

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 9 ###
Game On! ###
Graveyard Rules Rugby ###**

A thrall may work from sun-up to sun-down, but a crypt keeper's work is never done.

The day's scene done (or so I had thought), I had retired to my chambers, and was looking forward to a little light reading (Ghoul Tending & You, perhaps). But it was not to be.

At first, I ignored the horns. Orcs will be Orcs, don't you know. But when they were answered by the Goblin's drums, and the Cobalt's chants, well, it was clear something amiss.

And then, there was the Kibber at my door insisting that, "Mister Sid should come quick." I could have overlook his new livery (I guess

he was in the employ of the Elves, now) or the way he had addressed me (who was he to tell me what I should be doing, the nerve of the presumptuous pollywog!), but there was a look of urgency in his eyes; and for all the world, I could not help but flash on the image of some faithful servant running through enemies lines to get the call out for reinforcements -- perhaps taking an arrow in the leg or a spear through the chest en route -- only to arrive at his destination, deliver his mistress's message, and subsequently drop to the floor -- dead from the distress of it all.

Looking as he did, I gave the poor bloke a glass of wine to steady his nerves, which he accepted graciously. "You must come!" (Again with the musts.) "They are all in an uproar." (Indeed, the horns and drums and chants were getting louder.)

And as if to emphasize this last, he began to go on about war party this and war party that; so in the end, I had to presume the little fellow knew what he was talking about and there, indeed, was unrest on the grounds. And to this news, what was a Dark Necromancer to do, but mutter under his breath something about how he had been looking forward to a nice quiet evening at home, curling up with a good (or bad as the case may be) book. Of course, my utterances only caused the Kibber to start in with his, "What? What was that?" So what else was there for me to say, except that, "A crypt keepers work is never done," something I may have mentioned elsewhere before -- ever and anon.

It would be at about this point, however, that I was to learn that Kibbers keep straight union hours; and so, after I had consented to follow where he would lead and enter the fray, he just sort of looked at me aghast, said something about how he intended to wait it out somewhere safe, and if I didn't mind, another glass of wine would really hit the spot (which on retrospect, maybe should have been my first clue that Wally had laced his spell with a little humor for comedic relief).

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In any case, it was not hard to follow the noises to their source, for they led straight back to War Memorial Field. And when I got there, the

party was in full swing. All the clans had shown up (in full battle regalia, no less), which is to say, they were all sporting their colors.

Now, as stated earlier, the Orcs were making a nuisance of themselves with their horns, accenting whatever Mog (their self-appointed leader and/or shaman lord chieftain) said with the raspy things, while the Goblins (may the great Gob in the Sky bless their souls) were doing their best to drown out the sound of Mog's voice with their drums whenever he tried to speak, which is sort of ironic in that, pretty much everything he was saying was of benefit to the Goblins as well as the Orcs. But then, Mog is one of those loud-mouthed rabble-rousers, never content to let things alone, and always fighting against the status quo -- no matter what the status quo might be. So who knows, maybe the Goblins were not so much disagreeing with him as trying to get him to shut up so someone else could talk for a change.

Anyway, Mog was going on about how, "It's not fair." (And isn't that the way these tirades always go? It's not fair. Cry me a river.)

Of course, Mog didn't notice my heckling any more than he noticed the jeers from the Goblins, the Cobalts random cries of derision, or the groans from everyone else. (Why can the guy just shut up and let it be? But whatever.)

Mog happily continued his rant (or rather, his rampaget of spastic fury that sporadically boils to the surface here and there or which Mog seems able to call forth at will in response to even the slightest injustice -- whether said injustice be real, perceived, or simply imagined), Mog screamed with ritual rage in a way that sprayed those nearby with spit, spittle, and (to accent his point, I guess), "The game is stacked against us!"

But then, that pretty much happened the day he was born an Orc. (Not that I'm prejudiced, mind you, but the facts be the facts: Orcs are the Butt Hole of Creation.)

"And we demand satisfaction," Mog continued. And with Mog, it's always with the demands. I want freedom. I want equality. I want to be treated like a full blown sentient creature. I am not the Butt Hole of All Creation. Well, then act like it, you spastic crybaby.

