The Chronicles of Newton
by David Kocher

It was a warm summer night, with the moon shining bright, on a dusty path that wound down from an an old abandoned barn. The path ended at the bottom of the gully where a swamp stretched around a large pond. Running parallel, to the path, and down into the valley was a swiftly running stream that never froze. It was lined with brambles, young trees, and stumps that were hollowed out from rot.

In the valley, the swamp was not so peaceful. On a little path made by various animals, ran a family of turtles. Behind them came a riotous band of frogs, armed with every cruel weapon you could imagine; behind these came animals of the kind you might see in a swamp: turtles, newts, rabbits, and even a skunk or two. Following these were more frogs, cracking whips, shooting randomly, and generally being riotous and ungainly. Suddenly a small squad of about ten newts, all dressed in black, stepped out from the rushes, fell upon the closest of the frogs, who drew up and formed ranks with the main body. Even so, three frogs lay dead on the road. More newts had arrived and charged fiercely, but to no avail; swarming frogs fought them off, but even so another three frogs lay dead. Then the newts faded into the reeds and the frogs took up their pursuit of the swamp creatures.

Ahead the turtle family labored on. All the while being harried by the pursuing frogs, one of these stuck out his spear, tripping one of the little turtles. The turtle fell on his face, and the frog would have skewered him, but suddenly an arrow flew from the rushes, and the frog fell dead. One more lay dead before the frogs retreated from the unknown menace. The turtles labored on; by now they had reached the edge of the swamp and now turned to the creek. They let the current carry themselves back towards the swamp. They had hardly gone far when they realized that they were headed straight for The garrison of frogs that stood by the creek. Just then a voice hollered out, “Stop there or you're dead!” The turtles stopped, and the commanding voice said, “Who are you?”

The largest turtle known as Mr. Teziway clambered out of the water, grabbed the frog and threw him down into the water; as the frog fell, he uttered a hoarse cry.

The creekside sprouted with frogs, hideous creatures, carrying three pronged pikes, whips, spears, and scimitars of deathly black iron, morning stars, chains, and all manner of cruel weaponry. Mr. Teziway threw one into the stream, but it did not frighten the others who came charging on and simply evaded him.

The frogs, having surrounded Mr. Teziway and cut him off from his family, began tying up his family. There was a rustle in the brush and one of the frogs fell

dead, a black arrow stuck from his back, then another, and another fell. The remaining frogs retreated back to the fort. The turtle family fled back up the creek, followed from a distance by the three newts, dressed entirely in black.

One of them split off from the rest, and started jogging up the hill along the creek, till he came to hollowed out stump, and banged loudly upon the little door. In the back room of the little log home, a little newt lay in a bed of twigs, his tiny wet snout covered by his floppy tail. He was awakened by loud banging, and then the sound of voices.

Quietly he slipped out of bed, opened the latch on the door to his room and snuck into the hall. In the kitchen, his mother and father stood talking to another newt. They were whispering quietly, but he with his sharp ears could easily hear them. The stranger was talking.

“It started yesterday evening. They had marched across the border into Shrewsbury and by the time the moon rose, they had attacked the northern end of Newton. They have driven us out completely and are still heading this way. The Black Band is gathering and I was sent to call you.”

“Let us go then,” said Mr. Sejubo.

He opened a closet, took out a black coat, light overalls and a belt with a pouch. Donning these and tightening the belt, he went over to the fireplace and took a key off the mantle. Then he walked over to a large chest, made out of walnut, unlocked it and took out a longe bow, a quiver of arrows, sword and sheath. He buckled the sword onto his belt and slung the quiver over his shoulder. Mrs. Sejubo had packed some food and Mr. Sejubo put the food in the pouch.

“I'm ready” he said.

“Then let's go.” said the stranger and they turned to leave. There was a crash, The door buckled and a voice said. “Open in the name of King Kiwysela!” The door buckled again and snapped with a great crash.

A squad of frogs rushed in upon them. Mr. Sejubo and the stranger drew their swords and countered the charging frogs and the little newt scuttled back into his room. The noise of the fight soon woke his siblings, and they being adventurous younglings thought they should join in with their toy weapons. The first enemy they came upon was a frog who was fighting their mother. The frog distracted by these peculiar reinforcements dropped his guard for a moment, giving Mrs. Sejubo time to make a thrust with the butchering knife which she held and stab him in the gut.

The Stranger and Mr. Sejubo had fought off the others. Soon the rampaging frogs were routed. As they retreated, the little newt gave one last blow at the hindmost retreating frog with his cudgel, who whirling round, caught up the newt and ran after his comrades. Before the Sejubos had time to realize what had

happened, the frogs went down to the creek and jumped in. They were quickly carried down the stream to the garrison where they took the little newt and locked him in a cell for the night. Then he was dragged forth, and forced to march with a squad of horn toad. He spent a whole day marching at double pace and reached the eastern end of the pond at an hour before midnight. Here there were frogs everywhere and finally at an hour before midnight, they reached a large round hill with guards surrounding, set in the side of it was a large thick door that was opened from the inside. The newt was taken down a long hall with doors on both sides and one door at the end. They passed down the hall and came to the door at the end of the hall and stopped, and the squad commander (the most bullying and cruel toad) knocked. The door opened and a richly dressed guard appeared and looked at the newt disdainfully.

