

The Midnight Revolution

Chapter 1: The defense of Colourpest

Mark and Larry watched from their hiding spot as the Torchers charged into the city with a wild cry. They had been told to let them into the city and then suddenly ambush them from all sides. The city they were in was the Lost City of Colourpest. It had been discovered on a border between three empires, and there had been violent fights over it ever since. Whoever owned it had a strategic advantage over the other empires, since the city was on a hill and at the bottom of the hill was the borders of all three empires. There were other villages not far away. Mark and Larry were fighting for the Midnight Empire, which currently controlled the city. They were fighting the Pillager Empire, who were basically barbarians who were always at war with the other two empires and liked burning things down. Their Torchers were basically normal Pillager citizens with no discipline and little order, equipped with sticks that were set on fire at one end. They would whack people with their sticks, hoping to set them on fire, and burn buildings to the ground without hesitation. They were merciless creatures who killed every enemy they met, ruled by their mad emperor, Ryan. Larry saw their flag, a white fire on red, held up by one of the many Torchers.

As the Torchers approached the city centre, Mark, Larry and the other Twin Daggersmen jumped out of hiding. The Pillagers were distracted, burning down houses and laughing. They had little or no armour, and their only advantage was their number. The Twin Daggersmen, the

soldiers of the Midnight Empire, threw the daggers in their left hands, while still holding on to the ones in their right hands. Several Torchers died, and they quickly turned around and charged.

Unlike the Torchers, who dressed themselves in bright red, Twin Daggersmen were dressed in black cloaks with hoods. They were armed with two daggers and were very silent. Although they had no armour, they were very disciplined and were good at ambushes, especially at night. As legend had it, the first Daggersmen were trained by the Midnight Emperor himself, Shade. Shade was a shadowy figure and not much was known about him, but whoever he was, he was much better than Ryan.

As they fled from the Torchers, Mark saw the flagpole ahead, proudly showing off the Midnight flag, a white crescent moon on black. Suddenly, he heard a strange noise. He risked a glance back and saw the Torchers flicking their wrists in a peculiar way and launching small fireballs from their flaming sticks. This was new. They had never done that before. One of the Twin Daggersmen screamed as he was set on fire.

"Quick! Into the side streets!" Yelled the general. Within seconds, the main street was clear and the Torchers looked around in confusion.

"Forget the Twin Daggersmen, get the flagpole!" Yelled the Pillager general. A big mistake. The Twin Daggersmen jumped onto a building, and then crept from building to

building back to where their daggers lay, buried inside the necks of dead Torchers. They picked them up and sneaked up behind the Torchers who were still alive, who were crowded around the flagpole. Then they stabbed some of them in the back. The others immediately fled. The Twin Daggersmen didn't chase them, knowing it would only tire them out and give the Torchers a chance to kill more of them. Inspecting the damage, they discovered that a good quarter of the city had burned to the ground. However, the Twin Daggersmen found new homes for their residents in nearby towns and within hours, the city returned to something like normal.

The gates of Colourpest were always open when the Midnight Empire owned it. It actually had stone walls. But it wasn't the Midnight strategy to defend from the walls. However, for defense, they always placed a guard in each of the four guard towers, holding a telescope. One of them raised the alarm now. "Enemies approaching!" She yelled.

"What empire?" The general asked.

"They're Poisoners!" The guard yelled. "Their purple flag shines bright in the afternoon sun!"

The Poisoner flag was a potion filled with green liquid on a purple background. They were smarter than the Pillagers and had better units too. They must have seen the Pillagers attack the city and thought that the Midnight Empire soldiers must be tired after their battle, so it was a good time to attack.

"Hide behind the buildings! Get ready to jump out!" The general shouted.

Chapter 2: Arrow rain, poisoned brain

The Poisoners marched into the city in battle formation. They were wearing light armour that was dyed or painted purple, a mix of chainmail, hide and leather. At the front were spearmen with long spears and behind them were archers. They were all fairly light troops and could move quickly, but not as quickly as Twin Daggers. The tips of all their spears and arrows had poison on them, and if you got hit, you would feel very sleepy and sick. In a few weeks, you would die. The Poisoners liked to wound but not kill their enemies, injecting them with the poison. Then they would say that if you gave the poisoned soldier to them, they would cure them. Only the Poisoners knew the cure. However, the soldiers who were sent over to them never came back, and they were probably kept in some sort of prison after they were healed. Either that or sold into slavery.

