

My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult: *I See Good Spirits & I See Bad Spirits*

Theme: Doomite backstories of youth

Genre: Action/Comedy

Gateway to Hell

“Excuse me? Excuse me?” The first time I heard the question, I wasn't sure if it was directed at me. The second time was a bit more lucid, since it was also accompanied by a not so subtle poking of my right shoulder. I sighed wearily and closed my book, turning my head up slightly. “Yes?” I answered, also twisting a bit in my chair.

The Duonulan had a wide smile on his face, but it was too early on my part to discern if it was a sarcastic one. “I just have have to ask you two things. First things first: are you from Planet Dhmk?”

I was amazed I could contain my groan. Since landing on Planet Opachre, I have been asked the obvious question dozens of times. “Yes.”

“Ah, that the only word you know?”

“No.”

My inquisitor whistled. “Okay. Second question: By Zarkon's ears, why are you reading analog?”

It was a question I hadn't heard yet, so the Duonulan got points for creativity. “Family Heirloom. Really no point in uploading it into something digital when it's right here already written...”

“Mind if I take a look?”

I felt my eyes narrow. “I do.”

The Duonulan helped himself to the opposite booth across the table, snatching the book. “Don't be a curmudgeon, Dhmk. You're a minority here, y'know. Don't shoo away someone trying really hard to make a friend outta ya.” I pulled my gun from its holster and held it at his face. Slyly, he lifted my book up to serve as a shield. “I don't think you'll blast this heirloom just to get to me. I won't break it, I know how these things work. Now, let's see what we have in here,” he prattled on. I snorted, thinking him a fool. My book was written in my native language-what does a spoiled rich foreigner like him know about it?

“Neat! This book is all about the Dhmk Pantheon!” He carefully turned an ancient page. “Gotta tell ya, I love them, so much more personality than the boring Drules' mainstream atheism. It's a good thing some Natives survived to keep some of the old Opachrian culture alive, or my genetically engineered ancestors would've been just as dull, and my poor self, ultimately. But, I have to ask you: do you really, I mean, REALLY believe that Dhmfidr was a Centipede Goddess that split herself into two twin deities to save your world from the Ancient Goddess of the Sun, the epitome of overkill, Qyracm?”

My mouth dropped open, my lower jaw dangling as he rambled my religion to me like a scholar. "How...how do you know?" I stammered.

He lowered the book so I could see the amicable gleam in his eyes. "My great-grandfather was the first mate on King Zarkon's Aerie when he was just a Space Pirate and happened to land on your world." He delicately closed the book and held it out to me with both hands. "Come to think of it, that makes his Perpetual Majesty really freaking old, huh?" I accepted the book, and apparently the offer of friendship. "Yeah, the language was taken back when my great-gramps returned here a rich man. I'm Cossack Karavirs."

The Karavirs, huh? The name sounded familiar enough from the history books; quite a powerful family in terms of wealth, having a decent trading company out here on this distant world of the Empire. Business commerce was in its infancy on Planet Dhm and its annexed neighbors. I applauded myself for deducing earlier that this Cossack fellow was of prominent stock: his clothes, his demeanor, it all suggested someone who need not tolerate much that was unpleasant.

"And you are?"

I swallowed. "Mogor."

"That it?"

"Mogor...Morgil'Ar."

"Morgil Mogor'Ar? No, that doesn't sound right," Cossack's brow furrowed.

"Mogor is my first name. Morgil'Ar is my family name," I ground through my clenched teeth.

"Oh, sorry. Mogor is it? That happen often?"

"You have no idea."

"Sorry to hear that. You'll just have to overcompensate by being very conspicuous so people remember your name," he reasoned.

"You mean like you?" I countered.

"Heh heh, I live to be the life of the party. Anyway, why don't you come sit over at that table over there?" Cossack gestured to a distant booth where two equally well-dressed Duonulans sat. They looked at me with curiosity. I gave them an emotionless nod in return. Unfortunately, my new friend assumed I was accepting his invitation and before I knew it, I was practically dragged, book in tow.

I sat with them, and didn't say much for a while. I was never very good being sociable even on my own homeworld. Then again, most fellow Dhmk didn't go out of their ways either: my mother, a High Cleric of Nidhm, was quite overzealous, even for someone with her rank. While our Southern Race worshipped the Skull-faced half of Dhmfidr, and toiled hard to

migrate through caves on account of poor vegetation and frequent meteor impacts in the Southern Hemisphere, the hedonistic Northern worshippers of Sidhm benefited from lush biomass and clear skies. Polar opposites, literally: Duonulan immigrants on Dhmk preferred the Sidhm faction, and due to pure Dhmk's lifespan of twenty years, those that thought like my mother would die out soon enough without a holy war breaking out.

