

**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](http://www.paufler.net)  
[Brett@Paufler.net](mailto:Brett@Paufler.net)

**### Chapter 24 ###  
### PTA Meeting ###**

Bones has set up office by the Main Gate -- literally. He sits behind a nice oaken (Or is it mahogany?) wooden desk as he leafs through a large disorganized stack of papers. Once in a while, the gentle breeze that is blowing kicks up a piece of paper and blows it off the desk (literally scattering it to the wind). And at this point, one of the many Kibbers in attendance chase down the offending bit of typography, place is on a silver tray (from which it is often blow off several more times prior to reaching its destination), and return said piece of paper to the stack from which it was blown or -- more often than not -- Bones's waiting hand. Leaves, which are in abundance, now that it is fall (How much time has it been? Weeks? Months? Years?) take the opposite route, falling onto the desk and being carried away on silver platters by

other Kibbers who specialize in this particular task. It seems doubly pointless (the whole enterprise being one of waste and tedium in the first place) that when a leaf falls off a tray (or blows off, the more likely), the Kibber in question chases the leaf down, rather than just letting it drift away on the breeze. Anyway, eventually all of the leaves that started on the desk have find their way on top of small pile of same -- a pile that would have grown into a great pile by this time were it not for the Zombies who delight in crashing (and/or stumbling/staggering) through it, scattering the leaves about.

Days have gone by like this.

Nights have gone by like this.

Perhaps weeks have gone by like this.

Bones has been drinking (smoking, snorting, eating, consuming, but mostly drinking) wine (and whatever else) as he works (whatever it is that he is working at). But for the longest time, he has forgotten about these accessories, these props, the wine and so forth. And right on cue (or if I have been saying that too much recently, with uncanny timing), as if to answer the preceding question (of what it is exactly that Bones is doing), he suddenly (and without warning) tosses a pile of paper into the air (which the Kibbers quickly scramble to recover) as he complains (perhaps to Zephyr the wind or maybe just to himself), "I'll never understand the rules to this place," which as true as that might be, I would remind one that never is a long time -- a long, long time. And, once again as if by magical coincidence, so as to confirm I am right and he is wrong (which is usually the case), the next thing Bones does is grab a standard-size legal scroll from one of the returning Kibbers, glance at it quickly, and then ask, (of the air, the Kibber, or of himself), "What is 'habeas corpus' supposed to mean? We have plenty of corpses, but..."

Yes, it would seem that certain Keepers of the Crypt do not trust all (or any) of those in their employ, and so had taken liberty long ago to replace the standard Rules & Regulations of Keeping a Crypt with a mix-match from... wherever.

"Is this Elvish lettering? Next to Dwarves runes? If I didn't know better, I'd say was a peace treaty."

But I do know better. And I can assure you that it is.

# # #

But we did not come here (and focus on this moment) in order to enjoy Bones' frustration (that's just a pleasant side effect, a diversion); rather the meat of the moment concerns a little matter of which I have been aware for some time (some long time), but which Bones is just starting to notice: the citizens of the cemetery have grown restless. Of course, this has been coming on for years and is to be expected in any place (power structure, whatever) as devoid of change as a cemetery. But then, as of late, there has been a great deal of change around here. And what, with my disappearance (turning into mist for the past few weeks, months, maybe longer) coupled with the current Zombie Problem, the denizens have been spurred to action, decided to strike while the iron is hot (certainly seems like something a Dwarf might say in an effort to rally the troops) and take matters into their own hands. Or if that's not clear, they have formed a mob (or protest group, if you will; but then again, I do believe mob with torches and pitchforks and whatnot gives a better feel for the mood). And this mob is headed straight this way, eager to confront the would be ruler of their domain as they chant:

'Down with Zombies!'

'We shall overcome!'

Along with a refrain of the ever popular:

'What do we want?'

'No Zombies!'

'When do we want it?'

'Them gone!'

Clearly Mog had something to do with writing the lyrics. But then, as you can clearly see, as he stumbles along, more than a little of what passes for life around here has gone out of his eyes, for he is on the edge of becoming completely Zombified. Odd, how no one else has seemed to notice the change, yet. The intelligence of his mutterings remain at the same dismally low level. And he smells just as rank.

