

Olson looked around him. Either side of him were men and women, their swords, rifles, and guns drawn and at the ready. "What strange times these were," he mused. "That men of this age would be forced to fall back upon the use of swords."

"Captain, I think the men are ready," Moyels interrupted his thoughts.

Olson looked around one more time and nodded to Moyels, who stood with his companion Lexium in their own glittering Sanctorian armor. They certainly looked very out of place amidst the modern regimental uniforms.

Ahead of Olson's now-massive army stood the vast enemy lines, looking deadly and invincible. For two months now, the two colossal armies had waged a bloody battle against one another. Each side took their fair share of loss, if that's all a fair thing to say. This would hopefully be the end, the final battle for the time being. Olson had finally sought out an agreement with an old friend that would ensure that the region of where Britain had once been would be finally purged of this terrifying army of darkness.

Britain! He scoffed at himself. This wasn't Britain anymore – it was territory within a huge mass of land. The reformation of Pangea had completely landlocked the country he once knew, sandwiched within a vast supercontinent that had last been seen hundreds of millions of years ago.

It had taken three whole days to convince O'Neil to join him. The two had had a very tormented past. Olson had been responsible for the deaths of several hundred of O'Neil's men during a campaign in the Middle East some years ago. Olson had been tricked and had consequently found himself trapped within a web of conspiracy. The arguments and persuasions lasted for several days, both men as stubborn in nature as each other. However, by day three, O'Neil was beginning to see the bigger picture. Olson explained the entire story and even convinced Moyels to show the fiery Irishman what he had shown him a few months ago while they planned within the dungeons. When O'Neil had returned with Moyels and Lexium from the magical vision, his ideals had somewhat changed. His views were very Catholic, and it had almost broken his heart to find that his life had been completely wasted upon his choice of worship.

Now, on the battlefield, Olson hoped that his friend would pull through. The enemy was completely unaware that another army was creeping up behind their vast, yet slowly depleting, ranks. Moyels would send up a signal for O'Neil and his men, and they would charge right into the back of the army. Olson stared at his boots as he listened to the war cries from the opposite side of the green field they stood upon.

They were situated somewhere in the midst of Kent (or where Kent had once been). The field they stood in had yet to see battle, and as a result, the grass was still lush and green. It glistened, as if covered with many millions of brilliant tiny crystals, with the early morning frost. The surrounding trees hissed and rattled in the slight breeze, and the youthful sun shot its morning beams through the bare branches, which cast haunting shadows upon no man's land.

"This is our last chance, Moyels," Olson finally said. Moyels nodded his head grimly. Olson wasn't sure whether Moyels trusted the young Irish man.

"I am sure he will come through, my friend," Moyels tried to smile reassuringly. "It is worth it," he continued. "This army is all that is left of the enemy in this region. Once they are cleared, then we can march onwards. I heard on the wind, the other day, that Shaw has wiped out most of the Northern posts on his way to the coast, and in other parts, people are rising up."

Olson was suddenly hit with a very overwhelming sense of pride. Shaw was still alive and that meant there was still hope.

"Why is he on his way to the coast?" Asked Olson, knowing very well that this wasn't the time.

"He needs to visit the Sanctuary, to demand our army is raised once more. Sanctorian blood has been spilt." Moyels stopped to cough slightly.

"This means that our army can be released. We all made a vow that should a fellow Sanctorian fall in battle to the blade of one whom we deem the enemy of darkness, then we shall seek our revenge." Moyels' dazzling white eyes seemed to moisten somewhat at these words.

"Was he a friend?" Asked Olson carefully.

"A dear one... He was like a son to me all those years ago. He was too young at heart to die," replied Lexium, who had now decided to join the conversation.

"Then we shall avenge him on this day," hissed Olson. A sudden wave of power and passion, which felt strange and unfamiliar, began to pulse through him.

With that, he strode out five paces into no man's land and raised his weapon high into the air.

"Soldiers! Warriors!" He bellowed as loud as he could over the ever-growing battle cries from the opposite side.

