

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 16 ###
Music to Mog's Ears ###**

Nobody likes Mog. Nobody.

He's stupid. He smells. And he's an Orc. But really, now I'm just repeating myself.

But since he's a resident of the graveyard (that is to say, just because he resides in my graveyard), Mog seems to think that he's got special rights; or if not special rights, then some rights, at least.

He doesn't.

No one does.

A graveyard is not a democracy. It's not a plutocracy, a meritocracy, or any sort of 'cracy. It's a dictatorship at best; a living Hell, at worst.

So, when I say I don't feel like talking to Mog (and I don't), I don't have to.

Which is to say, when I start to smell him coming up behind me, I walk the other way.

And when he calls my name "Sid! Sid! Sid!" I ignore him.

But when he goes so far as to touch me (To Touch ME! The vile worm!), he has gone too far.

I turn around before his outstretched hand can connect. I've just been to the catacombs (don't know if I mentioned it), so I'm wearing my finest: hard boots, leather gloves, defensive (i.e. magical) cloak, face mask, and all the rest; just the sort of protective outfit one wants to be wearing while, sifting through bodily remains, making Drip, or being within ten feet of an Orc, especially an Orc like Mog.

Of course, I also have my staff with me, so I don't have to be within ten feet of an Orc or twenty or thirty or an even hundred thousand if I don't want to be.

So, really, it's out of kindness that I hit Mog's hand with the shaft of my staff (not hard, not soft -- but with all my frik'n might; have I mentioned how much I dislike Mog), whereupon a bone snaps, maybe two. To be sure about the count, I'd have to examine the injury, but that's not going to happen. That would mean touching Mog, another thing that's not going to happen.

And while most folks might attend to a broken arm... I guess this sort of thing has happened to Mog a time or two in the past. (It will heal, and sooner than it should.) Anyway, he just ignores it. (What is one more infirmity among the catastrophe he calls a corpse?) As he proceeds to inquire in a roundabout way (as if he had a right to inquire -- in a roundabout or not), "Sid hurt Mog. Sid break Mog bone. But Sid no break bread with Mog. Why Sid no eat with Mog?"

He's annoying. I could just blasterize him. (No, literally, I could.) Staff in hand, a touch of the ruby tip (glowing at the moment, hungry for something to eat, now that the topic has been mentioned), as it eagerly winds its way in Mog's direction.

Okay, I give the staff a lot of help (all the help it needs). But to be fair, some of these staves have been known to take on a life of their own.

I suppose that only comes about after they sucked down a few thousand errant souls, a precondition which might explain my staff's current hunger... or like I said, maybe it's current progress towards Mog's heart (and soul) has more to do with my desires than anything intrinsic to the staff.

Either way, Mog backs up until he's just out of reach. (Still way too close.) As he repeats his entreaty (as if anything that comes out of an Orc's mouth can be called an entreaty), "Why Sid no eat with Mog?"

Like I said, I don't have to answer him. This isn't a populist state. I rule my cemetery with the iron hand of a dictator. I am a Dark Necromancer, after all. I've got a certain reputation to uphold. But it's been a long time (centuries, millennium) since I obliterated anyone's soul (OK, fine, maybe I grew soft after the war and haven't done it since then; after all, there's the treaty to consider). Anyway, the point is, I could obliterate Mog... or there could always be, like, an accident (ah, but then if there was, there'd be the paperwork).

But whatever the case, these delightful ruminations (of an afterlife sans Mog) are cut short as Mog, the Orc, the nasty Orc, the disgusting Orc, the Orc with snot running down his nose, the Orc with drool running down his chin, the Orc that likes to wallow in filth (calls it taking a bath), the Orc that wears layer after of layer of slime (like he's proud of it, and it's not the good kind of slime, mind you, whatever that might be, but that bad kind of rancid fetid slime that's hard to distinguish from simply rotting flesh); but that's not all, we're talking about the Orc with unkempt hair (half pulled out at the roots, half knotted, and in dreadlocks, I believe is the style he's going for); certainly that seems to be what he's going for with his body hair, shaved here, not shaved there, scratched through here (I guess he itches. Wonder why?), and scarred there, with an extra layer of slime here, there, and everywhere (as if such a thing was even possible). In short, he's disgusting, and he asks, once again, like repeatedly. "Why Sid no eat with Mog?"

Still, only inches away from the business end of my staff (or seriously, only a fraction of an inch away -- that Mog does press his

luck), he has the nerve to ask (yet again, and again, and again), “Why Sid no eat with Mog?”

I guess the Orc wants an answer.

