas of cotton candy and sugar waffles as they flew by, the crowd smelled sulfur emitting from their wings.

As hard as he tried not to, Dittle could not help but shiver, and he was not the only one with quivering nerves on the western ridge. Nearly every chukkonette was hiding his or her face and crying.

Tarnnin's evil infantry skulked into view. Their shadowed appearances broke through the faint cloud of misty dust that vaguely lingered at the tunnel's entrance to the battlefield. First out was Evil's general, a stocky, bronze wightling clothed in the richest of battle armor. He rode in a chariot of mahogany wood trimmed with black onyx, pulled by a team of four wolven gliders that had been captured and trained to serve Evil. The general drew the attention of Marlen, Denton, and Dittle and made a subtle change, discreetly showing his true self to them, then he quickly faded back to his brawny character. Their hearts nearly stopped when they realized it was Lucasphair. His grumners followed behind his chariot, and his imps scurried about casting perverted

gestures. Marlen wanted desperately to warn Charleo but spared herself the embarrassment of trying to shout above the noise, as she knew she would never be heard.

A portion of Tarnnin's evil wightlings lumbered behind Lucasphair's entourage. When Pub Pete fixed his eyes on those who had abandoned SUL on Earth, compassionate sorrow pushed away confidence, and helplessness flushed his face. He looked down at Charleo in the wagon almost directly below him but saw that Charleo's face offered no expressions of comfort.

Behind the front lines of evil wightlings were the brainwashed chukkons. Additional fiendish evil wightlings, gladiators, and wardens moved like sludge, kicking and lashing the mindless pack of chukkons in front of them. A caravan of repulsive land beasts appeared next, trudging haphazardly, their keepers continually having to chase them back into line.

Boulders began to tumble, and an avalanche soared down the Alps as unruly aerial beasts, too big to use the tunnel, leapt and climbed by foot to the top of the Alps from Targrum. The obnoxious aerial brutes were tethered and held down on their descent to the battlefield. Some had unkempt riding baskets heedlessly strapped on their backs, while the largest land beasts carried evil wightlings in crude baskets that swung from the undersides of their bellies or around their necks. It was a gruesome sight as the tethered beasts jerked, slinging their handlers into the air like rag dolls and dumping their basket riders. As the distorted animals crept down the Alps and littered the valley, it was apparent they were untrained. But that made them no less intimidating.

Echoes of restraining chains and iron clasps rattled from the tunnel. Like the aerial beast handlers, the land beast handlers were not strong enough to control their monstrosities. The attendants were thrust into the air with a head butt or trampled by gigantic feet. Restless beasts gored the dirt with their horns, snouts, and hooves. Grunts, snorts, and deep steamy wet sounds reverberated threateningly off the tunnel's side walls. Eventually all of the evil beasts were herded next to the ground assailants.

Charleo, Keegan, and Artie stiffened with uneasiness as Evil's ground troops divided. One section remained on the eastern side and stomped in place while the others barged on to the base of the western ridge directly below the frightened spectators. The mishmash of Evil's warriors turned to face their opponents, slammed their weapons to the ground (almost in unison), then ceased all motion. The evil ethereals stopped their ghostly flight and came to rest scattered about the valley floor.

Tarnnin was last. His twelve czars preceded him, ensuring his entrance was grandiose in every way. All Evil bowed. The air thickened as he slithered in lethargic flight. Blaring off-key Gothic music sizzled from his wings. He made certain the foul stench from the putrid tones that escaped the holes in his veins fell heavy over the warriors of Good below him. He came to a halt above Lucasphair's chariot. The arrivals were complete, and for the first time, Good was witnessing Evil in its entirety. Though highly unorganized, Evil's numbers still dominated Good's by the thousands, even after having lost as many as they had upon their entrance.

At the fall of silence, a faint breeze graced the ridges while a stronger breeze whistled through the valley, stirring the sounds of fluttering banners and spears clacking together. When the wind died, the quiet was broken by a few horses snorting and rearing

prematurely, along with the added sounds of their riders adjusting in their reed-woven saddles.

Patience was growing thin amongst Evil. Anxious land animals made low noises and pawed the dirt. Aerial beasts grunted and continued tugging upward on their restraints, trying to take to the air. The evil handlers hollered and beat their animals with the ends of the tethers, huffing, spitting, and shouting cries of anger.

All Good stood with impeccable patience—chukkons, wightlings, animals, and spectators.

