

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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www.paufler.net
Brett@Paufler.net

**### Chapter 13 ###
You're Grounded ###**

Arriving at the South Garden, it should come as no surprise that Bones is the cause of the disturbance. Or at least, it doesn't come as a surprise to me. I once had the pleasure of watching him ream out a Second Lieutenant for two full weeks because that Second Lieutenant did... you know, I never did find out what that Second Lieutenant did wrong. And so, knowing that (or not knowing as the case may be), it should come as no surprise (and therefore there shouldn't be a lot of surprises in this chapter) that after two days S-Kelly still doesn't know what his father is raging about.

So anyway, S-Kelly loops around the garden once more (with his father chasing him, hurling obscenities all the while -- cursing this and cursing that, with no more rhyme or reason than a good old fashion love

of cursing brings with it), once they get back to the front door of their crypt, S-Kelly has the effrontery, the gall, the indignity, the arrogance, the something-something that expresses the extreme incredulity of it all, anyway, at this point, S-Kelly has the nerve to ask -- nay, state flat out (sort of wearily, too, I might add -- two days of getting yelled at for no apparent reason will do that to you), "I still don't get what you're so mad about."

And with that said, S-Kelly calmly walks into the crypt. I follow. And that leaves Bones alone outside to stew (or steam, or however it is exactly that you like your vegetables on the front porch), probably with smoke coming out of his ear holes for comedic effect, as he is a bit of a ham. Or maybe you'd like to picture him counting to ten, so flabbergasted he's at a total loss for words (highly unlikely). Me, I like to envision him with steam coming out of his ears.

Anyway, after saying my hello's to Bones' wife (Carrie the Corpse Bride) and their daughter Gloria (the ghost -- I think we met her doing cheers at football practice, a few days back), I take a sip from the mug of (steaming, why not? Go with the flow, that's what I say) coffee that Carrie has placed before me and more or less (yeah, OK more than less) make myself at home at their breakfast table and wait the few moments it takes for Bones to gather his thoughts (and perhaps any loose appendages -- finger and toe bones being the hardest to keep track of being so small, don't you know -- that might have fallen off during his campaign of terror) prior to entering their abode.

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"Who are you supposed to be," Bones asks, sort of out of character, sort of to himself (OK, mostly to himself), before deciding that in the context of the enchantment, "Right, so you're the law, the coppers. One of my suburban neighbors must have called in a complaint. And so, you're here to investigate, isn't that right, Johnny Law?"

“I prefer Sid. And if you’re not caught up in the magic of the moment -- clarifying your role and the scene as you are -- may I ask why you’ve been raging against your son for so long?”

“Why? Why? Why? You have the...” gall, the effrontery, the arrogance, the something-something, the whatever, but then, you see, even he doesn’t know the right word to put it all into perspective, to express the utter unbelievable incredulity of it all, that someone has, “to ask why?”

“Well, personally, I’d like to know why, as well,” Carrie chirps in. “Or would you like to smoke a pipe first to get your thoughts in order.”

“My K’fr use is not the issue!”

“Seriously, dad,” S-Kelly ventures forth, taking the two day berating in better stride than I would have imagined. I guess he’s used to this sort of thing, probably comes with the territory when you dad is a dishonored military veteran -- to lose thoroughly and completely I believe is the correct term for what happened. Disgraceful. And the guilt, Bones has to live with that every night, every day. It’s no wonder he’s a horrible parent.

Oh, I’m sorry, I think I might have mumbled that last out loud. How terribly rude of me.

But Bones only glares.

Or maybe, he just glares.

Whatever the case, his eyes turn a darker shade of red (as opposed to their typical sapphire blue); and they start to glow (even more so).

And then, of course, he starts to shake -- something akin to a slow boil (or simmer if you prefer, I know I like my vegetables a bit crisper than most). Anyway, Bones is starting to shake. It’s just the slightest of vibrations, but it causes his fingers and toes to rattle a bit (maybe even clatter). And it’s clear to all (or at least, to Carrie, S-Kelly, Gloria, and myself) that he’s on the edge of exploding, like a volcano that has reached its limits and is about to -- well, for lack of a better word -- explode.