"Make a square!" Yelled their general. "With any luck, the Poison Archer Statue is in the city!"

The Poisoners made a square, archers on the inside and spearmen on the outside. Their emperor, Peter, was convinced that a small but important statue made of purple crystal of a poison archer called the Poison Archer Statue had been stolen by the Midnight Empire, so they started attacking them a few years ago. However, Shade said that

they absolutely hadn't stolen it, but if Peter insisted, they would attack. He called Peter a liar and a warmonger.

"Attack!" Shouted the general of the Twin Daggersmen. They charged out of hiding and ran towards the square. But unlike the Torchers, the poison spearmen and archers had been well trained, and were as disciplined as them. The spearmen pointed their spears at them while the archers shot a volley of arrows. A few men were shot or stabbed.

"Retreat!" Yelled the general.

The Twin Daggersmen retreated, but the spearmen didn't charge. They stood their ground while the archers reloaded and fired another volley. More men were hit, and the poisoned soldiers started slowing down and getting tired.

The general realised they were losing and shouted, "Leave the poisoned soldiers! We have to get out of here!"

"But the Poisoners will get them!" Larry shouted.

"Never mind that, run for it!"

The Midnight soldiers escaped the city successfully. Glancing back, Mark saw the gates being closed behind them and the poison archers watching them flee from the city walls. Luckily, they were already out of shooting distance. They slowed down to a march and within a few hours, they reached the small village of Shadeton. The army rested there for the night, tired but safe. They could reclaim

the city another day, or more likely, night.

Chapter 3: The Great Campaign

The next day, the army woke up at eight AM. They were used to being awake at night so they weren't very good at waking up during the daytime, and they were also still tired from their great battles the day before. The general said they would stay there for the day but they would be going somewhere that night, so they needed some rest. The army consumed so much food that by that night, Shadeton had no food left. When Mark asked if they should save some for the villagers, the general replied that the villagers were just peasants and the army was more important. When Mark told Larry, he wasn't very happy. Larry had always been a bit rebellious and didn't like the way the army killed loads of people when they could have kept them alive. Mark didn't like it either, but they were both too afraid to mention it, because they might get punished. In the afternoon, Larry decided to ask the general where they were going, but he simply said, "Wait and see."

The two soldiers got some sleep that afternoon, and in the evening the general woke them up for a speech.

"The Pillagers and Poisoners are getting too brave and attacking too often. I have orders from the great Emperor Shade himself that we are to attack first the Pillagers and then the Poisoners in their own countries. We hope this will teach them not to mess with us."

The soldiers cheered and then the march began. They

marched across the border into Pillager territory. They didn't need to leave any soldiers behind because Emperor Shade had his own royal guard, who would defend the empire when they were gone. They managed to get to the nearby village of Sparka without any problem. The village Torchers were holding their sticks and sitting around the campfire. They were laughing about all the gold they had plundered, all the horse-drawn carts they had incinerated and all the people they had burned. The Twin Daggersmen easily sneaked up behind them and suddenly stabbed them all in the back. They died immediately and the villagers started to run away, but they weren't fast enough and they were all caught and killed. A few soldiers were sent home with the loot, which was carried on horse-drawn carts that had also been stolen and contained gold, silver, diamond rings and rubies. They left the houses alone, uninhabited but untouched apart from missing jewellery here and there. It was only a small village so there wasn't much, but they passed several more where they did the same thing. But eventually a villager got away, and a scout saw a large Pillager army heading in their direction. But they moved during the day and slept at night, while the Midnight soldiers did the opposite. So one night, they sneaked away and camped a few kilometres away from a large city called Burnia, hidden in a large, dry forest that often had forest fires. They would attack the city tomorrow.

Chapter 4: Attacking Burnia

The general put a few people on guard duty while the rest slept, and the guards would swap over in an hour. However, a few hours in, on Larry's shift, the guards smelled smoke.

