

ERL ^{IN} ^{And The} DOR

RISE ^{(OF} ^{THE} 8TH GUILD



ERLINDOR
AND THE RISE OF THE
8TH GUILD

BY SEEGZ

Aldecia was a peaceful city until the dawn war, a dreadful conflict in the city, and few know how it was started. The city had to pick sides, dividing into 8 guilds:

- 1: Guild of the Sea*
- 2: Guild of the Flame*
- 3: Guild of the Storm*
- 4: Guild of the Forest*
- 5: Guild of the Light*
- 6: Guild of the Stone*
- 7: Guild of the Mind*
- and the 8th guild, Guild of the Shadows*

Fearsome, bloody battles were common. Then, Kyust, soldier of the 2nd guild, purged the darkness with holy fire and peace was restored to Aldecia. The guilds, however, remained separate, but they did not fight nearly as often. Occasionally smaller groups within guilds would visit the altar of Kyust, made in remembrance of his bravery, where his helm of blazing fire would be displayed. But none expected the 8th guild to strike down Kyust in his sleep, stealing his helm. The 8th guild, having now acquired an item of power from the 2nd guild, combined fire and darkness to create chaos.

Still, the 8th guild was no match for the other 7 when united, and the peace was restored as the 8th guild and all of its warriors were buried deep underground. . .

This story is about Erlindor, 15-year old citizen of Aldecia, who has a strange obsession with English muffins.

Erlindor sat down and scarfed down an English muffin. His mother Aletha scolded him and gave him a lecture about eating with his mouth closed.

Sshhhfff! Faint noises came from upstairs.

“Loek, everything okay up there?” Aletha asked, for Erlindor’s father Loek was an inventor who used the attic for his projects.

“Yes, everything is fine. I’m almost-“

Thump, WHACK! Erlindor’s father stopped.

“What the-” Erlindor said, and raced up to the attic to find Loek unconscious. “Huh?”

“AAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!!!” Aletha screamed from downstairs. *Boom!* The entire kitchen exploded. When Erlindor came down to see what happened, it was a total disaster scene. He nearly fell through the broken floorboards into the basement. Then Erlindor thought to himself, *“Funny. I never knew there was a basement. Maybe I’ll check it out later.”* There were ashes all over the room and the windows and door were cracked. After Erlindor looked around, he noticed that Aletha wasn’t there. He searched and called to her with no response.

He finally gave up and went downstairs to investigate. He found an empty room about 10x10 ft. and 7 ft. tall. Well, empty except for a pedestal with nothing on it. Erlindor investigated further to find a hand-shaped indent. It matched his right hand perfectly. Before he touched it, though, he thought, *“It could be dangerous. Maybe I shouldn’t touch it.”* After a while, he decided to match his hand to the indent. Once it was matched, the room started to rumble. The walls receded to reveal the room being a

maze more than 10 ft. tall with 7 ft. tall walls. He couldn't tell how long it went because the walls blocked his vision. Erlindor had no choice but to go in. He went forward about 25 ft. and came to an intersection. He could either go left or forward. He edged forward to peek to the left but jolted back when an arrow whizzed past his face. The arrow hit a button on the wall on the right, which apparently had no immediate effect. After that Erlindor decided to carefully inspect the area before advancing, and found small plates on the stone floors. He stepped on one and immediately crouched as an arrow shot over his head. So he reasoned that the plates triggered traps from the left room. So he did the obvious and went forward instead of left. However, he stepped on one more plate and a third arrow hit the button. Suddenly, everything went dark except a torch every 15 ft. or so. Erlindor grabbed one and carried it with him. He came to another intersection where he could go either right or left. He was about to go right when the walls closed in so he could only go left. When he went left it also closed so that Erlindor was at a dead end. He had no idea how long he was in the maze, it could be an hour or a few days (he didn't have a great sense of time). He turned around and started walking back, but he tripped and his torch went flying. It hit the wall directly behind him and burned it down.