And there you have it. A Skeletal Warlord as wound up as he’s ever going to be, desperately looking for an outlet, a way to blow off a little steam, and express his anger in a way that those around him will

understand (and therefore, seek to avoid in the future). So, obviously, it's time to explain to Bones, "This is what they call method acting. Now, what I want you to do is to take that self-loathing angst-ridden anger and give it a direction a purpose, to harness it, if you will. Like, for instance, now," after two days of mindless (and meaningless) ranting and raving, "might be the ideal time to explain, exactly, why you are displeased with your son's decision to enjoy life," death, whatever (it gets so confusing at times), "and partake of the herb."

Of course, being the consummate actor, Bones only glares.

I mean, he just glares.

But then, I think we've been through this.

"Personally, I like mom's idea about the pipe," S-Kelly says, reminding everyone of Carrie's (sarcastic?) suggestion from only moments before. And to this end, S-Kelly produces a bag of marijuana that he had stashed in his boot a few days ago. And if you are unfamiliar, let me just say that marijuana is a vile herb, tastes horrible, gives you a headache, makes me feel sick, and all in all is not nearly as good as K'fr. Now K'fr, that stuff will knock your socks off. Anyway, having produced the vile stuff (and being well bred and taught to honor - - or at least, fear -- his parents from an early age -- but especially his father), it would be at this point that S-Kelly suggests, offers, and/or attempts to bribe his way out of the situation by suggesting (so I guess, suggest was the correct word after all and even from the start), "Or maybe you'd like a toke, instead?"

Now, I'm good for endless rambling asides. And so, I don't know if I've mentioned it in passing (can't keep it all straight to be honest, what I've said, what I haven't, what needs saying, what doesn't), but along with meaningful rants (like father, like son, I suppose), Bones is keen on glaring, and that's more or less what he does at this juncture.

At a complete loss for words, Bones only glares.

He just glares.

Infortunetly, S-Kelly misinterprets the meaning of the glare (and really, what were the odds of that) and insists, "What are you mad about, now. I was going to share. Honest. It's not like you ever gave me an opportunity to talk, explain, or get a word in edgewise, you never do..."

And S-Kelly probably could have gone on (in a world in which Bones doesn't exist, of course, but as this is a world in which Bones does exist) that's about it for S-Kelly's side of the conversation.

Because without even a glimmer or a glare or even a theatrical clearing of his throat, Bones asks, in that rhetorical way some (of us?) have when they're testing to see if their kid is stupid enough to say anything further, dig the hole that much deeper (as it looks like we might if I ever get around to writing that sequel), or you know, do something stupid like rising to their our own defense, Bones asks, "You think I'm jealous?"

Needless to say, S-Kelly is not that stupid. I mean, he may be stupid, but he's not that kind of stupid (ordinary stupid, not suicidally stupid).

Anyway, Bones is on a roll, so let's let him continue.

"You think I want to smoke this?" Bones says (continuing where he left off, if you will), while throwing S-Kelly's stash in the fire (for dramatic effect, don't you know), where it goes up in a delightful (some might even say, theatrical) puff of smoke. And personally, I think it would have been grand (funny, comical, ironic), if upon hitting the fire, the weed had filled the crypt with choking smoke (and deadly vapors?), sending them all out into the garden, but it didn't. Rather, as I have said (enunciated, if you will), that the lot simply burst into a delightful puff of smoke -- some might even say that said puff was theatrical, but none would say that it was overdone, overblown, or that it filled the place with smoke, which is sort of a shame, as I think it might have been better that way. But it wasn't. So, it isn't.

And after waiting for me to finish (he's getting a little testy, I can tell), Bones says (asks, whatever), "You honestly think that's what this is all about?" But as we've said, S-Kelly having a brain (or at least, a skull) is way too bright to take the bait.

