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Nekros
by
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OK, so you're grossed out. I guess I can't blame ya. It's my job. I eat souls.

Listen, I don't understand how you're here, let alone why ya can see me, so I won't ask any questions. Ya say you're here on accident, that's fine by me, I don't know how that stuff works, I'm just a working stiff. Heh, heh.

No, I don't know how to get back. What do I look like, a tour guide?

Amateurs! You play around and -- awright , awright, calm down. Sheez! I'm just sayin' you need ta know what you're gettin' into before you go an' do somethin' like this. Ouija, séances, trances, candles, they can all get you in trouble if you're not careful. How you gettin' back, huh?

Yeah, sure. Might work. You don't know when he's comin' home though, do you? Could get sticky. Hmmph -- guess I'm stuck with you.

And stop looking at me like that, will you?

Yeah, I know you're upset, but wouldja please be quiet? We don't like to draw attention to ourselves, if you know what I mean. Oh, yeah, you wouldn't. Sorry.

OK, OK, if it'll settle you down, we can go somewhere and talk. I'm done here anyway. C'mon, there's a spot down the alley over there that I like to hang out at.

Well, it's just like any other big city, 'cept the occupants can fly if they want to. Cuts down on cab fare, yeah? It's like Chicago without all the cars.

No, dear, the sun doesn't come out. It's always dusk here. Just the way the big guy wanted it, I s'pose.

This ought to do. Out of the way, huh? Hors d'ouvres? Finger food? Heh! Sorry, can't help myself sometimes. Guess I still have a little smart ass in me from your side. I'll put it away. Better?

Of course this isn't what you expected. You play around with things like that, you're gonna get surprises. Don't move so fast, it blurs you. Kinda freaky. So. You can't see beyond me, huh? Like a close up shot?

Oh. More blurry. That's the way I see you, too. More like a haze that focuses for a couple seconds an' then pops back to bein' hazy. I gotta admit, you scared the shit outta me back there. Poof! There y'are. 'Course, I'm not much to look at, I suppose.

Now look, you gotta wipe that puss off your face, or I won't tell you nothin'.

Sure! I'll duck out and take a shower real quick, make myself more respectable. Hello? Water's physical. 'Sides, doesn't smell, just looks bad.

Yep. Forever. See this spot? Down here, sweetheart . . . that's the first one.

How would I know? Maybe a hundred years, can't be more than that. So, you're here -- Ahhh . . . nothin' like a little relaxin' after a kill. Whatcha' need?

Well of course I did it on purpose. It's what I do. Find 'em, kill 'em, eat 'em. All part of the game. And before you get all holy on me I gotta tell you, none of that shit works.

It doesn't work, that's what I mean. We kinda got a commission here, from up there, you know? Guys like me, the Caribal, we do what we do because, well, it's what we do. Continuation of the soul, blah-blah-blah. Our fate, their fate, yackety-yak.

Caribal. You guys had a whole tribe on an island somewhere that called themselves that. Guess one of the mucky-mucks had a vision of one of us and decided he liked it. The whole tribe started eating people and everything! Flesh types are so weird sometimes, I swear.

Which afterlife?

Oh, yeah. That one. Nope. Never seen it. You folks put a lotta faith in it though. Here? Well, we made our choices, yeah?

Surprised? Me, too. Don't let it get to you. Hey! Where you goin'?

He's home? Looks like you were right, then. OK. Later. Didn't wanna baby sit you anyway.

Mmmf . . . you're back? Didn't take you long. Just a sec, mmf, ahhh . . . be right with you, this is the best part. Mmmmm . . . look at that, it's huge!

Well don't look then. Ahhhh . . . urp, that's gonna hurt on the way out.

Oh, like you don't ever.

Heh. That's what I thought. So! What brings you back? It's been, what? Half an hour?

What? He didn't! So he's right there with you now . . . well, ain't that somethin'? Wouldn't of thought that. When I was on your side, people woulda rolled their eyes. You know, made polite and all.

Sure, urp -- 'scuse me -- let's go someplace. People are lookin' at me like I'm crazy.

Of course there are. Don't you see them?

Just like last time, then. OK. Follow me.

Over there. Listen, you got some questions or somethin'? Or you just like hangin' out here?

I can tell you that -- here, have seat-- at least my spin on it.

Right. Wouldn't know the others. Ahhh . . . good to relax.

There are better parts of town, yeah, but this is where the vents are. Where it all starts for most of 'em.

That last one? Tough! Didn't wanna go.