Then they caught a flash of red on one of the trees. It was a forest fire! They woke everyone up. It was the middle of the day, and everyone in Burnia would be awake. If they stayed, they would be burned to death, and if they left, they would be spotted. They asked the general what to do.

"We will attack Burnia now," he said, "It's the wrong time of day for a Midnight Empire raid, but this will have to do. We have to attack now or never."

The army rushed out of the forest and towards the city. A few soldiers were burned on the way out but the rest got away unscathed. The city guards saw them and charged out to meet them. However, they left the city undefended. Big mistake. The army was inside in seconds, slaughtering citizens and stealing their valuables. The guards turned around and ran back, but the army weaved in and out of the crowd of citizens and the guards couldn't attack without hitting their own citizens. Even the Pillagers weren't dumb enough to do that.

The army sneaked into back alleys and started stealing things from houses. The guards started searching for them and a few soldiers were burned to death. However, most of them got away safely. The general put some guards on the roof of a giant mansion, and they watched for enemies while the rest of the army loaded their loot into bags and tied them to horses. The horses were faster than the Pillager army and could get home with the treasure safely. They had just finished when the guards shouted, "A large army is approaching!"

"How many men?" The general asked.

"Twice as many men as we have here. It must be two armies joined together."

The Twin Daggers were the main army of the Midnight Empire, but they also had a small but experienced elite force called the Shadow Guard, the emperor's royal guard and a reserve force called Lights Out. It was usual for empires to have extra armies to support their main one, and it seemed they were being used now. They had no chance of taking on two armies and the guards at the same time.

"Take everything you've got and flee," the general said.

The army fled the city, murdering more citizens on the way out. About half the people who lived in Burnia were now dead. On the way out, the Pillager torches flicked their wrists and sent fireballs in their direction, burning a few.

When they left the city, the people riding horses with loot were sent home while the rest of the army camped in the middle of a desert near the border of the Poisoner Empire. It was a bad place to rest, but the army was tired and it was the only place far enough away from Burnia that the Pillagers wouldn't catch them. The general said they would cross the border tomorrow.

Later that night, Mark and Larry asked the general something. "Why did we have to kill all those citizens

today?" They asked.

"They were Pillagers," the general spat, "they kill our citizens without a second thought! Why shouldn't we do the same to them?"

Mark and Larry looked at each other. Larry took Mary to a private corner.

"I think we should organize a mutiny," Larry whispered.

"Don't jump to that conclusion yet, Larry," Mark said, "we should wait to see if the Poisoner citizens are murdered too. If they are, we will do something about it. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

The soldiers went to sleep.

Chapter 5: Crossing the border

The next day, the army woke up at six in the morning and started marching. They didn't want to wait for night because the Pillagers might catch up with them. They marched through the desert at a medium pace. Since their armour was light, they weren't slowed down by the weight.

However, the sun beat down terribly and several soldiers collapsed of exhaustion. The general ordered them to leave the tired soldiers behind, and the rest marched on.

"It's their fault for being so weak. They should never have joined the army," he said.

Everyone was tired and sweating by the time they reached the Poisoner border and crossed it. The desert ended and they found themselves in a dry forest again. They rested there until night and then marched on. The dry forest turned into a rainforest which gave way to a marsh. They decided they would cross the marsh the next night, but for now they would sleep.

The next night, the army set off across the marsh. It was slow going and a few people drowned, but most of them got across safely and reached a city called Venomor. It was bigger than Sparka but smaller than Burnia, and the general told them to sneak into the city. It was surrounded by a wall of smooth stone that they couldn't climb and there were three poison spearmen and three poison archers posted on each of the four towers at each corner of the wall. A rainforest surrounded the city, and they were hidden there. They sneaked up to a section of the wall between two towers. This part of the wall was normally undefended unless the Poisoners knew there were enemies, but occasionally someone would walk past, patrolling the wall. Grappling hooks were thrown up and ten soldiers climbed onto the walls, including Larry and Mark. The next ten soldiers were just about to start climbing when they were spotted by a poison archer and a poison spearman on patrol. But they were still surprised to see them, and the Midnight soldiers quickly rushed upon their enemies. The spearman swung his spear, knocking one of the Twin Daggers off the wall, and backed away, trying to get his spear point pointed at them. The archer fired and reloaded, but she

