

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

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

(c) Brett Paufler 2013-2014
www.paufler.net
Brett@Paufler.net

**### Chapter 6 ###
Wizards Class ###**

We find ourselves in an Earth-Centric high school classroom; whiffs of smoke fill the air, giving little starts, shooting off in trails; a sparkle, here; an impromptu flicker of flame, there; a promise of things to come, pretty much, everywhere; as the student to be slowly make their way into Wally the Wizard's classroom: Abby (the Apprentice), Ned (the Nerd, don't know if I labeled him as that before or it's even proper to capitalize the moniker), Strathmore (the attention seeking, show-off of an Elf), Mine'irva (the Elvin princess), and Mata (her handmaiden); the later three drawing no end of comments from the remaining students, who at this point are far more interested in the ever shifting features of the Elves, than the puffs of smoke dancing in the air before them (which in and of itself is a good sign, as it shows the

generalized enchantment is working... even better than expected and/or before).

“How do they do that?”

“Why do they do that?”

“Don’t they have faces?”

And finally, “How do they even recognize each other?”

All the aforementioned comments come in a flurry, from Humans too numerous to bother to name or mention. (I mean, seriously, isn’t that always the way with those Humans. And sometimes, I wonder why I even bother to capitalize the H in Human. It’s because I’m basically a polite guy, I suppose. Won’t find me capitalizing orc, that’s for sure.)

Anyway, “Sort of gives you an insight into how I feel all the time,” remarks Frank, the Frankenstein-like representative from the Assemblage -- a comment you just might have to ponder on a while before it makes any sense.

Or just listen and pay attention to how his skeletal friend, S-Kelly (or more frequently Kelly, but I think I’ve decided to formalize his name to S-Kelly throughout for consistencies sake), responds, “Yeah, I broke a bone once and the doc was like, ‘We can give you a new one.’ And was like, ‘No, it’s hard enough knowing who I am without throwing another person into the mix.’ Besides, you know they’re just going to pawn off a goblin or orc bone on ya.” (Yeah, it’s lower case. It’s an insult. Feel free to take it personally. I hate orcs. Deal with it.)

But whatever. I mean, we could listen to the rest of Frank and S-Kelly’s conversation (and who has it worse and/or including the benefits to be had in switching out body parts depending upon the needs of the moment -- or any number of other conversations taking place about the room), but that’s about when (or exactly the when and the where of it all that) the bell rings.

So of course, Wally starts his lecture (without delay), by going into the grand finale. Remember all those puffs of smoke? Well, in a flash, in a snap, in a wave of the wand and the hand, they all coalesce into a scintillating tribe, a swarm of Fire Dragons and/or Smoke Imps.

Not the real thing, of course (Wally not being suicidal... or homicidal); but rather, magical constructs, recreations of the whole less

the sentience and freewill (and indescribably malice), for this is Magic 101, after all, and creating artificial intelligence is something best left to professionals... and/or the second course in the series, which we'll save for next semester... or at least next time this class meets, which just might turn out to be the same thing. (One never knows.)

Anyhow, Fire Dragons. Ever see an oil fire? A witch getting burned at the stake? (They do it to themselves sometimes, you know.) Well, you know that black smoke? That thick stuff, that boils in ferment?

Well, take a double handful of that stuff (real generous like); add a few sparks, those floating red embers do-jobbers (I mean, the entire column of smoke is just ready to go up in flames, right); maybe a flash of red for the eyes; and then, just sort of form the entire thing into a flying snake, a sort of westernized Oriental Dragon sort of thing. And for a lack of a better descriptor, we're going to call that a Smoke Imp (sans the freewill, directive, and/or indescribably malice). And these things are flying around the room, crisscrossing the ceiling, and dive bombing the students, who for the most part are eating it up:

“Cool beans!”

“Awesome!”

And, “Totally tripping-F’ing-dicular,” which I believe indicates we have hit the particular point in a time since past that we are aiming for.

