

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 22 ###
Loren'Thral ###
The Art of the Dance ###**

Floating weightless, drifting, it reminds me of swimming in the sea. I did that once. A day of recreation, morale boosting for the troops, and a bunch of us officers went into the sea. The locals did it for fun. We did it (or at least, I did it) on a dare.

At first it was terrifying.

How do you defend yourself against the monsters from the deep; the ones you (or at least, I) know are out there; the ones that would like nothing better than wrap a slimy tentacle around your leg, drag you under, and take you down into the deep?

Yet we went... on a dare, as a matter of honor, going out as far as we could, would, or dared, which for those who could not swim was not very.

I remember holding my breath and peering about under the water, afraid of what I would see; and then, yes, being very afraid, not of monsters or fish or spirits or demons or ghosts but of the way the land dived down, as if the shore were the top of a mountain and under the surface of the ocean it sloped down... forever.

Anything could be down there... a thousand anything's would handily fit down there with continental size elbow room to spare.

When I came up for breath, my companion asked me what I saw. Upon seeing my face -- the terror in my eyes -- it became a race for shore. We were the furthest out, the last in, lucky to have survived...

But it was nothing: a simple terror of the unknown.

###

I float.

I floated.

I know not how long. Spread out over the cemetery, my tendrils reaching into its furthest corners, I am the sea monster now... or so my charges would have you believe, but there are other powers greater than I.

And I confess to be worried about them... nibbling at my toes if you will as I dissipate, was dissipated. Yes, scared, petrified, terrified, or simply worried would be a good way to describe my feelings. Or one might say I was full of caution, courtesy, and respect. Yes, I like the sound of that. I was full of respect for the dangers of the unknown -- the powers that be that are greater than I and who could easily breathe me in and eat me alive in a single unseen breath -- as I floated about,

But that did not happen.

And nothing nibbled on my toes.

I felt no challenge to my power.

And so, I floated... as if on a waterbed or the sea for days.

And the pulse, the rippling vibrations from the music, coursed through my veins, while Zephyr (my friend the wind), pushed me where he would.

Of course, Zephyr (even Zephyr) is one of those greater powers (and of old) of which I earlier referred. Wind, a force of nature: it is terrible, ominous, and great. Or to put it another way, it's hard going when even gravity has turned against you (if you know what I mean, which I suppose if you've ever fought an uphill battle in the rain, you would).

I don't know if Zephyr has a mind or a will, certainly the breeze that drifts on by, curls dust into a ball, or waves a flag in the air seems to be without thought or feeling, but one could say the same of ants, and ants are quite intelligent as a group -- stone cold stupid alone -- but as a whole, as a tribe, quite capable of building castles in the sand.

And one might say the same about the wind.

I know I feel the same about the wind.

So, be kind to the pups for the momma be a right mean bitch.

###

I awoke, came to, pulled (together from and) out of reverie down in the old forest, where Jack had gone to be 'alone'.

He was dancing... call it dancing. It really looked more like he was mimicking Strathmore, pretending to be a football star -- the center of attention, star of the show -- as he scored yet another touchdown.

I don't think he intended to draw any attention to himself. (OK, I know he did not intend to draw any attention.) But he did.

Fingerlings and fairies (the small ones, hence the name) swarmed about Jack to play, forming a cloud of delight and becoming his dance partner. Fingerlings do not live long: some a month, some a week, and still others less than day (though to be fair, some of their kind measure their lives by the year). But the point is, with a life cycle as short as all that, the cemetery is full of them -- as it is full of dust and leaves, insects and maggots. (Looked at the right way, which I like to think is another way of saying looked at my way, the cemetery is a very crowded place

and greatly in need of expansion.) Anyhow, back to the fingerlings, as a rule, they are stone cold stupid, little more than insects -- annoying, meddlesome, but hardly clever, and easily distracted by a flutter of gold, tap on the ground, vibration in the air... or a lone wayward dancer.

In no time (or time enough), they had befriended Jack (perhaps at Gloria's bidding, perhaps at Gloria's request); but at the present, I could not tell you the how or the why. Perhaps it was simply the nature of his dance (solitary, alone, but truthful and honest, no pretense, no performance, just raw desire -- something the fairies know best) that drew them in.

Whatever the case, out of this crystal of need, this desire, Lorien'thral took form. Drafts and breezes and gentle winds gather together and form a mighty storm, where one strand of wind begins and another ends is hard to tell.

In some ways, this is as it is with Lorien'thral... only the parts are more easily seen. And though it is true that alone, the fingerlings have more life, intelligence, and existence than the wind, like a great storm, without them Lorien'thral would not be at all, and also like a great storm, she is so much greater than her constituent parts... like leaves dancing in the wind or water spraying in the falls, Lorien'thral is the fairies and so much more.