They understand that it's part of the process. Can't imagine it's pleasant. Well, you saw. Aww . . . there you go with the puss again. Look, you did it on purpose this time. You don't like it? Leave.

Fine, then. Get rid of the face.

Better.

S'OK . . . urp.

Oh yeah, that one. Everyone on your side wants to know that.

No. But I did. Can't imagine things have changed that much.

So . . . near as I can figure, it goes like this. You live on your side for a while. You die. Here's where it gets iffy. What you believe out there, is what you get after. Like, if you believe in heaven and believe you're gonna go there, then you do. If you believe you deserve the Hell thing, well, that's where you go, too.

Purgatory? Hah! Don't get me started. Heh, heh . . . Purgatory. Yeah, it's there. Boring. Trust me. Just not a lot to do, that's all. I guess they get what they're after but, hey, there're better ways to go about it!

Why, through me, of course.

See, take your Hindus. Reincarnation, that whole bit. You're side couldn't handle all those folks comin' back out of the blue, whether they was blades o' grass or whatever. Get mighty suspicious, if you know what I mean.

Right. Belief system determines fate. Hey, you're good!

Well, I'm for the rest of them and for what you call Purgatory.

That's like a waiting room for here, more than anything.

You know, the ones that don't believe one way or t'other.

Ghosts? Well, that's what we really are, in your terms anyway.

No. The ones on your side are hiding . . . not ready to let go yet, I s'pose. I find 'em eventually, though. Me or one of the others. Tough. Don't like 'em. But, if they gotta go, they gotta go.

Oh, just a voice. Big boomin' one. 'Go get so-and-so!'

No, not divine. Just really commanding. After that . . . no choice, really. Just can't help myself. Heh, heh.

Either directly here or they come up the vents from below. Those are free game, whoever gets to them first.

Depends. They could stay here for a long time, or just a few seconds. Luck of the draw, really. It's not a bad life here, kinda relaxin'.

Yeah, there's me and the other Caribal. There's a lot of us, we blend in pretty good. Kinda like Death on your side.

No. It's just biological. You guys, you're on your own. That's why your side's so popular.

Yeah, the free will thing. Some places got it, most don't. Sorta got it here. They're free to do whatever. But they never know when I'm comin'.

Not a demon. Just another soul. I made a choice, that's all. I like it here.

Maybe my time will come. Doubt it, though. I'm good at this.

I show up. That's it. I go where they live, tap on their shoulder, tell 'em it's time to go. That's usually enough. Sometimes they put up a fight. Don't like those. Makes 'em tough to chew and they come out hard.

That nose thing you do is kinda cute, you know that? Anyway, I get to rip 'em up.

The soul . . . heh. It's a tricky thing. Doesn't like to be exposed. It runs and hides. So we usually wind up makin' a big mess of it.

Well, yeah, they're spirits. They still got souls. The ones here, they're stuck on the shape they had last, an' the soul goes right along with it. Once the soul's gone, the rest of the stuff sort of sticks all over the place, kinda like glue. You're pretty lucky you just see me. I don't think you could handle it here. Not bein' from this side an' all.

Yeah. That's why it's all over me. One of the drawbacks, though we can change what we look like, at least for those that live here. Sorta like a mask.

Well, you can see me. I dunno know why, doesn't work on corporeal types I guess. I think the ear on the shoulder's cool. You don't? Kinda like a badge. I like it. Can't do anything 'bout it, anyways. Once it's on, it's on.

Uh-huh. Gotta eat it. Usually it finds its way into a single place, but sometimes it kinda splits itself up, so's you gotta chew your way through the whole mess. Some guys, they don't like that. Me? Suits me just fine.

Well, the darker souls, the really black ones like that last one? They fight. Don't wanna go back, I guess.

Well, then we let nature take its course. Just like you do, 'cept what comes out is pure, refined soul.

Oh, I gotta go now. You might wanna come back later.

No, really. I gotta go.

Fine. Suit y'self . . .

Yikes! Knew that was gonna hurt.

There, you happy? Heh . . . you wanted t' stay . . . it's your own fault.

Oh. That's easy. It goes where it needs to, the next level, if you will. Either start over or go up.

Nope, haven't a clue, never been there. That one was startin' over.

'Cuz it went that way. If it was goin' up, it woulda gone straight up like a shot, 'stead of kinda wanderin' the way it did.

Uh-huh. You're a funny one. 'Butterflies out my ass.' Cute.

Leaving?

Epiphany? Yeah, OK. Whatever.

No. Just . . . whatever. I'll see you later.

Trust me. I will.