

**The Twelfth Century**  
by  
**The Dark Lord Insidious**  
(just call me Sid)

**A New Beginning:  
Zombies  
&  
Skeletons  
&  
Not So Elvin Princesses,  
Oh my!**

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**### Chapter 2 ###  
### Supper with the Geek ###**

No!

Shut Up! All of you!

You are a family...

No, I don't want to hear it. You're a family, now. You act like a family, now. So you can act like you were a family, then. Period. End of story...

"Well, if that's the end and we're done here..."

Shut up or I will end you!

Good. Excellent. I see that I have your full attention.

So, I'm just going to lay down a little groundwork, here. Bob, you're the dad -- and you were so concerned with providing for your

family that you worked yourself to exhaustion and fell asleep at the wheel of an automobile on the way home from work one night.

“Actually, I was wide awake. I got blindsided by a tractor trailer...”

Excellent. Good. Way to work in the meaningless details, Bob. So now, we also know why you took up accounting and handle the books around here. Anything else you’d like to add, you’ll note I ask the question rhetorically?

Once again, then, good. Excellent.

Carol, you play the role of the mother in this clan.

“And I’m the one who fell asleep at the wheel.”

“Was this before or after you decided to drink the fifth of vodka and accidentally drive off a bridge?”

Nobody cares! Not now! Not then!

<Sob!> “I know.” <Sob!>

“There’s no reason to hurt her feelings, Sid. We care, honey. Don’t we Ned?”

“Sure, um, mom? I mean, you’re like a mom. You treat me like a son.”

<Sob!> “You really think of me as your mother? You’re not just saying that because Sid is making you?”

“Sure, yeah. Second mom, afterlife mom, whatever. I like the way we hang out together as a family. Though sometimes I wish...”

<Sob!> “Oh, here it comes.” <Sob! Sob!> “No, no. Don’t hold back, I’ve been betrayed by worse.

“I was just going to say, it would have been nice -- nicer -- if you’d gotten that prescription filled, um, first.”

“Yeah, Sid. Isn’t there something you can do? What was it, honey? Praxil?”

Do I look like a pharmacist?

“A potion, you can whip up a potion, can’t you?”

Well, there you go. That was easy. And now you’ve got your side quest. Help me with the story and I’ll see what I can do. Maybe kick her down some happy juice, I presume that’s what you’re looking for?

<Sob!> “Really, you would do that? For me? But then, it really won’t do any good, will it?”

Well, we’ll never know at this rate.

But no. No sense giving in to that negative thinking.

We’ve got the introductions out of the way, after all. And you’re sitting down for supper. You’re a nice nuclear family...

“If it was a nuclear family, I’d need a kid sister. I always wanted a kid sister.”

“And if we’re sitting down for supper, then actually eating something would be nice. I mean, it’s been ages since I’ve had anything to eat. I mean, seriously, on occasion, every now and again, I actually resorted to grabbing a pinch of dirt and giving it a chew, you know, just to see, just to try and remember what it was like. But then, even that doesn’t taste like anything anymore. It’s all just tastes like the inside of my mouth, just gummy and bland.”

Um, Carol, I do believe think they’re insulting your cooking.

“How can I insult what’s not here?”

Pretend. Just pretend. I’ll cast a spell or something, working something in post-production.

“What? Seriously? We’ve got to pretend to eat. Why? Because you’re too cheap to fry up a rat?”

“Yum! Um, good chicken, mom?”

<Sob!> “You’re not just saying that?”

“Chicken? Really, um, son. How do you get chicken?”

“If I’ve got the choice between real rat and pretend chicken, I’m going for the pretend chicken. Besides, isn’t that the joke? That everything tastes like chicken. So that’ll cover whatever he pastes in later.”

OK. Good. Good. I like the improvisation, but the scene isn’t really about the food.

<Sob!> “You don’t like my food?”

“We like the food fine, Carol. Could maybe use more... some, any, really. But what’s here is fantastic. So, good job, honey. But, um, Sid. So if it’s not about the food or lack thereof, what is this scene supposed to be about, then, anyway?”

The newcomer's, Bob. The newcomers.

"What newcomers?"

Didn't you read the script?

"I would have, you know, if someone had given me a script to read."

Fair enough. Tell you what. Improvise. You seem to be pretty good at that. Maybe ask your son if he saw anything interesting today.

"Well, Ned? Did you?"

"Saw Sid staring into the Reflecting Pool over by the Diaz."

You saw Elves, Ned. Chaos Elves just moved into the neighborhood.

"Oh, that's right! Strathmore just got a new steed. He was ripping it up over by the West Gate, jumping over everything... even knocked over a few gravestones, I thought for sure Sid was going to... um, go ballistic. But you seemed pretty happy about all that, Sid? As I seem to recall, you were sort of egging him on."

We were shooting the opening credits, the Elves journey from the Courts of Chaos to their new home in the outer reaches of New Suburbia. And you know how Elves are, or at least how Strathmore can be. So as the rest of the family rides along in the relative comfort and safety of a horse drawn carriage, he's prancing along beside on his mount, showing off and running interference.

"Interference?"