"Hey, Mogor, you look like you're part Dhmk. Am I right? You have a Duonulan parent?" Cossack interrupted my train of thought. I nodded. Oddly enough, my mother had converted a stray Duonulan and my hybrid self was born from their union. He continued, "Does that mean you're gonna drop dead ten years from now?" I shook my head. After an uncomfortable silence, he cleared his throat. "You wanna elaborate?" Honestly, even I didn't know: too many different gene pools soaking my vessels made life span prediction pointless. I didn't want to admit that out loud, though. "Do you have that funky crest on your head, or hair? C'mon, take off the green hat," Cossack prodded. I sighed and took it off. "I knew it! A crest!" Cossack looked quite pleased and as I put my hat back on my head, I could see why: a hundred credit chip was slapped into his hand by one of the disgruntled gamblers.

"Half of that's mine," I demanded, not sure why I blurted that out. Cossack laughed and handed me the chip. "Here, take it all." I simply stared at it, suddenly getting angry. "I don't need your charity. I said half." Cossack snickered and his entourage joined in. "I insist." He thrust the chip in my face. Without a moment's hesitation, I took the chip, snapped it in half, and slid one piece across the table. "So do I."

Cossack looked down at the lost money, and then up at me. He chuckled, not at all upset. "Mogor, we're going to have a blast together. And just in time, too. I have something I've gotta do before I enlist in the military against my family's wishes, and you're just the sort of person I'd like to have tag along."

We headed deeper into the underground compound, and I had yet to have my question answered. It seemed as good a time as any to repeat it. "Why are we here?" Cossack stopped his steady march in front of our small group, peeking out from under the black hooded cloaks we were all sporting to say, "What, didn't I tell you?"

I stomped up to him until I could smell what he ate for breaking fast. "You said you wanted to explore a cave; I know caves. This is not a cave, this is a subterranean settlement built artificially with advanced technology. I'm thinking Drule, and I'm sure you're thinking Drule, but what I want to know is what I am supposed to expect as I descend. So," I folded my arms, "if you don't tell me, I'm leaving. I don't need this last hurrah before I continue my military training on this planet." I postured dominantly.

Cossack shrugged. "You ever hear of the Vajelic Nihilists?"

"Actually, no, I haven't. I've heard of Vajel: some God of Chaos and Rebirth of some sort," I lied. I knew enough about the sect on account of my raving mother. I could almost hear her quake-inducing voice rattle through the metallic walls. "Many heretic Dhmk claim Vajel is the son of Qyracm, come to destroy what she could not! And they worship this foul bastard creature, more monster than deity. Blasphemy! And His Majesty, advocating the incorporation. Bah, what can one expect from an outsider? If he hadn't overthrown the GndI

Dynasty he would have been sacrificed to Nidhm by now!” I could even see my father's complacent nod and hear his “Just listen to your mother” mantra.

“...and so the Nihilists are certain that Vajel is responsible for the VCS disease in the Drules, and that Vajel will destroy them all, except for a special few with kick-ass genomes or something. They mutate and become either more advanced or cellular messes. That, in my opinion, is what happens when you repress a society for too long. Atheism one side, crazy Blessèd freaks on the other. My guess is those red-eyed Purplies don't understand the concept of gray and...what?” His two accompanying buddies besides myself were staring at him while he rambled. “Oh,” he realized. He turned around to resume his journey when I nearly yelled, “You STILL haven't answered my question! What are we doing here?”

Cossack did not bother to turn around. His shoulders sagged beneath the cloak. “My cousin is down here somewhere. I gotta get her outta here before something happens and she changes, alright?”

“I thought that all Duonulans were immune to VCS,” I wondered aloud. Cossack tossed me a sideways glance, the first bitter look I saw on his face. It seemed the impish, jovial fellow was supplanted with a stoic clone. “Well, with all the racial mixing on this world, some are more Drule than others.”

“How much time do we have?” I asked.

“I don't know, but I need to do this. No one else in my family but me knew she was into this stuff, and I laughed it off until it was too late.” His hand reached into his hood, and rather than dwell what he was wiping from his visage, I took the lead. “Well, I don't know about you, but I'm starting to sweat down here. Let's go and find your cousin,” I feigned optimism. If she was a fanatic, the chances were slim she was leaving here voluntarily and if she wasn't alone, neither were we.

That's it. We're all going to die. And it's all because of Cossack.

We had managed to walk into the main sanctum without resistance or suspicion; black cloaks were in style here. If mutation was all the rage, I was a bit surprised full-blown nudity to brandish the Blessèd changes was not. Perhaps there was something to Cossack's repression theory: maybe it had a powerful genetic basis even Vajel's zealots couldn't wholly eliminate. Cossack then began a valiant attempt to discover which of them was his cousin by getting a look at their cloaked faces. Creative bending, acolyte questions, even the occasional swipe at the hood coupled with an “Oops” to get a better look, and she was still not found. I felt chills crawling up my spine. I did not belong here, I barely qualified being on the planet. By all natural rights, I should be home on Planet DhM. Scratch that, by all natural laws I shouldn't exist at all. The Nihilists would have no qualms about reaffirming said laws with my death. Why had I bothered to follow so blindly?