"You have followed my lead and my orders with patience and great loyalty. Now do this last favor, not for me, but for yourselves and your country, your world! This battle is for us. This battle is for good, and you cannot fault or seek displeasure in that. We do not seek to oppress, but to destroy an oppressive tyrant. We are fighting Evil in its purest and most despicable form. We fight to be free!" Olson looked up and down his vast line of men who now stood transfixed. Olson swallowed the lump which was growing in his throat and continued.

"Now draw your weapons and let us finish this fight once and for all!"

With that, Olson turned and ran towards the enemy line who were still chanting their strange battle cries and songs.

As Olson ran, he was filled with a great deal of relief as he heard the great thunder of thousands of men running just a few yards behind him. As he reached the startled enemy line,

he let out an uncontrollable and brutal roar of fury and passion. The first time he lowered his sword, it landed upon an enemy officer's head, slicing it in two. In his other hand, he held his gun and he fired it into the crowds of enemies. There was then the sudden clash of metal and wood as the armies collided with such a force the very ground rumbled and shook. Lightning bolts and plasma bullets of every different shade blew up into the air. The battle had begun, and it felt, truly, as if both sides were facing one another for the final time.

Both Moyels and Lexium fought with a great passion and brutality that day, which was born of an impossible number of years of repressed rage. They sliced through the enemy who were obviously expecting to face a much more demoralised army than the one that was eating through their lines. Olson battled his way through the crush, a gun in one hand, a sword in the other, blasting and swiping at any enemy who came his way, and there was no shortage of them. Olson nearly lost his life within the first moments of the battle; he was knocked flying by a charging minotaur. Landing heavily on his front, he rolled over, desperately reaching for his sword as the great beast turned and began a second charge. In a blur, a black-caped figure stood in its way, raising his sword and lashing it across the beast's throat. It arched its back in agony, and with impossible speed, the black-robed figure plunged his sword into the beast's heart. It collapsed in a heap at the figure's feet. Olson, now remembering to breathe, inhaled vast lungfuls of air and looked up at the figure as he turned to help Olson to his feet. He was a large, dark man, his arms were heavily tattooed with tribal markings. Olson reached for the outstretched hand but then recoiled as he looked into the man's black eyes.

“Fear not, friend, I am not one of them. Now to your feet, for there is a battle to be won.” Olson allowed himself to be pulled to his feet, glaring at the grim-faced man with those jet black eyes.

“Believe me, friend, you would be dead already if I wanted it.” He inclined his head slightly. “I wish you good fortune in this fight. If we win, it may be one more act towards my redemption.”

Olson didn't have time to consider that encounter as another enemy was upon him, but the sight of the man with black eyes baffled him.

“What is this?” Hissed the commander of the enemy army, Balthomere. He was a demon. His skin under his battle dress was a deep green and his face had reptilian qualities to it. Every so often a blue tongue would slither between deep purple lips. His clawed hands gripped a jagged axe and a chain that was tied to a spiked ball which rested heavily upon the ground by his bare feet.

“They seemed to have found hope from somewhere,” Smiled Rufus through his Black hood, his fangs protruding over his tight bottom lip. ;

“Why is this so amusing to you Rufus?” Snarled the Demon.

“The hopeful always taste better,” The vampire sneered at the commander who gave him a strange look.

“Your troops know what they are doing then?” Asked the reptilian creature.

“Once the sun is shadowed, they will arrive and feast. That I have promised them,” Smiled Rufus from beneath his hood, “I am good for my word my friend,” he added.

“Not so loyal to Mandrake though, were you?” Snarled Balthomere. “I heard your ‘people’ ran away when things got tough.”

“Mandrake was a fool who underestimated his enemy. We will not do the same on this day,” Rufus replied cordially.

“You Vampires are all the same, full of overconfidence and vanity, I was surprised to hear it was Mandrake and not you who had fallen at the hands of that Sanctorian.”

Rufus looked at the commander and smiled pleasantly. “My dear commander, you are treading a very thin line. I have you know that I am doing your master a favour by bringing my people into this dispute. I urge you to pay me the respect I deserve, I am putting myself at great risk to assist you in this battle.”

“I will not show you any different than I would a leech,” Sneered the Commander as he winced at the sight of Olson’s army taking the high ground.

