

Tales of Valor & Deceit:

Three Levers

Djarka roped himself into the pilot's chair. The Behemoth's cramped interior was already heating up; he could feel sweat trickle between his shoulder blades. The two Dwarves behind him were running through their checklists, making sure the war machine was ready for battle. Djarka pulled on his thick leather gloves, then checked the steam pressure to make sure that the boilers weren't running too hot. The three control levers were in the ready position.



Now all he needed was someone to shoot.



Someone clanked on the outside of the tank. Djarka slid open the metal screen. He could see the commander of the rebel unit through the aperture, giving the signal to attack.

Djarka slid the screen closed. He grabbed the first lever and shoved it forward. Through the thick glass of a front porthole, he could see the Behemoth's huge cylinder begin to spin, its sharp, foot-long spikes slicing the air. The Dwarf shoved the second lever into position, and the Behemoth surged forward. On the field, the Brass and Blade Golems marched toward them at top speed. From Djarka's point of view ten feet above the field, the Atlantean war machines looked like toys.

"Do we have a shot yet?" yelled one of Djarka's co-pilots over the steam engine noise. Squinting one eye closed, Djarka looked out the porthole. He had a hard time finding a hole in the mob of oncoming golems.

"We can't miss!" Djarka yelled back. "Here we go!"

The two Dwarves slapped their hands over their ears. Djarka ratcheted the third lever forward. A thunderclap boomed behind his head. A belch of fire exploded from the cannon. Bone-numbing vibrations shook the tank. The black powder bomb exploded in the enemy lines, blasting a couple of the advancing Blade Golems into a shower of flaming shrapnel.