Yes, she IS the fairies and so much more.

Alas, it doesn't really convey enough.

Sister to the Elves, no doubt, a daughter of chaos, her cunning is legendary, and her power, extraordinary... even Death does not hold her. Here, she dances in my domain, among her daughters. But while there is life on the other side, there she will dance as well, going to and fro across the divide as she chooses, when she chooses, the wall between being little more than a doorway to her, a stepping onto and off of the path.

Perhaps, she is exactly what we need, what I need, what I have been looking for.

One wonders if she can say the same about me or us... or more importantly, if one day, she hopes to take her children home; if for one who knows not Death, does Death have any meaning?

#

I did not call the rest forth or arrange any of this. The rest of the 'students' came on their own -- it having been decided (by whom? Lorien'thral? certainly not I?) that the next class should be held here: not amid the rock, not amid the ruin, but in the old forest. For, it is here that Lorien'thral dances. And it here that Jack dances. And now it is here that Strathmore dances, Ned dances (if you want to call that herky-jerk dancing), Abby dances (and yes, I will call that subtle shifting of forms a dance), and talk about shape-shifting, Mine'irva dances slow and easy bordering on the indecently erotic, easily becoming the center of attention, the focus of the swarm, and in no time at all, Lorien'thral singles her out to be her lone partner, lover(?), and escort through the dark (if you will allow me to wax poetic).

#

Somewhere, zombies are shuffling along.

Somewhere, the dust gathers.

But here, the morning star (not to mention the sun) catches Lorien'thral full on, as she teaches her students a thing or two about life and beauty and the art of the dance.

I don't believe there is anything else to say, no side words are spoken, no 'Mu-ha-ha' to break the flow. There is something here -- something magic, something secret, critical, and key. This I can tell you.

This I believe.

But as to its exact nature...

I do not know. Perhaps even the gods of old have a hankering to walk upon the sacred ground of Earth, once more. Perhaps they never wished to leave. I know I didn't. And perhaps somewhere (in there somewhere) Lorien'thral is key.

#

I wonder if the gods of old (or I would settle for Lorien'thral alone) would kneel at my feet, swear fealty, and do as I bid?

In answer, I might as well say the wind knocked a branch from a tree almost hitting me or kicked up some dust in my eye. It would have been clearer and straighter to the point.

Rather, instead, a fingerling, a little tyke of a girl, a waif, insubstantial, meaningless, like some toy trinket or doll, alights on my finger, and there she sits and ponders and calls two more of her other sisters over; and together they try to decide whether I am friend or foe, a dancing companion... or one who must be run off before the dance can commence in earnest.

Their bite is wicked mean, cruel and unforgiving -- unrelenting.

But for now, I am neither friend nor foe, that judgment must wait, and in turn, the dance (the real dance) awaits...

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Yes, the dance awaits.

So, now, if you'll forgive me, I do believe Lorien'thral is winking at me. No doubt the trio were intended to be an envoy of sorts. And as the morning mist hangs on the ground and/or swirls in the air, so to the dance Lorien'thral and I will dance may not be as simple and straightforward as it may as first appear.

Don't ask me what this has to do with school.

Don't ask me what this has to do with escape. After all, resistance is useless and escape impossible. Haven't you heard? No one has ever escaped from Stalag 13.

And yet, we shall try.

Yes, and yet, we shall all try.

And if that means I need to laze about as the mist on the wind for a few more days, weeks, months, years, while Lorien'thral's (and/or her minions) weave through my hair, dance, and nibble (and/or step) on my toes as they whisper sweet nothings into my ears, revealing their secrets

in the flaps of their wings (i.e. telling me nothing); well then, if that's the case, then I say, let it be.

###

And what has it been, now, weeks?

And, yet, the music still plays?

Well, you know what they say, 'When the Crypt Keeper's away, HIS minions will play.'

'Ouch, fine, no nibbling on the toes. The denizens will play. The denizens will play. Like that better?'

And, yes, I do believe Lorien'thral's daughters do.

Have mentioned their bite?

And how a healthy respect for one's elders can go a long way?

Excellent!

Good!

Then, I recommend 'smiling when you say that' and remember that the bees of the swarm can make sweet honey or sting an enemy to death (or submission)... and often times both (at the same time).

And with that, I would say 'Class dismissed!' But then, I do not believe it was ever in session. Yet for the wise, every day is a new chance to learn...

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Tomorrow, there will be a quiz.

But for now, class is dismissed...

{{{Chapter End}}}