“But for my master I would kill myself and therefore I will do anything that he asks of me. However he has never ordered me to show you any respect and therefore I shall give you none. You are all the same to me, you vampires, vanity and pride before sense. And don’t forget what you really are - scavengers.”

Rufus clenched his ice cold fist inside his robe at this outrage.

“Then my friend I must say goodbye and good luck. For that insult I shall not allow you to use my men,” He growled.

“You cannot do that Rufus,” Laughed Balthomere, doubt beginning to fill his mind, “Once the Dark Lord has been reawakened he will hunt you down for your treachery and then your pathetic race will be at an end”

Rufus smiled coolly. He knew this to be true of course. He had sold himself to Masshawus just before this new war which meant that like everyone else he was now the property of the Dark Lord. He cringed slightly at the thought of what his sire would have thought about this. Vampires were not supposed to involve themselves with wars and battles; they were the most powerful race in the world; there was no need for them to get mixed up with any of this. Yet he believed that it was time for a change. Rufus had no interest in the Dark Lord returning to power. However he did believe that this war would bring about a new era for the vampire population. He smiled as he imagined himself as the supreme ruler of the vampire world. No longer would his people have to hide within the shadows. He would begin his own empire. His army had grown considerably since the Battle of Mackay. The two beings looked down upon the battle that raged just below their vantage point upon a small ridge. Which unbeknownst to them sheltered another great army.

O’Neil lay flat upon his back and listened to the deafening sounds of battle coming from over the other side of the ridge. He fought once again the urge to jump to his feet and charge the enemy and help his friends. However Olson had been very firm about this. O’Neil was not supposed to move until there was a signal. He knew why of course. Olson and Moyels were convinced the enemy would try a similar tactic and it would be worthless if O’Neil was summoned and then the enemy pulled their last card. O’Neil lit his twentieth cigarette of the morning and breathed deeply.

“What’s going on sir?” Whispered his second in command a Major called Riley.

“Nothing for the moment, boyo. Get some sleep if you need it,” smiled O’Neil.

“God, Brother! You think I’ll sleep whilst that’s going on? You gotta be barking!” laughed Riley.

O’Neil looked upwards at the sky. Thin wisps of black battle smoke drifted softly upon the cold morning breeze. He was looking deeper than that. He was staring at the heavens and wondering why he had been so terribly betrayed. He felt hollow and deeply sad. His God had deserted him, in fact his God had been a terrible lie.

O’Neil had always said that he followed one man and that was the ‘Almighty’, even when many of the religious establishments had deteriorated he had still kept his faith. But now he was not so sure anymore. His belief had been based upon a very clever lie. He found himself feeling hopelessly humiliated as he remembered all the battles and fights he had fought for his treasured religion. He brushed a tear from his eye in disgust and crossed himself three times. He cursed himself for this force of habit and closed his eyes.

As the sky began to turn a bloody red, Olson looked about him in the dyeing light. The enemy had been beginning to wain for the past few hours, and it felt as though he was winning this fight. He looked over to Lexium who was firing a blue bolt of lighting from his hand. The receiver flew ten feet into the air and fell back down, dead before he even touched the ground. Lexium ran over to Olson, fighting off attackers with his sword.

“Are you alright?” barked Olson as Lexium wiped blood from a nasty gash upon his forehead. He smiled broadly and nodded. It was the first time Olson had seen this solitary man smile, and it felt like a very refreshing experience.

“We are doing well,” bellowed Lexium, “But we must hold off our second attack for at least another hour.”

“Why is that? Why not finish them off? They obviously haven’t got anything left to throw at us!”

Just as Olson finished his sentence, a strange four-legged beast came charging at him. The last thing he saw was a set of blood-stained fangs and a lot of shaggy hair before he had fallen to the ground. The beast was incredibly heavy. He pushed and kicked and lashed out, trying everything he could to prevent those deadly looking fangs from penetrating his body. He was in a dilemma as he knew he had a knife in his belt; however, both of his arms were needed to push those fangs away. He stared up at the creature.