Anyway, enough about Mog. The crowd is coming from inside the cemetery, but Bones had set up his desk facing the outside (toward the entrance), so as to better control and/or greet any newcomers that may have arrived. But then, as we're using the side gate (rather than the main gate) this month (Don't ask me why?) business has been abnormally slow. Of course, even if he had taken up residence at the side gate, he would have found that business has indeed been dismally, nonexistantly slow (for I am on vacation and taking a hiatus). But that is neither here nor there. Business concerns aside, all this really means is that Bones has to look over his shoulder to get a good look at the approaching crowd, that is, until the Kibbers lift Bones up (desk and all) and turn him around facing the right way, which in a cemetery would be looking in, for to control others, one must first control oneself, yada-yada, and/or Mu-ha-ha-ha.

###

Once the crowd is fully assembled, Abby is the first to speak (having been duly elected as the spokes-Apprentice for the mob at the preceding -- pre-convention(?) -- meeting), "We want to talk to you about the growing Zombie problem."

Abby's words are, of course, echoed by cheers, chants, and such meaningless endorsements as 'You tell him, girl' or 'Way to lay it on the line, Abby.'

Along with a hearty, "Abby, Abby, she's our gal, if she can't solve this, no one can! Go Abby!" It's good to see Gwyneth hasn't lost her enthusiasm, though she might want to find a new cheer.

Still, you've got to hand it to Bones. He takes it all in stride, throws his legs up on the desk (sending papers flying and Kibbers scattering), leans back (so far he almost falls off his chair, loses his balance, regains his balance, almost loses it again, tests his balance just to make sure, relaxes a little, leans back a bit further, too far, not enough, OK, finally gets it right), and finally takes a sip of wine... at which point his chair finally breaks under the strain of it all sending him clattering to the ground.

So, Rule Number 257 of Crypt Maintenance: store your perishables indoors and under lock and key. Given time, everything decomposes and turns to Dust: Everything (but especially fine wooden furniture, it just doesn't last long in the mist).

Of course, I'm just making that up (that there are rules); and good luck to Bones in finding any useful information like that in the stack of paper he's currently working through, so all in all that might explain his current 'ill humor'.

Meaning, Bones glares. He dusts himself off. And he glares. Then he glares some more. I guess he's angry. Probably blames Wally or Mog (and I do believe Mog is unconsciously fingering his juju beads, at this point, not that I would have had anything to do with either that or the other thing). But whatever, the point is, it's clear Mog was responsible for that little chair breakage incident. And so, Bones glares, stands tall, and asks, as only a truly annoyed Skeletal Warlord who has been spending the past fortnight or two trying to make sense of a load of gobbledygook regulations and paperwork, "What is this..." and then, all of a sudden, Bones can't talk, can't move his jaw bone. And if I had to deconstruct the scene for you (which I guess is my job or something), I do believe Mog might be twiddling his fingers, trying to cast a spell, or something. (I mean, he could be, certainly seems possible, not completely beyond the pale of reason.)

But then (and in truth), I just might have something to do with Bones current run of bad luck (if that's what you want to call it). And personally (just by the by), I find it annoying that the Kibber's loyalty is so, um, transitory. It's not that I mind that they offer there services to whoever seems to have the most power. It annoys me that they do not see that that person in charge here, the person who is running the show, the person who is (most obviously) pulling the strings behind the scenes here is me! Not Bones! Not Mog! Not some stupid Elvin clan whose adopted 'Lands' are currently being overrun by Zombies, but me!

Me! Me! Me!

And since Kibbers serve power, they most certainly should be still serving me, and not some upstart who can't seem to get his paperwork organized, sit in a chair properly, or even talk; and who, even as we

speak, at this very moment, is making his way through the crowd, ignoring Abby's petition, and instead, planning in advance exactly how he is going to pound Mog into the ground (dust and/or submission) for welding his mouth shut, when suddenly his (Bones') legs won't work. Maybe a slight rain will start and we can turn this whole thing into some scene straight out of the Wizard of the Graveyard and Bones can be the squeaky old Animated Skeleton whose always low on the ole magic juice and needs to be refreshed from time to time out of one of those five and dime spray liquid manna bottles for comedic effect; but then, I probably digress.

Meanwhile, Abby is thanking Wally, because she thinks Bones current run of 'bad luck' is all his doing.

"Um, no problem," he replies. And though, he's on my short list (truthfully, almost everyone is on my short list at the moment), I'm going to let it slide (his taking credit for this that is).

But that is neither here nor there.

Taking advantage of the moment, Abby declares, "These are our demands," as she hands Bones a prepared list of (what else, but) their demands. But Bones hands won't work at the moment, so a Kibber graciously accepts the list from Abby and reads the document aloud:

'Zombies are trampling the flower beds.'

