

Introduction

“The cycle that best surmises Zero Blackheart you say? Mmm... a Defender set out to destroy an enemy, lost and turned round along the way, set fast to become the Destroyer as he unknowingly returns home. That should about do it.”

“From his beginnings within the Mephisto to destroying the Empire he fought for for years, to his conquests with the revolutionist Corus and the Warring States Era, to the height of the Terminator Wars to save it all, to his backing of the Dark Council returned from an Empire long fallen, to the great war against the Tatara not once but twice. And as I recall his own are the ones who aided the Shadow Reaper battles and the Hell Uprising. Of course- all of such culminating in that final battle against Soul Ripper those years ago.”

“Aye... that about sums it up.”

“The story of Zero Blackheart... a story of failure. In his quest to create a better world he destroyed most everything he came into contact with until finally-”

Clunk

Down set a cup upon the table, a head shifting, “- finally he destroyed his own mind.”

The clatter of a tea cup followed soon after, placed upon the small plate it came served upon. A decorative flower design, bright and colorful, standing out in this darkish coffee shop of dark oaks and stained glass. Around a table stationed were several, suits and ties afoot. The men drinking their various beverages and sat looking to one another. And it was across this table in the small yet vast shop, the man in a blue vest over a black and gray shirt sat, gloved hand upon the cup. He shifted his sights up, one eye visible behind the reflective tint of his glasses, white hair spilled around it.

“Gentlemen... I must confess my own bewilderment. You call my brother a failure? Allude to him as some kind of rabid dog? Truly now-”

He spoke, raising his cup and sipping from it. The sights of the others around him set upon his own vessel. A little tension, gazes of judgment. Their own hands down, their own cups set, their own faces even hung. His sip concluded and the cup pulled way, placed back down upon the plate with a slight clang only to be pushed away by the velvet gloved hand.

“Gentlemen... I must confess... that I find your, limited viewpoint of be dear little brother to be truly, absolutely- less than shit.”

“Hrngh??”

A few murmurs of surprise as they all kept their focus upon the white haired man, now leaning back within his own chair. His hand flipped outward, as if beckoning for retaliation- yet none would come.

“Your viewpoints are quite honestly- far too timid. Zero, Hell befall his soul if it still remains, was a pathetic pile. Full of worthless ideals. A broken existence that did not warrant its own continuation. The man murdered COUNTLESS people through and by extension of his actions. And for what? Some fucked up belief in being able to create peace by destroying the existing system?”

Their murmurs ceased, attentions cast around now. Bits of sweat and wrinkles befalling their expressions, raised eyes, lowered and ruffled brows. The man across from them pulled his hand, resting it against his own chest.

“I do not mourn for my little shit brother, few in my family do. We do not condone what he had done, and if not for the wonderful curse preventing us from taking his life a few of us would have done so ages ago.”

“Hell, the man was known for cheating Death. Maybe you’ll get the chance now that your Father and Grandfather aren’t maintaining that curse.”

“..... well, I will give you that one; though I feel like backhanding you for bringing it up. Things have been... rough, in more ways than one since their passing. But I can assure you,

Zero Blackheart is no more. And aside from the echoes that persist, we are well rid of him and his work.”

“Yet back to the topic at hand and as previously mentioned, the state of Shadow Dominions?”

“Hmm? What of it?”

“Well it’s just that- without your father, and with the loss of much of the top brass-”

“- and not to mention Zero himself a few years before who kicked it all off. There is a lot of doubt in the Dominion’s ability to survive and lead in the regions of this sector. Some see the Blackheart’s recent losses as weakness, as the Shadow Dominions have hardly moved an inch since.”

“Ugh,” he spoke, a hand to his face as his head shook, “We’ve been over this before, the Shadow Dominions and the Blackheart Family both are standing strong. Yes- neither have made a move in recent times but you need remember, Shadow’s passing has had a drastic effect on our direction. And I can assure you, once my elder brother Geno steps up to lead things are going to change significantly.”

Silence... shifting sights. Beads of sweat dripping profusely from one. His white eye brows raised as one focused orb of magenta rested upon one of the men present.

“What? Does Geno’s style worry you that much? I admit he can be a bit of a mess but his sense of direction is-”

“No- it’s not that milord... I just... we-”

“We thought you heard.”

“Mmm? Heard? Heard what?”

“Y-your brother, Geno has uh... he’s-”

“He’s been... slain.”

“... what?”

“It- it is the truth. The Primus Realm, milord uh- word has it that he went to retrieve something from Zero’s dynasty and was- well, his unit was ambushed by some of the remaining Tatara Insurgents. Geno Latios Blackheart was recorded killed in action.”

“... I see,” he murmured, slinking back, his arm at rest now at his side.

“Ye-... yeah.”

“... well now... fuck me sideways. That might just do it then. That will cause a stirring.”

