

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 4
Dinner with the Wiz

“Perfect! From the start! And, ‘Action!’”

Hey, wait! I’m supposed to say that.

“I’ve waited long enough for this. Anyhow, that’s what you would say. So, here’s the thing. We’re at the wizard’s house. And I’m Wally the Wizard.”

Not, Wally the Wondrous Wizard or Wally the Wiz-Bang Wizard?

“Right, we should introduce ourselves all right and proper like. I’m Wally the Wizard. And this is Abby, my Apprentice.”

“What? So, do I say ‘Hi’ or something?”

“You’re doing fine. Just make sure you have the respect -- you’ll never get complete control otherwise -- of the creature you summoned.”

I have a name.

“Right, make sure Insidious the Infernal Dark Necromancer is standing on his marker.”

“The hexagram?”

What?

“Oh, nothing binding for now. Wally said that we’ll need to get that locked-in post-production based on whatever editing protocol you use. But for now, maybe we should have flames dance around your head. Or, no! I remember, now. We were thinking long run about maybe doing one of those fireside chat things, maybe getting Gloria’s,” the Ghost’s, “help, who knows. See, it would be like on of those neighborhood gossip rings, you know, only instead of housewives leaning over backyard fences to chat it up, it would be a bunch of alchemists and cooks and spell slingers from the Old Country trading bits of news through their kitchen fires.”

“But you’re more of a Dust guy, right Sid.”

A bit of Dust here and there helps to keep the mind focused -- and if used properly (and on the right folks) can help to give things an aura of... quiet, undisturbed, serenity. But then, it would appear you have this thing (whatever exactly it might be at this point) thought out further than I would have supposed. Speaking of which, Abby, why are you dressed like a...

“Harlot, Erotic Dancer, Slave Girl...”

“Well, I am your Apprentice, which is supposed to mean I’m also your lover and your wife,” Abby interjects. But then, they have never consummated the, um, er, arrangement. Perhaps that’s because the Wiz-Bang Cracker-Jack doesn’t have what it takes after all these years, centuries, eons, or epochs. Truly, the guy is old.

But to belay that theory, Wally merely gazes at the bigger than life portrait of Abigail (who appears to be quite the heartbreaker) that hangs over the mantle as he gives a wheezy sigh.

“He’s always pointing out my shortcomings and comparing me to her. I don’t see how I’m ever going to fill her shoes,” Abby sighs as well, meeting Wally’s despair, resignation, and/or weariness (who knows exactly with these two) note for note. “You know, when I first signed on as Wally’s Apprentice, I thought it was a good indication, you

know, that he was mourning the loss, showed he could love me, care for me, and that I could count on him in a pinch no matter what, you know, that he would always have my back... and speaking of backs and hindquarters in general,” Abby remarks while dancing around in slow gyrating circles, “Methinks it’s time to back that promise up, Old Man.”

Is she always like this?

“Yes. That about sums it up.” Wheeze. Sigh.

“He feels guilty over the... what? Incident? I think that’s what we’re calling it. Probably wasn’t even his fault. Probably not a darn thing he could do about it. But all the same, he feels like he’s to blame...”

“A Wizard is always responsible for his Apprentice.”

“I get that a lot, how many times have I hear that, what? ‘A Wizard is responsible for his Apprentice’, but not perhaps responsive to her needs. Come on, I mean, get a load of these legs. And these thighs, do they not sparkle, or what? And I’m wearing just what he likes. You know I am. But does he notice? Does he care?”

“Not yet, not tonight.”

“Or any night...”

“When the time is right...”

“When pigs fly...”

Of course, that wouldn’t be a problem for either of you, so...

“Idioms, we’re trying to go with the local idioms. Speaking of which...”

“Idiom or idiots?” Abby asks for whatever reason. “Where are we?”

“Um, yes, well,” and gauging from Wally’s reaction (and/or the poor set up to a lame joke), perhaps the two of them have been ‘rehearsing’ this scene far more than I would like, which I have come to expect out of Wally. I’m sure he’s already played this all out, perhaps countless times before, and for years running (and now that I come to think about it, that might explain why he’s been so darn easy to understand the past few moments.

