

Chapter 82 Executioners

Christian counted the shells next to his mortar, then he glanced at those of the others, rushing to the nearby crates before he restocked his team.

“Artillery team, we’ve received confirmation that the first horde is taken out. Stand by for further instructions.” He heard the confirmation and breathed out, steadying himself against his knees.

They didn’t break through. He wiped at his brow, realizing he was wearing a helmet. An annoying addition, he found. He could see and hear so much better without.

“Well done team,” Fred said and went from person to person, touching Christian’s shoulder as well and giving him a nod.

“An undead horde,” Lukas said with a joyous tone. “That’s really good, right?”

Christian breathed in deep, ignoring his teammate as Fred reassured him that yes, having taken out the horde was in fact, a good thing. *Just focus on your own tasks, Christian.* He checked his mortar again but found that everything was in order. He was ready to fire again if Valery or Dispatch gave the command. And by now he understood the mechanism well enough to adjust it, in case they had to fire somewhere else.

“Fighters. We just got confirmation of two more hordes moving in on your position. Northwest and South. Valery, how should we proceed?”

“Two more, hmm?” Fred murmured.

“Guess we did too well on the first one,” Christian said and grinned. He noticed that Fred didn’t react. Was he scared? *We’re doing okay, aren’t we? Valery isn’t getting us into an unmanageable situation, right?*

“Artillery team, the Lure team will try to keep the southern horde away from your position and coming towards the west or north of city hall. Hold your position for now and be ready to fire. Should undead arrive and attempt to breach the courtyard, retreat and regroup at the main hall. I’ve sent the Executioners to help cover your retreat in case that happens.” Valery’s voice came through Fred’s radio.

“Understood,” Fred confirmed.

Christian grit his teeth. He knew the two fighters from Keilberg were strong, but there was a reason they hadn’t joined a team of the Union so far. And they hadn’t even joined the Union itself, still clinging on to their castle. He knew that Fred was familiar with Kate at least but things had changed since all of this had started and Christian had gotten his first Class, so the same was surely true for everyone else. And there were rumors. Rumors that she wasn’t quite right in her head, that she enjoyed the slaughter. He kept his mouth shut of course, knowing that Fred would chew him out if he complained. *The undead won’t get here. And if they do, you just retreat and let them handle it.*

“Oh, the Berserker is coming to help us?” Lukas said.

How is he excited for that? We’ve got enough potential killers around already.

The two joined them a minute later, Logan the supposed Paladin, wearing knight armor, and Kate, former firefighter, in her already downright infamous Overakar scale armor. He'd heard a few of the others talk about how they'd killed their first Overakar weeks ago already, and how they had an insane crafter too at Keilberg castle. That just made Christian question even more why they didn't join the Union but if everyone else agreed with the setup, he would too. Things were chaotic and dangerous after all, so there would be at least some irregularities. Not that that fact didn't annoy him.

"Your shells mostly took out the giant," Logan said. "Good frequency too."

"Had someone with a few tips," Fred said and slapped Lukas' back.

The young man scratched the back of his helmet. "Yeah. Artillery troop, third company. Well, not anymore, or now. I don't think they'd still be around."

The Paladin looked at Lukas and nodded. "Good to have you with us, son."

For some reason it pissed Christian off to hear the tone of voice. They weren't with the Union, why was he acting so familiar with Lukas? They'd have to prove themselves first, in a way that Christian could see. The ghost stories and rumors didn't exactly impress him, and their armor looked worn if anything.

"Feeling something," Kate said.

The others went quiet and listened to her.

"Tremors, several hundred, coming closer."

Logan reported the findings immediately.

"Confirmed, Executioners. Lure team is attempting to divert but if the fighting starts again, they may not be able to do so," Dispatch informed. *"Northwestern horde is hitting Markstrasse, Valery will call in for artillery, hold position for as long as you can."*

The machine guns roared to life again, the sounds loud despite the distance and the large building in between. He would've liked to see them in action, the fifty caliber ammo tearing into the undead. It must've looked glorious, their enemies ripped apart by their technology.

"Southern horde has picked up on the noise, fire as soon as you receive confirmation, and retreat once the horde arrives. Get to the main hall and hold them back for as long as you can," Dispatch called in.

"Prepare to fire," Fred said, their team ready to load the next shells, the two fighters from Keilberg stepping away towards the stairwell and the entrance to the city hall as they prepared their weapons.

"Artillery team, same target area, fire away." Valery's voice came through their radios.

"Fire," Fred said.