'Zombies are ignoring the quiet areas, disturbing the mediation and religious practice of others.'

'Zombies are ignoring property rights.'

'Zombies are invading our privacy.'

Zombies are doing this.

And Zombies are doing that.

And if looks could kill (or if Bones could kill with his looks), I'm sure someone (Mog, probably Mob, yes I do believe it would be Mog) would have to pay for all he has done. (Heck, Bones might even turn him into Dust if we're at all lucky). So with that said, I do believe it is time to release Bones (in a thunderous flash of light and no little amount of smoke) as Bones (seemingly) breaks the enchantment through sheer force of will as he (sure, it's Bones, why not, believe what you want, you traitorous little Kibbers, you'll get yours).

Anyway, under normal circumstances (if there is such a thing around here, anymore), Bones first course of action would normally have been the continuation of his last course of action, but Mog is nowhere to be found (having made the transformation completely and even now shuffle-walk-bumps repeatedly into one of the larger oaks in the forest for which he has found a strange attraction).

Still, that rat-bastard Mog couldn't have gotten too far away (and Bones is of yet unaware of his fate), so Bones scans the area looking for his prey. But Abby is right there (with a Kibberish sort of persistence if you ask me) as she reminds Bones, "The Zombies, what are you going to do about the Zombies?"

"So, you have a grievance? And you're coming to me? Your defacto ruler? Your King?" Bones asks.

"What? No." Abby looks at him quizzically, as if to say, what are you talking about, and/or didn't you get the memo, because "Sid left instructions."

"Where!" Bones asks, says, demands. He reminds me an awful lot of that bad guy pirate in every cheap theatrical production they've ever put on down at the community center (might have something to do with how Bones usually gets that role in said production). Anyway, we're obviously at the part in the play where said pirate has just found out that someone else knows where the buried treasure is located. (Isn't that always the way it goes?) Or if that's not clear (and/or in other words), Bones has got that full-on stare-glare running on high-beam, just like a maniacal Skeletal Warlord might have if he thinks he's just about to receive the key to the kingdom. (It's almost exactly like the expression of some of your more vapid animals -- poodles, hound dogs, or a rabid snarling pit bull in this particular case) right before the ball is thrown during a game of Fetch.

'Throw the ball! Throw the ball! Throw the ball!'

Only instead of that, Bones is saying, "Where is it? Where is it? Where is it?" And if he could, I'm sure Bones would be drooling at this point. (I'm sure of it.)

So, with that as cue (and it is the correct term at this point and not overused at all in this particular case), Jack (the Jock, who was

originally slated to play the paladin, but obviously that isn't going to happen -- he's been a bit of a jerk lately in my opinion) is motioned forward. And once at the forefront of the action, Jack shows Bones the book he's been carrying around: a book, which now has a short (very short) handwritten note scribbled in the margin of one of those near empty pages publishers delight in inserting in nearly every book I've ever read. And in truth, it's the sort of handwritten message that I might have wrote. And certainly, it looks like the sort of handwritten message that I actually wrote. But it is not.

Rule 487: Never Write Anything Down.

Rule 488: And Certainly, Never Write a Book.

Anyway, so it may look I wrote it. It is in my hand, and says -- maybe is exactly -- what I would have written if I had thought of writing anything in that book. But I hadn't. This is all Gloria's doing, skilled forger that she is. Clearly, I'm going to have to press her harder on that apprenticeship opportunity I mentioned to her earlier... a few months back, now? No matter. Time flies when you're having fun -- or simply dead.

Anyway, back to the message. The message is short and sweet and is exactly the sort of short cryptic message I might write down if I was making notes to myself... or rather, it's exactly (almost eerily exactly) the sort of thing I might have related in confidence to a potential apprentice for their better edification and understanding of what I was doing so that they might be better impressed by my actions, goals, and/or long range plans, if you know what I mean, which you probably don't; but then, Gloria probably did, seeing as how the message reads:

PTA MEETING - Zombie Issue - Bones is President

And after reading these few lines, Bones sort of flips-rips through the rest of the book in the way that they do in those better cartoons... or come to think of it, your better community theater productions wherein the menacing Pirate Warlord gets a map, book, diary, whatever, and while looking for more clues, maps, notes, or whatever, winds up destroying what little evidence he has in the first place.

Probably not my clearest bit of prose. Suffice to say, Bones rips that book to shreds, inside and out, from cover to cover, looking for more. There has to be more! But sadly, there is no more.