“Because you’re disgusting, Mog. You smell, I don’t like you, no one does.”

“Sid no sweet talk Mog.” How else does one compliment an Orc, after all? “Sid eat with elf. Sid eat with Wizard. Sid eat with Human runt. And still Mog wait. But when Sid eat with elf again, Mog wait be over. Mog want to know, when Sid eat with Orc? When Sid eat with Mog.”

“Never. The answer to your question is never.”

“Mog lodge the protest.”

“Mog can do what he likes,” a poorly worded statement if ever there was one. Fighter types might live and die by the sword, spell slingers (Dark Necromancer’s among them), tend to live and die by their word. And as soon as I said it, I knew I’d regret it. And it didn’t take Mog long at all, (not at all).

“Mog be Music Teacher. Mog read up on subject,” will wonders never cease, “Teacher get good benefits -- pension, health. Mog teach Music. Mog get benefit package.”

And with that, Mog flicks at the (albeit -- and thankfully -- small) bone in his nose (in truth, it’s perhaps the most tasteful thing about good ole Mog). Anyhow, it might have been nice if the bone sort of rang out like a bell or some sort of musical chime, but instead, it makes an empty sort of (not even a dull or hollow) thud.

And with that, Mog is off and running to teach his first class (already in session).

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When we get there (me, Mog, and a few curious bystanders -- Trent, some of the Old Spirits), the class is, indeed, already in session.

S-Kelly, Frank, and the gang are busy making armpit noises (I guess they decided to form a band), while most everyone else (no need to go down the list this time) is either running around, playing games as

kids will play (slap, keep away, etc.), or simply talking gossip (or talking shop as the case may be: Ned and Abby -- being the only two I shall call out at this juncture -- are whispering amongst themselves, heads close together, dissecting the logic behind the Music of the Spheres, and in general trying to get down to the root cause of it all).

Anyhow, amidst this chaos, Mog is right at home (so maybe being a teacher -- and a music teacher, at that -- has always been his destiny), because rather than yelling at the kids (and this is what he knows best from what I've observed, yelling), Mog simply sits on the teacher's desk (not in or behind, but on), crosses his legs, gives a great big Orcin war cry "I-I-I-I" (as it's all about him, it always is with Orcs) and proceeds to hammer out an armpit squirt belch song-ditty the likes of which the kids have never seen before (and if they are lucky will never see again). It's not music (of course), but I've seen a few armpit choirs in my time (there are a lot of Orcs in the cemetery, humans, too), and as far as armpit squirt belch song-ditties go, Mog is clearly a master.

In no time, the kids (as are desirous) of such a thing find the nerve to join Mog in his serenade; and slowly but surely the children spontaneously add (or Mog coaxes them to add) random chants, curses, insults, obscenities, and no little bit of what can only be called screaming at the top of one's lungs. So, I guess Mog is leading them through a round of the Orc National Anthem. (I am Chaos, hear me roar.)

Not music to my ears, but I recognize the sound, the tempo, the grating on the ears, so it's true to form. And seriously, a whole lot better than I had expected of Mog. No, seriously. When he hopped on that desk, I was half expecting him to silence the assemblage with a mighty roar... and when that didn't work, going around hugging the students, shaking hands, and so on (not a pleasant experience, let me assure you, no one wants to touch an Orc, let alone be hugged by one, not even another Orc). And then, after a bit of that nonsense (perhaps as Mog noticeably failed to hug -- i.e. snubbed and looked over -- those who were sitting quietly and behaving themselves -- and therefore, quite obviously not suitable stock for any horde of Mog's) the rest of the class would get the hint and silence themselves right quick. And then, having

gained their attention, I expected to follow a long, boring (humorously inaccurate and self-serving) lesson on MultiCulturalism.

But like I said, Mog did not go that route (so maybe I've underestimated him). And for the most, the kids are whooping it up. And although, it's not what I would call music, it does have that magical chant quality about it -- mesmerizing, infusing, like listening to the Existential Hum -- and after a bit, it does seem to make a sort of sense (a clear sign of magic, that).

And then, let's not forget that Mog works magic -- calls himself a shaman or some such nonsense -- animal totems, spirit guides, a whole heck of a lot of K'fr (maybe a bit of Drip if there's any around), and well, you start seeing things, your mind leaves this world behind. And let's face it, some of the folks who leave this world behind have the knack of changing things there (wherever it is that they go) in such a way that things are changed here, as well. (I guess like most magic it's easier than it sounds and harder than it looks).