A stiff wind, building with volume and intensity, whipped through the valley; SUL had inhaled. He roared with a voice of cracking thunder, “LET THE BATTLE BEGIN!”

The chukkon and wightling warriors of Good awaited the commands from their generals. Charleo and Philip were tense as they held their positions. Lucasphair vainly watched for the signal from Tarnnin to order his grummers and imps into battle. Evil wightlings bayed while banging their bare chests, void of protection.

Charleo gave Artie a nod.

Artie leapt aboard his icataras and flew low, back and forth over the chukkon warriors. His face held fury as he delivered his pep talk with a conquering spirit. “Land troops! Tis OUR day! Ye’ve worked and trained hard fer such a day as this. Ye be the backbone of our troops. When ye go forth and fight, do so with a vengeance! Aerial troops! Tis OUR day! Ye be a special breed of strength and maneuverability. Wait and hover low with dignity till ye be given the command ta fight. And when ye fight, fight with accuracy. All of ye, both air and land, remember the plan our Gen’rl Charleo devised fer us and taught us in great detail. Fight not fer yer own life but fer the lives of yer families, yer friends, and yer fella warriors. Fight fer Levi! Fight fer SUL! Fight fer Good! Be brave! Fear nothin’!” He flew his icataras above the center of the warriors, waved his fist high, and shouted as loud as he could, “If we be warriors...” The chukkon army raised their weapons and fists and resounded, “...then all we have ta fear be fear itself!” Artie had aroused the fighting spirit he had striven for amongst the troops.

At the same time on the southern end of the battlefield Philip was riding back and forth, instilling an abundance of confidence and strength in the wightling troops of Good. “You were created by SUL! Your name was written in the *Book of Decision* by the Grand Wizard Himself at your birth. On the day you proved yourself worthy on Earth as a protector of all that was Good, He wrote beside your name the word ‘WARRIOR.’ When it was revealed to you that you were indeed a warrior, you looked into the Mirror of Maycly and saw yourself as SUL sees you. Now look at yourselves. What do you see? Do you see the same physical strength and warrior spirit you saw in the Mirror of Maycly?”

“We do!”

“Look upon your fellow warriors. Do you see impenetrable armor?”

“We do!”

“Do you see acrimony for Evil in the eyes of those looking back at you?”

“We do!”

Philip rode faster, slapping his sword against the swords of the warriors on the front line. He shouted his portion of the wightling battle cry. “You - were - born - to - FIGHT - AND - PREVAIL - for - GOOD! What say you to this?”

“We will make our Creator proud!” Their vigilance was nearly visible, but the cheers of Good were finally drowned out by the thumping of Evil’s large drums.

Lucasphair attempted a pep talk of his own, but no one listened; they were too busy boasting and bragging to each other about how tough they were. He snapped and pulled on the reins of his restless wolver gliders. “Hold steady!”

The revolting sounds of the edgy tyrants crescendoed. Impatience consumed Tarnnin. He motioned for the drums to increase in speed and volume then gave Lucasphair the signal.

Lucasphair’s voice blasted over the noise. “All Evil–ATTACK!” He shook his staff rigorously.

Charleo and Philip’s initial tactic had succeeded; they had wanted Evil to make the first move.

Lucasphair cracked his whip, and the wolver gliders loped into the air, pulling his heavy chariot above the battlefield and out of harm’s way, next to Tarnnin.

The first evil beasts to be released were grotto cobb rollers. The wooly, twelve-foot tall, tusked behemoths thundered across the field shrieking and plowing up the ground, determined to annihilate whatever lay in their path.

Lucasphair yelled a command.



GROTTO COBB ROLLER

From clouds of dust came the grumners, running amok. Imps either rode on the grumners’ backs or lurched behind them. Following were Evil’s disorderly land troops. Bags filled with unfamiliar contents were tied around their misfit girths and seeped nasty slime with every pounding step.

The bones of the nearly indestructible hipposaurs rattled and banged together as each animate skeleton jockeyed for a front-row position.



HIPPOSAUR

Some evil warriors, carrying heavy wooden mallets, lay prostrate along the backs of razor-toothed lesardes, the warriors' low profiles making difficult targets.



RAZOR-TOOTHED LESARDE

The riders guided their big lizards in and out of the brainwashed chukkons, who marched to a chant they had been taught. With crooked spears and uneven shields the absentminded chukkons traipsed toward the center of the battlefield, their blank stares strangely hypnotic.