Of course, the lightshow itself is but a petty concern, an illusion, the lot nothing more than a trick easily done with smoke and mirrors (even easier without the mirrors, I suppose),

But once again, whatever. Unconcerned with delving any deeper into the importance of the moment, S-Kelly gives a karate chop through any of the wisps that fly near to him (but this has no effect, as one might imagine); Strathmore plays an impromptu game of fetch with another (throw, chase; throw, chase; and it really is amazing how many different strands Wally can attend to at once); while Abby delights in one perching on her shoulder (because Wally has a soft spot in his heart for his Apprentice and still recalls her desire for a Dragon); Mata plays ringleader to a trio of the Imps she is teaching to dance (don't ask me why); and Mine'irva is as studiously aloof to the proceedings as any Elf

can be (which is pretty darn aloof, let me tell you; but then, since being aloof and looking pretty is basically the lot of an Elfin Princess, this would go a long way towards explaining why Mata would much rather be the Princess's Handmaiden than the Princess, herself; but perhaps, I have already made this last bit of trivia abundantly clear).

#

Any-the-ways, I think you get the idea.

Magic is fun!

Magic is awesome!

Try it at home!

The worse you can do is burn down your house or set fire to your kid sister!

So, adult supervision is not required nor recommended!

(Seriously, I live in a graveyard. I laugh at Death... and those jokes of his. He's always good for a gag or another one liner whenever he drops of another load of fresh(ly decomposing) meat. Heck, some of them are even the result of playing with matches, mixing potions together at random, or you know, dabbling in magic. So I say, the more the merrier. Play on! Let the games begin! And all that.)

#

So, any-hoo (community service announcement aside), before you know it, Wally is done with his grand finale, which like I said is a full blown magic demonstration (right at the start of his first class, no less). But seriously, add a directive (freewill, a cognitive system, and/or a little bit of hunger or desire) along with a little firepower (a little punch to their bite, if you know what I mean), and you can turn that playful swarm into a floating armada.

No need to wonder why the goblins are always fighting the orcs, the trolls are always fighting the hobgoblins, the cobalts are always fighting the Sprites, the Elves are always fighting the Dwarves, or the Humans are always fighting, well, everyone.

Fielding a magical army these days is indeed child's play. And at the risk of repeating myself, I say, 'Game on!'

###

But that's neither here nor there... or at least, not central to the little endeavor that I am focusing on at the moment. Just that, if you're wondering about the utility of Analog Magic -- it's all there. Not that the use for magic is to be found on the field of battle, because along with goblins that need gutting and cobalts that need killing (and there's always a few), there's always a factory that need staffing or a mine that needs mining.

However, I do believe I am letting my thoughts wander far a field... and not explaining myself very well, to boot.

So, let us start fresh and anew and point out that (all appearances to the contrary), Wally doesn't suffer from that particular affliction (continual distractibility). And as if to prove the point (and right on cue), he pulls the multitude of Fire Imps back together into the one. And if you look real closely (or simply at his hands), you can see his Sphere of Influence contracting and expanding as he, um, fondles his wand. I suppose if it was my intent to mislead, I could call into question Wally's sexual proclivity and point out the, um, intimate and familiar way in which he strokes his Wand of Might and Power.

But fun as it might be (and actually is) to take a few pokes at Wally's (or any teacher's) manhood (womanhood or general intelligence), if one were to examine Wally's magical technique closely (as we shall now do), one would see that Wally has chosen a rather peculiar item to use as his wand. I mean, you know he's old school, right? So, it wouldn't be too surprising if he chose to use a willow branch as a wand. And you can work magic with those. Not good magic, but magic nonetheless. And I'm sure Merlin will beg to disagree. (But then, at this point, Merlin really is just begging. No, truthfully, the man is down and out... to the point, that if I saw the need, I'm sure I could get him to do a cameo as a substitute teacher for a song and a

dance... or whatever his going rate is. It couldn't be more than a copper.)

But, whatever.

The point is I use a pocket synthesizer to back me up these days (in these modern magical times). Which is to say, I use the latest and the greatest. And I upgrade on an almost continual basis.

Seriously, if you don't have silicon in your system, you're living in the Stone Age. And although, I can see a teacher (such as Wally, just as a for instance) using a pocket calculator for effect, you know, to break things down. But the slide rule that Wally is using for his focus? That's just taking things a tad too far... or so it would appear, until you see his fingers working their magic (better than mine on a keyboard, that's for sure).