That's why we have extra's, I suppose, because even though she is married to the pile of bones, Carrie doesn't know why Bones is so upset. OK, he lost the war, he's a horrible leader -- and I just mean disastrous -- and even though commenting on this in an aside, just (or would that be only) seems to cause Bones to fume anew (glare if you like), that's all

ancient history. It's not like it happened yesterday, last week, or even in the past few centuries. So, come on, get over it.

Meanwhile, Bones looks around the room, all the while (you guessed it) glaring, until finally his (glaring great-big googly-eyed) gaze falls on his beloved wife (who he perhaps favors with fanaticism), as he asks, "You think I'm being unreasonable?"

"No," no, heavens forbid. "I just want to know why you've been yelling at your son for the past two days and nights, nonstop, for all the world to see."

"He let me down. He let the family down," Bones says simply (and with a less drama than I for one was expecting).

"Yes, of course he did, honey." Doesn't he always. "But how exactly did he do that this time," as some kids are just (or only, but probably both -- only just) disappointments, if you know what I mean. But like I have perhaps insinuated, S-Kelly is a bit of a screw up; and so, one more mistake hardly explains anything. "Are you upset because he didn't go out for football?"

"Oh, not that," S-Kelly whines, perhaps bringing to light some of the reasons why Bones might feel the need to yell at the kid, probably took all his willpower not to slap the little puke around at the sound of his grating voice. And then, there's his name, S-Kelly, what sort of sissy girl name is that?

"Oh, I know," Carrie says, sort of having fun now, and ignoring my carefully crafted flavor text I might add, "You're mad because Kelly," no S one might notice; I mean, it only gets worse, next thing you know, he'll be wearing a dress and dancing at the officers club with the enlisted men; anyway, she was being sarcastic and so says, you're mad because Kelly "didn't already win the tournament, aren't you?"

"Or become King of the Forest," S-Kelly says, joining in (because let's face it, tormenting one's father is a game that started at the dawn of time. Yeah, I'm talking to you, G'narsh.)

Anyway, taking no note of me or my asides, Carrie continues the game quite happily as she quips, "Or Lord Emperor of the Northern Marches. I mean, we all know how you were Commander of the Iron Watch only two seconds after you were enchanted..."

“And it was only three hours before you got your first kill...”

“Daemon the mighty Dark Demon! And that’s gumption, I tell you! That’s initiative! That’s how you get things done!” Carrie says in that special voice that wives use whenever they are mocking their husbands.

Need, I mention it, Bones glares (only, just).

Perhaps you’re familiar with another story in which ‘and Tar Baby, he say nothing.’ Well, Tar Baby may say nothing. Bones on the other hand, only-just glares.

And he glares.

And he glares.

And he glares for a moment, for a while, for that fraction of a second (or two or three minutes as the case may be) longer than good taste might dictate, before he asks of S-Kelly (sort of rhetorical, but then sort of not so rhetorically, so really, it is in such a way that a kid might not be too sure whether they’re supposed to answer or not, but they can still be pretty sure that either way -- and any the way -- they are going to get in trouble if they answer or they don’t; or at least lectured to for no good reason for who knows how many days to come, because they spoke when they should have listened or kept quiet when they should have spoke up); anyway, Bones asks, perhaps rhetorically (perhaps not), “You want to know what I’m angry about?”

To which S-Kelly replies (quite quickly and easily, I might add, likely indicating a certain lack of interior dialogue -- or confliction regarding the issue on his part) with a simple “Yes.”

“I know I do,” Carrie observes.

And then, all eyes turn towards Gloria, the ghost, you may remember her, or then, you may not, sitting at the table, managing to fade into the background, until now, when all eyes are focused on her. She starts to tremble, to shake. She has anxiety issues. Most ghosts do, what with their horrible deaths, they usually have massive PTSD issues, so it’s not surprising all she says is, “Don’t look at me. I don’t know,” as she tries to hide behind her mother. Of course, she probably does (know). The quiet ones always do. But as she won’t say, it’s hard to know if it (her knowing, that is) makes difference in the end.

