

THE CASTLE

The man stands on the ramparts of the castle and raises his eyes to the flag of St David. The flag flutters in the breeze and lights a beacon of pride within his heart. This is the reason for his being.

In the distance, thin threads of cotton clouds skirt over the mountains, their bare brown crowns tonsured by the dark woodland of the forest below. Stretched before him lie green and yellow fields, some swollen with soon-to-be-harvested crops, others the home of contented sheep. The sun shines peace over the rural scene and the man marvels at the beauty of his homeland.

He stands in awe. "This is indeed the land of my fathers."

But, as he contemplates such patriotic thoughts, a shudder runs down his spine. Experience tells him the tranquillity cannot, will not, last. Overhead, the harsh calls of the crows which nest in the tall oak within the confines of the castle break the silence. Is their screeching a premonition?

Not a single human being stains the landscape. But the man knows that before noon - when the sun has risen five degrees more in its upward arc - the field before the castle will throng with the noises of rampaging hordes intent on breaching the defences of the castle. He hears in his mind the insistent and demanding sound he has often heard before. "Die! Die! Die!"