Tarnnin nodded to Lucasphair to give another command. Before Lucasphair could speak, several beasts lunged prematurely, snatching their handlers off the ground. The impatient creatures raced skyward, their handlers now having lost control and dangling from the chains. "Turn them loose!" shouted Lucasphair. The dragging chains wound together in the chaotic takeoff, flopping animals to the ground on top of one another, ending in treacherous fights. Other tethering chains clanged as the beasts scabbled to take to the air.

Evil riders struggled to stay on the winged hydrurgas that were bucking their way into the sky, plowing through the tangled masses of flying serpentines. Evil ethereals did their best to create some sort of organized pattern but failed miserably, fighting amongst themselves over which of them was in charge.



WINGED HYDRURGA

Charleo, hesitating much longer than anyone thought he would have, finally shouted to Artie and Philip, “Call ta battle!” Charleo personally ordered Keegan to remain at his side on the wagon for protection throughout the battle.

“Land troops! CHARGE!” ordered Artie.

Philip commanded his wightlings. “Land troops! Divisions one and two! CHARGE!”



FLYING SERPENTINES

The warriors’ bravery was immeasurable, and their tenacity filled the battlefield. They hollered their battle cries, rushing into the faces of their worst enemies. The overwhelming sight and ominous sound when Good collided with Evil brought untold numbers of spectators to their knees with shouts of desperation.

Artie gave the next command at Charleo’s beckoning. “Aerial troops! TAKE TO THE AIR!” Artie led the way on his icataras.

“Aerial troops! TAKE TO THE AIR!” Philip watched the timely departure of his warriors astride their winged horses.

Following the icataras squadrons were aerialoceroses, each equipped with releasable boulders strapped to the underside of its wings. Baskets on their backs were filled with chukkon riders. The riders slid their toes under the stabilizer straps that were bolted to the basket floors and hung on. It was not long until the chukkon warriors took aim and loosened the ropes to drop the medieval-style bombs onto the cobb rollers. The high-pitched squeals of the large boars and sows were chilling as they were crushed to within an inch of death.

In the meantime the rest of the aerial and land troops headed for their assigned destinations. Charleo shouted when the designated warriors reached their slated coordinates. “DIVIDE AND COMBINE! DIVIDE AND COMBINE!” Artie and Philip echoed Charleo, and the troops followed the orders. Chukkon and wightling battalions split and merged together so as to utilize their varieties of sizes and strengths.

“MAKE HASTE!” Philip strongly waved his third and fourth land divisions on to fill in the gaps.

Earl, receiving the hand signal from Artie, blew his shell horn. The land troops, trained to listen for that specific warning, tuned into Earl's voice. "Eastern quarter, follow yer leader, Lee!" Lee repeated Earl's command. "Western quarter follow yer leader, Allan!" Allan waved his sword in the air for his group to see. "Southern quarter follow yer leader, Homer!" Homer sounded his shell horn, and his crew immediately gathered behind him. "Northern quarter, follow me! CHARGE!" Every quarter ran into the midst of Evil swinging their swords and chain maces.

Artie sounded his shell horn then called a command. "Air troops—designated first half—follow me!" His arm motions were sharp and distinct. "Designated second half—follow Ron!" Ron blew his shell horn to guide the aerial troops assigned to him.

Tarnnin's ethereals, still fighting amongst themselves, were nothing more than annoyances around which the aerial teams had to maneuver. The chukkon aerial warriors did some bumping and jostling but maintained their tight formations as they merged unscathed with their high-ranking fellow aerial wightling warriors, twelve guiding riders strapped into saddles onto fiery castle sentinels. The sentinels also carried heavy-duty baskets filled with wightling warriors of Good situated behind the guiding riders. The winds from the aerial attack were furious.

The towdoceroses created a wall of confidence behind the land troops. The towdies stolidly pulled their heavy battle carts, the riding chukkon warriors awaiting their orders to fire at will. The pounding of the towdies' leaps jarred the ground. "FIRE!" shouted Charleo to the back lines. The firing squads on the towdie carts released the catapults. The boulders flew high then dropped, smashing unsuspecting Evil into the hard-packed field.

Merely copying the tactics of Good, Lucasphair shouted, "FIRE!" Chukkon warriors of Good slammed to the dirt when arrows slit their organs deep within. Towdies wailed as Evil's boulders hit and broke their horns off at the bases. A few overturned their carts as they reared, swinging their front feet at Evil's flying ammunition. The spotted hopcats screamed as pieces of rock and dirt flew into their cages, embedding in their skin.

