Side Story Faith

In a world far away a massive building sits on a floating island seemingly between the spaces of the world's adrift. A cleric with blonde hair overlooks it all with a boy with white hair. “Isn't it wonderful son? Countless worlds surround us some idealistic, some nightmarish, all equally important in The Caretaker's grand design. And here we are in the middle of it all ready to witness them all.” The Cleric says as the boy looks at the swirling vortex in awe. “It is amazing, but I don't get it. Why must some worlds suffer more than others?” The boy asked in confusion.

After finding the words he answers. “Well you see Dusk in the multiverse every possibility exists, but while others aren't desirable we always strive for the best outcome. The core tenets of our faith state as much, but never to interfere with it on a grand scale. The Caretaker is mysterious but has us all in its best interest.” He smiles hoping that is a good enough explanation for his son.
The boy seemed to take that well smiling back at him. “I think I understand. Maybe I should visit the library to learn more about it.” He said eager to learn. “Ah how I miss youth your mind will absorb everything you see like a sponge. I commend your studies.” The Cleric said praising him. Dusk smiled running off to do that, but before he could get far he fell causing his father concern.

Dusk started to see visions of another version of himself in one of the less fortunate worlds he

lay there dying on the street starving. His desire to live was strong he didn't want to end it like this. Dusk felt him reach out and overwhelm him more and more. He cries out in pain holding his eye as The Cleric rushes to him. “Dusk what is wrong.” He said worried. Dusk kept riving in pain as his right eye started to bleed out of its socket. He stopped moving.

“Dusk!” His father said in disbelief. Slowly he sat up confused but calm. “Where am I? What did I?” the boy looked around slowly coming to see what happened. “I didn't... I didn't want it to be this way.” Dusk said greatly distraught. “What do you mean son what has happened?” The Cleric asked. “I'm... not your son.” He said looking down with shame. “I don't understand.” The Cleric asked again not sure what was going on. “I... didn't mean to but, I didn't want to die. I replaced him.”

He didn't know what to say he knew strange powers existed throughout the multiverse but replacing someone? He restrained himself from doing anything wanting him to explain further. “If you aren't dusk who are you.” The boy looks at his hands and then back to The Cleric. “My name was also Dusk, and this body feels like my own. I was a street rat starving looking for scraps anywhere I could find, but I wasn't able to find any... and I died.” He tried to explain not fully getting it either.

The Cleric seemed to finally understand. He wanted to be angry to lash out at the one who took his son but he couldn't. Instead he hugged him. Dusk tried pushing him away. “What are you doing? I killed your son.” He said in protest. “It will take some time for me to grieve, but you are not to blame for this. Come from now on this will be your home.” He stood up motioning for him to follow. Dusk didn't seem to like his quick acceptance.

After a few years as The Cleric promised he was welcomed as if he were his son. He didn't understand the warm welcome never really experiencing it before then. He still felt guilty about it but went along with it unsure what else to do. Likewise, he learned from him in both the realm of combat and knowledge. Until the day The Multiversal Empire showed up.

The Massive ships loomed over the church grounds as smaller ships flew down to land with ground forces. Emperor Lucius Novastride exited one of them leading them forward. The Cleric met

them at the gates with his forces as Dusk watched from a distance. “We finally found you. I'll commend you It wasn't easy.” Lucius answered with a confident demeanor. “The Church is always moving to reach the most people. What can I help you with Emperor?” The Cleric asked ready to take him on. “The way I see it your faith is both possibly a great asset or a huge threat. I am here to offer my hand to you personally.” He said holding out his hand to him.

“Men like you are dangerous. I know of your tragedy, and I understand your outrage, but I would never condone trying to control the multiverse on the scale you intend to.” The Cleric said rejecting him. Lucius lowers his hand frowning. He begins to pace back, and forth. “Hypocrisy! You have done the very thing you claim to be against, and now you sit here apathetic to the suffering around you.”

The Cleric sighs. “The holy war was indeed bloody and to some extent we do overstretch our powers too far, but we must so those such as yourself can't replace us it's The Caretakers...” The Emperor cuts him off in anger. “Don't claim to speak for that thing! It has caused countless injustices against us all. There is no reason for such meaningless strife!” His words struck a chord with Dusk with everything that happened. It was clear this conversation was going nowhere.