So, the slide rule is basic. It's primitive. But then, it's also pure and simple. And in the end, it's sort of like the difference between a harpsichord and an electric guitar. Sure, that electric guitar is going to be relatively easy to learn how to play, is going to give you some powerful effects -- rock the block, and all that -- but to elicit the Music of the Spheres, to make the angels dance on the head of a pin or float in the clouds above, and take one's audience to heretofore unseen heights of emotion, well, nothing can match the skillful plucking of a protégée as he, she, or a certain Elvin Princess we all know and love, work their magic on a harp of ancient origin.

So, watch and learn, as Wally eases the center stick on his slide rule back and forth as he controls the size, speed, and number of imps flying about in the air. And those slide rules, they come with adjustable indicators, you know. And in the right hands, those tabs act like switches. (And I hope it goes without saying that Wally's hands would be those aforementioned right hands.) So before you know it, rather than increasing and decreasing the number of magical minions doing his bidding, Wally has contracted the swarm to a solitary flyer, whose size he controls by simply (as if anything in magic is simple... or simply) sliding the bezel back and forth; and then, he moves on to adjust its character and quality (from smoke to fire; and from ice to droplets of water); and finally, the water becomes a mist, a vapor, and it's not so

much a creature anymore, but rather a globular sphere whose size and shape changes at Wally's command; until even the substance of the shrouded fog is transformed into a glowing sphere of raw energy; like a bubble, a single large bubbled attached to the end of his slide rule wand, (perhaps the single most powerful type of wand there is now that I think about it -- guess there was a reason Wally chose it after all); as the giant bubble deflates and is replaced by a near endless stream of smaller bubbles that fill the room; and then, at the very end, the bubbles gone, there is nothing left, but the illuminated tip of Wally's wand -- a glowing metaphor for the seed of knowledge, from which everything else must necessarily flow.

And then, of course, better than I have, Wally may have explained things as he went along:

“And from there, one can add intelligence, which is beyond the scope of this course...”

“Any aspect of reality can be controlled and modified...”

“Modulating size and number is a rather basic effect...”

“Once the raw magic is flowing freely it behooves one to give it a purpose, direction...”

“A force of will... multiplied, that's where it all starts,” and ends.

Of course, this is Wally we're talking about, so his instructions are cryptically short and they come long after the complex demonstrations that I am told were intended to serve as tutorial examples for each of the aforementioned effects; but then, is that not always the way with Wizards: explaining everything at once; and thereby, explaining nothing at all.

Eh, what do you want?

This tome is not a magical primer; and even if it were, this is only the first lesson (perhaps of many, perhaps of few)... but whatever the case, this particular lesson is most assuredly, rapidly coming to a close.

And having said that (as if on cue, once again, proving he's a team player), Wally asks the class, “Anybody else feel up to it, then? Teach the class? It's really not that hard? You've seen how it's done.” And when no one steps forth, “Though, I must admit, your calculus would do wonders here, Ned?”

To which, perhaps, the only reasonable response to being singled out like that is to stammer, “What?”

“Ned, teach the class,” Wally reiterates in that helpful way that Wizards so often seem to have.

To which Ned this time replies, “Huh?” in that helpful way that Humans (boy child or not), so often seem to have.

But then, Abby who really is helpful in that way Apprentices so often are (and hence why they get the job assisting Wizards in the first place) is quick on her toes and reminds Wally of a thing to which you really wouldn’t think he would need reminding, “It’s the first day of school,” i.e. we (leastwise Ned) doesn’t know any magic yet.

Really?

“Well, here we are, then. Time sure does fly when you’re having fun,” Wally surmises, which doesn’t really make any sense whatsoever until the bell rings, announcing the end of the class; and that’s when Wally goes back to what he was doing before the students arrived... mucking about with his wand, having fun, and making sure the safeties are all set, before he gives the slide rule a good polishing and puts it away in its custom carrying case -- more or less the reverse, of what he had done an hour or so before at the start of the class, assuming I’ve got the order of things sorted out all correctly and whatnot.

But really, no time to worry about, now.

Math class is next.

And seriously, if you think magic is an esoteric subject to be teaching to high schoolers, just wait until you try to decipher the tangled web of contradictions that passes for modern day mathematics. In contrast, it makes Wally’s quaint ideas on magic seem positively progressive -- like one of those forward thinkers, ahead of his time and all that, if you know what I mean, which I’m sure that you do... or soon will.

{{{Chapter End}}}