didn't hit anyone. The general shouted up from the ground, ordering them to kill the two enemies. In a few seconds, both Poisoner soldiers had daggers in their throats. They died, and the soldiers retrieved their daggers. Then they threw ropes down and climbed down the other side of the wall, while the next ten soldiers took their place. Half the soldiers were going to go to the section of the wall which was used to lower and raise the gate, so they could have a quick getaway. Mark and Larry were in the other half of the army, which was looting the city, having climbed down the ropes into the city already. The soldiers who were going to open the gate sneaked up behind the wheel that was used to open it. They found a place to hide behind some bags and bins, because five poison archers were watching over the wheel while five poison spearmen stood guard. They would need help to kill the soldiers and take the post successfully, because it was hard to fight as a body on the walls and the enemy would have time to get reinforcements.

Meanwhile, Mark, Larry and the others sneaked into houses by picking the locks and stole valuables, putting them into sacks. They also stole horses from the stables and put men with full sacks on them. They mostly found purple crystal, which was very valuable to the Poisoners, and ordinary money. However, they also found some ruby, stolen from the Pillagers, and some obsidian, which was stolen from the Midnight Empire. Obsidian was very valuable to the Midnight Empire and ruby was very valuable to the Pillagers. They had just finished their ninth block of houses and were ready to sneak over to the tenth block when somebody on the wall shouted, "Where are Amy and Sam?

They should have finished patrolling by now!"

They realised Amy and Sam must have been the two soldiers on patrol they met while climbing onto the wall. The soldiers would be on them soon. They wouldn't be very happy either, as the soldiers had killed all the citizens who happened to be in their houses when the Twin Daggersmen raided them. This meant Mark and Larry would have to mutiny, as they had planned, but they were both silent at the moment. Their half of the army rushed to a safe hiding spot near the gates, hoping the other soldiers would open it in time.

The other soldiers heard shouted commands from Poisoner captains, and the soldiers around the wheel started getting all their gear together. They used this distraction to run up and stab them all in the back. Then they turned the wheel until the gates opened, running down some steps conveniently placed at this part of the wall and joining the rest of the army. Together they ran out of the city. The poison archers fired down on them, and quite a few men were hit and started getting tired. Most of them were left behind and captured, but a few of them managed to keep up.

They made camp in the rainforest, far enough away from the city to stop the Poisoners from finding them. The soldiers with loot would be sent home on horseback the next day, but the general said the army would attack another city the next night. But Mark and Larry had other ideas.

Chapter 6: The mutiny

Most of the army was asleep during the day, preparing for the big march coming up. A few people were on watch at a time, and they rotated every hour. All the captains and the general were asleep, and Mark and Larry gathered all the ordinary soldiers together. They didn't include the captains and the general because they were all loyal to Shade. They spoke about their plan for mutiny, and found that the other soldiers wanted to mutiny too. They decided they would get ready and attack in the evening, when people hadn't quite gotten up yet but they were already under the cover of darkness.

It was a simple, quick mutiny. The soldiers crept up behind the general and the captains and suddenly stabbed them all in the back. They died in seconds, and it was so quick that there was no resistance. The general and all his officers were dead.

The soldiers then debated over who the new general should be, but they decided it should be Larry because he came up with the idea of mutiny. Larry chose the captains himself, including Mark.

"So what are we going to do now?" One of the soldiers asked.

"It's not over yet," said Larry, "The general and his officers are not our true enemies. They all fight for Shade, and I believe it is him who wants us to kill all those citizens. I think we should head home and attack Shade in his castle.

Then I will be the emperor and Mark can lead the army. We will start a revolution, and make a new Midnight Empire. A better one."

The soldiers cheered.

"I think we should set out now, and get home quickly before the Poisoners find us," Larry said.

