

The South Will Rise Again

Match Conclusion

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The air had turned cool as the sunset casting long shadows around Outpost #7 and in the office trailer where Captain Soo-Z typed her daily Dead Zone after-action report by natural light. There was a knock on the door.

"Enter," she said, just loud enough to be heard. The door opened and Sergeant Kruer stepped in, came to attention and saluted her. She returned the salute.

"At ease Sergeant Kruer, I've been waiting on you to finish this report," she said. "Give me the short version of what you found at Rebel's Roost before it gets too dark to type"

"The story we got from the Rebels was that eight weeks back, a group of fifty Lords of Hell ran them out of their hidden village and killed two of them. Then, two weeks ago, ten guys come along on horseback heavily armed and well organized. They dismount, say a prayer, attack the raiders holed up at the Roost, kill them all, and then go on their way to who knows where."

"These mounted men...they killed fifty raiders?" the captain asked.

"We only saw the remains of eight, There were no signs any raiders had been back. At least no recent motorcycle tracks."

"How do you know it was the Lords of Hell."

"Guessing. The Rebels just said they were crazy bikers. There was motorcycles for every toasted corpse we found. They destroyed the Christian chapel. We found human bones and a big cook pot. It looked like the ritual torture and cannibalism they go in for."

"Hardly uncommon these days."

"Well there were bones mixed in with the burnt wreckage of the motorcycles. Bones that were wired on. You know...for decoration. And they had a pretty girl's "live" head in a foam cooler. Somebody wrote "SWEET SWEET CONNIE" in blood with their finger on the outside."

"That's does sound like the Lords."

"Yeah, the Sweet Sweet Connie thing clinched it for me. I guess they were sharing her."

"Sweet Connie? Am I missing something?"

"Sweet Sweet Connie captain. You know...from the Grand Funk Railroad song...American Band?"

"Before my time."

"It's a rock classic."

"Whatever. What do we know about the horsemen?"

"The Rebels didn't see the attack...only the preparations. The horsemen were in and out in less than 20 minutes. They didn't take anything from the Roost. I think they came to the Rebels Roost just to kill those raiders. The witnesses told us they all had old-timey knight kind of swords and big black church crosses on some kind of camo frock they wore over their clothes but under the gear. Their horses were armored too. From the look of the battlefield, they went at the raiders like pros and slaughtered them with rifle fire and blades. Then they were on their way. The Rebels checked the place out right after the battle and burned up the dead Lords so the undead wouldn't hang around."

"Which way did the horsemen go?"

"It was an old trail, but it looked like they went East, back into the unpatrolled part of the Dead Zone.

"Interesting."

"Who do you think they are captain?"

"Well, if I was going to SWAG it, my scientific-wild-ass-guess would be...Knights Templar."

"Who?"

"From the Crusades?"

"Now you're before my time captain."

"I'm guessing all the undead in the area were probably drawn in by the Lords of Hell and the more recent attack?"

"That's my guess too captain. The zombies were all pretty ratty looking. Not a recently turned one in the bunch. We ran into two of the Rebels while we were mopping up. They'd been at it since the Lords got iced. We finished off the last 36 for them it turns out. Actually, it was just one of our guys that did all the heavy lifting. Killed all 36 by himself. He shot the last six with his rifle standing in the woods and that's how we found the Rebels. He spotted them and picked off all the zombies in front of them and the Rebels sort of surrendered to him. They were worried about being mistaken for zombies they said."

"Who was the ZK?"

"It was Doug. Not the Doug whose tooth you kicked out. The other Doug."

"I know which Doug. It could only be ZK Parrack. He's one of the best men in your squad. I'll mention him in the report. Good work on the operation. I'll see about getting city aviation assets over that area to take a look around. I'd like to meet these horseman. An enemy of the Lords of Hell is pretty likely to be a friend of Live E-Town. Get some rest. Dismissed." Sergeant Kruer saluted and left.

She typed the final paragraphs of the report, separated the carbon copies and left them on the desk for her admin assistant Betty to deal with in the morning. Leaning back in her chair, she stared out the window of the trailer lost in thought. "Knights Templar," she said to herself softly and inquisitively, her expression unchanging as the minutes past and the trailer grew dark.