You know, in case the host is attacked, he'd be the first to go, thereby giving the rest of the party a moment to react and the women folk a chance to escape.

"You're not setting up some kind of a war reenactment, are you? You're not going to have us fight each other?"

No, I don't go for that sort of stuff. I'm actually hoping for a lighthearted farce.

"Really. You don't have some zombies of the suburban apocalypse thing planned?"

And you said you didn't read the script.

<Sob!> "I knew it! We're all going to die! He's going to kill us all!"

First off, the dead can't die. And second, I'm only joking.

"It's not a very funny joke."

<Sob!> "It's cruel. That's what it is."

No, cruel would be spiking your heads by the front gates as a warning to all those who would talk over my story. Now, that would be cruel.

"Especially on account of how you haven't given us a script."

I haven't got time for that, Bob.

"Truthfully, if there's one thing you and all the rest of us have it is time and plenty of it."

Shut up, Bob, before I decide to rethink my stance on spiked skulls. Ned, why don't you describe Strathmore?

"Strathmore? Are you joking?"

<Sob!> "Is he? His jokes aren't very good."

Ned, please describe Strathmore before I lose my patience... which means, now, immediately.

"How?"

Why are you making this so difficult?

"It's probably because, oh, I don't know, Sid, maybe it's because Strathmore's soul was shattered by some mass destruction area effect spell."

What?

"Like, his whole village was wiped out by some disintegration ray thing and their souls got all mixed up and jumbled together."

What are you talking about?

<Sob!> "It must be awful."

"Actually, honey, I thought it would be kind of cool. I mean, I'm assuming Strathmore can communicate with the rest of his family... or anyone else that he's linked to. You know, like, he's got a bit of his mother and father's soul and even his sister's mixed in with his own, so they're all sort of interconnected or something, phasing from one moment to the next."

Ned, what are your parents talking about?

"Strathmore, Mata, I don't actually know their parents names. Anyhow, when the lot of them died, the explosion or magic or whatever

was so intense even the gods couldn't pull them apart and make them whole again, so they just kind of got patchwork-quilted back together, and they get to spend the rest of their days trying to unscramble or something."

Wow! That's good. I like it. It's wrong, like a million miles off base, but I like it. So, maybe we can work that in somewhere.

"What do you mean, 'It's wrong', Sid."

I mean, it's wrong. They're Chaos Elves. They're not a jumble of souls. Go visit the Reflecting Pool and drop in a couple rocks if you want to see what a mash of fragmented souls looks like. Chaos Elves, on the other hand, might like you to believe that they're not all of this world, which is true to some extent, but for the most, they just can't decide who they are or what they want to look like and so flicker through all the possible options, non-stop, one after the other.

"Really?"

Yes, Bob. Really. So Ned, back to you. Care to give another go at describing Strathmore?

"Um, like you said, he flickers. I always thought we were seeing his kinsmen as they leaked through, but if you're telling the truth," and why wouldn't I be, "what we're seeing is a sort of reflection of, what? Probably what's on his mind... perhaps as he decides who he wants to be?"

No. Don't guess. What you're seeing is a cross between what Strathmore wants you to see and what you want to see, so it's different for everyone. And this is true for all Chaos Elves -- dead or alive.

"Really?"

Yes, really, Bob. And now, maybe you should send your son out to play.

<Sob!> "At night, in a cemetery, full of ghostessies and ghoulies and fracturally restructured Chaos Elves who don't know if they're coming or going or what they want to be!"

It's either you or him, Carol.

<Sob!> "I knew it! We're all going to die!"

"Mom, we're already dead. What's the worse that can happen?"

Well, Dust.

<Sob!> “Dust! No! Don’t go! He’s the only son I have, Sid.”

“Mom, you’re overreacting. I’ll be fine. I will be fine, right Sid?”

Of course, you have my word.

<Sob!> “Don’t listen to him. He’s a Dark Necromancer.”

“Mom, relax.”

So, anyhow, if that’s settled, Ned, the plan (and it turns out it was only a plan) is for you to step through that Reflecting Pool we’ve been talking so much about as of late and you’ll emerge on the other side in a sort of stylized recreation of Pre-Contact Suburbia... or, um, slightly Post Contact Suburbia, seeing as how the Chaos Elves have just arrived.

But really, Carol, I’m insulted. ‘Ghostessies and Ghoulies’, you act like you’ve never met your neighbors. And my cemetery is safe. I run a tight ship, I’ll have you know.

“Oh, that’s right, Sid. Long waiting list, as I hear it. Your cemetery, folks are just dying to get in.”

<Sob!> “That was awful, Bob.”

“What? He said he wanted a comedy, so I’m just helping out.”

“But come on, dad. To help, the jokes would have to be funny.”

“Well, if that’s going to be your attitude, young man, perhaps you should take it outside and I’ll help your mother with the dishes.”

<Sob!> “There aren’t any dishes. And I could tell, no one liked my cooking.”

“Well then, good thing there aren’t any leftovers.”

<Sob!> “There never are.”

“Um, and on that note, I’m going to go outside and play, right Sid?”

Yes, exactly.

{{{Chapter End}}}