Rule 489: If Must Write, Keep It Short

Rule 490: To The Point

Rule 491: Of Obfuscation

Rule 492: And Confusion

And just between you and me (considering Bones just destroyed that sucker), it's a good thing Gloria is no longer residing in the book.

Somewhere along the line, she reasoned that if she could travel about inside a book that just happened to be in Jack's back pocket, why not skip the middleman and simply hole up in said pocket, shirt, hat, headband, shoe, socks, wherever and whatever. I guess she's been a happy little ghost for the past while. I can do my incorporeal thing my way and she'll do hers her own, thank you very much. But then again, now that I mention it, if the crowd were really concerned about invasion of privacy (and not just prejudiced against Zombies), she might be in some serious trouble. But as it is, the crowd doesn't really seem care about anything else but the Zombies at the moment (so there you are, a clear case of discrimination and prejudice) and what Bones President of the PTA is going to do about said Zombies, there disturbance of the peace, and the resulting lowered property values a Zombie Menace/Infestation always seems to bring with it to a graveyard.

Ain't it funny, it's always about money.

###

So, reading over the scrap of paper, once again and again (it being all that remains of the book at this point), Bones asks, "What's a PTA Meeting?"

"It's a meeting of the Parent Teachers Association," Abby answers glibly.

Someone has done their homework, but that someone is obviously not Bones, "What in Gra'gl's name is that?"

“The back to school project thing Sid was working on before he disappeared. A PTA is a lot like a proactive community organization group that the teachers and parents formed to better advance their joint agenda.”

“Against who?”

“What?”

“Against who?” Bones says out loud again; but really, he’s more musing to himself right now. “Are the parents and teachers against the kids.”

“No, that’s not the way,” Ned starts, but Bones could not give the smallest (What?) femur, clavicle, bone-ear what that little pipsqueak has to say about this, that, or anything else for that matter.

“So, it’s you against the Zombies?” Bones asks again, trying to achieve some sort of clarity on the issue. There’s always some sort of confrontation or conflict. For Gra’gl’s sake, he’s a Skeletal Warlord. Conflict is about the only thing he understands. So by all that is unholy, let us hope this PTA thing has something to do with an adversarial relationship between someone or something or he’s not really going to know what to do.

And Abby does not let him down. “Well, sort of,” Abby has to sort of, kind of, grudgingly agree. “But we were all sort of hoping it would be Us, you and us, against the Zombies.”

“But if that happens, who speaks for the Zombies?”

“What? You’re not serious.”

“They are sort of my children. And if Bones left me in charge...”

“It’s just the next scene in his project...”

“He. Left. Me. In. Charge! As President! It says so, here. And now, you, an angry zealous short sighted mob with bigotry in its heart, with close-minded discrimination and prejudicial abuse want to take away the rights of your fellow citizens.”

“But they’re Zombies,” Abby sort of whines.

But the crowd is more insistent.

“Make them go away.”

“Or make them behave.”

“Or what? No. No. Don’t answer that. You’re likely to say something you’ll regret,” Bones says, declares, threatens, makes clear by the way his hand rests on his sword, just looking for a chance to use it. Cleaving a few heads from a few bodies never solved anything (even he knows that). But, boy! It sure is fun. “The Zombies stay, they have rights. Besides, I like them. They aren’t bugging me.”

And with that, the crowd goes wild -- and not in that good way: ‘It’s a hit, it’s back, it’s back, and it’s over the fence, a home run. It’s a home run! Bottom of the ninth! That’s the game! That’s the pennant! The Graveyard Zombies are going to the World Series! And the Crowd Goes Wild!’ So, like that would be the good kind of a crowd going wild. And rather and instead of that, there is much cursing and yelling, shouting and threatening, and in general the sort of noises that a mob makes when it’s not all that terribly happy.

“Fine! Fine! Fine!” Bones shouts over the lot trying to calm them down (or at least shut them up). “We’ll have a vote! Democracy, that’s what Sid always falls back on. And as president, as he says that I am in the note, well, that implies some sort of democracy, doesn’t it. So as President of the PTA, I call this meeting to order and demand a vote on... what’s the first item?”

“Just get rid of the Zombies.”

“Stack ‘em in a pile and burn the lot? Sorry, no can do,” Bones informs, as he waves that lone piece of paper back and forth in the air like it had a life of its own (a will that even he cannot control, ‘I am only a humble servant here, doing the will of a higher power’), holding the paper still only long enough to read it. “Here we go, first item. No Zombies treading on the flowers. All in favor?”

And the crowd roars as one, “Aye!”