“That is what we were referring to milord. The Devil is dead, the Lord is dead, and the Son is dead. None of his commanders left to take hold and with your family having felt so many losses-”

“There’s no avoiding it now Lord Blackheart. The Federation and the Legion are already preparing to take action. Many holdings under the Dominions are about to fall out. Perhaps if another Blackheart were to step up but many of you have not held lead of it in so long- I am afraid that these revolts are going to turn into full blown revolution. Shadow Dominions is going to collapse.”

“Many realms are already experiencing turmoil!!!”

“And that is why-”

“Heh... you want me, the apparent next-in-line, to deal with it.”

“It is your duty Alexander. Correct this situation. We need you to step up and take back control with iron resolve!”

“Or we require you to denounce your family’s holdings of the Dominions, and to turn it over.”

“Yes. We can not allow the weaknesses of Geno- nor the downfall of your father, rest his soul, lead to our dissolution. The Blackheart Family is viewed as weak. And to protect our hold-

our ground rather, we need a tough leader or the total surrender. On top of that, if you could speak out on this weakness, denounce it, show some strength then maybe, JUUUUST maybe, we can turn this around.”

“... heh... heh heh heh... oh- you people... you truly surprise me,” Alexander spoke, returning a hand back over his cup of tea- gently placing his fingers around the rim of the ceramic.

All of them looked to Alex in that moment, tensing up ever so as the lad chuckled to himself, his body convulsing with each laugh.

“You... who were servants of my father... would have me call out not only him but my recently murdered brother, call them weak, and then either turn over my own freedom and the freedoms of many- or you would have me turn over my family’s legacy.”

“... this isn’t a game Lord. Results are necessary in these times.”

“Without proper authority and proper threat, we appear as weak to our enemies.”

One set of eyes narrowed, “You can either do as we request, or we will find another way to deal with this crisis without you.”

“Heh-” Alexander sneered, his pointer finger flinching.

With the single flinch- the ceramic crackled though did not break. Rather- the cups of those sat around the table all blew in an instant. Shattering pieces of ceramic and the hot tea splashing about on the table. The startled individuals, all stumbling back out of their chairs. Some shot up, some fell back.

Around the table, soldiers in Black Storm Trooper attire readied themselves in response! Staffs charged with electricity, rifles trained and aimed. Meanwhile around the young Alexander well- it was just him, a long white coat hooked around his chair, one shrewd looking old man in a butler attire stood with arms crossed behind his back, and a young small girl of similar white hair with a splash of red, and darker attire. The old man did not move, only narrowing his gaze upon the men across from his master as the winds slapped him- the girl herself did not change expression, paying no mind to her own hair as it flopped about.

“You people... you could give a shit less about my family. You could give a fuck less about the people under the Dominion’s banner. You bureaucratic bastards only care about one thing- your station. Your wealth and your power. You wish only to retain it. I find that... disgusting!”

A whiplash of wind soared around the room- the epicenter being the young master. The whites of his eyes began to darken, the cornea reddened, and as it appeared to turn blood shot there came strange patterns forming as he looked ahead. Around he and his two followers the Purge Troopers readied themselves, weapons raised and staffs at the ready to twirl. Around Alex a black aura rose around, drifting in and out. As it passed over his face, his face would be replaced only in the brief moments by a vast curled back- glowing purple smile, sets of horns ripping from his face like many vines spreading from a tree.

“Morionus, gentlemen, I do believe that we are done here,” Alexander spoke, glancing to the central man who now had begun to stand up, “But before my colleagues and I depart, there’s one last thing you can do for me before we go.”

“GUARDS READY!” the man, Morionus, screamed.

On his command the blasters shifted, as if activated with the press of a button.

“In the service of the Shadow Dominions, I think you all can go and deliver a message to both my Father and my fallen Brothers-”

“FIRE!”

CRASH

From beneath Alexander’s feet, rather in a ring around him, the group erupted. Both figures stood behind him vanished in an instant as black tendrils roared up and out of the ground. They arched, lowered like a horse ready to charge, and bolted. The spiked ends traveled fast, bolting like arrows- the first plunging straight through the chest plate of the closest trooper.

It ripped through the armor and his body, tearing out the back with a spatter of blood and lungs, like a bamboo skewering only instead of bamboo it was a tentacle. His arms flopped, his

weapon flying away. Next to the soldier went another, straight through the gut- and then another, and another, and another. The sound of blaster fire echoed, screams and shouts- the wails of men firing on an enemy before them with nothing but the dread filled rage bubbling within.

Tendrils were shot, tendrils were filleted, yet more and more came. Wrapping around the leg of one and traveling up, ripping them from the ground and swinging them about. CRASH- right through the wall with a solid throw. Another around the throat of another soldier and a squeeze. Multiple bodies hoisted high into the air and tumbled about, some flung and others left impaled or otherwise bound.