“Okay....” he said, and strode bravely into the gate of flaming wood. In the room on the other side, he squinted at the bright light shining from down a pit in the center. Erlindor was about to investigate the chasm when he reminded himself, “Why am I here anyway? Shouldn't I go back home? Won't Loek worry?” So Erlindor turned to go

back through the half-burnt down wall but found a locked iron gate where the burning wall used to be. Erlindor was trapped. Suddenly, another flash of white light erupted from the deep hole. It rumbled and footsteps could be heard from down in the depth. Erlindor tried to run, but ran into the locked gate. He thought (out loud) “WHAT SHOULD I DO!?!?” But after a few seconds, he had a “bright” idea. Erlindor took a few steps back and brought out his longbow. He took aim, and with careful precision, shot the lock on the gate. He missed. “Gah!” he exclaimed angrily. He shot again but the arrow shattered on the lock. He turned to the pit as the footsteps got louder. Erlindor could see the stairs on the rim of the 5-ft radius chasm. And something big was coming up. Erlindor panicked.

“AAAAAAAAAAH!” and out of the pit leaped a hydra. A 2-ton bloodthirsty menace with purple and black scales harder than steel and 9 angry heads turned towards Erlindor. He ran around the room, trying to find something to save his hide. Finally, the hydra attacked him. Erlindor leaped out of the way as 3 angry heads smashed into the wall behind him. Erlindor took advantage of this and drew his sword, a 2.8 foot long metal blade with a leather handle and sheath. He cut off two heads (thankfully one of which was not his own). But Erlindor must not have been thinking about what he just did, because 4 new heads grew in their place. Erlindor slapped his forehead. He remembered something about burning the heads so new ones can't come back, but how was he to burn the stub when the hydra so quickly retracted its stretching neck?

He tried to find his flint in the backpack-like sack he carried, but he wasn't careful and the hydra smashed him

into the wall. The back of his head hit a button, and a plate on the wall opened to reveal a cannon. Erlindor had a great idea (while dodging the hydra). *Why burn its heads when you can blow them up?* It turned, looking for Erlindor, who had hidden beneath a pile of rocks. When the hydra inspected the other side of the room, Erlindor used his opportunity. His smoke bomb flew into the air and exploded, leaving a screen of black, dust-like substance in the air. Erlindor's senses and reflexes took over, leaping, striking, and loading.

When the smoke cleared, all 10 cannons had their panels open and were loaded with 3 rounds of dynamite. "Have a nice trip..." Erlindor grinned. The hydra turned. "To where the bad kids go." He loaded one arrow in his quiver, and let it fly out of his bow. It hit perfectly, and pressed against the button. Then all heck broke loose. Each of the 10 cannons shot their explosive projectiles in 3 rounds. The hydra was instantly destroyed. Unfortunately, the floor was too. Tiles were blasted apart, some crumbling. Erlindor fell, and the hydra's body did with him. His first idea was to get on top of the body, but he would still be crushed on the floor, which was coming into view; it was an awesome stained-glass floor of many colorful shapes. And a very colorful smash for Erlindor. But he had a better idea.

Erlindor drew his sword and switched to diving position, his sword in front of him and kicked against the wall, giving him a spurt of speed. The floor was barely 100ft below him. The hydra, heavier, fell and smashed into the floor, leaving a few large cracks. But that was nothing compared to Erlindor's landing. His sword drove into the

glass floor, shattering the glass (and the sword). The shards were blasted away by the shock wave pulsing from Erlindor's sword. He vaulted over the sword and stuck the landing.

The room was completely covered in shards of stained glass, out of colorful tiles. They shone like the sun, yet when Erlindor pulled up a few tiles, there was nothing but stone and dirt. Finally he found a chest, in the center right wall. "What is this doing here?" Erlindor wondered out loud. He opened it. Inside he found two things: a shining gold and silver key, and a note. He read the note. It read:

Beware. It is rising. Fear the dark tomb. Our worst fear is coming.

"O-kay..." Erlindor said, unsure what "It" was, nor the dark tomb. So he decided to bring the note along. He picked up the key, and it glowed. Each tile shot a beam of colored light at the key.

Suddenly, Erlindor was back in his basement. Then he looked at the pedestal. Something was different. There was a keyhole on the back. So Erlindor inserted the key. The top of the pedestal opened up and revealed a wooden chest gilded with silver lines. "WHAT'S WITH ALL THE CHESTS?!" Erlindor yelled.

