

# THE ONE CALLED KIRALYF

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—TALES OF THE AWAKENED DEAD—



# O1

## PAPA

The fire smoldered without light. Light was not necessary for them. Papa had told them that in the long-ago they had used the fire to make food. They had asked Papa what food was like and he had handed them pieces of tree bark. “Chew on this my children”, he said. “Food was like this”. They chewed on the tree-stuff and pondered. ‘Papa is strange to have enjoyed this in the long-ago’ they said among themselves. Still, if Papa did it, they would do it as well.

Now they chewed tree-stuff in the darkness by the fire. Papa was singing softly the tales of the long-ago, the tales of the battles of men and the legions of awakened dead. They liked these stories. It made them feel like they were somewhere other than the tree-place. They did not like the tree place and thought often about the field they had

stayed before. But Papa had taken them to the tree-place. Papa said the field was no longer safe for them. "Why is the field no longer safe Papa?" they had asked him. "Because the State is looking for me, children" he had said.

"Papa what is the State? Is the State the men and the metal men from beyond the field?"

"Yes children. The State is trying to find me and we must not let them find me."

"Must we fight the State Papa?"

"Perhaps children. But not now. Now I must protect you, my children."

The children sang along with Papa's songs. They enjoyed times when Papa sang. It seemed to them as though he sang less after they moved to the tree-place.

"Quiet children", said Papa. A gust of wind blew through the trees suddenly and scattered the embers of the fire. The singing stopped and the children heard nothing. Nothing in the trees moved. Nothing near the fire moved. The children saw Papa reach back for his great sword. The smallest flicker of light glinted as he drew it from his ragged mantle. "Children, the agents of the State are here. Stay behind me now."

## O2

### AMBUSH

The Captain looked at his group. He could see the machines lightly glowing through the trees. The men were silently looking at him. Confidence began to flow through him. They had followed this group of State enemies for a month. He felt that he knew their every move, their every action and reaction, even their thoughts. He knew they felt safe in this forest. They could hardly be expecting him. He had made sure not to disturb them in their new hide-out for this very reason. He knew if he could take this group out his superiors would look very favorably on him.

He looked back at his men. They knew the stakes. He had made himself abundantly clear to them. "No mistakes. No missteps. No fuck-ups." They stared back at him in the forest, fixed on his moves through the trees. He could hear some sound passing through the trees. He knew they were

there. He looked back and gave the signal for his men to draw their weapons. The slightest rustle reached his ears as grips tightened on automatic rifles.

The captain moved forward two yards. He saw his targets in the clearing. He could feel the adrenaline flowing in his veins. He steadied himself. He flashed back for a final look at his men. They were ready.

A sound like a shadow reached the captain's left ear. His head spun to meet the noise.

# 03

## UNCLE

The children watched as a form emerged from the trees in front of Papa. "Uncle!" they cried. Uncle cleaned his sword with his tattered cloak and returned the greeting. "Hello children." He turned to Papa. "All are dead. A perfect trap".

Papa returned his sword to its place out of sight in his mantle. "Well done Helyt. But the State will be back with more. You must leave quickly and prepare."

"Yes, Kiralyf. Come children. We must leave this place."

Uncle began to lead the children out of the clearing. Papa stayed where he was standing. "Is Papa coming with us, Uncle?"

"No children. Papa has matters to attend to. He will meet us later."

The children looked back at Papa. He did not look back at his children. He stared into the woods, towards where

the men had been.

Papa re-adjusted his mantle and crown and stepped out of their sight.