

**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 15 ###  
### Bleachin' It Out ###**

If there were some sort of intelligent design to the afterlife (and the intent were to punish), along with a deadening of the senses, goblins and orcs wouldn't be allowed to bicker, fight, or wage protest; elves (even Chaos Elves) wouldn't be able to recite poetry, collect gems and jewels, or look at themselves in the mirror; and Dwarves wouldn't be able to make stuff (castle walls, ramparts, secret doors with connecting tunnels and corridors under the football field, and that sort of thing).

But Dwarves can do that sort of thing (exactly that sort of thing).  
Soo, they did.

And Mog (being an orc, if you'll remember) organized a protest.  
While the elves, sat around and looked pretty.  
Each doing what they did best.

The upshot of it all being that in my absence (on administrative leave, to attend to personal matters, and/or whilst taking a sabbatical), the dwarves had done a fair bit of construction -- on one side of the field, at least. I think they had grand plans to encircle the entire (future) field of battle with a fortress of their own. But after they'd got the one side built (two towers on either end, connected by a low wall of sorts), Mog had done his thing, organized a sit in (with very little sitting involved); and as soon as I returned from my mini-vacation (into the very Heart of Darkness itself, as it were), the 'situation' was coming to a head.

It being my job (and because that's just the type of Infernal Dark Lord that I am), I listened to gist of Mog's complaint, "It's not fair. They're going to have the home field advantage," and rain cauldrons of flaming oil down on us, he probably would have added after a bit (i.e. after he had figured that last part out). But I told him to shut it, which (sensing my mood) for a change he did.

As to the Dwarves (the elves don't really figure into this little episode, I think they were staring into mirrors or something, trying to decide how they would look for the day or something; anyway, as to the Dwarves), I admired their work (nice solid construction, tight seems, quality timber/stone, and all the rest), gave them a few pointers and bits of technical advice (always welcomed by the laboring class, I have found), and thanked them for building a tier of bleachers, "Oh, you weren't planning on, I mean, well, that it is to say," if you were building a fortress action might need to be taken, but bleachers, "good show."

And that settle that.

The Dwarves hastily redrew their plans. Mog and his kindred wondered off griping about 'favoritism' and 'preferential treatment'. While the elves, well, I guess they thought it was about time the day began (i.e. they made a showing).

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So, here we are -- at the top of the bleachers, looking down from the good seats in the back where Abby and Ned talk shop. It's boring stuff, revolving as it does around low level magical enchantments, high

level linear transforms (math, I think is the category that falls under), accompanied by idle chit chat about the goings-on (the 'haps' as it were) on the field below. (In other words, most/some/all of the "commentary below" being theirs, not mine -- edited for clarity and so it accurately reflects reality, of course).

And with all that introductory nonsense out of the way, it's time for one of those montages (a montage sounding so much more artsy than going down a list).

Anyway, I've been told 'the first shall be last and the last shall be first', so having had almost no part in the opening segment, we shall shift our gaze to where Strathmore is practicing on the field with Jack. And with a 'Hut! Hut! Hike!', Jack falls back into a well-defended position, surrounded on all sides by burly humans (as burly as human get); while on the same cue, Strathmore tears off into the no man's land (or no Elf's Land) that is the defenders side of the field. After Strathmore dances past a few of the defenders (second string Humans), Jack throws the ball, which Strathmore subsequently catches; and then, proceeds to pretend that he's a professional wrestler, generally goofing around, taunting the opposition, and in the whole, taking as much time as possible (thus giving every defender at least one or two good 'goes' at him). Of course, eventually (all good things must come to an end, after all), Strathmore winds his way into the end zone, where there is a short intermission, while he does his spike-down, victory dance of 'everybody look at me, I'm a great elf'.

"Strathmore's quite the show off," Ned notes.

To which Abby replies, "I'm surprised he isn't the quarterback."

But Jack's no fool. When you're up against Bog Wights, Giants, and Trolls, letting someone else carry the ball (while you, yourself, are safely encircled by a squad of defenders) is what he (and/or I) like to call 'a sound defensive strategy'.

So, enough about that.

Next in line, we have Mine'irva. It seems as though she's organized a bit of a girls club (ladies in waiting if you will), with her at the center of the throng, giving relationship advice, helping the others with their makeup, hair, and jewelry. (It's shocking how little jewelry --

I mean, real jewelry -- these humans have. Certainly, no diamonds or rubies! ‘How can you stand it!’)

And then, of course, there is the talk and gossip (mostly about cute boys and who is kissing who), while they snub the homelier girls.

“Wait!” Ned says, doing his rolling commentary thing par excellence. “Is Mine’irva actually deigning to speak to a mere mortal?”

“Ah, she’s found her clique.”

And that explains that.

As for Mata, she’s like the popular girl’s kid sister or best friend from back in the day; the Tom Boy at the edge of the group (not really interested; but then, not really having anywhere else to go). Besides, someone has to enforce the code. I mean, an Elvin Princess does not carry her own books.

“Mata looks bored.”

“I know I would be. Tell me, does my hair look better up or down,” Abby playfully mimics, Ned smiles, and I’ll just say, the correct answer is always down.