Anyway, a few moments ago, Bones had said, “You want to know what I’m angry about?” And as far as he was (and is) concerned, it’s not a rhetorical question; but rather, one that needs answering. And who better to do it than him. “And you also, maybe, think I’m being a bit, oh, I don’t know, maybe a bit hypocritical on account of...”

“All the K’fr you do,” S-Kelly says, jumping in and finishing the line for him, which, when you stop and think about how often he does that sort of thing (stands up to his father and so on), shows how much courage the kid really has... or maybe it just shows that S-Kelly (being a skeleton) doesn’t really have all that much brainpower, lacking the requisite organ.

Whatever the case, it is here that Bones pauses, perhaps it is because he is the consummate actor and he’s trying to decide how best to play the moment, or perhaps it’s because being a good father (or at least, because he is trying to be a good father) he suddenly realizes that maybe (just maybe) that he’s never taught S-Kelly this particular lesson. Though, come on. Give me a break. Some lessons you wouldn’t think you’d have to teach your kid, or at least, you’d hope you wouldn’t have to teach your kid, I mean, what kind of an idiot is this kid of yours, anyway.

And there you are. I thought Bones had hit the wall, that his anger had runs its course, but I was wrong.

He glares.

He fumes.

Smoke does pour out of his ear holes, while his eyes burn with a fiery brilliance.

Yes, Bones is now (finally) officially mad.

How can a kid be so stupid?

Me, I blame bad parenting.

But all the same (and with any luck as I must confess that I am getting a wee bit weary with this entire episode at this point), Bones will get to the gist of the matter without further pause or delay, without hithering or dithering, without beating around the bush, going off on tangents, or any of the rest.

One can only hope.

“You’re missing the point. I smoke my own stuff, my own stash,” and so he does (not to mention, get to the heart of the matter without delay).

But of course, S-Kelly doesn’t get it. And we could let him talk (or that is to say, Bones could let him talk) and maybe ask a question as seeks guidance (in this world and the next -- or vice a versa as the case may be). But really, have you ever been yelled at by your parents for smoking someone else’s stash? If you have, then you know that it’s extremely unlikely to get even one -- just one -- word in edgewise; and if you do, it’s usually something useless, along the lines of, “But...” before they cut you off, assume that you’ve said your peace and continuing on their own rampage.

“It’s clear you don’t know. It’s my fault. I blame myself,” odd how it never really sounds like someone is blaming themselves when they say this. “I should have taught you better. So, I’m going to explain this to you here and now and if you ever do anything like this again, I’m going to rip off yours limbs one by one and toss them to the corners fo the world! Do you understand? I SAID, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?”

“Yes, sir!” S-Kelly says, reporting for duty.

“This is my stash,” Bones says by way of explanation as he pulls a well-worn (well-loved and, well, used) box from the shelf where it is kept. Inside, is primo stuff. And I’m just saying, there are benefits to being ‘Greatfully Dedicated to a Higher Calling’ if you know what I mean. Un-Death does hath it’s privileges here in the ever-after.

But that is neither here nor there, what is here (don’t know about there), is the charred remains of the pipe (ashes and all) of the stuff, Kelly brought home, that Bones scoops out of the fire (with his bare hands, what a man, er, skeletal warlord). “And here’s your stuff,” Bones snickers. “Only, it’s not your stuff. You see, that’s the point. You got it, Gra’gl knows where. Probably got it from some stranger, someone you never met before.”

“So?”

Bones gasps.

Glaring doesn’t cover it, doesn’t do it justice.

He just gasps.

“<Gasp! Sputter!>” (Translation: is this really my son talking? Where have I gone wrong?)