Cossack ran past me with his two friends taking up the rear. He had a large cloaked body flung over his shoulder that was kicking and screaming words like idiot and moron. He passed by me, stating blatantly, “Vajel Squad after us, time to go.” I followed in suit, and my

stride length catching me up to them in no time. I dared not look behind me, since the sounds of dozens of angry Nihilists gaining ground was hint enough. Great, I had managed to piss off another God, and just for being an accomplice. What joy. Some of them had psychic abilities because I could hear their poisoning thoughts searing through my head. Some of them had telekinetic skill, as I was dragged backwards and knocked off my feet. I could see the same things befalling Cossack and the others, though he was putting up quite a fight. He dropped his burden to the ground, which promptly stood up and gave him a hearty punch to the face. Her blue fur that presumably once covered most of her body was in patches with purple skin shining through. Her yellow eyes were speckled with a medley of reds and violets. Her expression was a cruel one, promising of malice and punishment for the transgression.

She held out a hand, which prompted the oncoming mob to stop.

Cossack continued to struggle, "Snap out of it!"

Even I could see that it was too late for her. "She's gone, Cossack. If she leaves here, she's destined to live out her days in a medical facility. On Dhm, the old way was euthanasia. You have no other choice."

"Mogor," the cousin suddenly addressed me. "Mogor," the throng reiterated. I gulped. The psychic attack provided some feedback to her? Fine. "Well, at least you got my name right." "Do you believe?" she asked. "Do you?" the mob echoed. I crossed my arms, attempting bravado at the stupidest time. "Believe in what? Vajel? Nidhm? Cossack?"

"You don't. You don't believe anyone, do you?" the cousin continued. I was expecting the crowd to repeat it, but I guessed the phrasing was too complicated. "Your mother loved the Gods, but you never did. Even now, you tote around a rotting pile of pulp, trying to dissuade yourself from the truth."

"Cossack, you have to end this," I ignored her words. "You want closure, this is the time!"

"But Vajel speaks through all of us. Vajel knows of your planet and its peoples. It is only a matter of time before Dhmk's Code is broken. Join us, and Vajel will find the way. Vajel is real, Vajel is life!"

"Hey!" The cousin turned around. Cossack had a thoughtless look on his face. "Dhmfidr sends Her regards." He pulled out his hidden blaster and shot her in the face. That was all the signal I needed to toss the lazon grenade towards the crowd and make a run for the entrance. The explosion was great, and compromised the integrity of the metal tunnel considerably. Luckily I had memorized which tunnel passageways we came through, so getting out was easy. It was a good thing the Nihilists were not militarily inclined to have many guard posts. The few that approached us were shot dead from a distance, supernatural powers be damned. One of Cossack's unnamed friends gave a grateful holler before his survival was ironically taken away by a thrown piece of steel debris. The remaining three of us made it to the surface before I used my second bomb to seal the tunnel. I figured by the time the Nihilists thought the obstacle away we'd be long gone.

“Well, I suppose it's time.” I was worse with goodbyes than I was with hellos. Cossack and I were outside his residence.

“Had a helluva time, though,” Cossack replied, the concept of mourning nonexistent.

“She wasn't your cousin, was she?” I confirmed.

“Nope.”

“Well, then, who was she?”

“I'm not gonna say.”

“Damn it, Cossack! One of your friends died and I nearly did, too! Let's not forget that whoever it was, you shot 'em dead. I think a proper noun is in order here.”

“She was Vajel, leave it at that.”

“C'mon!”

“If you don't stop, I'm going to tell everyone I meet your name is Morgil.”

I grunted.

“Sure you don't want my pops to put you up for a couple of days?” he offered.

I shook my head. “No, I think I'll report a little earlier to the academy. I appreciate the offer, though.”

Cossack smirked.

“Was she your girlfriend? Your sister? Grandmother? A hooker? Tell me!” I pressured, but he laughed and walked away with me standing there. I never did find out exactly who she was and what her relation was to Cossack; I never saw him after that. I never found out what was done about the slain friend, but he certainly had the family connections to bribe any blame away.

Sometimes I wonder if he was just curious about what they did down there and she was just a random Nihilist he picked out of the crowd for kicks, conjuring up the cousin scheme to keep us all going along. He certainly thought like a Dhmk. I could definitely see him indulging in Sidhm's ways. It would be interesting to see him on Planet Dhmk someday. By Nidhm, I hope he avoids trouble to live that long!

Lyrics:

Gateway to Hell Lyrics:
Written by Buzz McCoy & Groovie Mann
Published by SleazeBox Music / BMI
Vocals - Groovie Mann

Keys & Programming – Buzz McCoy
Guitar - Luc Van Acker

You want danger? I'll show you what danger is baby!

What are you talking about?

Gateway to Hell

Ahhh

Gateway to Hell

We try and remember

What's right and wrong

We seem to forget

Where we belong

Somebody talks

Assaulting your tongue

Discussing your life

And where you belong

You're not real

We used to think so

You're not real

We used to think so

GGGateway to Hell

What are you talking about?

We try and remember

What's right and wrong

We seem to forget

Where we belong

Remove the scum

And fill in the holes

No Kingdom Come's

Awaiting in gold

You're not real

We have to think so!

You're not real

GGGateway to Hell