Those in the grasp of the tendrils, run through or otherwise, twitched and spasmed. Not one proceeded to die in the instance of the attack. Bodies swung into other bodies, bodies used as meat shields to soak up blaster fire, bodies dropped straight through tables which shattered into pieces.

KLUNKKRUNCH!!

The suits by this point, seeing their soldiers get rag dollled, all turned. Some tried to crawl, others standing attempting to run. Yet the moment their backs turned they were swallowed from behind- the tentacles wrapping around and pulling them in. Screams absolutely filled the room now, those men, those soldiers. Visors shattered, tendrils slamming through the plastoid. Gags came from some with liquid shadow seeping under their helmets and straight into their mouths.

Glass windows erupted as bodies went soaring through them and crashed into the streets outside. One soldier, firing a shot, quickly became ensnared- the tentacle wrapping around the head and then the upper part of the body. They became quickly hurled up and swung around like a rag doll before crashing down into the ground.

Morionus trembled, the elder man stepping back with the shakes. Before him lay nothing but carnage, bodies snapped and flattened, blood and guts spilled out onto the floor. And one by one they all fell- until what remained was Alex himself, his shadowy tentacles, and the hung

bodies. His face contorted as he gazed ahead, that same reflection of a demonic entity present in the wafting aura as it danced around Alexander- his own grin replaced by that of the creature.

And as one last deafening crunch was heard, it all ceased. The thrashing and flailing shadowy tendrils ceased. A pause in the air... and as suddenly as it had begun, it all fell apart. The bound bodies all began to drop, the impaled now unimpaled. The tentacles burned away as a black mist, dissolving into the air and vanishing mostly whilst a few crept back down and under into the shadow cast by Alex himself. Bodies hit the floor, helmets and weapons falling down first and foremost.

When all was said and done as the last of the troops hit, the only two still standing were Alexander himself and Morionus. Silence, the former not moving an inch as his own hair fell before and blocked his eyes. For the old man, nothing but a quiver. His shaking, his hoarse breathing.

Across the way one final tendril rose up from the floor beneath Alex's feet, his body now stood. And it was this tendril which hooked his white coat, pulling it from the chair and moving it up and around Alexander's shoulders before receding back into his shadow. Silence, again...

Step. Step. Step. Step.

He had begun to move, coat hanging on his shoulders, slow moving as he paced on across the wooden floors. The echo of his steps so perfect in this atmosphere where one could hear a pin drop. The old man's eyes widened greatly, sweat pouring from his very pores. And step by step Alex drew closer and closer... close.

His head jerked up, his mouth hung open as all at once the snow top stepped to the right and..... trailed right on passed. The steps receded, echoing, growing further and further away. Alexander passed right beside the old man and moved beyond him. Morionus in turn fell to his own knees, then to his hands, streams of both tears and sweat flooding from his face and onto the floor.

Behind him Alex turned around a corner, moving down the corridor for the door left open. And as he passed by the counter, where behind a small frail young lady crouched- shaken and also crying, he stopped. A brief paused, and without turning his head-

“Sorry for the mess. Morionus will cover the repairs, rebuild it into something better. After that- tell him that he’s fired.”

With that he continued right out the door. Outside came the steps, steps that he quickly descended before turning again. Waiting for him as he turned were the two who had been behind him prior. And thus the three continued on.

“... is this alright? Letting the little monkey live?”

“Death is release. If he wants it he’ll have to do it to himself. Besides, sounds as though we have other matters to attend to.”

“Hrmm... he’s right you know. Shadow Dominions is going to look rather weak after all of this. What would you do, Lord Blackheart?”

“Nothing at all. Do recall that I DID in fact abdicate sometime ago. If anything we would be better off standing by and watching. There is no stopping what is to come anymore so it would be best to simply bide our time.”

“Things are about to get interesting,” the young girl murmured.

“... Indeed. Sayyyy, what say you guys, shall we go and check in on my little shit brother Leo in the Primus Realm for the heck of it?”

“And pay those Tatara Remnants a visit along the way?”

“You know me too well old friend. Heh... well if there’s one thing I can say, it’s that the map is about to change significantly. And whatever comes next, we had best be ready for those floodgates to burst open. These times of temporary peace are about to end~”

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NOVELIZATION WRITTEN BY:

Alexander Stormsong

Soul Fall

Veil of the Lost

Soul Fall

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Dedicated to friends of the past who have been a part of this great adventure, here and gone. Our legacy as Homeling continues on so long as there are those that will continue to pass on the torch. And of those that have passed, may this work be dedicated in your name.

We hold in memory:

Wesley "Shadow Blackheart" Dafoe

Amanda "Amy" "Tara" Frost

Destiny "Unmei" Tenorio

Nathaniel H. "Droid Bustr" Davidson

"Daft Fan 3"

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