The exertion of the fight was tiring him, and he knew that it would not be long before his arms gave up on him. In a second, he rolled abruptly to his left. The beast, suddenly caught off balance, lunged forwards and crashed into the ground with a yelp of surprise. Olson rolled over again and grabbed his discarded sword. He instantly jumped to his feet and brought the blade down upon the beast’s head. The beast howled and then evaporated into smoke and ash. Olson watched as Lexium fought off three human forms who seemed not to be trying to slash at him with their swords but rather bite into him. Olson ran over and stabbed and slashed at Lexium’s attackers, yet none of them seemed bothered by this. One of them turned around and lunged for Olson. Its blood-red eyes burned with a savage anger that haunted Olson. He

lashed out with his sword again, but the wound that should have been inflicted never seemed to occur. The man stopped in his tracks and sniffed the air.

"Is that fear I smell on you?" he laughed.

Olson did not know what to do; he was fighting a man who did not seem to be capable of being injured. The man was a little smaller than Olson was and a lot slimmer, and with the rather obvious exception of having jagged teeth and red eyes, the man looked normal. He was wearing a bloodstained British army uniform, which made Olson think that these men were some strange strain of mercenaries.

The man smiled wickedly at Olson, who shrugged in defiance. Then, with a burst of speed that surprised Olson, the man pounced. Olson fell to the ground once again, his sword clattering away as the strange and powerful man pinned his arms to the earth. Leaning in close, the man lunged for Olson's neck. A terrible draining sensation flooded Olson as he felt the man's fangs sink into an open wound. He began to drift, the sounds of battle fading into a dull roar. The fading light dissolved into a sea of twinkling stars, and within that glittering expanse, a man's face materialized, bearing an uncanny resemblance to Olson himself. The face smiled kindly.

"Keep going, my friend," the apparition whispered. "You must live to win this war."

"But how?" Olson rasped, the effort weak. "I'm dying. How can I keep going?"

The face contorted into a menacing snarl. "You are not dying."

Suddenly, a jolt of energy surged through Olson. He snapped his eyes open to find himself staring into Lexium's grim visage.

"To your feet, my friend!" Lexium roared, hauling him upright.

Olson rose shakily, his hand instinctively flying to his neck. It was slick with blood and a strange, black powder. He looked to Lexium for an explanation.

Lexium's face twisted with loathing. "Vampires," he growled, the word laced with disgust.

"Creatures of darkness. To kill them, you can either puncture their hearts with a wooden stake or decapitate them. Come now, we'll summon O'Neil and end this battle." He paused, his gaze piercing into Olson's eyes. "Did he force you to drink his blood?" Lexium demanded, his voice tight with suspicion.

Olson, surprised by the question, shook his head, the wound on his neck throbbing with a dull ache. Lexium studied him intently for a moment, then seemed to reach a silent conclusion.

"Come," Lexium muttered, his voice heavy. "Let us make the call."

Olson nodded wearily and bent down to retrieve his sword, half-buried under a pile of ash. He surveyed the battlefield, now teeming with hundreds of vampires. They moved with a chilling grace, their fangs glinting in the dying light. While they seemed to favor biting and turning their victims, they were also surprisingly skilled fighters, wielding swords with deadly efficiency. The realisation that there were only two ways to kill a vampire drastically altered the dynamic of the battle.

"Moyels!" Lexium bellowed, his voice strained. "We need to raise the signal! We can't hold these creatures back much longer. Vampires have joined!"

Moyels grunted in acknowledgment and began muttering an incantation under his breath. A ball of crimson flame materialised in his palm, his eyes glowing a startling white. He dipped his fingers into the fire and muttered more words, his voice laced with urgency.

"I'll cover you, my friend!" Lexium shouted as two monstrous beasts charged towards the Sanctorian, sensing his vulnerability.

O'Neil was in the midst of yet another pep talk, when a ghostly figure materialised before him. The edges of the figure shimmered and blurred, like a distorted vision or a holographic projection. It was Moyels, his face battered and bloodied, sweat mingling with beads of crimson trickling down his cheeks.

"You must come now," Moyels rasped, his voice disembodied and distant. Many of the surrounding soldiers flinched back in surprise, some even letting out gasps.

"You must come now. There's a new enemy, and the only way to kill them is by decapitation or a stake to the heart. Fire will work as well." The spectral image vanished as abruptly as it had appeared.