“Then see if you can take me down.” The Cleric said pulling his staff apart into a sword. “Very well,” Lucius said charging towards him with his army. The church didn't move dedicated to only act after already attacked. He blocked the Emperor's blow with his sword causing a shock wave around them. Now that he had made the first blow The Cleric counters dodging to the side and cutting him up quickly, but the wounds are shallow against his tough skin.

The armies started to all engage. The Empire's force mostly had more conventional weapons, and the church used more traditional ones like staffs and chains. They seemed rather even in strength The Church had a slight edge, but The Empire had overwhelming numbers. The Emperor managed to strike a powerful blow into The Cleric's chest seemingly atomizing the area around it. For a normal person that would certainly end it, however, The Cleric started to regenerate like he did nothing.

Taken back Lucius looks surprised. “A healing factor? Troublesome indeed.” He grumbles knowing this won't be an easy victory. “There is still time for you to give up, and leave.” The Cleric grins pushing him to take the chance. “The Empire does not back down so easily.” That is all he said in response keeping up the fight. Dusk looked in awe seeming to admire the opposing side.

After hours of fighting most of the foot soldiers were either defeated or exhausted to the point where they fell over all that remained was The Emperor and The Cleric even still fatigue was setting in on them both. “This is getting us nowhere.” The Cleric said between heavy breaths. “I'm Afraid you might be right about that,” Lucius said also panting heavily.

Both of them sit down next to each other out of energy. “You've proven to be formidable. For now, I will withdraw but don't think for a moment that is the end. Stay out of my way, or I will be back stronger, and next time I will win.” He said standing and walking away. “And when that time comes I will do the same.” The Cleric said as his forces all left in the ships they came in and flew away.

They took the time to recover tending to the wounded on both sides that had been left. The Cleric entered to building exhausted Dusk looked more star-eyed than normal but tried to hide it. “That was incredible both of you,” Dusk said excitedly. He sighed. “Fighting is not a spectacle son it's a means to an end. You're well to remember that.” Dusk frowned. “But what exactly happened to that man? Why is it so wrong for him to fight for it?"

The Cleric rubbed his head finding it harder to think of the best way to put it after such a long fight. “He is a victim of probability simple as that. Something happened out of his control, and now he seeks to destroy us all through a fool's goal.” Dusk shook his head. “You're always telling me to find the path that favors me, but not to interfere I don't get it.” “You don't force the change you hope for it. The Caretaker has it all...” The Cleric starts to explain but gets cut off. “That thing killed your son! I... killed your son. Do you not care does that not upset you?”

The Cleric looks down not knowing what to say. “It hurts me more than you know. But I can't take it out on you. You don't deserve that you are also a victim of probability.” Dusk frowns not liking

his answer. “Well, maybe I'm not content sitting around doing nothing anymore,” Dusk said storming out of the room. “Wait where are you going?” The Cleric quickly looked up and started to follow him. Dusk rushed through the halls toward the tower. He quickly reached the top peering down at the edge. “Dusk what are you doing get down from there!” The Cleric pleaded. Dusk ignored him jumping off. “Dusk!” The Cleric cried out as he hit the ground below dying right away.

Like before this was not truly a death for him, he reached his mind and soul throughout the multiverse till he found another version of himself taking his body and looking around at his surroundings. Wiping the blood from his eyes he walked forward trying to find the nearest way to The Empire.

After months of searching, he finally made it to the port world known as Porta Nexus where The Empire had a presence to enter a recruitment center. After a boring process, he was pushed up the chain of command by people holding interest in his power after being able to prove it was legitimate, reaching all the way to The Empire's head scientist Dr. Oswald Corvus.

After some tests, the doctor became very interested in him studying his cells and everything. “This is quite fascinating. It would seem you are very useful to us. You will serve both my and The Empire's interests swimmingly. I'd love to test the limits of your ability.” He started to say only for dusk to answer right away. “Do whatever you wish. My desire is the same as The Emperor's.” While a little disgusted by his admiration he smiled deviously. “Oh my, it usually takes much more coxing to get people to go along with my experiments. Are you truly willing to do anything I decide to put you through?”