Loek came through the broken floorboards and said, "There you are! What's with all the screaming? You're going to be late for archery class!"

"Hey, hey, one thing at a time! The basement is a huge maze with traps and hydras and I got this key and I'm

going to see what's inside this chest," Erlindor said. "Oh and also, can I have another of those English muffins?"

"Maybe later," Loek decided.

Then Aletha walked in. "HOW DID I GET STUFFED IN THAT CUPBOARD!? WHO STUFFED ME IN THAT CUPBOARD!? WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP ME GET OUT OF THAT CUPBOARD-"

"ENOUGH CUPBOARDS! STOP YELLING!" Loek yelled. "I went to the city guard and they said a criminal named Billybobjoe planted a bomb into the house. He stuffed you in the cupboard and knocked me out. Then Erlindor fell into the basement and it turned out to be a maze and he got a key and came back and he yelled what's with all the chests. Apparently he found a lot of chests. OK? Can we stop yelling now?" Erlindor agreed, but still went to open the chest.

Inside was another chest. But since Erlindor was quite tired of chests, we are going to skip to what is inside the smaller chest chest to avoid having very rude sayings in this paragraph.

Two things were inside: a sword with a gold and silver blade and a blue gem on the hilt, and a bow with silver lining, complete with quiver. Erlindor took them and replaced his basic weapons with them. And he would have just come back up and enjoyed an English muffin, but as he went up, Aletha yelled, "YOU'RE LATE FOR ARCHERY CLASS!"

Loek responded, "He knows! And STOP YELLING!" So Erlindor walked out and went to the arena. Lessons started by each of the 10 students (including Erlindor) shooting the target that had their name on it and only that

target. They did this 5 times, and each time they moved the targets back a bit. Erlindor did this with ease, nailing his target every time except on the 3rd try, when another student's arrow accidentally knocked his off course.

Then was the drill they did every time, where they split into 2 teams, red and blue, and each team races to hit the target first. Erlindor was on blue, and his team tied the red team for 50/50 score. And finally, they finished with trajectory practice, where they stood next to a tube about 2ft. in diameter and tried to shoot upwards, so their arrow landed in the pole and not on them.

They departed, and Erlindor went to the swordsmanship lessons. They started out dueling with basic swords, 3ft. of steel and other metals on small platforms, with battlefield medics in case of injury. Your goal was to disarm their sword and bring it outside the circle. His opponent, who slammed the hilt of his sword into Erlindor's blade, disarmed Erlindor easily. Then they dueled with a choice of a large variety of blades, and Erlindor decided to try his sword that he found in the basement/dungeon. His opponent stepped up again, ready to win another time. But Erlindor's silver and gold blade sent his flying, where it landed 25ft. away. He did the strategy exam and went back home.

"... So I finished the test and came back," Erlindor finished telling Loek about the lessons.

"Peculiar..." Loek replied. "May I see this blade?" Erlindor gave it to him as he examined it. "Follow me," Loek told him. Erlindor followed as Loek climbed his retractable stairway.

In the attic, Loek's projects were everywhere. A few hovering orbs made of bronze rotated in a corner. An anvil and cauldron were at the center, with a few different hammers on the top. A suit of armor, with curved shape for superior defense, was hung on a few ropes. The attic was more like a second floor, with its size.

Loek took one of the hammers and knocked the silver blade. Nothing happened. He did the same with the gold part of the blade and the hilt, with the same results. "Huh? An average sword would have a small dent from that," Loek remarked. He took a larger hammer, placed the sword on the anvil, and swung. The hammer bounced off with a small crack in the middle. The sword remained the same. "It is protected by clear, thin lines of a rare substance known as adamant, found in the mines of the dragons. The gem is just a decorative sapphire. It obviously dates back a long time," he described. "And for the bow, it is a clever design that secures the arrow exactly straight before firing, and uses tight, strong strings for fast shots."

Erlindor replied, "Ok. But should I use them in lessons? I mean, would it be unfair to others?"

"Well, I think you can use the bow for them, but only use the sword for true combat," Loek reasoned.