But then, it would be at about this point that Mog started to make a crude sort of unrefined sense; so really, there's no point in recording his wild, ill-conceived mutterings here. Besides, he's an Orc, so no one (who is anyone) is going to take his hair brained ideas seriously, anyhow -- a thing which might have something to do with the bone Mog likes to wear in his nose, the scars on his face, his rotting teeth, or general lack of hygiene, but, eh, maybe that's just my own baggage talking. I mean, if truth be told, he's no more horrible or disgusting than the next Orc in line.

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Oddly, Mog isn't a child -- didn't die a child. (So, he may look like one. And he may act like one. But by Orc standards, he's quite mature.) So, he's not really part of the story we're currently working on (not to have a starring role, anyhow). In fact, most of the parents aren't. (At best, they're supposed to be a little background or flavor.) But word had spread through the graveyard about the big game the kids were playing. And well, you know how Orcs are; and you know how Goblins are; and you know how they each stick together and defend their own like the hordling rats that they are. Which of course meant that if the Orcin lads were on the field of battle defending the clan's honor, it was up to the rest of the tribe to support them, to show up and chant chants, fly flags, and offer up such words of derision that if taken out of context might sound like threats to knock young Timmy's teeth clear out of his mouth should he be so bold as to run with the ball again.

All in all, good natured Orcin fun.

Or so, it would have been if the goblins hadn't shown up and done more or less the same thing.

As had the trolls (big, ugly, scary, and dumb), the cobalts (knee-high, nutcrackers, if you know what I mean), and the Spirit Clan (the vampires, assemblage, and what not; and truthfully, I had no idea they even talked to each other, much less would finally get it together enough to form even a loose association, much less a cohesive group). Of course, that was just the start. Once the ball got rolling (so to speak) and

everyone who was anyone could see the writing on the wall, pretty much (as in, yep, pretty much) any group that had ever talked about forming an alliance had miraculously done so; and even now, were now out on the field routing for their team, which until Trent had moved in, taken charge, and knocked a few heads together (literally, the tree can really move when he wants to), this had meant joining forces with their children on the field (of battle, as it were) and trying their best to slaughter the rest.

In short, the entire graveyard had decided to play War Ball or whatever you want to call the game where the object is to kill (quite literally) the guy or ghoull with the ball; of course, that is, until Trent stepped in (good tree that Trent) and declared, "This is my field! And we're going to play by my rules!" And that apparently meant parents off to the sides and in the stands (which is what the regular un-sentient trees that line the way will look like in-story -- stands, bleachers, and that sort of thing); and into which, Trent was more than happy to throw any of the parents who were slow to comply.

(For a second there, I thought good ole Mog had learned how to fly. But, alas. 'Crash! Bounce! Thud!' No.)

Anyhow, Trent having just established his dominance and authority over the field, this is more or less when I had returned: to hear Mog, the orcin crybaby, go on about, "It isn't fair. Battling, er, playing against the Human's on their field, with their rules, it just isn't fair."

Which perhaps isn't so clear, so let me explain. You see, Orcs are genetically incapable of playing any game by any the rules and so having a game that has rules stacks the deck against them from the get go. Capiche? (No, really -- truly and for real. This was Mog's chief complaint: rules are unfair and by their nature discriminate against Orcs and other members of the horde.)

Goblins, on the other hand, have never been keen on standing still and sort of have a hard time understanding the concept of in bounds and out of bounds, which (some might say, like me, just as a for instance) probably has something to do with their inability to honor national boundaries, a flag of truce, or any number of other 'Civilized Conventions'.

While the cobalts (small alligator like creatures -- or so I have been told, having never seen an alligator, myself); anyhow, these knee high reptilian fire crackers have a profound ability to slur their words.

As in, 'Hey's, you'se besters no be's the besmerchering the Charlies honorifics if the Sidivious knows what be the besters for heems'.

Like I said, not only do they slur their words, but they also share the same idiosyncrasies as the Orcs and Goblins regarding fair play, rules, boundaries, and all the rest (the lot of them being horde creatures, don't you know). But the main thing to remember about Cobalts at this point is probably that they are small, so only letting sixteen of them on the field at any one time (and truthfully, I'm sort of surprised they can count that high...)

'We'se already warningers the Siders Viciousers the once. He's best bee's the considerate and careful'ers.'