Anyway, they’ve got some agenda (Wizards and Apprentices always do) that they no doubt worked out far advance (and/or

'postproduction', one never knows with a Wiz). But I guess that's the price to be had for their involvement. (And I need their involvement.)

Anyway, so, continuing on where we left off, Abby is saying, "He's an idiot," of some as yet to be named individual.

(And who knows who she's responding to? Probably someone over the fireplace wireless. Not that they've got that going yet, but...)

"Sid, the pertinent point is that we do not think that you will have a problem with S-Kelly vis-a-vie that whole method acting 'Action!' thing. He's sort of immersed in the moment, if you know what I mean," (which I very seldom do).

So, what are you saying?

"Well, in short, S-Kelly," who most folks call Kelly, but I'll include the 'S' even when others drop it, "is an idiot," which is true. But then, most skeletons -- Warlord or not, and he's not the Warlord his father is, not by a long shot -- are idiots (meaning his father). I mean, there's a reason we lost The War -- and/or most any war. Anyway, S-Kelly, "doesn't take his protective Dark Rites very seriously," Abby surmises rather succinctly before going off on another tangent. (The second this conversation, but who's counting? But whatever.) "Really! The lot of you with your Dark This and Dark That!"

No, need to get personal, Abby. I don't make fun of you and Wally with your crisscrossing backward ways. Speaking of which, is that what this pentagram is all about, Wally?

"As you well know, the borders dropped and," in theory, "everyone have moved to Earth Central -- Star Date: Suburbia - Initial Post Contact - Prognosis Open." Um, Wally's a big Dr Who fan. (Don't ask. 'Dr Who?' 'Why, yes!' And so on.) "I mean, that's the story, right? Dark Forces Unite, or something like that"

Yes.

"So, there was -- and so there is -- a truce?"

Exactly so, and so again, what's with the pentagram? Not very truce-like if you ask me.

"As Abby was saying..."

“Yeah, you’re all Dark This and Dark That, Sid. I don’t trust the lot of you.” (The lot of us?) “And neither does Old Man Fiddlesticks, here. So, as to make sure any truce sticks...”

“Through any intermediary...” Wally corrects and/or accents (with magic, no doubt, not that I can see and telltale traces).

“Yeah, to make sure it sticks ‘through any intermediary’, because we’re obviously not going to be able to bind you directly...”

“Here?”

“...in the here and now,” Abby says, wording her charm as best she can, which being an apprentice, you know, is what it is. “But the thinking is, if we successful cast a dweomer on S-Kelly...”

“That way we get leverage, a multiplication of the effect.”

Leverage, Wizard?

(And that may sounds a bit hostile. At least, it does in retrospect. I mean, I’m trying to make all of this as clear as possible, calling out timestamps when appropriate and so on. So, it may get a bit confusing. But then, that may just -- yes, it may just -- be an indication that there is more to this than meets the eye. Which is another way of saying, for someone walking into an enchantment, I was, am, and continue to be amazingly cooperative -- post production back-stamp effects cross both ways my friends -- and what has yet to happen can still be undone, if you know what I mean.)

So, anyhow, the point is, “This thing, this exercise, this story as you call it is going to be real for S-Kelly, it already is. But the enchantment is coupled pretty loosely. But whatever it’s extent, there will definitely be no need to say ‘Action!’ for S-Kelly’s benefit. He’s into it. And therefore, as a side bonus, we’re counting on his letting down his guard...”

“And showing his true colors,” Abby says once again jumping in and finishing what Wally started, which is pretty much what an Apprentice is for... Wizards too, for that matter. So, it should come as no surprise when Wally jumps back in an adds, “It’s about putting all of one’s cards on the table, what does it mean to be a Wizard, an Apprentice, and for that matter, a Dark Necromancer.”

An interesting proposition...

“So you trust Wally?” Abby asks, sort of surprised.

I assume Wally knows what he’s doing.

“Do you?” Abby assures me. “Seriously, you should watch him try to find his socks some morning. I’m sorry, but every day it’s the same and it’s a real confidence killer.”

“We all have our areas of expertise.”

