“Alright, everyone, can you open to page 560?”

Mr. Greyford waited a moment while the sounds of turning pages filled the classroom.

“If you look at the start of the chapter, we're going to be going through the causes of World War Two starting with the economic downturns of the late twenties and thirties. Obviously last chapter on World War One and the interwar period will factor heavily into this.” He paused and looked over the classroom.

Off in the distance there was a slight rumble and the barely heard sound of a low whistle as if from some massive ship.

Mr. Greyford paused for a moment as if trying to hear the sound, but it was gone almost instantly. If the school intercom has gone off, it would have been much more clear than that.

Unperturbed he turned again on the class. “I'll lay out the dates of the quizzes and the final exam later at the end of the period, but for now I think the best course of action would be to just jump right into things.”

He scanned the classroom, looking briefly at Leon, the class trouble maker; Sam, the know-it-all, Erica, the most popular girl in the grade; and finally at me: Chris.

“Chris, will you read the intro paragraph?” He asked.

Unfortunately, Chris was preoccupied at the moment. He was busy gazing out the window, thinking about things. Many things: sports, methods for making breakfast faster, how he was going to convince his mom to let him go the school field trip, and most importantly, what was going on out the window. He was in fact thinking about many things, but he was certainly not paying attention to the teacher.

“Uh, Chris?”

Chris was still looking out at the scene outside the window.

The world twinkled.

The shine of the tiled floor; the sterile metal and processed wood of the certified desks; the neat and organized shelves all full of history books; the white board, now not so white with years of use; and each of the students in turn; and finally Mr. Greyford waiting.

“Something interesting outside?” He asked.

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“Well the crux of the matter is that their forces are arrayed too defensively for us to manage to take even the picket that they've set up over the brook.” Christopher Callwell said, sweeping his hand across the parchment of the warmap.

The assembled lords shook their heads in agreement. It was a hard situation, and one made much more difficult by the fact that time was of the essence. The preferred tactic, to let the defenders merely stew in their own time until they crumbled from within, was not even close to possible. After all, Princess Samantha, beloved of the nation was in their hands, and every second not spent in action was intollerable.

Regent Greybeard stroked his titular facial hair and let out a quiet hum, running his eyes over the distribution of the enemy arrayed before them.

The heat of the day billowed in from the open tent flap, unfortunately bringing in with the all the normal smells and noise of a military camp. A fly buzzed noisily around part of the sunlit skin that formed the tent. They could all smell the earth, almost even taste it.

“Attacking is suicide.” he uttered.

There was a second of hesitation as the assembled nobles waited for the follow up statement which would elucidate to them an alternate course of action. Greybeard's wisdom was legendary, even if many thought he was past his prime.

The second elongated, and through it, prince Callwell tugged nervously at his collar, hot in summer air, even out of the direct sun. He took a quick glance through the flap of the command tent, wishing for some sort of distraction: a messenger, a problem, an attack, anything that could break the horrible moment. After all, his sister's life was in these people's hands.

“Is that it?” Senior Leonardo ventured. The mercenary captain's reputation for impetuousness was certainly granted. Prince Callwell wished among anything that someone could rein him in before something bad happened. He might have been a professional, but more in the smash and pillage school of war than the careful political struggle before them.

“So the rumors were true then.” Leonardo dared, laying has hands crosswise over one another and staring pointedly at the old man. “The terrible Sword of the South has finally lost what little brains he once had.” He sneered.

Before any of the other nobles could interject, he continued. “To be fair, he started with much more than any of you soft nobles. Now...” He turned the map towards him, upsetting some of the pieces laid out on it. “This is what I propose...”

A hand suddenly came down with a terrible force onto the table. A distant ringing of some bell could be heard, playing counterpoint to the forceful slam. A shudder ran through the ground, giving ridiculous notion for one split second that it was Greybeard who had caused the tremor.

All of the nobles, the Prince and the warlord included, jumped as one. The peacefulness of the afternoon (war seige nonwithstanding) was instantly and suddenly disrupted. A growl emerged from the old man, his body white had placed firmly on the map stopping it from turning.

“I said...” He paused, “Attacking is suicide. What I was going to continue to say, once you young upstart simpletons had wrapped your pathetic brains aground this fact, was that ironically, a full on assault is exactly what we must do. It remains our only and best option at breaking their line.”

Leonardo looked taken aback and did not interrupt the old man as he now pulled the map closer to him.

“They have their forces concentrated, Here! and Here!” He gestured pointedly to the locations on the map.

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“Now the important part to truly wrap your head around is that all of the actions you will read about in this chapter on World War Two, all the horrible things and all the good ones, were done by people. Don't let time distance your understanding, all the lessons that were learned during this time are in some sense still applicable today.”

The intercom bell rang for real this time.

Mr. Greyford looked up at the clock.

“Well I suppose that's it for today. I'll go over the syllabus for the unit next class. Have a great day everyone.” He snapped the book closed and the next minute or so was filled with the scrapping of chairs against the ground as Chris, Sam, Erica, Leon and the rest of the students exited the classroom, apparently as noisily as they could manage.