Christian waited for Lukas, then the others, focusing on the sequence before he sent his own shell out, ducking away as the blast sent the projectile out and over the large structure of city hall. He couldn't see the impact but tried to focus on the now, one slip up and someone could die. Grabbing another shell, he glanced to the fence and out into the streets beyond. *No undead so far.*

He wiped at his brow again, hitting his helmet, then glanced at his team. His turn to fire came and he did so, then another three shells. When he had the fourth in hand, he could hear a roar from

nearby. Christian nearly dropped the artillery shell when the undead hit the fence, clawing against the metal, arms reaching in as they tried to climb it.

“Think it’s time to get inside,” Fred said with a loud voice. “Go, go, go!”

Christian followed the others, glancing back at the incoming horde of undead, his eyes going wide when he saw the hundreds of monsters streaming towards the courtyard, glimpses of ogres and fliers in the corner of his vision. He rushed towards the open entrance, seeing the Executioners standing on the stairwell. The woman threw her massive battle axe in the same moment, Christian ducking as the axe whistled past. *That was way too close! What the fuck is she doing!* He rushed in, breathing hard.

“To the first floor,” Fred said, pointing at the stairwell ahead, the group crossing the entrance hall before they went up the broad steps and to the overlooking balcony. One of the heavy machine guns was propped up at the top, aiming towards the entrance they’d just come from.

Christian stopped at the top, the double doors leading to the main hall on the first floor were open, machine gun fire audible from beyond, a constant roar. He glanced back at the courtyard entrance and saw the Executioners shutting the heavy wooden double doors, chains wrapped around the handles before Logan shut the heavy locks they’d prepared. The windows to the left and right were boarded up with metal and wooden sheets, drilled into the stone.

He looked down at his hand and saw that he was still carrying one of the shells. *Shit.* He felt blood rush to his face, turning away from the group before he set the shell down near the wall.

“Take positions near the rails, if they overwhelm our position, we retreat back to the main hall and shut the gates,” Fred said.

Christian found a position, not too far away from the doors. He saw that Logan had sat down to operate the machine gun, Kate standing next to him, the heavy mace set on the ground. *She just threw her axe? Is that just meant as a one time projectile? Why would she carry that thing around then?* He shook his head and focused on himself. This was not a situation where he could let himself be distracted, even though it felt very irritating to have these two around. He hoped they could fight even a tenth as well as the rumors suggested.

“Southern horde has reached the courtyard, breaking through the fence as we speak. City hall doors are locked, we’ll hold them here before retreating to the main hall,” Fred spoke into the radio.

The others had gone quiet, readying their guns and magic. Christian focused on the entrance, a few meters down and twenty or so ahead. He shook his hands to calm himself down, feeling the power in his veins. He could feel the heat building in his core.

He jerked back slightly when a heavy impact crashed against the double doors before them, rattling the chains that kept the doors locked. He could hear the roars and groans beyond, even with the machine gun fire coming from behind them.

“I take the main entrance,” Logan said. “Focus on stragglers or if they get through the boarded windows.”

Christian narrowed his eyes, watching as the chain rattled and rattled. Then it stopped.

The doors shook, as did the wall. Another strike and the wooden gates flew inwards, hinges ripped off from the walls, clattering to the side. The roars became louder as the first undead rushed in.

Christian aimed when Logan started firing, the undead ripped apart with the first bullets, the machine gun fire cutting a path out into the gathered horde pushing to get in through the courtyard.

Yes!

He watched as the assault was brought to an abrupt halt, even the ogre that tried to push itself in was shredded apart by the large projectiles.

It didn't take long for the first of the windows to be broken through, the glass shattered and the screws punched out, metal plating falling to the marble floor before the first of the creatures started climbing inside.

Christian focused his magic on an orc that climbed in, pushing his heat and fire through before the orc's head exploded in a small sphere of flame, bits and pieces of bone and flesh splattering to the ground. He moved on to the next target, seeing the magic and bullets from his team now striking at more of the creatures coming in through the window. Logan now fired in salvos, preserving ammo as he pushed back the horde. Another window was broken through, then another. Christian now had more than a few targets to choose from. He exploded another head before he sent out three small zipping spheres of fire, latching them onto the legs of three undead. He focused and let them explode, ripping through their limbs and grounding them as he focused on the next.

He raised his brow when another window broke, the gathered fighters no longer able to pick off all the undead that rushed inside. When he saw a gray butterfly flutter into the hall, he pushed a chunk of his magic into it, causing the thing to glow and explode into bits of burning flesh.

"Reload!" Logan shouted, the machine gun fire ceasing as himself and Fred started to reload the heavy weapon.

More undead rushed in, no longer held back from the main entrance. A dozen pushed through with snarling sounds, gashing wounds on their bodies, some of their limbs broken. Their blue eyes glared at them as they searched for prey.

Christian staggered back when he saw their numbers. He sent out a few more spheres of fire to try and slow them down but there were already dozens, more climbing up on the sides of the first floor railings.