Grummers and imps split off in packs and bolted to attack the wightling land animals of Good. The wightling riders swung their swords and mallets in defense; the grummers and imps yelped in pain each time the weapons made contact. Scads of elephants, llamas, zebras, oxen, and elk keeled over when the grummers' claws penetrated their haunches. The riders were thrown from their saddles and left to fend for themselves. They hailed the aerial troops, several of whom swiftly flew their animals to the defenseless land riders and carried them into the air.

Shrill hysteria resounded from the western ridge as the chukkon spectators witnessed death for the first time. Some heaved their breakfast, some ran back into their tents, others hid their faces but remained where they could see, should their courage to watch return. Many grabbed their chukkonettes and hid them in tents or safe-holes in the ridge. Wightling spectators released curdling screams as their warriors were gashed open.

Evil wightling warriors untied the soggy pouches that hung from their waists and hurled the contents onto the chukkon warriors of Good. The snail-like sniggillorapiduses, with a taste only for chukkons, scaled their victims with uncanny swiftness.



SNIGGILLORAPIDUS

Slime burned trails on the chukkons' skin as the single foot of the wet creatures moved with swift undulating motion. Then they adhered to the faces of their enemies, slowly smothering them. Wightling warriors tried to rid their fellow chukkons of the sniggills, but even following complete annihilation of the creatures' shells, they could not be removed. Sadly, attempts to resuscitate the asphyxiated chukkons were futile.

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Evil's two-headed viper claws crept along snapping at the warriors' legs. One venomous bite brought a warrior to the ground in seconds. The vipers coiled themselves around their victims and crushed them. Body parts shot from sockets. Chukkons suffered life-stealing wounds, and wightling warriors of Good became comatose but did not die, as they had already experienced death on Earth.



TWO-HEADED VIPER CLAW

Evil's flying serpentines and winged hydrurgas proved to be ample competition to those defending Good, but were seldom victorious. Aerial battle animals shrieked as they tumbled out of control following the loss of their riders. They bashed against the cliffs and dropped to the valley floor.

Scale-feathered garrotts pulled two sleds tied together; the front sled carried masters of medicine and supplies to tend to the masses of injured warriors of Good, the rear sled carried the wounded back to the caves of bodily repair. The journey to reach the wounded was always intense. Besides dodging evil weapons, beasts, and warriors, dust hindered their vision and breathing. They could hear the snaps of breaking bones and feel the air disturbances created by aerial warriors plummeting from the sky just before they hit the

ground with a muted whomp, often splattering the masters of medicine with blood. Wightlings of Good naturally suffered massive traumas but remained unconscious and did not die. Chukkons, however, met death.

When administering triage on the battlefield, the masters of medicine were inundated by other battered and bruised warriors in shock, still able to walk, seeking immediate attention. Being that the sleds held only so many, the masters of medicine were forced to make split-second decisions to prioritize the wounded based on the severity of their injuries. They had to load the chosen severely wounded ones onto the sled then set off, again dodging the obstacles on their return to the caves of bodily repair, listening to the fading disturbing cries of those who had been left behind.

“Momma, uncover yer eyes. Ye be a-missin’ everythin’,” said Denton. But Marlen could not bear to watch. She did not want to see—or even imagine—what might happen to her dear Charleo. Dittle decided that, if his momma was not watching, neither was he, so he buried his head again in her side.

Jit and Giddy, still hidden behind Halo’s and Scepter’s ears, had no idea it was going to be like this. With no other Sprites in the Valley of Battles to accompany them, they knew they did not stand a chance of helping their chukkon or wightling friends.

Artie found himself in aerial hand-to-hand combat with an evil wightling rider aboard a chameleon grizzly scudder. Their swords rang and sparked as they collided with each swing. The evil wightling boldly let go both hands and hurled two shurikens at Artie. Artie ducked but still felt the rush of the blades whizzing by. He quickly retaliated with the slinging of a dagger, sticking it deep into the evil wightling’s arm. Artie’s icataras hissed wildly at the grizzly scudder who snarled with a vigorous growl and a swipe of its giant paw in response.



CHAMELEON GRIZZLY SCUDDER

The two flying animals bit and batted at each other with their sharp teeth and claws. The evil wightling regained his footing and stood on the scudder’s back then jumped and landed on Artie’s icataras near the base of its tail, its painful quills jabbing into the wightling’s calves. The chameleon grizzly scudder bellowed at the loss of its rider. It turned tail, its wings flashing random color changes as it flew away. Balance became difficult for the wounded evil wightling. Artie took a chance and flicked another dagger behind him. The big cat howled when her quills ripped from her hide as the evil wightling went tumbling and flailing toward the icy peaks with Artie’s dagger stuck deep in his forehead. With his fist in the air, Artie shouted in victory. “YEAHHHH!” His

icataras responded at the same time with a loud hiss and an ear-splitting “MMMMEEEEOOOWWW!”

