Zoo Story Archive 2025

Aaron C

The sea was restless as Zeus himself stood at the prow of the black-hulled ship, lightning whispering at his fingertips. Behind him, a chosen phalanx of Spartan warriors tightened their bronze shields. This was no ordinary campaign; they sailed toward an island of untold power, a place where the earth bled monsters and the skies trembled with prophecy.

Yet the force was more than mortal. From the shadows moved a band of Medusas, their serpent hair hissing in eerie unison, sworn to turn their gaze not upon their comrades but upon whatever beasts lurked ahead. Beside them marched proud Amazons, their spears gleaming, eyes fierce with the certainty of battle. Centaurs thundered on the deck, half-man and half-stallion, restless for the charge to come.

Even the gods had taken sides. Hades rose from the depths in a cloak of darkness, promising dominion over any slain creature's soul. From above, Helios guided the dawn, his radiant chariot burning a path across the waves, ensuring no shadow could hide the prey they sought.

Zeus lifted his hand, and the company fell silent. His voice rolled like thunder: "This island holds the secrets of fate itself. Monsters will guard it, but monsters shall also march with us. United, we are the storm."

The oars struck water in perfect rhythm, bronze tips flashing. Across the horizon loomed the island, jagged and shrouded in mist. The Spartans and their divine allies pressed forward, an army born of myth, destined to carve legend from terror.

Andrew R

The Sandstorm Requiem

In the scorched heart of the Shattered Expanse, where the sun never sleeps and the wind whispers secrets of the dead, the ancient host of Spectre stirred once more. Beneath the obsidian sky, the Death Cult Hierarch, cloaked in veils of mimicry and sandstorm, raised his staff—Soul Conduit pulsing with necromantic power. His voice, hollow and eternal, echoed across the dunes: *"Rise, my children. The veil thins. The living trespass."*

From beneath the sands, the legions awoke.

The Nomarch Akhmenet the Unyielding, Deathless Noble and bearer of the Crown of the Pharaohs, stood at the vanguard. His Sha Guardian shimmered with spectral energy, and the Scroll of Desiccation hung from his battle standard like a curse waiting to be spoken. Behind him, Skeleton Warriors formed a phalanx of spears and shields, while a smaller cohort entombed in silence prepared to strike from below.

The chariot wheels groaned as Legion Charioteers surged forward, Aspis Arrows glinting in the moonlight. Shabti Archers took position atop a dune, their eyes glowing with ancient wrath. Tomb Cataphracts, armored in forgotten sigils, flanked the formation, their charge imminent and unstoppable.

Above, Great Vultures circled, screeching a dirge that heralded death. And then came the Colossi—twin titans wielding Giant Aspis Bows, each step shaking the earth, each arrow a spear of annihilation.

The Hierarch whispered the incantations: *Whispers of the Veil, Danse Macabre, Chorus of the Damned.* The air thickened with magic. Spectral Blades shimmered on skeletal arms, and Soul Blight drained the vigor from the enemy ranks.

The living had come seeking relics. They would find only ruin.

As the sandstorm rose and the dead marched, the desert sang its requiem. Spectre's dynasty would not be forgotten. It would be feared.

Heath H.

<u>The Cordon Sanitaire</u>

The moon hung low over Lyonesse's misty border, its pale light glinting off a Cordon Sanitaire watchtower. The night's stillness bred unease, Mousillon's swamps below exhaling foul vapors like a dying breath. Praying to the Lady of the Lake, Sir Erec scanned the fog, "Shadows and silence," he muttered.

A guttural moan shattered the quiet—like a tomb unsealed. Sir Erec gripped his sword, peering into the fog. Soon the reeds parted, unleashing horror: hundreds of zombies, flesh sloughing from bones, eyes aglow with malice. Wights drifted behind, armor clanking; ghouls skittered, hissing. At the rear, a cloaked necromancer stood atop a mound and raised a pulsing green staff, chanting evilly to summon the dead of cursed Mousillon.

"Lady's grace!" Sir Erec whispered as he began ringing the alarm. Men were yelling as the garrison roused, but the horde, driven by the necromancer's will, closed on the tower. Sir Erec rallied his men for a desperate defense, dispatched riders to the

neighboring towers and Castle Ra[chard, knowing they had to hold, but that they had could not. The Cordon Sanitaire would be breached so he knew he must buy time.

Northward, Perrin rode his horse through hard through the darkened paths, driving him as branches whipped his face unfelt. He'd fled the tower as Sir Erec made his last stand, the necromancer's laughter echoing amid screams. Castle Rachard finally loomed ahead.

The gates opened and the guards dragged the exhausted messenger inside to the Duke. Duke Bertrand de Lyonesse, hawkish and silver-haired studied a map of the Cordon Sanitaire that embodied the endless watch against Mousillon's corruption. "My lord! Sir Erec's post—lost! Zombies, wights, ghouls from Donjon de Dol swamps. A vile necromancer most foul leads them. Sir Erec and the men fought valiantly but the dead overwhelm us. The Cordon Sanitaire breaks!"

Bertrand's hand clenched the hilt of his sword and felt it warming with the Lady's grace. Silence fell. "Rise," he commanded. "The sorcerer—describe him. How many has the villain brought with him?"

Perrin trembled: "Cloaked, from the Donjon. Endless dead, moving as one."

"The Lady tests us," Bertrand declared. "Sound the horns! Riders to towers: hold or fall back to the rally points. Summon the host and send riders to the King calling for aid.

Horns rang as men and riders thundered out to carry out the Duke's commands. Bertrand climbed the battlements, gazing south at sickly pulsing fog. Erec's last stand would be honored—Lyonesse would rise, and the necromancer would fall to the Lady's wrath!