The soldiers packed up their camp and marched on. The soldiers with loot rode ahead on horseback and would hopefully get back home safely. The army marched through the rainforest until they came to a big lake. They followed it along until they reached a wide river. There was a river on both sides, and the soldiers with loot were stuck. There was a bridge not far away but it was heavily guarded.

Half the soldiers crossed the river here, swimming across easily. The other half stayed with the loot and the horses and walked along the bank towards the bridge. The soldiers on horses stayed where they were while the soldiers on both sides either sneaked up behind the guards or waited under the bridge. The soldiers on the bridge then pushed the guards into the river, and the ones under the bridge kicked them as they fell. They landed with a big splash and were carried away downstream. The army crossed the bridge safely and the soldiers with loot went ahead again. The main body kept walking and eventually made camp in a dry forest. They would set out again the next day.

However, the army lit too many fires that morning before

they went to bed, and they were discovered by a group of Poisoner soldiers. They didn't attack though. They sent some soldiers up with a white flag and a message for Larry.

"I see you have some soldiers that are poisoned," said one of the Poisoners, "If you give them to us than we can heal them. We are also here to say that you are trespassing in our lands. If you stay where you are, we will not attack, but if you move your camp, we will attack you."

Larry and his captains debated for a long time. Finally, Larry spoke to his soldiers.

"If you are poisoned, it is up to you if you want to go with the Poisoners or not. If you do, you will be cured but you may become a slave. If you don't, you will die in a few weeks. The choice is yours. We will stay here for now, until we reach some sort of agreement with the Poisoners."

About half the poisoned soldiers joined the Poisoners. Then the army went to sleep, unsure what to do next.

Chapter 7: The revolution

The next day, the army stayed where they were. They were running out of food but they couldn't go anywhere else without a fight. In the afternoon, some messengers came to their camp and asked what they were doing in Poisoner territory. Larry, Mark and the other officers were unsure how much they should tell the Poisoners, because they might use the knowledge against them. But the Poisoners didn't like the Midnight Empire much, and they came to the

conclusion that telling the Poisoners about how they had done a mutiny and were planning a revolution would do more good than harm.

The messengers went back with the news, and that evening a small force of Poisoners appeared, under the command of Captain Adam Acido.

"We are going to escort you back to your empire so that you can start your revolution," said Adam, "I'm not really supposed to help you, and Peter would be pretty angry with me, so we will have to move fast. Good luck on your mission, and if you find the Poison Archer artifact, please return it to us."

"We don't have the artifact," Larry said, "I'm not even sure it existed in the first place! Maybe Peter made it up!"

"It definitely exists," Adam argued, "I even saw it before it was stolen. And just because Shade says you don't have it doesn't mean he's telling the truth."

There was silence after that. The Poisoners were not used to marching at night so they slept that night and marched the next day. They soon reached a city that was bigger than Venomor, called Slimas. The soldiers were not allowed in but merchants sold them food and supplies outside the city gates. It was quite expensive so they didn't buy much, getting just enough for one meal. Then they marched on. In the late afternoon, some of the soldiers started complaining because they were hungry.

"Don't worry, we're nearly at the border," Larry said.

They crossed the border and said goodbye to Adam that evening. They made a camp in Shadeton, where they found the citizens starving. Rather than taking what little food they had, they hunted for wild boar, deer, ducks, chickens and cows. They gathered enough food not only to feed them, but enough to give the Shadeton residents food for three days. This would stop the starvation and allow the farmers to get back to work. The army stayed there that night, planning to march to Shade's castle and attack him in the next few nights.

Chapter 8: The assassination

The following night, the army marched on. They marched through many cities and villages, including the cities of Shadowa, Darrkon, Doomar and Glooma. This was quite a long way and they were quite tired, so they rested in a dark, roofed forest. The night after that, they finally saw the palace on the horizon, in the capital city of Moone. They marched through a village called Owlton on the way there without trouble, but when they were just about to scale the wall of the castle, they heard rustling behind them and spun around. Adam and his troops emerged from the bushes, disguised in Midnight peasants' clothing.

"What are you doing here?" Larry whispered.

"We tried to go back and join the army, but apparently someone spotted us and told Emperor Peter. Now he's

paying people money to kill me. We had no choice but to run away here, and we decided that since we were here, we might as well help you with your revolution," Adam replied.