"Ok 😊 smiles and happy faces."

"No problem."

"How do you know all this anyway?" Erlindor asked.

"Library. They have books on EVERYTHING there, even how to hold swords on your nose and stuff like that," he replied.

"Ok, I'll go there." Erlindor picked up his sword and bow, went to sleep, and the next morning went to the

library. The concept of defeating enemies with a sword balanced on your nose sounded interesting.

He walked down to the library, which was a few minutes away, and he found his friend Joeybobbill (no relation to Billybobjoe) on the way. Erlindor told him that he was trying to go to the library so he could figure out how to balance a sword on his nose. Joeybobbill came with, wanting to find out how to shoot a bow with your two big toes and your head. So they went to the library.

When they got there, the first thing they noticed was how huge the library was. You could compare its width to 16 city blocks (square shape) and its height was about 125ft. They actually noticed that before they got there. Sort of hard to miss. It was built out of smooth polished marble, with a golden emblem on the top, the mark of Aldecia. The doors were more than twice as tall as Erlindor, which was large because Erlindor was about 5 foot 8 inches.

When they walked in, they had to adjust to the dim light. There was an ominous feeling about the large, gilded staircases leading to 5 floors of books. It was like a maze, with all the twisting halls and gloomy passages. It looked much bigger on the inside than on the outside. It was certainly fit for a kingdom. Luckily they found a box containing maps of the library. The two decided first to go to the section labeled, “weird ways to wield weapons.” They began the ascent to the 3rd floor 27th section (weird ways to wield weapons), which took more than a minute. Finally they found the books they were looking for: *How to Balance a Sword on Your Nose* and *How to Shoot a Bow with Two Toes and Your Forehead*.

So Erlindor kept his sword precariously balanced on his nose and Joeybobbill shot arrows that Erlindor deflected in an empty library corridor (both techniques learned from the books). Afterwards, Erlindor remarked, “Maybe we should read about something, well, more serious.”

“Yeah,” Joeybobbill replied (from now on we will call him JBB to save time). So they went to the 5th floor 1st section and found “spell craft for beginners” and read step 1: “get a wand, staff, orb, or other implement.” They got stuck on step 1 so they decided to try that later, when such were available. So they wandered around the section, with no specific book in mind. Eventually JBB had to go, so Erlindor wandered alone. But he stopped on (3rd floor 1st section) “Strategy guide for military and ranged weapons and combat.” He read three random strategies:

Blade wheel maneuver:

With 3 or more allies and 1 enemy, form a circle around your foe, with your swords pointing inwards. Simultaneously advance, leaving no escape for your enemy. A sudden move from your opponent will not result well for it. Advance until your blades strike your adversary.

Sword restrict:

In 1-on-1 combat, wait for your enemy to make a strike. Parry it and grab the hilt of their blade. Twist your arm with a tight grip on their sword, misdirecting their blade. Strike swiftly to finish.

Martial assault:

In 1-on-1 combat where neither you nor your enemy has any weaponry, grab their wrists. Kick them with more repulsive force than harm and release their arms, and they should lose balance, giving you a short period of advantage.

Erlindor thought it would be useful. He left a note at the front desk saying what he checked out and when he would return it. No one was there, but the note sank into the table as if it were nothing but air. Erlindor came home and went to bed.

He woke up to knocking on the door and Loek and Aletha arguing over who should get the door. So Erlindor went up and got it and found one of the city heralds at the doorstep. He had a message for Erlindor.

“Your swordsmanship instructor has reported that you possess a legendary blade, one of the ten. And since a blade is best with its true wielder, you will be joining the 5th level swordsmanship guild, the final level before the militia.”

“Ok,” Erlindor said.

“On your next lesson, arrive at the 5th level training instead of 3rd level. The lessons will be 30 minutes longer than 3rd level.”

“Ok,” Erlindor said.

“Alright?” the messenger asked.

“Ok,” Erlindor said.

“Can you stop saying ok? It’s a little annoying.”

“Ok.” *Sigh* the herald left.

Aletha came downstairs and asked, “Who was that?”

