

The sound of metal against metal rang out through the village as the blacksmith beat the glowing/incandescence iron to shape, sweat trailing down his brow with each hit. Two men lead a horse pulling a cart through the street. Across the street, three women stood in a half-circle talking, one held a babe to her hip, another held a basket of clothing to hers. Children whooped and laughed as they chased each other between the buildings, taking full advantage of the sunny early-summer day.

A man, old and withered, sitting on a bench outside of the local tavern raised a wrinkled hand to shield his eyes from the beating sun as the outline of a group of travellers on horseback approached down the dusty road to the village. The old man nudged his grey-beared companion and pointed.

(1) His companion finished filling their glasses with whatever vile spirits they had gotten their hands on and looked to where his friend was pointing. The pair leaned back and lazily observed as the group slowly approached, the spirits warming their bellies and the sun warming their skin.

(2) The pair continued drinking whatever vile spirits they had gotten their hands on and lazily observed as the group of travels slowly approached, the spirits warming their bellies and the sun warming their skin.

Both men had been drinking since late morning and most of the world seemed a bit less clear than it had a couple of hours ago, but the ensemble approaching seemed even less so. All the two men could make out was the outline as the dazzling sun backlit the shapes, almost as if their mere presence absorbed the light around them.

(1) Something about the look of them and their slow approach made the hair stand on end on the men's backs as they watched, their glasses of spirits held and forgotten as they watched, entranced. A fear rose within them both, a fear long buried, and the world suddenly felt colder as the approaching party came closer.

(2) Something about the look of them and their slow approach made the men shift in their seats as their spines crawled with unease, their glasses of spirits held and forgotten as they watched, entranced. A fear rose within them both, a fear long buried, and the world suddenly felt colder as the approaching party came closer.

The glass slid from the grey-beared man's limp hand as the sight of what approached stole his breath away: three soldiers, each riding a nigh-black stallion, all wearing obsidian black armour road past them, not even sparing a glance. Identical helmets depicting the skull of a humanoid looking demon made of the

same unnaturally black metal with tightly slitted visors completely obscured any and all human features. But what made them both freeze was the insignia on each man's chest plate: a burning cross, the insignia of the church of Scientology.

Both men had been young boys during The War and had heard the stories of what actually hid underneath the armour.

The day had suddenly become very cold and very dark. The men didn't shout, they already knew it was too late. With a shaking hand, the old man downed the last of his drink and leaned back, closing his eyes while praying - not to the Gods, but to death himself to be quick.

(1) When the soldiers departed the village, the metal rang no more and no children laughed.

(2) When the soldiers departed the village, no metal rang and the children laughed no more.