"Quiet, someone might hear you!" Mark hissed, "Anyway, it's looking more like an assassination now. You wait out here and we'll open the gates for you."

The Twin Daggersmen scaled the wall while the Poisoners prepared by putting on their armour and cleaning their weapons.

Mark, Larry and the other officers jumped off the wall on the other side. The ordinary soldiers had already jumped over and were hiding in the bushes. They slowly sneaked out and the whole army moved as one towards the door of the keep. It was locked, so Mark picked the lock. But as he opened the door, it made a loud creaking noise and ten men jumped out with a cry. They were from the Emperor's Royal Guard!

"What are you doing here?" One of them asked, "Shade didn't summon you here."

Mark didn't reply. He just struck. Five of the guards died and the others fled up the stairs. Another captain threw a dagger which hit one of them in the leg.

"Quick! If you serve under Captain George, go to the gates and open them!" Larry yelled, "Everyone else, up the

stairs!"

The soldiers charged up the stairs, but two of them bent down to pick up the soldier with a knife in his leg. Big mistake. The four remaining guards turned around and threw their daggers. Most of the soldiers either dodged out of the way or ducked but the two soldiers bending down were struck in the head. Then ten more guards joined the fight. The guards were fighting downhill and had the advantage, and they couldn't go another way because this was the only way to the throne room.

"Watch out!" Shouted Adam as he and a few of his men burst into the room. The gates must have been opened successfully. The poison archers fired, hitting a few guards. The others fled further upstairs, and were joined by ANOTHER ten guards, increasing their number to 21. This continued until there were no more stairs to run up and 104 guards. But at the top of the stairs there was no advantage. With the Twin Daggersmen throwing daggers, the Poison Archers shooting arrows and the Poison Spearsmen charging in organized groups, the guards quickly fell. The poison made half of them go to sleep and the other half were killed by the Twin Daggersmen. They then climbed up another set of stairs, meeting little resistance, and arrived in the throne room, where they saw a cloaked figure on a throne surrounded by thirty guards. Emperor Shade.

Larry realised he had never actually seen the Emperor in person before, and nobody knew what was under that hood. Well, it was time to find out. The soldiers charged.

Somehow, Mark and Larry pushed through the guards to the Emperor and stabbed him in the chest. Then the emperor ROARED. He threw his cloak away, revealing a monster with a hundred arms underneath. Each one held a dagger, and they were extremely long. Reaching out, the emperor cut an officer's head off. Then he picked up a soldier and threw him at another soldier.

Without thinking, Mark and Larry slashed. They chopped two arms off and the monster who used to be their Emperor roared in pain. But the arms turned into black snakes which hissed and tried to bite them. They were driven back. Then Adam came forwards, holding a poison spear. He thrust it at the monster's head and hit it right between the eyes. Immediately, the monster started to shrink and collapsed on itself. Its arms fell off and the snakes that they had created died. The monster was weak to poison!

The Royal Guard immediately threw down their arms and surrendered. "We are loyal to the Emperor," they said, "You have killed him, so now we are loyal to you."

A few days later, Larry was relaxing in the throne room. He was now the emperor and Mark was the general of the army. Meanwhile, some people were searching the Treasury for money to pay the soldiers with and anything else that could be useful. The army was to report here the next day with the results. But for now, he was having a break while a servant massaged his back.

Chapter 9: A surprising discovery

The next day, Mark led the army through the gates and into the courtyard. His old friend, Emperor Larry, was waiting with some guards and a sack full of money. He was also holding something green. Adam and his troops were here too. Larry payed the soldiers with the money and then held up the green object.

"We found this in the treasury," Larry said, "It's the Poison Archer Artifact. Shade must have stolen it without telling us. We will have to return this now."

Just then, a messenger ran into the courtyard. "Emperor Larry!" He shouted, "A large Poisoner army is approaching Shadeton from Colourpest!"

"Oh no!" Exclaimed Larry, "Mark and Adam! Send your troops over to defend immediately!"

"My soldiers won't like fighting their own empire," Adam said.