As in the next item to cover as we go down the list, is the war trumpet that sounds (and/or blows) from deep in the heart of the bleachers. Or so I presume it’s from deep in the heart of the bleachers, based mainly on the way it echoes up from below the ground and how it seems to (coincidentally enough, odd how that is) signal the appearance of Dwarves, who emerge from the Dug Out (I’m guessing that’s what you’d call that structure) in full battle dress and a tight formation. And by ‘full battle dress’ what I mean is spiked helmets, armor, and shields and those great big battle axes (with a few giant war hammers thrown in here and there for good measure) that Dwarves are so famous for.

“Axes? Hammers? Those have got to be against the rules. Why doesn’t Trent do something?”

“Um, Axes,” is Abby’s only response, while for his part, Trent (the Tree’nt, I forget how you spell it sometimes), finds it prudent to look the other way. Does anyone really expect him to mediate a full on war (if that’s what it comes to; and it’s certainly looking like that’s what it’s going to come to) as the orcs and goblins enter the field (from opposite ends) similarly attired.

But today is NOT game day. And threats, taunts, gestures, and boasts aside, it is easy enough to plant someone (anyone, maybe even Mog, maybe even especially Mog) into the ground for a few days if they get uppity, I don't like them, feel like an example needs to be made, or I feel like brewing up another batch of Drip.

Alas, Mog keeps his troops in line; and so, there is no need. (Pity that. Not that Mog would make especially good Drip, but I'm sure his screams would please me more than most, if you know what I mean.)

Oh, well.

Meanwhile, Gloria (the ghost) and Gwyneth (the sexually androgynous witch with divergent tastes to match -- or so, I presume) have recruited a few more cheerleaders to their squad (one of this, one of that, don't know what you call that thing, along with a troll, a dwarf, two goblins, and an orc, so it's a multicultural sort of cheerleading squad at this point.

But at present they are taking a break from the cheering ('Rah, rah, ree, kick them in the knee; rah, rah, ras, kick them in the... other knee') and instead, admiring the boys on the field. Well, that, and trying to work out the cheer vis-a-vie who to cheer for.

"We should cheer for our own."

"I wish," I believe is Gloria's wistful response as gazes lovingly at Jack. (I guess someone has a crush.)

And as to this last, neither Ned nor Abby has anything witty (or even helpful) to say, as they have sort of fallen (hard, deep, and far) into a book on Linear Algebra and are busy trying to decipher the difference between orthogonal, orthonormal, and how either might relate to the congruent covariance of the frequency.

(Any and all of which are beyond the scope of both this tome and/or the author's understanding. Interested readers should consult an appropriate reference work. Might I suggest Dimensional Algebra: Getting it Right the First Time -- you know, because it's catastrophic if you don't...)

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Anyway, having done the front of the field, maybe it's time to look on over Abby and Ned's shoulders, past the low wall behind them, over the side, and down to the backside of the bleachers. There's plenty of action here, as well.

Harry (the Human, that ne'er-do-well) is chatting it up with Gilead (the Goblin), O-something or another (can't remember his name at the moment, but you can bet it begins with an 'O'), along with a few dozen others (not necessarily orcs, with names be too tedious to relate here).

Of course, when I say chatting, I'm probably using the wrong word, giggling is probably closer to the mark, senselessly giggling, hacking, and coughing (from the Drip, don't you you), as they slowly lose their minds. (Yes, that does seem closer to the mark.)

Anyhow, the pertinent point in all this is that S-Kelly and Frank (from the assemblage, he would have you know, as if you could ever forget such a thing with all that amateur stitching covering his face) are sharing the wealth from the previous night's adventure, as it were.

The wealth in question being the Drip (I think I may have mentioned the stuff) that they are consuming (squeezed over a pinch of K'fr smoked in a brazier). It's the sort of concoction that will truly make you lose your mind...

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

...and cause you to repeat yourself, I might add. K'fr, Drip, and no end of other drugs tend to have that effect, you know, with the net result being that you wind up saying the same silly thing over and over again and somehow think you're being witty and clever.

All the same, I feel compelled (sense a professional obligation) to add in (right about here) a second (hearty) chorus of:

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

"Mu-ha-ha-ha."

Cough. Cough.

Cackle. Snort.

And having said what needed saying (while leaving out the rest, “Mu-ha-ha-ha”), it is now time to follow the billowing puffs of smoke as it rises back over the top of the bleachers (being careful to inhale deeply and hold it in as long as you can... or not, as is your preference) as we gently leave our bodies behind and experience life as Grag’gl intended it to be.

(But then, maybe not exactly how Karthrax intended it to be, if you know what I mean.)

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

Clearly, there is a sampling process inherent in the brewing process (i.e. whilst one squeezes out a little of the Drip one does tend to get a little on their fingers) and I seem to repeating myself more than usual.

But not to worry, I shall be my old self in but a moment.

In the meantime, I think I hear the school bell grimly announcing the start of, yet another (how many of these are there?) school day.

Do not ask for who the bell tolls, the bell tolls for thee.

Yes, indeed. I do believe I like the ring of that.

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

Cough. Cough.

Cackle. Snort.

“Now get to class, the lot of you!”

{{{Chapter End}}}