

**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 32 ###**  
**### A Short Interlude ###**  
**### In Which Time Waits for No Man ###**

Wheeze. Gloria takes a breath in her sleep.

I wonder if Gloria knows that she snores.

Wheeze. Gloria takes a breath in her sleep.

It's sort of cute.

It's sort of adorable.

Wheeze. Gloria takes a breath in her sleep.

It's sort of pathetic really. You call that a bone chilling groan sure to wake the dead in the cold of the night? Well, maybe you do. What do I know? But I don't.

Wheeze. Gloria takes a breath in her sleep.

Still, she's awfully cute, isn't she?

We're resting (sleeping, gazing, taking a break from it all) on the hill overlooking the South Gardens. I have a tombstone for a backrest, and find myself amidst Poison Vine (to the left) and Death Root (to the right) with assorted brambles -- or whatever those small sticky thorn things are called -- mixed about and underneath as a sort of cushion. Of course, it would all be quite uncomfortable if we were alive (and not just the brambles, Death Root is noxious enough -- even at this distance -- that we might not long be for the living), but as she is a Ghost and I am a Dark Necromancer (Board Certified, I'll have you know, accept no substitutes whilst contracting for your afterlife needs -- going to have to see about renewing my credentials one of these days) these surrounds do not bother us. In fact, I find them quite homely and more than a little romantic.

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Meanwhile:

Wheeze. Gloria takes a breath in her sleep.

Clearly Gloria is at ease.

Or then again, maybe she's not. Maybe (yes, just maybe) after Abby and the gang (and yes, I think of Abby as their ringleader these days; personally, I was expecting Ned to step up, but it is Abby that has taken on the role; and after Abby and the gang) dezombified Gary, the lot of them set about trying to reproduce the results... to little avail.

Another Zombie, another barrel of water, and nothing; Gloria and I weren't there (or more specifically, Gloria wasn't there), so nothing.

But it didn't stop them from grabbing a zombie, dousing it with water, and discussing the proper course of action required to produce the desired results when whatever they had just tried didn't work.

"Jack has to bless if first."

So, someone grabbed another bucket of water, Jack blessed it, and they doused a zombie with the lot of the stuff.

Splash! And the zombie, he just murmur. "Murmur. Murmur. Murmur."

“We didn’t use enough water.”

“Jack’s not blessing it right.”

“What do you mean, I’m not blessing right.”

“You’re not doing it like you mean it.”

And finally, when all manner of subtle corrections to the formula fail to work, “We’re out of water.”

So, it’s to the Wishing Well -- lots of water there, right?

And, why not, I mean, the Wishing Well is a good place to store the zombies if nothing else, so:

Splash! Zombie a drops into the water, but he no murmur.

“Help! I can’t swim!”

Gloria has done her bit and in a flash, Rob is turned back. But does anyone let down a rope?

“I don’t have a rope. What do I look like?” A henchman? A provisioner? A lackey? “Don’t answer that,” Strathmore amends.

“I didn’t bring a rope,” Ned shrugs impotently (I believe is the correct word in this situation).

So, “We’ll just fill up the well,” with more zombies, “and they can climb out,” one top of one another, Abby decides.

Of course, there’s no sense pointing out the flaws in her plan, because before you know it:

Splash! A zombie falls into the well. (OK. So, maybe he got pushed. Either way), he just murmur (as in), “Murmur. Murmur. Murmur.”

“Why didn’t he change?”

“Why are you throwing zombies down here?”

And then it’s:

Splash! A zombie falls into the well.

Splash! A zombie falls into the well.

Splash! A zombie falls into the well.

“Stop already!” Rob cries as his voice echoes up the rock-lined wall of the well. Of course, it’s sort of hard to understand what he says on account of all the zombies murmuring away.

“Murmur. Murmur. Murmur.”

“Get me out of here!”

But nobody pays him any mind, until:

Thud! A zombie falls onto the other zombies already at the bottom of the well.

“Well, that’s not working,” obviously.

“You’re not blessing hard enough,” probably.

“Fine. You try it.”

Nope, sorry Jack, that’s your job.

Besides, if things are not working out the way they planned here, then clearly they must go elsewhere.

“We got to find more water.” See, someone understands how these things work.

And seriously, does it matter who said what? Except for, perhaps, to point out that it is Rob (but then, who else could it be?) who cries out (and up) from the bottom of the well when it is clear the gang is about to leave, “Hey! Don’t leave me down here!” A rope, a ladder, seriously, why doesn’t someone simply cast a spell or something? I hear good things about Levitation.

But let’s face it, he has already been forgotten.

Well, almost.

“Shouldn’t we help him?” Gloria, ah, sweet Gloria asks... or perhaps technically asked as this is all past tense reverie... as most of the afterlife seems to be?

But, “No.” The answer to her (the) inquiry is “No, he’ll be alright.”