"But Peter doesn't want you anyway, so for now you can consider yourselves part of the Midnight Empire," Mark said, "Besides, you don't have to kill anyone and after we return the artifact, Peter might let you back into your own empire. But for now, we must defend our territory."

The army set off. It was a few days' march to Shadeton and the Poisoners had taken their time to enslave their residents, loot everything and attack nearby towns. The Twin

Daggersmen and Adam's troops hid in a forest on one side of Shadeton.

"I don't like Shadeton's name anymore," Mark whispered, "It reminds me of Emperor Shade. We should change it to Larryton or something after we drive these Poisoners out."

"Sounds like a good idea," Adam replied.

That night, when their enemies were asleep, the Twin Daggersmen crept out of hiding, leaving Adam's troops in the forest. They sneaked into the tents of the Poisoners and tried to stab them all in the chest. However, one of them cried out and the Twin Daggersmen ran back to the forest as the Poisoners got up and started putting armour on and picking up weapons. They threw some daggers back into the village as they ran, killing a few men. The Poisoners charged in a body, and suddenly Adam's troops sprang out of hiding to meet them. They were so shocked that there were other Poisoners here that they stood rooted to the spot until the first arrows hit their men and spears were thrust through the chests of the men in their front line. Suddenly, spears were stabbing and arrows were flying everywhere. The main Poisoner force was larger than Adam's troops, but they had totally forgotten about the Twin Daggersmen, who crept up behind them and cut the ankles of the archers. The archers cried as they fell and the spearmen turned around to see what had happened. Big mistake. Adam's archers fired arrows at their backs and they collapsed, defeated. Most of them were either poisoned or injured.

"We surrender!" Gaspd the captain of this force.

"Take this," said Mark, holding out the Poison Archer Artifact, which he had taken with him. "We found this in the treasury. Emperor Shade and his Royal Guard stole it without telling us. But we recently assassinated him and replaced him with Emperor Larry."

The Poisoners' eyes widened. "Thanks," their captain gasped. Then he gave a command and the Poisoners slowly limped up the hill to Colourpest, tired but grinning and holding the Artifact above their heads as if it was a trophy.

Chapter 10: The message

The next day, the army sent a messenger to Larry to notify him about their victory and that they wanted to rename Shadeton. The Emperor replied he was very happy and that he would call the city Markton because it was Mark who thought of the idea. The army also got a messenger from the Poisoners.

"Thank you for returning the Artifact," he said, "We have decided to make peace with you and return all the Midnight citizens and soldiers that we captured, as long as you give us the Poisoner citizens and soldiers you captured.

However, we are not going to make any alliances. Peter does not make allies with people who fought him in earlier days. Instead, we will just stop attacking you so you can focus on keeping yourself safe from the Pillagers. However, if you are seen in our territory or in Colourpest, we will attack again."

All the prisoners were returned and for the next few days, there was an uneasy truce between the two empires. Adam was still not allowed back into the Poisoner Empire and he was very worried. But four days after the last messenger, another one arrived with news that the Poisoners were considering an alliance.

"What happened?" General Mark asked, "A few days ago you said you wouldn't make any alliances."

"Emperor Peter didn't want to," he said, "but all the citizens protested. They said that if he didn't make alliances and let Adam come back to their empire, they would start a revolution. And not just an assassination like what you had. A real revolution."

A lot happened in the next few days. Adam and his troops returned home to join the rest of the Poisoner army, an alliance was made and the Poisoners decided to share Colourpest with the Midnight Empire. Each empire had one half of the city and the citizens there were able to mix together. They were allowed into each others' empires and an embassy was set up in Colourpest. It was actually a building that was half in Poisoner territory and half in Midnight territory, so it belonged to both of them. They also agreed that they would organise a campaign to wipe out the Pillagers once and for all and share their territory between the two empires.

And what happened to all the characters?

Emperor Larry and Emperor Peter continued to lead their empires and the citizens thought they were the best emperors they had ever had. General Mark worked with the general of the Poisoner army and together they eventually defeated the Pillagers. And Adam eventually left the army and became an embassador and a very important person in both the Poisoner and the Midnight Empires.

The End