Dusk seems a little more hesitant now but answers all the same. “Whatever it takes.” “Whatever it takes? I see.” The old man said laughing motioning for him to follow. “I believe I can amplify your power even more, and create a sort of hive mind. Once we capture a few versions of you that is. My boy I do believe you have the potential to be the greatest assassin.” He said leading him down a hallway past a group of orange-haired girls that all look the same.

“Who are they?” He asked curiously. “Hmm oh well they are simply another project of mine. They are given the Letter designation G. For you, I believe we are on R now. Each one of your bodies will be labeled with R and a number.” He said seeming to enjoy explaining his work to people lightly chuckling. They arrived at the test chamber, and Corvus hooked him up to a machine strapping him into place.

“I'm afraid it's far too late to back out at this point. This is going to hurt... a lot. So steel yourself.” The old man said to him. “I understand give me all you got,” Dusk said as he pulled the lever causing him the most excruciating pain he had ever felt. He struggled to stay awake screaming out in pain. This kept up for weeks and months. Like he said Corvus had abducted other versions of himself who were much less willing to do the same.

He tried killing him seeing how long it took for him to possess his other self, if they ever fought the possession, how much of a range, and more, all in which brought him great joy. He had the strongest of The Empire come in to train him. Until the day he was ready. He flipped the switch one last time Dusk was much less affected at this point not because it was less painful, but because he had grown used to it.

Corvus deactivated the switch. “It is finished I have made you into the ultimate killer, The Empire's best. Tell me R-35 how do you feel? Can you control your other bodies now?” The old man asked. After testing it out he was able to look through the eyes of another version of himself and walk around it was a somewhat surreal feeling. “Yes, but it seems to be limited to the ones you have taken.” Dusk states. “Hmm not quite what I was hoping for but acceptable. I think you are truly ready to serve the empire. Hmm... I suppose you'll need a name R followed by a number doesn't exactly strike fear.” He ponders.

“What's wrong with dusk?” R-35 asks. “Oh yes I forgot you went by that, I don't think that will do either.” He said thinking about it as he paced around the room. “Ah, I got it. From now on you will be known as... The Reaper. Simple yes but certainly sends the message.” The Reaper thinks about it for

a moment coming to like it right away. “Yes, I will embrace it.” He started to laugh feeling like all his work was about to pay off.

Things didn't go exactly to plan. He was incredibly useful to the empire usually reserved to end a threat after no one else seemed able to do so, but that all changed when one of the captains of the Empire took one of the orange-haired girls and went AWOL. It didn't take that long for him to track him down and end him, but the girl got away. He seemed to pursue her endlessly never quite catching up to her, and when he finally did this little girl managed to kill him each time.

This frustrated him greatly He was supposed to be The Empire's greatest asset and while the girl was also considered to be one he felt humiliated. According to Corvus, she held the key to everything The Emperor was striving for. He had had enough even with all his power and skills it wasn't enough he needed more. A stronger body. So he returned home.

The Reaper entered a large room with an army of other versions of himself. “Brothers! Our reputation has been put on the line. This battle decides everything. Remember who we are fighting for. For the Empire!” He tells them. All of them salute him ready to take on anything that lies ahead. The Cleric stands inside a large immaculate building. “Your Eminence. Filthy heretics have arrived at our doorstep.” an attendant says to him. He sighs looking a little sad, but unsurprised. “Send all the non-combatants away. We will defend the church for the good of the Multiverse, even if it costs us our lives.”

The ship The Reapers arrived in lands outside. All of them go out to meet the army waiting for them. The Reaper steps forward as does The Cleric. “So you have returned at last. I doubt It's to become a follower of our ways again. So why are you here?” The Reaper stays quiet slowly pointing at him. “Your body.” He says to him. “Oh? I see, and you couldn't just take it over like the countless other versions of us you've taken over. Have you ever felt remorse for that? I once thought you did, and then you went and joined The Empire.” The Cleric would say with anger in his words. “My only job is to serve The Empire.” The Reaper answers. “The Empire that tortured you? Tramples all around the

Multiverse without care. Can't you see despite your crimes you're a victim in this too?" The Cleric says trying to reason with him. "I didn't come here for a sermon." The Reaper says pulling out a multi-tool, and transforming it into a sword. The Cleric's men draw their weapons as do all the other Reapers.

"Very well. We will give you exactly what you want then." The Cleric says pointing to the staff he has forward, directing his army to charge.