They sped toward the ground, landed, and Artie’s icataras licked the sore follicles where the quills had been stripped. “There, there me big cat. Ye’ll be fine.” Artie sniffed hard then unstrapped himself and slid backwards on her quills so as not to stick himself. The icataras panted from pain but allowed Artie to sop up the blood and dress the wounds with the few salveleaves he had in his side pouch.

Artie looked up and saw that Lucasphair was leaving himself wide open. Artie returned to his saddle, and his icataras took to the air. He guided her toward the changeling, all the while placing an arrow on his bowstring. When they were within firing range Artie let the arrow take flight. It hit Lucasphair square on, right in the spot that should have dusted him, his grummers, and his imps. But the arrow bounced off and did not go through as Artie had seen before. He frowned; Lucasphair laughed. Artie set another arrow, took aim, and fired again. Overly confident, Lucasphair opened his arms and let the arrow hit on purpose with the same end result.

Lucasphair knew he could not be dusted during the battle. Laughing wildly, he pulled back his chest piece to expose a special protective plate. Artie had no idea what was happening but went to warn as many as he could.

“Advance yer troops ta their positions fer a-closin’ in!” ordered Charleo.

Philip echoed the order.

Artie met Lee in the air and they coordinated their well practiced tactics. Aerial animals carrying evil warriors began to bang and collide into one another as the forces of Good closed in around them.

When ordered, Ron landed his aerialoceros and disembarked. He gave the verbal shout, and the beast sped back into the air with its remaining riders. Ron led the troops of supreme archers on the ground. They marched in two lines, firing arrows in rapid succession. The front line shot with unparalleled accuracy, taking out evil warriors and their beasts at pointblank range. The back row’s arrows arched high into the air, their upward rush a fast-moving cloud of peril. Evil warriors and their beasts, hit by the mass of arrows, dropped to the ground.

When Artie saw that Lee had everything under control, he bulleted to the battle animal handlers and shouted, “Release the spotted hopcats!” Within seconds the cage doors flew open. The 1000-pound leaping felines, trained to eat only the limbs of evil wightlings during a battle, dashed to their feast. Artie called for aerial warriors to join him, and they followed overhead to thwart any attacks on the hopcats.

Artie wretched his breakfast at the sight of scores of deceased chukkons. They lay motionless, scattered ruthlessly across the valley, swollen like dead vermin on hot pavement. Their skin was tight, and their spilled blood was now black and coagulated. Their burning doom had singed off their lips and eyebrows and caused their armor to become fused to their flesh. Even Artie’s icataras gagged at the thick stench rising from the burning bodies of the chukkons, wightlings, and animals.

“Begin the encircling of Evil!” was Charleo’s next command to Ron and Artie. Ron’s archers joined forces with the swordsmen on the ground to begin tightening the

circle around Evil's lawless warriors. Artie instructed his aerial troops to assist with the flanking from above.

"Get down!" Keegan shouted, but Charleo did not move in time.

"Yer face! Ye've been hit with an arrow of Evil!" Keegan was a bundle of nerves.

Charleo put his hand to his cheek. But where the arrow had cut open his skin, he felt nothing; no blood was on his fingers when he looked at them. "Twill be fine Keegan."

"Yer cut...it be...it be...not a-bleedin' but a-turnin' gold." Keegan touched it.

"Tis SUL's doin'. Now keep yer eyes on the battle so ye can be a-warnin' me in case another evil arrow be a-comin' this way. I'll try ta be faster next time." Charleo glanced toward the Alps and nodded his thanks to SUL.

Tarnnin figured out what was happening to his army. He glared at Lucasphair. "They're closing in on us. Tell our troops to move out! NOW!"

Lucasphair guided his team of wolvern gliders past his troops and shouted, "Move to the outer edges of the valley! Go! Go now!" Being the coward he was, he wasted no time in speeding back to his safety zone in the sky with Tarnnin. The evil warriors and their beasts attempted to run or fly to the outer realms of the valley, but it was too late. The army of Good was now the dominant force.

The sights and sounds of the battle had exhausted the spectators, and mercifully SUL called for the battle to come to an end.