“Nothing. I’m going to take singing lessons after swordsmanship lessons. They take 30 minutes,” Erlindor

replied. He thought it would keep his mother from freaking out and putting him in a lower level.

Aletha was not surprised and went back up.

They had a normal day, and Erlindor asked Loek to make a machine that would fling English muffins into his mouth. Loek said he would work on it, but it might take a while. So Erlindor just ate one manually. They went to bed early, and woke up as the city's blue flare went up and made a sharp *CRACK!* Erlindor hurried out the door. Just as he got out, Aletha stopped him.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Singing lessons," Erlindor replied. He ran off to the Aldecian plaza (the city has a calling method using flares to summon students: orange for 1st level, yellow for 2nd, green for 3rd, purple for 4th and blue for 5th). There were a group of knights about his age in full armor gathered around the 5th level instructor.

"Erlindor, are you prepared?"

Erlindor drew his sword and bow, and said determinedly, "Yeah."

"Ok. We are sending the 5th level students and a few selected soldiers from the militia to gather resources for the city. The 6th guild (Guild of the Stone) has sensed that the mines are currently prosperous, and the city shall fall if resources are not gathered. When the time is right, we will send a map with the location of Fort Nova, which will be your storage area. Good luck."

"Um how do we get there?" Erlindor asked.

"By carriage. There will be 2 horses pulling it. The ride will not be very long. Just to the Aldecian mines, then

to the farm right next to it. Lastly, to Fort Nova. The whole trip should be a length of 50 miles.”

“One last thing,” Erlindor noted, “if my mom wonders where I am, tell her I have very long, time-consuming singing lessons.”

“Ok,” the instructor said. They opened the gates and the carriage creaked slowly down the path to the Aldecian mines.

The whole trip was not like the start. The horses sped up, reaching 35mph. The students introduced themselves. The tall guy with blonde hair was Icarus, the short guy with short brown hair was Elbrus, the tall girl with long hazel hair was named Marolyn, and this tall dude with spiky jet-black hair was called Horus, and the moderately tall guy with black hair is, well, Erlindor. They decided to pass the time by opening the door and slicing apart weeds without falling out of the carriage. It turned out that Elbrus owned another of the so called “Legendary blades” and luckily, he brought a book about them, which Erlindor picked up and started reading.

The Ten Legendary Blades of Aldecia

Introduction

During the Dawn War, ten swords were forged from the well of thought by the 7th guild. They could have kept them all and ruled Aldecia, but they were wise and knew there must be balance between the guilds. Each guild took one and the remaining 2 somehow disappeared, never to be seen again. In time, the guilds grew careless and

“accidentally” lost their blades. Only the swords of the 3rd, 5th, and 7th guilds remain.

Erlindor read the identification table and labeled his sword as the 4th guild's and Elbrus' sword as one of the 2 that went missing. Elbrus showed him how his blade would glow with different energy depending on the environment around it, and flash white when danger was near (he did this by making Icarus pretend to attack). Erlindor tested his sword and grew a tree out of nothing on a nearby field, and then made it grow backwards (each transition taking about 3 seconds). “Cool,” he said. Finally they arrived at the mines.

It looked like just a hole in the ground, but it lead very deep and had many tunnels. “How do we get down into the shaft?” Elbrus asked.

“It appears by elevator,” Marolyn replied as a metal box lifted out of the 10ft x 10ft chasm and they stepped in. The descent was fast. It stopped at the bottom level and the students stepped into one of the tunnels. They grabbed a pickaxe from a rack on the wall and strode through the torch-lit tunnel.

“Prosperous” was right. In ten minutes, they had found all kinds of metals, ores, and gems. They had already filled 1 of 10 sacks (each one of them carried 2 sacks) within 25 minutes. Horus pointed out, “maybe we should collect some stone, too. Stone can be useful.” So they extended the wall a bit, collecting some rock.

They split into 2 groups, Marolyn, Icarus, and Elbrus, the other group being Erlindor and Horus. They walked down what looked like a deserted tunnel, but was brightly

lit by all the precious gems amplifying the light of the torches. They were careful to find everything that shined, reflected, or sparkled. After a while, they came to a dead end. "Should we just go back?" Erlindor wondered.

