

The ember glow of campfire illuminated a small troop of soldiers leaning against a circular bank. A band of Noxian scouts – twelve in all. Exhausted after a full day of travelling, they established a camp just a couple miles south of a burned village. Reports had surfaced of a powerful magic that had been near the village in a temple. A previous assault division had engaged enemy forces three days earlier, but contact was lost with them on the first night. Before wasting any more resources, these scouts had been sent ahead of their main forces to report their findings.

Beyond the bank in a treeline about five-hundred feet away, a man was perched on a twisted branch. His breath was steady as he teased his legs forward, trying to get a closer eye on the camp, narrowing his eyes on the orange light of the campfire, counting out the shadows.

*“Twelve.”* He counted. The man nimbly dropped to the ground, the caress of the moon behind him highlighting him as he stood tall. Picking up a massive, stygian bow that had been left beside the trunk, he moved deftly and silently. The man knew the area well. He skirted alongside the thicket of trees as he climbed higher over the bank, closing the distance to his prey. They had already been undone by walking into his home-territory.

An echo crept into the back of his mind as he traced his way along the familiar paths; *“Devour them all! They are no match for our power! Sunder them Varus!”* The voice grew to a shout, then to a roar. Varus clasped his hands to his temples and bit down on his tongue, the rage almost overtaking him. Pain shot across his body as a slick gnarled substance, covering his entire lower half glowed vividly. *“Not yet!”* Varus’s own voice echoed back to his mind, fighting the pain and rage. His voice grew louder over the disembodied voice as it snarled, its dominance defied. Varus’s pain began to subside, his calm returning. Breathing heavily, he continued onwards. *“Stay in the shadows! I still have a task to accomplish!”* Raspy, deep laughter guttered through Varus’s mind. *“Ahhh! Now I finally understand why you were picked as a guardian. But be cautious archer! I will have my time!”*

As Varus closed in on the encampment, he spotted a lone soldier at the highest point of the bank. The scout sat with a crate underneath him, shivering. A lookout. Varus could see the faint shadows that swelled and waned against the dying light of the campfire. He closed his eyes and listened for the wind. The air was dry, stark & soft. It carried to weight with it. He pulled a red scarf that had been draped across his chest over his mouth. Raising the bow, he straightened his form and fired a single shot. The arrow made a soft ‘phweee’ sound as it travelled through the air, leaving a faint violet streak behind it. The look-out tilted his head as the glow travelled towards him and promptly fell backwards, his head snapping upwards as the arrow flew through his skull and he crumpled behind the crate.

Shadows darted quickly in the dying light. Varus made out three other men who had stood to attention, warily looking around them. He heard a low shout as the man called to the now-dead lookout. He quickly turned to the other two and they raised their shields around them, shouting. Varus made out a voice.

“Ambush!”

Quickly, the other soldiers were roused to consciousness. Shivering and half awake, they quickly grouped, raising their shields out in front of them. Varus fired another shot. It clinked off of one of the shields. Looking downwards, the scout saw the grass die and rot around the fuchsia shard. A foul smell wafted upwards from the rot. He brought his gaze forward again, desperately trying to see where the attack had come from.

The raspy voice appeared in Varus’s mind again; “*Come now Varus, show them true fear!*” Varus’ right arm began to burn again. Gritting his teeth as his anger returned, he pulled back forcefully as a massive, blood-red arrow dug itself out of his palm. The pain was nauseating, but Varus used his rage to stay conscious. His focus drifted as he tried to maintain his shot. When he couldn’t bear any longer, the arrow tore itself from his hand and rocketed towards the camp.

The arrow crashed violently into the camp, covering the small bank in dust. Varus could hear screams that quickly cut out. As the dust settled around the camp, over half of the troop had been wiped out. In the centre of the camp stood the large, ruby arrow. Three men had been impaled on it. Another four had been crippled and could only whimper. Varus spotted a lone soldier wandering out of the haze, confused and swinging his sword while trying to protect his eyes. Varus swiftly fired another shot. The scout bellowed in pain as the arrow dug itself into a nick between his forearm and elbow. He quickly snapped the arrow. As he fervently tried to cover his wound he noticed the veins within his arm turning a sickly colour; the same shade as the glow on the arrow head that pierced him.

He gasped in pain as the purple shade spread throughout his arm, rotting it as it turned black & melted away from his body. He dropped to his knees in shock, grasping at his stump. Another arrow thwacked into his chest, just above his sternum. The lower half of his body was still kneeling in the ground as his upper half disconnected itself from him in a spray of crimson.

The last three remaining soldiers bolted. Screaming as loudly as they can, they didn’t notice the moonlight darken momentarily as arrows rained down upon them, sticking them like pincushions. Varus drifted towards the camp, noticing the crippled soldiers. The guttural voice rang through his head again as he raised his bow one last time.

“*Wreak your retribution!*”

