

# Melvin and the Maniacs

[\[The Day After Ragnarok\]](#)

Melvin Kaminsky is very possibly *the* best ghoul hunter that the French have, and his team of Maniacs certainly has an exceptionally dramatic track record when it comes to keeping ghouls out of French North Africa. He's technically a corporal in the U.S. Army: his unit of combat engineers was *east* of the Serpentfall in Europe, which would have normally meant that they would have been quietly swept up and stuck in a Siberian work camp for, well, ever. Melvin managed to avoid that fate by successfully convincing the Soviets that he was Jewish (true), that his entire unit was also Jewish (not true), and that they were all eager to go to the People's Jewish Republic and be good Communist soldiers (not true, either). Melvin is good at talking.

Melvin is also good at blowing things up, and his unit escaped from the PJR in an adventure that would have been hysterical slapstick if it weren't for all the dead bodies they stacked up on the way. In fairness, most of those dead bodies were Ras al-Thubani Serpent Cultists who didn't care for the Tribe of Aaron (Moses doesn't get nearly the ire from Serpent Cultists as Aaron does), and

the unit managed to in-the-process stymie a raid on Jerusalem, so technically the Soviets came out ahead on the deal. Not that the Soviets see it that way, but there **is** a giant Serpent carcass between Melvin and them, so Melvin's not worrying about it.

They probably think that he's dead, anyway. That's what usually happens when you drive into the Ras al-Thubani with a stolen Russian truck convoy. Usually. In this case, Melvin and his unit got lucky, for given values of lucky; late 1945 was still a very confused time in what used to be Egypt, and most of their problems could be avoided by just driving as fast as terror and benzedrine would allow. It took them two weeks to drive the distance, and Melvin still doesn't know how they did it. There are entire *days* that his unit doesn't quite remember. The fumes coming from the Serpent's corpse got pretty harsh, even through the gas masks.

But the unit made it. The French were admittedly surprised at the sudden appearance of the unit's somewhat ragged convoy showing up on the border, but Melvin and his unit had gotten very good at shooting, stabbing, running over, and/or blowing up ghouls during the course of their escape. They got so good at it, in fact, that they've spent the last two years doing just that on

behalf of the French colonial government. Technically the unit is US military on detached duty, but these days Melvin's Maniacs are effectively now a mercenary company that specializes in killing ghouls and other monsters before they bother the good subjects of French North Africa. It's good work, if a bit dangerous. Which means that they're always hiring.

Just beware: Melvin has a *sense of humor*. He's always had it -- and three years killing monsters in the desert has **refined** it, in a number of ways. It's not to everybody's taste, alas.

- Moe Lane

- <http://www.moelane.com>