Anyhow, at the present, sixteen of the Cobalts (the number of players Trent had indicated were to be allowed on the field at any one time) are busy swarming over a Bog Troll, who is for the most part ignoring them as he slowly lumbers down the field.

"See's, the Charlies no standers the chance! He's the too biggers." (Um, Charlie being the name of every Cobalt I've ever encountered -- anywhere, anytime. But maybe you already knew that.)

"See, It's what I've been saying all along," the loud mouthed Mog chimes in. And have you noticed how he always has to be the center of attention, that Mog, with his ceremonial dress and his string of teeth from the fallen and his ridiculous ideas about sportsmanship, fairness, and fair play?

But I guess Trent was getting a headache; or maybe he knew if he didn't do something fast, the Orcs would just do one of those sit-in protest things (On His Field!) with their endless chants:

'What do we want?'

'Fair play!'

'When do we want it?'

'Now!'

I mean, as if an Ord would know fair play if it hit them with a stick... or a branch from an old oak tree. But whatever.

Long story short, Trent must be getting soft at this point (rotting at the core if you know what I mean); and so he allowed his good reason to be compromised by Mog's incessant yammering and there was some sort of convoluted addendum added to the tradition rules of the game of Football that indicated teams would be constructed by weight ('Now the Charlies have the chance') and that things like out of bounds, rules, actually carrying the ball into the end zone (as perhaps opposed to throwing or kicking the ball --with or without an opposing team member attached -- into the end zone) would not so much be against the rules (as there would be no 'rules') as they would simply be scored differently, because apparently, somewhere along the lines it had been decided that there would be a tournament (to decide the best of the best).

Now, I won't be boring you with the rules, because:

- a) They don't matter;
- b) I'm not convinced they really exist;
- c) And even if they do, I'm never going to bother to learn them and that could make listing them here more than a little difficult.

But not to worry, the important thing to take from all this is that:

- d) No one likes Mog,
- e) Least of all me.

Besides, you can bet it will take them most of the night (if not next few nights) to work out the rules (not that there are going to be any).

And even after the changes (with the changes), the Charlie's (i.e. the Cobalts) still won't stand a chance.

'You should no be the so's sures abouters that, Misters Viciousers. Charlies got the thingie or the two'e up his sleeve,' like talking over my dialogue. 'Mister's Visciouskiters dialogue? The Charlie no thinks the so. He be the talking, here's.'" Or maybe, he could be the ending, here's. 'So, the Charlie be the done, now. Carry the on, Mister Viscousness.'

So, where was I? Oh, right. It looks to be that come Friday night (this week or next or maybe in a few weeks, not sure yet, as no one can seem to agree... on anything at the moment), there's going to be a

tournament of sorts around here. So, invite your friends, invite your family, bring your sweetheart, and during the halftime lull, feel free to walk down the ruins for a little alone time with just you and him, her, or it (whatever you call your sweetheart, I suppose), and the Gods of Old.

Oh, and one last thing, for whatever reason, as all the others were sinking into their ancient clan rivalries, the Elves and Humans decided to put all that aside, forge ahead into the future, and be on the same team. Or as Jack put it, “Oh, sure. That Strathmore character is a real arrogant cuss, but did you see the way he can run? We need him on our side.”

Of course, he might have left off the part about how he didn’t want to be the one holding the ball when the Stone Giants hit the field, and although the Charlies looked small (cute, helpless, and almost endearing), it was clear using unnecessary force or contraband equipment (spears, catapults, knives, guns, etc.) was only going to reduce the value of a goal by a point or two (it having already been agreed that yardage penalties would only serve to slow down the play), so their size might not be as important as originally thought.

Which is all to say that if the name hadn’t already been copyrighted (and I wasn’t a sucker for residual royalties), perhaps we could call what they were planning on playing something along the lines of Slaughter Quest Soccer™. But as the name is already taken, we’ll just call whatever it is that they wind up agreeing to play as Graveyard Rules Rugby and call it a day -- or, er, a night.

Any-the-who, with all that settled, it’s time for me to head off to the showers... and see if that Kowardly Kurr of a Kibber has left me any wine or if he’s already eaten me out of house and home.

{{{Chapter End}}}