“You can’t even remember what I just said, let alone where you put your hat. And Gra’gl help us if you’ve misplaced the eye of newt or anything important. I must say, you’re being remarkably lucid tonight, Wally.”

“Speaking of which, isn’t it time for you to go looking for that cat of yours?”

“Ah, my forgetful Old Man, what you need to remember is that I don’t have or want a cat. See what I mean, Sid. It’s always some bit of randomness. Eh, but I love him all the same. Speaking of which, Wally, wouldn’t you rather I stay at home, build the fire up high...” and as she trails off, this would be about where Abby starts to, um, flirt dangerously with the edges of decorum and good taste as she starts to wiggle like a horny pole cat.

But Wally is used to such distractions and knows how to handle his salacious little apprentice, “Go find that cat! It’s the first step, Apprentice! I don’t know why you are making this harder than it needs to be!”

“Let me make it simple. I don’t have a cat! And I don’t want a cat!”

“First, find that cat!”

“Why? If I was going to get anything, I’d get a Dragon!”

“You’ll regret a Dragon, only get you in trouble. Besides, how are you going to take care of a dragon if you can’t even keep track of a cat?”

“I don’t have a cat!”

“Precisely!”

Um, well. OK. If that’s settled.

Oh, wait. I guess not...

“Fine!” Abby declares after a moment. “If you want to get rid of me so you can spend another night sobbing over your loss,” Abby says,

as she indicates the portrait over the mantle. “Then fine! I’m out of here. I’m young. I’m wild. I’m good looking...”

At which point, Wally snaps his fingers, like, you know, your better Wizards often do, and Abby’s clothes are transformed into...

“Boy’s clothes?”

“Ah, clothes by which to blend in and stalk your suburban playmates...”

“And get the lay of the land,” Abby says hopefully. “ But then, you know, if I could get any action in here, there would be no need for me to go elsewhere...”

“Good reason to find a cat, if you ask me.”

“I! Don’t! Have! A! Cat! You crazy old man.”

“No? Where do you get these crazy ideas? But that’s neither here nor there. Find Ned, he can still help, you. Not me, mind you. No helping me, not now, too late for that now. But if it’s dragons you’re after, Ned’s the one you want to befriend. He probably has a way with cats, too, now that I think about it. Steady hand, that one. And good eyes, too. And at the end of the day, after you’ve brought him home, cat, friend, dragon, whatever, I can leave the door open, let it out purely by accident I assure you; but either way, that’ll be excuse enough for you to go out and do... whatever. I guess it’s the only way I’m going to get any peace and quiet around here, so get to find that companion of yours.”

To which, what is Abby to do but say, “Fine,” all petulant like as she raises her hands in surrender: an act which brings her long shirt sleeves into view, which causes her to check out the rest of her outfit -- travel boots, dungarees -- all well-worn and dirty, looking for all the world like some street urchin straight out of Oliver Twist -- she sort of sighs brokenheartedly, “I never stood a chance, did I? I mean, you’re into boys, right? Is that it?”

Wally, however, is used to this sort of behavior. For every ying, there is a yang. For every Wizard, there is an Apprentice. “You’re upset. Obviously, we’re not clicking as well as we should be. But if you’re going out, please avail yourself of this opportunity and find that pet whatever of yours.”

“No need to wait up, Old Man,” and with that, Abby is gone.

I know it’s none of my business...

“Yes, but by that, you mean if things around here are always like... this?”

In short, yes.

“Sometimes we play cards, read the same book out loud to each other, or cook a quiet supper for two,” and it would be here that Wally’s attention reverts to the portrait of his one true love hanging from the wall. “Oh, how I miss her.” And as pathetic or romantic as it sounds, it will be into her static, unmoving, painted eyes that he will gaze as the night slowly progresses... and his memories slowly fade, of both good times and bad, and of times that never were and of those that have not yet come to be.

“Looks like our time together is over,” Wally eventually says with a dismissing wave of his hand; and from there, what is there to do but vanish from the pentagram with a puff of smoke, leaving nothing behind but a small pile of Dust, left in remembrance of those things that are yet to be... or a price paid for the enchantment, a price that you can bet will be repaid with interest in the days to come.

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

{{{Chapter End}}}