“You might as well have been walking down a dungeon corridor, stumbled upon a ring and decided to put it on. Would you do that?” (It’s a rhetorical question, but the correct answer is No, just in case you’re wondering.) Or, “Oh, look. Here’s a cursed scroll, I think I’ll read it. What’s this, a potion?” Bones asks, getting all dramatic now, as he grabs a flask (or is it a flagon? Truthfully, I don’t think I’ll ever be able to tell the two apart) from the mantle, uncorks the sucker, and drinks the contents, which being a skeleton, sort of wash through Bones as they splash about his ribs, pouring through to the floor below. Such a waste of good wine, it would seem. But, ah. It was no wine. For, Bones’ bones start smoking (his ribs taking the brunt of the damage mostly). “Ah! Ah! Ah! It’s acid! It’s acid!” Bones squeals -- mocking his son, no doubt -- as he dances around until Carrie throws a pot of water over him, ending the display and showing that even good actors can get carried away and at times over do it.

Anyway, that said. Now it is S-Kelly’s turn (to speak, act, ask a question, glare, drool, do something); but all he seems to be able to do is to look on uncomprehendingly.

“Don’t drink potions you find in dungeons,” Bones states simply explaining the moral of the lesson to his son (and any Orcs or Goblins that might be watching or listening to -- certainly not reading -- the story at home).

“I know that,” S-Kelly replies a bit peevisly or petulantly (assuming either of those are the word I’m looking for) on behalf of Orcs, Goblins, and silly sons the world round.

“And don’t read any scrolls you might find, either. That’s what wizards are for. The more of them that get blow up, the better, I say,” Bones continues.

“Yeah, duh. I know.” Pretty much to all of it. He is his father’s son, after all.

“And rings? How about rings? Are you going to go putting on some random ring you find?” Maybe one your boyfriend gives you? “Or a bracelet? Or a necklace?” I mean, is it just me, or doesn’t it seem

like Bones wants to add, 'I don't care if they're magical or not, if you ever put on a necklace and wear one in public, I will break every last one of your bones.'

But to one and all, S-Kelly simply states, "I'm not going to wear any stupid jewelry."

"Good."

"Fine."

"So, if that's settled," Carrie interjects; but then, perhaps she spoke too soon, as S-Kelly (suddenly, or at least, ill-advisedly) declares, "I still don't see what I did wrong."

Has the kid not been listening?

Bones counts to ten.

He tries glaring.

He tries only glaring.

He tries just glaring.

He tries glaring at Carrie to see if that works.

"Don't look at me, he's your son."

Well, obviously, that didn't work. So, maybe if he glared at Gloria. But she's suddenly nowhere to be found.

But not to fear, like the best of skeletal warriors, S-Kelly walks boldly into the void. (Obviously, the lot of them are as dumb as nails. No wonder they got massacred.) "Seriously, I don't see the problem," S-Kelly states. "You smoke it up with your friends all the time. Hardly a day goes by without someone..."

"They come here! They smoke my stuff! It's my stuff! That's it! That's the key! Reading scrolls isn't dangerous. In fact you should do more of it. Maybe you'd learn something. What's dangerous is reading some random scroll you find in the Lost Tombs of Alcazor," or whatever. "Oh, look. The last words of some half-crazed," or more than likely, fully crazed, "wizard bent on world domination. I think I'll read this!" And pantomiming the prescribed action, Bones promptly explodes.

BAM!

Oh, the carnage!

Oh, the humanity?

Femurs and thigh bones are everywhere.

Anyway, upon regrouping (and/or reassembling), along with the last of his metatarsals (fingers, don't you know) blown to a corner, Bones finds a golden ring. "Oh, look what I found! A pretty ring! I wonder what this does," and then; perhaps thinking better of going down that road, Bones pauses for a second, smiles at his wife, and says, "It's not about putting on rings in general, lots of rings are beneficial," a comment that brings a tear of joy to Carrie's eye, as she fondles her own wedding ring (a gaudy number, that one). "I'm actually quite fond of certain rings," Bones manages at last, "Though if I ever catch you wearing a necklace..."

"There's that one that gives you power over animals and allows you to call them forth as servants..."

'Given this a lot of thought, have you, son?' Bones almost says.