The little newt looked back fearlessly and curiously. This unnerved the guard who was used to beaten and cowering creatures. With an effort he gained control of his expressions and said. “Ahh, he seems an unusual one.”

“Yes, indeed he is,” said the commander. “He dealt me quite a blow. That’s what earned him this special treatment.”

“Come with me,” said the guard. They walked in the door and entered a large hall with ornately decorated doors. At the far end of the room, there was a chair of dark wood almost black and it was decorated with cushions of red, and green and in it sat the fattest frog of all. He opened up one eye and said, “Bring it to me.”

The little newt and the guard walked up to the chair and the guard bowed low, but the little newt looked at the King with obvious disgust. “Bow to me you legged snake,” said the emperor Kiwysela (the frog in the chair). At this, there was a loud hissing noise and the newt noticed a large grass snake in a cage.

The newt realized he had a chance to escape. He bowed, and as he did. He drew out his little knife and stabbed the foot of the guard who howled in pain and rage. He tried to catch the newt, but he was too slow. The little newt dodged away and made straight for the cage. The guards were all trying to catch him. He dodged between the legs of a frog who was guarding the snake. He scrambled up the side of the cage and opened the latch. The snake grabbed him in his mouth and shot out across the room. The little newt wondered what would happen next, and whether the snake would eat him. He didn't have much time to think about it. The snake reach the door and coiled about the frog who is guarding it. He reached up till his mouth was level with the door and said in the language of the swamp “Open it,” the little newt opened the knob. The snake shot out of his quilt, the frog spinning away into another pursuing frog, causing them to fall. Then a miniature pile up by then the snake and newt traveled all the way back out the hall and onto

the path that led out of the swamp behind them. They could hear the sounds of utter confusion.

They traveled along way the snake, moving quite fast compared to the madly hopping frogs. Then came the most awful sound that he could possibly have heard. The sound of marching frogs in front of them, the snake shot off the road. Then he put the newt down and whispered, “My name is Kulvas.”

“Wait here.” Then he went and coiled up right by the side of the road, but well hidden and waited for the soldiers. Up and over the hill they came singing a horrible marching song and in their midst tied and gagged marched three newts, behind them in a cage, was a small grass snake. Kulvas the snake, Kulvas waited till they passed, launching out from behind, he struck one of the frogs carrying the cage. The frog dropped his end, causing the cage to fall. Kulvas closed his jaws on the frog, killing him instantly. Then he coiled around the next frog and grabbed another one in his mouth. The remaining frogs fled down the road.

Kulvas opened the cage and said to the other snake, “Hello, young friend.”

The snake slithered out and in an awed tone said, “How do you do your majessty?”

“Not very well,” said Kulvas, “but better than I wass before.”

He softly called the little newt who came out of the reeds as cautiously as if he expected the road to be awash with frogs. Upon seeing only the dead frogs and Kulvas, he relaxed and came over. “Can you untie our friendsss?” said Kulvas, pointing to the thee newts.

The little newt pulled out his knife, and cut the ropes that bound the newts. After they were all released, Kulvas called a meeting by the roadside. “My friend,” he said, indicating the other snake, “has just informed me that another squad of frogs is headed this way, carrying his wife and children. I am of the opinion, that we should wait here and ambush them.”

Just as he finished, they heard the tramp of approaching boots. Then the large snake turned to the little newt and said Mister. “I'm afraid you'll have to wait here and hide. This won't be a pretty sight.” As soon as little Sejubo had disappeared, around the bend came a line of frogs for abreast upon seeing the band of prisoners they halted and the frog in the center eyed them seeing they had no weapons. He called out, “Prepare for battle!” And then “charge!” The Little band of fighters was soon overwhelmed by sheer numbers, for hardly had the fight begun when another company arrived.

The newt watched as the frogs tied up Kulvas, and the one surviving newt, but he could do nothing except wait, as company after company passed by. Most had prisoners in their midst, but finally they stopped coming, and the little newt was

able to retrieve a frogs sword, bow, and he was still gathering arrows when he heard marching again he scuttled into the bushes and waited.

Around the bend came a battalion of about twenty frogs marching slowly, as if they expected something, when they saw the dead frogs, they got even more uneasy. Just as they passed where the newt was sitting, he he let an arrow fly. He first shot the leader, and then those on either side, he kept up firing until there was only fifteen or so who seeing, no enemy but several dead comrades, lost heart and fled. The prisoners seeing only how many frogs were dead or fleeing began to run away finally, the only frogs were dead ones then the newt called low and began to gather the bewildered prisoners finally, once they were all more or less together, he spoke. “my name is Sejubo. Will you lend me your help?” All the prisoners answered with cheers and a hearty yes.