"Wait," Horus told him. He poked the wall and it seemed to dissolve. "Huh. It looks like someone does not want us to find stuff for the city." They walked on and found that this tunnel was even more filled with riches. They came up to an intersection and nearly fell into a lava pit.

"What the-" Erlindor said.

But he was interrupted as Horus yelled, "RUN!"

Several great balls of fire burst out of the pit. They homed in on the two and they ran up to where they encountered the wall. They passed right through it as an illusion, and unfortunately, the fireballs did as well. Erlindor stopped and sliced one with his sword. Vines sealed the passageway as the remaining fireballs slammed into it. The vines stayed intact.

They met up with the others, left the mines, and walked up towards the farm.

The farm was not just any farm, though. Plants of all kinds grew everywhere, a colorful mass of nature. Elbrus used his sword to detect how close different plants were to the extent to where they were ripe. They rooted up all of the dead plants and Erlindor used his enchanted sword to summon new ones in their places. The few plants that were almost done he sped up and harvested. They got a very large amount of herbs and other plants in no time. At about 9:30, they got tired and slept in the beds there.

At 7:00 they woke up to a bird's call. Erlindor saw a crow outside perched on one of the trees. It held a piece of paper. Marolyn picked it up and showed it to them. It was a detailed map with an X on a square labeled *Fort Nova*. They walked outside, boarded their carriage and sped off. Within minutes they could see the looming fortress, a tall, large, wall surrounding a village.

When they arrived, they were greeted by 2 guards, while one of which led them to the storage room. "Your part is done," he said. "We will transport this to Aldecia."

"Ok," Erlindor replied as their cart swiftly left, dashing through their path to Aldecia.

At the Aldecian gate, they saw an unpleasant sight. An angry mob was gathered on either side, and the guards were yelling, "Settle down! Crowd control!" which did not help much.

Erlindor asked a guard, "What's going on?"

The guard replied, "Apparently they're just a typical angry mob who just wants to cause trouble." Erlindor and his team leaped into the fray, disarming the members of the gang. Erlindor used the sword restrict and managed to peacefully disarm a few. Elbrus whacked one with *The Ten Legendary Blades of Aldecia*, which, luckily, was very thick and heavy. Horus used some sort of judo move, flipping one of the lighter members over his shoulder. Marolyn and Icarus just quickly and simply grabbed their weaponry. Eventually, the crowd died out, and the 5 students entered the city.

When Erlindor got home, the first thing he did was go to bed. In the morning, he slept extra. When he woke up at

about 10:00, Aletha asked, “What did you learn at your extra-long singing lessons?”

“Umm...” Erlindor let out a high pitched squeak.

“Keep it down in there! I’m trying to focus! Who let the air out of a balloon?!” Loek yelled from upstairs.

“Holy cow, you DO need singing lessons!” She grimaced. Erlindor sighed and walked down to the barracks for more “singing lessons.” At the militia, another section of the 5th level training was just finishing. His instructor and the other students were on the bleachers, observing their tactics. When the clock struck 12, Erlindor entered the training field.

The first lesson was dodging. Each of them took a bow and quiver and did an all-out free-for-all archery clash (with light leather suits designed to stop arrows). The competition was intense. Icarus’ loading arm was quicker than the eye. Elbrus and Marolyn shot arrows like the sun that released heat. Horus shot once every 3 seconds, but with such accuracy that he never missed. Meanwhile, Erlindor dodged well and his silver bow let out ammo so that it spliced other arrows mid-flight. Due to the extremely high level of performance, an overall winner could not be determined.

Next, in the sword category, they did a nemesis (all against one, the solo contestant gets a physical advantage) style battle. Horus was randomly chosen and got to use 2 swords at a time. And, it turned out that the combination was greater than the sum of its parts. It started with Horus making a defending charge towards Icarus, Marolyn, and Erlindor. He disarmed Icarus with a spin using the faster momentum of the swords to strike swiftly and strongly.

Erlindor held back one of his blades as Elbrus and Marolyn searched for weaknesses. Erlindor stepped back a few feet and rushed him, knocking him off his feet, and Elbrus held Horus at sword point.