"Sounds like vampires, sir," Riley murmured, his voice laced with a hint of grim knowledge. O'Neil locked eyes with his men, a grim nod passing between them. He drew his sword as he began to jog towards the battlefield, a surge of primal bloodlust coursing through him.

Down on the battlefield, the din escalated to a deafening crescendo as fresh troops surged into the fray. The enemy ranks fell by the dozen in the ensuing chaos. The first wave of reinforcements ripped through the battlefield like a tidal wave, carving a massive gash of empty space across the enemy lines when viewed from above. Olson allowed himself a smile. The enemy were losing and becoming disorganised. He watched as many enemy soldiers flailed their swords around in confusion as the great mass of new soldiers stormed into them, cutting them down left, right, and centre.

Captain Reynolds jumped for joy as she watched the great influx of fresh-faced soldiers. She fired off several rounds from her weapon, killing five enemy soldiers as she did so. The battle upon Mount Mackay had not vanquished her men's spirits, nor had the long journey back South. She watched with pride as her men fought back the enemy with apparent ease.

Olson narrowly missed a blow from a jagged axe. He ducked again as a spiked metal ball flew over his head and then recoiled, flying back and just missing his right ear. He turned and found that he was face to face with Balthomere, a sick grin plastered across his green face.

"It is nice to finally meet the mighty Olson of these times!" he snarled as he waved his great axe, and this time the blade seared across Olson's left arm. He felt the warmth of his blood run thickly down his sleeve, yet he ignored it and lashed out with his own blade. The axe and the swords clashed, and Olson felt for the first time the great strength of his opponent.

"You are strong, my young friend!" hissed Balthomere as he pulled his axe away from the clash so that he could strike once more. Olson blocked the next challenge and then the next. He moved around his enemy, seeking out weaknesses in the armour. He struck at the creature's breastplate, and the clashing sound echoed up into the heavens. Balthomere roared in pain and beat his clawed hand against his dented breastplate. He threw the spiked ball at

Olson, who ducked. The ball sailed over his head and lodged itself within the chest of a vampire who was about to attack. Balthomere pulled on the chain, and the vampire's chest exploded. Ash flew into the air, and Olson lashed again with his sword. This time, the blade struck the desired mark. Balthomere's head flew into the air, and the body slumped uselessly to the ground.

Nearby, Rufus smiled as he watched the great leader's headless corpse fall to its knees in front of Olson. Rufus raised a thoughtful eyebrow as he wiped the blood from his mouth. He looked around and saw that the battle was coming to a close. The men commandeered by the supposedly mighty Balthomere were scattering, and Olson's men were cutting through them like a knife through butter. His burning red eyes flitted back towards Olson again, who had turned his back to the dead commander and was now fighting alongside his men. Rufus ran his hands through his long, greasy hair and rubbed his tongue along his razor-sharp teeth.

"The descendant of General Olson. A worthy prize indeed," he hissed to himself, a wry smile splitting his face. He raised his sword to the sky and emitted a huge jet of white lightning, which illuminated the sky and everyone around. The lightning seemed to transform into a picture of a skull. With that, Rufus vanished on the spot, as did his men.

An hour or so later, the battlefield was filled with men cheering and congratulating one another. The battle for whatever was left of Britain was over. The occupants had been driven back for now. Olson sat upon a rock with his old friend. They sat in silence for a while, both men far too tired to do anything else.

"Good scrap that was!" laughed O'Neil.

"Alright," smiled Olson, putting his hand to his neck and feeling the two scabs that had formed over the bite.

"So, what now? Where are we headed?" O'Neil asked quietly.

"We?" asked Olson, unable to hide his surprise.

"Well, you know this thing has spread across the world, someone out there will need us. I reckon we should finish 'em for good. Know what I mean?" smiled O'Neil, breathing smoke from his nostrils.

"In that case, come with us. We're supposed to sweep eastward, once we have secured Britain. I was ordered to march across and aide anyone who would need our help on our way."

"Sounds fine by me!" smiled O'Neil, staring up at the heavens as he did so. The sky shimmered a faint blue, the first hint of dawn breaking through the ash-filled atmosphere.