And maybe she started thinking I was cruel, maybe she already thought I was cruel and this sort of solidified the thought in her mind, or maybe she was more concerned with her own part in it, and whether she was now responsible for the outcome, an enabler of sorts; and so, when we were down at the Water Wheel (and/or the ruins, thereof), and while Abby and Jack and all the rest waded into the stream and conducted an impromptu faith healing - baptismal session (with Gloria selectively dezombifying this one but not the other); well, in between the action, Gloria and I got to talking (had a little philosophical discussion as it were, the most of which I shall not bother to relate) as we sat on the

hillside overlooking the action amidst the Death Root, et al, as I previously related; and do in fact, now lie.

“I should go turn Steve.”

“Steve can wait.”

“But I feel responsible.”

“You didn’t do this,” and then, maybe because there were some false accusations that maybe I had done this, “Look, he’s not in pain,” Steve isn’t, “And it gives the others something to do,” which it does. “When’s the last time you saw this level of interest in anything around here?”

“But I should help Steve.”

“And you can and you will, but not yet.”

“He doesn’t look happy.”

“He’s a zombie.” And I might be hard pressed to recapture the exact turn the discussion went from there (or even have any desire to as I seem to recall having put my foot in my mouth more than once), suffice to say that being a zombie is not an unpleasant experience. I mean, OK, maybe it’s not pleasant, but that doesn’t mean it’s unpleasant. It’s neither. It’s neutral. It’s like being in stasis. “Or, I know, being a zombie is sort of like being asleep,” or being on so much Drip that you just don’t care enough to focus on anything, let alone open your eyes, or something to that effect. The truth is, I forget the exact words, their order, and all that, but the one thing I do remember is the longing look in Gloria’s eyes when she said, “I’d like to sleep,” for a day, a week, a month, a year. And then, she didn’t say this next (not out loud, at least), but it was incredibly easy for me to imagine her saying, ‘Sometimes I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up.’ And well, the next thing you know she’s nestling down amongst the Death Root and Sleep Berries and having a good old snooze, because that’s what friends are for.

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Or if that's not clear, let me repeat the previous play-by-play in slow motion. (Who knows? Maybe I could use a little slow motion play-by-play practice prior to the big game.)

Anyway, down by the river, Jack and Abby and all the rest are trying to work out what it is that they need to do in order to turn the zombies back into whatever they were before, but this process is becoming more and more haphazard as it is Gloria -- and not them -- who gets to pick and choose when and where the change happens. So, having more than a little sense of humor, Gloria's been having a grand old time watching the gang jump through bigger and bigger hoops, trying to achieve the desired outcome. And as they do that, both Gloria and I sort of de-mist-ified (if that's a word), became a little more corporeal (which I do believe is a word), as we sort of lie back against the tombstones and watch the action in the creek bed below. And then, because why not, and I've always liked a lazy sunny day, I do believe it is time to let the sunshine in.

This, of course (yes, literally, of course), convinces the gang that they are on the right track, so they herd a group of zombies into the water, and Jack blesses them en mass, "Bless you."

"What's that?" Strathmore sneers.

"You try it," Jack counters. The pressure really is incredible. Everyone is counting on him and he hasn't got the slightest idea what he's doing.

But Strathmore doesn't care about that. "Bless you," he says in a mocking sissy-boy voice.

"I don't sound like that."

"No. It's more like B-lessssss Youuuuu," Strathy sings, which of course enrages Jack and he takes it out on the nearest zombie (anger does have a way of flowing downhill and zombies lie at the bottom of the muck). "Turn you stinking sack of zombie..." and well, Jack goes on and on, yelling and screaming, saying this and saying that, and dunking the poor lad (or laddie, because actually, I think it's Sarah who is taking the brunt of his wrath and who is busy getting pushed under the water) repeatedly, held under the water for far too long, and murmuring for all her zombie hide is worth, "Murmur. Murmur. Murmur."

# # #

And I figured things could get ugly (were getting ugly) and it was time for another zombie to turn, but Gloria was sleeping (the sleep of the helpless innocents, I do believe), and well, I always did wonder if it was just her touch (could I bottle that) or her presence (something conscious or whatever) that did the zombie turning trick, and so, why not carry her down to the river, pass her presence through the body of another, and find out?

“Stop!” Gurgle! Gasp! “I can’t breathe,” and what do you know, Gloria doesn’t have to take an active role but merely be physically present.

Of course, Jack thought he was on a roll (and I wanted to be sure), so between the two of us (or three if you want to count Gloria, but seeing as she was a bit out of it, I don’t see why she should get any of the credit) quite a few more zombies (maybe a score in all) were turned, until I lost interest, and flew away (sight unseen, don’t know if I mentioned that, but it’s probably key, I’m a modest bloke, don’t always like to take credit where credit is due) before giving a good cackle-laugh like all us good Dark Necromancers do when we’re on to something good.

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

# # #

“That doesn’t sound good,” Abby said.

“Never does,” Ned agreed.

And wouldn’t you know it, but from that point on they were unable to affect another change. But then, all good things must come to an end.

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

Or rather, that should be:

“Test. Test.”

“Sound check. Sound check.”

“Is this thing on?”

Yes, that’s right. It’s time for the big game. And guess who’s going to be the announcer?

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

“Mu-ha-ha-ha.”

Or rather, that should be:

“Test. Test.”

“Sound check. Sound check.”

“Is this thing on?”

{{{Chapter End}}}