

# Won by Defeat

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The Orcs and Trolls battered the gates of Rivermount for weeks, their war drums echoing through the valley as the skies turned gray with the smoke of war. The Elves, resolute and swift in their defense, rained arrows down upon the attackers from the high walls of their ancient city. The humans of Lutovia, wielding steel and bravery, clashed fiercely with the Orcs on the ground, while the Dwarves of Mithandir's Watch held the tunnels of Barrowhills, preventing the Trolls from breaching the city from below.

The siege seemed destined to last for months, but after weeks of brutal fighting, the tide of battle finally turned. Rivermount held strong. The combined forces of Elves, Humans, and Dwarves proved too great for the invaders, and with one final push, the Orcs and Trolls were driven from the city's walls. Victory cries filled the air, and the survivors believed the threat had been vanquished. But the Orcs had never truly intended to conquer Rivermount.

Their chieftains, cunning and darkly wise, had known from the start that they could not break the Elven stronghold. The siege was but a ruse, a blood-soaked ploy to mask their true intent. As their lifeless bodies piled up on the battlefield, the rivers ran red, carrying the blood of countless warriors down the slopes and into the sacred Lake of Shadows—the resting place of the Sunken City.

Deep beneath the lake, the ancient seals that had held back the evil power for eons were fragile, remnants of an old magic known only to a few. The Orcs and Trolls had learned from forbidden texts that the blood of war, freely spilled, would weaken those seals. Each death, each drop of blood, was part of their dark ritual, and now, the lake stirred as something long-forgotten began to awaken. As the victors celebrated, they remained unaware of the growing threat.

But beneath the surface of the water, black shadows of mist began to rise, twisting and writhing like serpents. The ground trembled softly as the evil in the Sunken City stirred, sensing the flood of life and death that had washed down from Rivermount. The Orcs, retreating from the battlefield, grinned through their wounds. They had accomplished their true mission: to awaken the dark force buried beneath the lake. Even in defeat, they had won a far more terrible victory. In Rivermount, the Elves began to feel the earth shudder beneath their feet.

The tremors grew stronger, and soon, they could no longer deny the truth. Something ancient, something far worse than any enemy they had ever faced, was rising from the depths. Whispers of the Sunken City, once dismissed as old legends, now spread through the ranks of soldiers and citizens alike. Desperate for answers, the Elves sent word to the Halflings, whose wisdom and connection to the land had been spoken of in hushed reverence. The Halflings, who had already been preparing for the coming storm, knew what needed to be done.

The dark force could still be stopped, but only through their ancient magic—and the power of the three heroes, who could tip the scales in their favor. As the black mist spread across the lake, the Halflings worked tirelessly, sending out their scouts to find the heroes. Time was running short, and if the evil that now stirred was not contained, it would consume all of Aedelore.

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