"Or colorful diversions," S-Kelly does actually say as he continues on with his recital. Anyway, the truth is that although the Necklace of Colorful Diversions sounds like it might only be desirable to sissies and such, it actually happens to be a fully powered portal to the prismatic sphere, which still doesn't sound all that dignified, so let's just say in the right hands, light can be turned into darkness and vice a versus, and with $E=MC^2$, and all that, it's kind-of sort-of powerful and more or less exactly the sort of thing that any macho he-man skeletal warrior would be happy to accessories his ensemble with.

Anyway, we (or at least, I) seem to have gone off a tangent (again and again and again). The bottom line is, "No son of mine is ever, and I mean ever, going to smoke anything he doesn't have a hand in making," which sounds like good advice on the surface; but after one deconstructs the inner meaning, starts to sound rather ominous.

"Yeah, that's right," Bones says, sort of looking me square in the eye, which is almost exactly like -- uncannily similar to his -- glare.

"We're going to make some Drip," he says matter-of-factly, like he was proposing a picnic in the park.

But the important part of the proceeding (yes, even more important than the part about making Drip) was the, "We?"

“Yes, we. You, me, and S-Kelly, Sid. You, me, and S-Kelly are going to make some Drip.”

“I don’t really think that’s a good idea.”

And it’s not.

Simple.

Really shouldn’t have to explain it any further than that.

No ‘Good’ has ever come out of Drip.

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But then, Bones went on about how I might be handing this thing over (yes, this thing, this whole entire thing) hook line and sinker to a bunch of Chaos Elves; and then, on top of that, how I was leaving all the crumbs to a Wizard and his Apprentice (Wally and Abby, I do believe, if you want me to name names); and what, with this, and that, if I wasn’t careful, the Dark Forces that be might think I’d switched sides (like, again, I do believe he was insinuating), especially considering my, um, ‘early retirement’ from the armed forces (some might say a full fortnight or maybe even longer) before the fighting had subsided; hence, perhaps (single handedly) insuring that said fighting would subside, if you know what I mean. But then, someone had to negotiate a peace. And besides, I don’t think its fair to call me a coward (or imply I lack any honor) simply because I didn’t see the point in fighting to the edge of the void (and beyond), as some skeletal warriors may have at one time vowed to do (vowed -- and subsequently rescinded, I might add in my defense).

Anyway, long story short, I guess what I’m saying is, I’ve gone for long enough here and no sense dragging it out any further. We, as in S-Kelly, Bones, and I decided that making a little Drip together (and teaching S-Kelly the art therewith, if you know what I mean) would go a long way towards evening the score.

Besides, hadn’t it been long enough since I’d had a taste?

(Why yes, I suppose it has, if I do say so myself.)

And so, with that decided, there wasn’t really that much left to do but pack for the adventure (making Drip is always an adventure, or at least a stand alone chapter in a book -- or that second part of the show

that takes place after the commercial break in your better sitcoms). Anyhow, being skeletons (warriors, et al); the pair of them didn't take very long to get ready (two, three seconds, I believe -- about the time it might take a father to toss his son a rusty sword. "Really, for me?"). And then, it's off to the races (or the depths of the dungeon crypts), leaving Carrie and Gloria alone for a bit of one on one by way of chapter wrap up.

"Oh, I wanted to go along," Gloria says, sort of poutingly. "Why can't I learn how to make Drip. I want to make Drip?"

But Carrie just smiles, takes her daughter into her arms, maybe combs her hands through her daughters hair (no mean trick considering the one is a ghost and the other a corpse bride), and says, reassuringly, "Dear, you don't need to learn how to make Drip."

And then, she may have gone on about how being a ghost and all, all Gloria needed to do to effect all manner of wondrous effects was to allow herself to be breathed in by another.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

But that is a story (or chapter therein) for another time... a time when Gloria is able to meld with another without terror or fear, able to give herself fully, and taken completely, without worry or concern, confident in her own... ghostly spirit, I suppose.

And when that time comes, well, I say, whoever it happens to will be a lucky boy... or girl. I mean, Gloria isn't exactly the necklace wearing type, if you know what I mean.

{{{Chapter End}}}