"There are too many!" Lukas shouted.

"Retreat and keep firing!" Fred shouted, when the heavy machine gun roared to life again, tearing into the undead but there were too many now, too spread out.

Christian stepped closer to the main hall double doors, taking an instinctive step back when he saw the growing number of undead flowing into the hall, spells and bullets maiming and killing dozens of them with every second, but for every one downed, there were ten more coming.

He saw the others retreat towards the doors now, Logan leaving the gun as he stood up and grabbed his sword instead.

Christian saw that Kate didn't step back, the woman instead walking towards the stairs as the horde rushed up. He watched as she raised her massive mace, several undead about to reach her when she swung. He could see the mace shatter through them without resistance, mangled bodies sent flying with splashes of blood, guts, and bones splattering outwards.

The Exterminator finished her swing and took another step down the stairs. She roared, her next swing tearing into the horde with another horizontal strike, the heavy spiked mace sending half a

dozen undead stumbling or outright flying to the right, entire torsos squashed and shattered, a few of them stumbling backwards with half their heads missing, before the next swing ripped through what remained.

Christian watched in frightened awe as the scaled warrior not only halted the assault of the undead horde, but started gaining ground.

A shout to his right brought him back to the fight. He saw one of the butterflies had stabbed Lukas into his outstretched arm, more undead running in from the left and right side of the first floor balcony, having climbed up instead of taken the stairs. Christian fired another set of spheres, seeing Fred strike the butterfly before Logan stabbed his sword through the creature.

“Kate! Retreat!” Fred shouted as they took more steps back, the man pulling the injured Lukas as the rest of the team fired more spells to the left and right to slow or kill the undead.

“There are too many!” Logan shouted. “Kate, now or never!”

They were at the double doors now, one of their team on either side, ready to shut the gates and lock them up with chains and boards.

Logan stabbed an undead that got close, the man taking a step forward before he stepped back.

Christian could still hear the screeching undead, and he could hear the mace that tore through them, the swings now almost rhythmic, accompanied by the sounds of shattered bone and flesh alike.

“Shut the gates!” Logan shouted.

“We can’t leave her!” Fred shouted from where he held Lukas, one of the healers already there now, more combatants joining their position as they were informed of the courtyard breach.

Christian still listened to the mace as he saw the double doors close, chains added around the handles before his team and nearby combatants started drilling wood and metal into the doors to keep them shut.

She just walked in there, Christian thought.

He gulped and shook his head ever so slightly. He looked down at his hands and found them shaking. *She walked in there to die.*

“Order to retreat through the escape routes, both hordes have breached city hall.” He heard Dispatch call out through the nearby radios. The machine guns had fallen silent some time ago.

Christian saw the fast moving combatants of the Union rushing into the main hall and towards the escape routes.

“The undead have cleared out of Markstrasse,” one of them said as he joined the healer next to Lukas.

“What about Kate?” Fred asked, looking at Logan.

Christian heard a dulled roar from beyond the doors. An undead? No. He’d heard it earlier in the fight. He could feel a shiver go down his back.

She’s still standing.

Logan still faced the doors as well, then turned and shouldered his blade. “Start moving. She’ll hold them back.”

Gunfire resounded nearby, a few fliers rushing down the hallway of the west hall.

Christian took a last glance at the doors before he gulped and ran, joining the other fighters of the Union.

Five percent really wasn't much, Kate thought, swinging her enchanted mace through the horde of monsters, all of them kind enough to rush her in a wild frenzy. She grinned to herself, feeling magic flow through her arms and back again, Crushing Storm empowering her swing before her mace crashed through the undead horde, her steps sure, her strikes heavy. Three more swings sent undead stumbling and crashing into each other or the nearby walls when Kate felt one of the butterflies wrapping around her back.

She used her magic to jump up, landing on the first floor with an explosion of blood sizzling into the nearby creatures. Angling herself with her back towards the stone wall, she jumped into it, feeling and hearing a wet squashing sound, the strength of the butterfly gone as she reached behind herself and ripped it away. She saw that some of the undead had reached the double doors leading to her allies, and she really couldn't have that happening. This was her fight, and her enemies really shouldn't get distracted.

Not when she was right there.

Vengeful Charge brought her close, her mace downing several undead on the way before she stomped her foot down, Reverberating Charge and Blood Rupture lashing out into the creatures around her. Hundreds still, she heard, some of the larger variants still trying to break in through the thick walls leading in from the courtyard. Others had already moved on to try and find better ways inside, or to cut off her allies.

Kate held her mace up to block the undead horde. She roared and pushed them back, many of them stumbling against her strength before she swung, bits of blood splattering her armor as she took one step forward and swung again.

She would kill those that were here, and then, she would hunt.