“Opposed?” Bones asks ever so evenly as only a Skeletal Warlord (or in a pinch, a Dark Necromancer) can.

Of course, there is nothing more than a shuffling silence; the slight groan from a Zombie, here; the sound of Mog running into a tree yet again, there... and there, and there, and there. (Dear sweet Gra’gl do I love that sound. But no time to dither in our own indulgences, for there be politics to attend to.)

“Sorry, the ‘Nays’ have it,” Bones informs. “Outvoted two to one, by my count.”

“No!” Abby objects.

“You don’t have a quorum,” Bones once again informs as he narrows his eyes and bends down (quite a bit) to meet the tiny little (she is kind of short now that I think of it especially with Bones standing next to her) Apprentice. “No quorum. No vote. Motion doesn’t carry. Is there anything else that you would like to vote on?”

“That’s not fair.”

Bones smiles, just sort of plays with his sword (I mean, with a decided lack of flesh, he does have, um, certain compensation issues, so you figure out what that means), as he asks, “Are you questioning my authority.” To which, he holds up the scrap of paper. “My authority. Question it one more time, little girl, and I’m going to have to declare Martial Law.” Bones pauses for a moment to accept a glass of wine from a Kibber, as if to say, ‘See, they know who’s got the power here, who’s in charge’. And having taken the symbolic sip from the symbolic cup that doth more than symbolically runneth over (he’s a messy drinker/eater, always has been, always will be, it’s the lack of a stomach that does it, so the wine just splatters everywhere, I suppose he’s trying to maintain composure, that’s why he only takes a sip), after which, he says, “Now, run along, before you get hurt. I don’t believe you have a permit to assemble.”

So see, he is making some sort of sense out of that random pile of excerpts about political theory and law that I left for him. We’ll make a politician out of him yet.

In the meantime, “I SAID RUN ALONG!”

Of course, in my experience there is a fine line between a military dictatorship and a democracy. Yes, the first gains power thru the military. But both ultimately retain power by controlling the military. Often, it’s just semantics. I’m no philosopher, of course. But personally, I often find it hard to tell the two apart a week after the elections. Because, you know, just like the Kibbers, the army always seems to side with the winner. Odd, how that is.

Eerily similar to the Kibbers, if you ask me.

Speaking of which, I wonder if they really know who's in charge here?

###

So, back in my chambers, taking on the form for a while, taking a break from the Ghost Dance, while a Kibber massages my feet, another polishes my boots; and me with a glass of wine in my hand (still the same horrid stuff, but at least it's horrid), along with a bit of half-rancid cheese (which sounds nasty, but really, that's pretty much what cheese always is, so it's hard to tell the difference, and any flavor, even a disgusting flavor, is a pleasant diversion, helps to keep me focused on the potential, the task at hand).

"Yes, sir. Bones' turn of 'bad luck' as you say, sir. It had your handiwork written all over it. We knew you were back, so we made ready, sir. Shall we expect you to stay in the corporeal form for long, then, sir?"

"No."

"Very good, sir. And your lodgings."

"You will continue to..."

"Mourn your passing and make ready for your return, sir."

"Yes, precisely. And if you..."

But catching my tone, understanding as only the truly subordinate can, "You were never here, sir. We understand. But if we might be so bold as to ask, that message..."

"Have you ever been down to the fountain? Have you ever noticed how many frogs, like large, Kibber size frogs there are in that area of the graveyard?"

"Of course, sir. We understand, sir. Will there be anything else, then, sir?"

"Cut the Elves off."

"Sir?"

"You serve Bones when he has no power. You will cease to serve the Elves even though they do. For I am the higher power, am I not?"

“Of course, sir. As you say, sir. We shall cut the Elves off at the knees, then, sir. But if I may, sir?”

“What?”

“It’s just that...”

“What?”

“Well, if I may say, sir. Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha, sir.”

“Oh, now. I say, that is good.”

“Thank you, sir. We have been practicing, sir.”

“Give it another go.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha, sir.”

“No-no-no. With feeling, like that first time and all together.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha,” as the sinister laugh of the Kibbers echoes through the graveyard, “Like that, sir?”

“Yes, exactly like that. Mourn my passing. For all you know, I have gone to Dust. And Bones is your new king.”

“As you say, sir. Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha. Mu-ha-ha-ha...”

And on an on, through the dark and endless night.

It’s good to be the Dark Lord, Necromancer, whatever.

Call me by whatever name you wish, as long as you call me liege in your heart.

{{{Chapter End}}}