Any-the-way, when Mog starts chanting (over, beyond, and with the assembled parties, which takes on a new sort of subtle meaning -- the assemblage, it does -- once one realizes that Frank -- among others -- is amongst the chanters), it's clear something needs to be done, someone needs to save the day, or at least take charge of the moment and channel the energy, you know, someone other than Mog, that is. (I mean, have I mentioned -- lately, in the last few paragraphs -- how I loathe that guy Mog?)

Anyway, this someone, this savior, this Elf happens to be Mine'irva (and no other). True, Strathmore escorts her to the podium and Mata stands at her side, but it is Mine'irva who plucks at the heart strings as she plays the harp that someone (maybe me) left on the stage (just for her).

Elves are great singers.

Mine'irva is a great singer: beautiful, graceful, delightful. Her voice dancing with the chanters, above the chanters, guiding and directing them, as she sings about gods of old and gods of new, and above and in and around and through it all, she sings about the glories of Elves and their kind.

Hours, moments, seconds, or years later (time stands still once the Elf Song takes over, so who knows), Mine'irva is done. There is nothing but silence. Music soothes the savage beast don't you know, and a mere Orc doesn't stand a chance against Elf magic.

The applause is thunderous. I freely admit to clapping myself and giving a wolf whistle as Mine'irva's pauses for a moment between flickers to take on the form a girl I once loved... and then, she is gone, the smile on Mine'irva's face being but a promise that she could bring the visage back, if only for a moment, you know, if the price was right.

I'm sure everyone in the room saw the same thing in their own way, seeing their own true love. One wonders who or what Gwyneth saw (as just an example) or Gloria. I suppose there is power in the knowledge, a utility, a sort of leverage.

Anyway, as I (and perhaps all if not most) of the onlookers (ancient Spirits included) sink into a sort of reverie (a quiet post Elvin ballad appreciatory bliss), it is Mog who breaks the silence. (I guess Orcs don't have lost loves, loves at all, or perhaps, being mortal enemies of Elves, have built up a sort of resistance to their charms.) Whatever the case, Mog gives a polite clap (which from an Orc -- and an Orc that likes to hoot and holler and so on -- polite clapping is a sort of sarcastic appreciation at best), "Elf sing good. Mog like. Princess audition. Mine'irva get the role. She get the part. She be lead singer in the Mog's band now. Elf princess be free to sing for the Mog anytime she like."

These words are said with the obvious intent of claiming ownership of and stealing the glory from Mine'irva, so swords are quickly drawn (Strathmore's & Mata's), but Mog shows no signs of concern as he says, "Sing-song be done now today. Class dismissed. Elves may go, now. Mog require their service, he call, he sing, he chant. And the pretty elf princess, she come running with her sing-song."

Then, Mog turns his back on the elves (drawn swords and all, calling their bluff, besides, he'll heal if he's wrong, so what does he care) and studies the blackboard. There's nothing on it, so he's probably trying to figure out how it works, chalk being a tricky business, don't you know.

And with that, the bell rings and the rest of the students file out, as Mog calls out over his shoulder not bothering to look around, “Mog dismiss elf, now. She free to go. Mog give the call,” the hoot, the holler, “if he need her again.” And that said, Mog (good old Mog) starts to whistle a raspy guttural imitation of Mine’irva’s song.

I do believe the Orc is up to something.

It’s certainly something to ponder as the rest of the students leave. And when they are gone, and we are alone, Mog inquires once more (with a sort of gleam in his dull eyes), “Sid break the fake bread with the Mog, now?”

No, not now. Not ever.

But there is no sense in speaking such words as one might someday live (or un-live) to regret... or worse yet, to have to eat... with an Orc, no less. Yuck!

But Mog, does not seem to care. Facing the board, chalk in hand, he idly scratches out a sort of cave painting, as he says to the air, almost casually, “Sid cast spell. Elf cast spell. Wiz cast spell. Soon boy cast spell. So, Mog cast spell. It be good spell, strong spell. Sid let Mog know when he want to break bread. Mog have no plans. Mog free for lunch, for breakfast, for any-the-time Sid want to rethink position. But until then, Mog must ask Sid to leave.” Mog says the last while twirling around, a twinkle in his eyes. “Next up be secret strategy meeting, members only.”

And with that, the Orkin football team swarms in (hooting and hollering and smelling the place up even more). So, no one has to tell me to leave twice, I’m out of here.

Though I do wonder what sort of greasy grimy plan (and it is a greasy grimy plan, you can be sure of that if Mog is involved) that the old Orc has planned.

Yes, indeed. I do wonder.

{{{Chapter End}}}