They armed themselves and at the commandment of burly turtle, who appointed himself as the leader began the attack on the palace. Or at least that was the idea, for they hadn't got far when a scout reported that the whole castle was being emptied and that they were coming up the road and the rebels gathered themselves together and the turtle, brushing the advice of sharper minds aside. Decided they should split into four groups and melt into the swamp. After the split was made, the newt and his group spent the night in a deer bed on the hillside facing the south

Early next morning, preparing to move the company heard the noise of a fierce battle on the opposite creek bank and suddenly a shrew from the fourth company appeared having swum the creek and frantically begged them to come to his companies aid.

They prepared themselves and swam the creek. The lesser swimmers sailed across on rafts hastily made. Once on the other side they joined the fierce battle, but it failed to gain anything for every slain frog was replaced by two more. The little newt who had been left out of the battle grabbed a trumpet from a departed toad who had been a herald and shouted loudly, “Retreat to the creek!”

The panicking troops now listened to him and by some stroke of luck. They all managed to gain the safety of the river once aboard. Having safely put out from shore, the newt said, “Will you now allow me to be your leader?”

The beaten and frustrated animals were now more than ready to listen to anyone who was composed and the turtle having died in the morning encounter did not oppose him. Then he said, “Let us sail up the creek to the end of the gully and camp there till we have rested and regrouped.” Then grabbing an oar, he turned the raft, and the others followed. Then they set sail up the lake towards the creek only stopping to rest once when the moon had sunk.

Early the next morning they met the third company who said the second company had been taken prisoner. Then the third company joined them and they set off to the head of the valley that evening they reached the spillway of the creek. Then little Sejubo commanded them to make a fort beside the creek. That night just as the sun set, a scout arrived who said that there were a hundred frogs on the march towards the fort. Another scout came saying that they were at least two hundred but that there was an unseen resistance that was holding them off. Then little Sejubo commanded ten of them to go out and try to find out who was leading the resistance. In the wee hours of the morning, the scout returned, saying that he had found a dead newt dressed in black. Whilst they were speaking, a courier came to the newt and told him that a band of newts dressed in black wish to see him

There was a great gathering of all those who were threatened by the animosity of the Emperor Kiwysela and a preparation for battle and strengthening of the fort sending of the scouts and various other things that must be done before a siege should ensue. . . .

Tom Catsby, woke up before the sun rose, but although a lazy child in general, today was not a day he would complain about getting up so early. It was his favorite day of the whole summer, or as him and his cronies (the other boys in town) called it, *Frog Day*. Tom wanted to do his chores and other random jobs assigned to him before his friends came. Tumbling groggily out of bed, he dressed himself. A clod of dirt hit the window. Tom thought to himself "too late already" and descended the stairs in a hurry.

He saw his father taking out the trash. He attempted to sidle away away out of the room, but the keen eye of his father caught him. "You ought to have been down hours ago." Tom grinned ingratiatingly took the trash from his father and strolled out the door on the porch where his friends Edmund, George, and Pete waited.

George eyed him and said, "Where is your gear?"

"Hold on a second." said Tom. Irritably chucking the trash, he dashed to the shed grabbed his pole, tackle, and some old farm boots and swung around and called to the others, "Come on then!"

They all set off down the road. They walked down a nice little country lane shaded by trees and the occasional house till they came to an abandoned barn. Then they all crept ominously down the path till Tom stopped them. "Let's gear up here so the frogs won't hear us creeping into the water," and the boys opened their tackle boxes and were all charging in hollering and occasionally stopping to add a frog to the collection of amphibians in the boxes.

Down below the frogs fled in terror, unable to do anything to this fearsome enemy and being natural cowards there was a great slaughter of them and their number was decidedly reduced soon the day began to draw to a close and just as the boys were about to leave a company of frogs crossed their path heading to defend the palace. The boys chased after the frogs as they went until they reached the palace where Kiwysela was personally giving commands to the courier. When Tom spotted him, he cried,"Look at that guy." Grabbing him, he stuck him in his pocket. The other boys crowded around, but Tom said defensively, "I'll show it to you when we get home and have the fights." Then they trekked home to the Fights, which consisted of putting angry frogs into a box until they fought.

Down at the swamp Mr. Sejubo commanded his gallant army to follow his example, building rafts of reeds and dry sticks. Then he took the lead and led them down the stream to the garrison then following came a battle which was easily won because for the first time the rebels had the advantage in numbers and surprise. Then they sailed on till they came to the palace where the siege lasted for weeks, but finally they forced the frogs to surrender and Kiwysela's son, Prince Kicelan (a weak coward like his father) signed a peace treaty and said he would pay for the damage his soldiers had perpetrated.

Then the other animals began to break up and return home. Last of all came Mr. Sejubo and his son, who boarded a boat and then began the long journey home.

As the evening light dimmed and the vessel sailed on, a shadow trailed them. All was engulfed in a huge wave and the Catfish settled to the to the muddy bottom of the pond.