Afterwards, there commenced a special category for engineering. Each student was allowed a variety of resources and was instructed to make an operating cannon. Erlindor created a system based on using a spring and wards to launch small objects long distances. Icarus tried to create a tube channeling human-generated saliva to deter adversaries (A.K.A he took a hollow tube and launched spitballs out of it). Elbrus, Marolyn, and Horus worked together to make a strong metal tube filled with gunpowder to launch rockets (but they had to test it on rocks first).

Eventually, they left. When Erlindor got home, Aletha asked, "What did you learn at - never mind, I don't want to know." Erlindor groaned. He went to bed, but little did he know, a large battle was about to ensue. DUN DUN DU-ok let's just go to the combat.

POW! Erlindor leaped up as a sharp crack and a deep rumble shook the city. He looked out the window, and all 5 flares were lined up above the plaza. Except there was a... red flare? It didn't take a mastermind to know that the red flare was a sudden burst of flame. "What's going on?!" Loek asked from the attic.

"Nothing. Just practicing singing," Erlindor replied. "Oh and by the way I'm going to need some heavy artillery."

"Ok. The weaponry is downstairs," his father directed. Erlindor rushed down, grabbed his sword and bow, armor,

and some English muffins (heavy projectiles). He rushed out the door and went to the city plaza.

“What is going on?” he asked his instructor.

“In case you haven’t noticed we’re under assault.”

“Oh.” Erlindor and his group advanced to the north wall turrets and saw the problem. A dragon, 75 feet long, was circling the city and blasting the walls with fire.

“DUCK!” Elbrus yelled.

“Really? That looks more like a dragon!” They ducked down as fire blasted right above their crouched bodies. Erlindor could feel the heat of the fire, raging through the air.

When they got back up, the instructor exclaimed, so that the whole city could hear, “FIRE AT WILL!”

“No, please! Don't hurt me!” Will said, cowering in fear. The militia rushed out of the gates, slashing their swords as the dragon swooped down. The twang of hundreds of bows releasing swift arrows simultaneously echoed through the city. Most bounced off the dragon’s scaly skin.

“FEEL MY WRATH!” Erlindor yelled and he chucked an English muffin at the dragon. It hit him in the eye. The dragon’s roar of anguish resonated through the ears of the militia. “Aim for its eyes!” he yelled. He loaded 3 arrows into his bow and let them loose. Three slightly burnt arrows fell to the ground.

Erlindor said, “Be right back!” and put a sign at his turret saying, “back in 5 min.” He ran home. “Hey dad, can I borrow your prototype high-intensity laser?”

“Sure, it’s in the attic. You will need a power source though.”

“Ok, then can I also have your machine that uses heat for energy?”

“Ok,” Loek said and went back to sleep.

When Erlindor got back to his turret, the dragon was close to his area. He readied the energy panel. The dragon breathed fire, exactly what Erlindor wanted. The power levels went skyrocketing. The laser blasted a bright white ray of condensed light and power. It went straight into the dragon’s maw, incinerating it. And guess what? It just made the dragon’s fire breath more powerful. And guess what? All that did was power up his laser. It came out as a blinding crystalline white with a blue tint. No more dragon. Unfortunately, there was an aftereffect of the giant, mythical lizard.

A stream of lava erupted from the ground. It swirled upwards, in a distinct shape: 8. Everyone shrugged and turned around. Just then, a bolt of lightning crackled in the air. The sky turned dark. With a flash of blue light, an elemental hybrid of lightning and fire in the shape of a giant man appeared in front of the gate. The guilds moved into action. Blasts of flame, water and lightning struck the elemental monstrosity. A ray of light blasted through the dark, heavy atmosphere and collided with it. A stone monolith burst up from the ground, encasing the beast in a stone prison as it was knocked backwards by a wave of invisible force. Vines encircled the cage and prevented escape. The city beacon blasted through the sky, cleansing the thunderclouds and marking victory for the Aldecians.

The next morning, Erlindor woke up to the *clang* of a cold, hard hammer on an anvil. Erlindor walked up to the

attic and saw Loek working. “Hello there,” Erlindor greeted him.

