

Erin Nienhuis

## Battleground

The digital clock in my car read 1:58 as we drove past the plaza filled with hundreds of people. Individuals were indistinguishable from the rest. The plaza simply looked like a single rippling body of thousands of colors and protrusions. I stared at the plaza, drinking in the sight, before I remembered that I needed to park my car. My friend Sandy and I were headed to the giant pillow fight that was taking place in downtown Grand Rapids. We had our pillows, we'd chosen our loyalty, signified by our black t-shirts, and were geared up to see some feathers fly!

I illegally parked my car as Sandy quickly swiped black mascara across her cheeks, and we threw ourselves out the doors, running in the direction of the roaring—toward the Rosa Parks Circle. As I ran, I stuffed my keys in my purse, gripped it under my armpit, and brandished my blue, plaid-patterned pillow. Encircling the plaza were spectators, news vans, and the armies of soldiers, their loyalty identified by the colors they flew. Wearing black, my comrade and I joined the rest of our troops. Quickly scanning the groups of other warmongers, I noted the presence of the nations of Red, Green, Orange, Blue, and White, as well as smaller nations such as Purple, and the Independents (identified by their non-solid standards). Turning my eyes back toward my own strategically organized army, I saluted my fellows in arms that were familiar to me, and then looked toward the battleground.

A military band gave the preamble to the battle, striking anticipation and awe into our bodies with the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. A chant broke out among our ranks,

shouting our allegiance into the trembling air, “BLACK BLACKBLACKBLACK  
**BLACK!**” We held our weapons threateningly in the air, shaking them at our enemies,  
mouths open and roaring wordlessly. As the song ended, our leader started the descent to  
the battleground, the ranks folding out smoothly after him. Each of the other nations  
started advancing the field, and then the battle-horn was sounded, loud and ringing.  
Roaring our excitement and aggression, my comrade and I charged the field, surrounded  
by our allies like flying ravens.

The battle became a frenzy, a writhing mass, and everyone at its center struggling  
to smite his enemies. Sweat ran down faces covered in war paints. Bodies pushed, ran,  
shoved, smashed, tripped, retreated, advanced, circled, converged. I braced my back  
against my companion and we took them all as they came. I brought my weapon down  
onto the head of each enemy, arms burning with continuous effort. The screams and cries  
of my allies and enemies alike filled the air now. Over the general noise, a voice cried,  
“Black, to me!” Obeying, we converged around our leader, and lead a valiant single  
charge into the unsuspecting throng of our enemies, screaming a battle cry.

After a while, our army spread among the rest, we retreated to the outskirts,  
breathing hard and nursing our wounds –

“Erin! Erin!” I turned around at the sound of my name and grinned to see my  
friend Patty standing on the outside of the circle with a camera. I pulled my friend Sandy  
over to say Hi.

“Hey! I didn’t know you were gonna be here! Why aren’t you out there with a  
pillow?” I asked, holding up my plaid pillow in query. She laughed, and I didn’t pay  
much attention to her response as I looked around at the spectators with video recorders

and cameras. I glanced back at the huge group of participants smacking each other with pillows, and was eager to get back in there. “Could you hold my purse?” I asked, and at her assent, pulled it off my shoulder and handed it to her. “I’ll talk to you in a little bit,” I assured her, and, Sandy’s arm hooked with mine, we headed back to the fight.

–Renewed by our brief pause, we reentered the fray with vigor, striking down men, women, and children of any color not our own. Already it was plain to our eyes that our enemies were losing soldiers, had worn out their reinforcements, and had used up their supplies. Victory in easy sight was just what our troops needed to inspire a last push into their reserves of strength and win the battle for our nation.

Finishing off the last of the other nations, we the Black army converged in the center, once more declaring our name to the empty air –

**Blackblackblackblackblackblack!**