Loek barely looked up from his project but said, “Hello, I’ll be done in a minute.”

“What are you working on?” Erlindor curiously asked as Loek added the finishing touch, the layer of steel encasing the mass of wires and metal. The blue orb glowed, making a fine light blue tint on the shiny metal case.

“It’s a bracer, made of highly conductive metal, perfect for attracting and channeling electricity. It won’t be useful except in a storm, but I can give it small charges to show you.”

They went out to a field and Loek gave small electric charges to it, and the bracer crackled with the white electricity swirling around it. He made a punching motion and watched as the ray of energy blasted across the horizon. “Ooh,” Erlindor exclaimed and watched in amazement and asked if he could use it to fry English muffins.

Loek: “No.”

Erlindor: “Why not?”

Loek: “Only use it for important things.”

Erlindor: “English muffins are important!”

Loek: “Then why do you eat something so important?”

Erlindor: “They’re important to eat!”

Loek: “Why fry them?”

Erlindor: “I have to prepare them somehow!”

Loek: “Then deep-freeze them!”

That ended the conversation. Erlindor went back to deep-freeze an English muffin. Erlindor ate it and Aletha asked, “Why are you deep-freezing your English muffin?”

“I don’t know, ask Loek,” he replied. He decided to go to the library. He did not have anything in mind, but just to browse. He walked out the door and began the travel.

Erlindor used an alley passageway as a shortcut. He was wary of the uneven ground and filthy walls as he strode towards the gigantic library. Even though he had seen it before, the looming structure of the white marble building was surprising and impressive. *Whoosh!* Something above him moved swiftly and (almost) silently. Erlindor drew his sword. There was a loud CLUNK behind him. However, as he walked over, he found it to be just a rock. Then a small shadow crept up behind him. Erlindor swiftly knocked the blade out of the goblin’s hand. “Why are you following me?!”

The goblin did not answer his question. Instead, in a low and raspy voice, he pronounced, “Our kingdom will rise again.” The goblin kicked Erlindor backwards and ran off through the alleyway.

“Sheesh,” Erlindor remarked, wondering whatever the pancakes that meant. He continued towards the library.

Once he got there, as he browsed *A History of Aldecia*, he found the text, “*Rumor has it that the 8th guild will rise again when it is least expected.*”

Erlindor dashed out of the library. It all made sense now! He wished it didn’t. He started climbing up the library wall, making use of all the intricate designs. It took almost half an hour. When he finally reached the top, the

ground was rumbling and, sure enough, a black castle was rising from the ground across the horizon.

The dark kingdom was back.

Most of the city was panicking. The word had spread that the cult of shadows had risen, and the militia was preparing for a citywide defense, archers sniping at the undead soldiers marching towards Aldecia. Erlindor's instructor gathered his students and shouted, "Final exam, don't get killed by a vicious zombie army!"

"Aren't the guilds going to help?" Erlindor asked.

"Nah, they're all hiding under their beds," his instructor remarked. Erlindor rushed out to join the town's army, and, with a single well-placed arrow, the front most enemy soldier fell. Erlindor united with the others and charged.

The undead warriors were no amateurs. They slashed and parried, striking fast and fatal, but Erlindor's legendary blade made quick work of them. He worked through the field towards the black castle, where a vicious storm was brewing.

Eventually, after many strikes and parries, there were no living (or undead, I suppose) enemy soldiers left to stop him and the small force of allies left from the final challenge: A dark mage standing 50ft away, raising a silvered staff with a large fireball on the tip.

The wizard was quick to act. As lightning flashed and thunder boomed, he launched attacks rapidly, quickly eliminating most of the soldiers. Erlindor rushed in to swing, but the wizard just blocked with his staff, and gave a return strike that knocked Erlindor to the ground. He tried to get back up, but the dark mage pinned him to the ground

with his staff. Then he spoke. The low sound seemed to come from every direction, not from the wizard's mouth. "*Nothing, no one can stop me now.*" Then Erlindor noticed one of his allies recovering, getting to his feet with his sword at the ready.

"You're wrong!" he yelled.

"*Oh really, foolish one?*"

"Yep, look behind you." *SHING!*

GAME OVER