

Loss: The first Necromancer

By Kyle Bickerman

Loss knew what he was doing was wrong. He knew they would hate them for it. He knew he shouldn't do it, and every part of him screamed for him to stop. Yet he kept on. He needed this information, he needed a plan, he would not lose any more loved ones. His brother would understand. He read through his notes, all of his calculations were correct, and all of his diagrams were perfect. His anxiety spiked, looking for an excuse to put off the actions he knew he needed to take. He knew what he needed to do, and knew it was time to do it. His hands felt heavy as he set to his task. He placed the candles he had brought, light bouncing off of the cave walls. He drew out the symbols, invoking the magic from himself and the area around him. He knew at any point he could have stopped; he could have thrown it all into the sea and no man or God would have been the wiser. He persisted, rapidly approaching the point of no return. His spirit reached out into a different world and found a spirit of one long passed. Grabbing the spirit, he began to drag it into the physical plane, holding it while it was wriggling like a fish. It physically manifested before him.

"Release meeee" the spirit grimaced. Loss had known that ripping them into the physical world would cause pain to them, but he could feel the pain that they were going through the link that he had created with them.

"I have questions of the future spirit, and you are going to answer them..." Loss launched into his interrogation, probing the spirit for any information he could. He wanted to know everything about the threat that was looming over his family and those around him, he listened to the responses that the spirit gave, taking it to heart. When the ghost had satisfied his need for knowledge, he released it, sending it screaming back into the spirit world. Even though he had released it, he still felt some of the pain that he had caused it. He took a deep breath, reaching back into that other world and grabbing another spirit, forcing it to materialize in front of him.

He continued this process countless times, ripping spirits into this world and causing them agony. Each time, he felt a little more pain, as if every time he was ripping souls from that other plane, they were ripping into him right back, he had lost count of how many spirits he had interrogated, but he was able to ascertain what his next steps should be. He paused before the next soul, as he had a strange feeling in his gut. The hair on the back of his neck stood upright, and he felt a sense of dread deep in his gut. He hesitated for a moment before he forced the next soul to materialize.

He stood in silence, unable to breathe, and unable to think. His ears began to ring as his heart began to pound. He had grown complacent in his interrogation and finally understood the gravity of what he was doing. Materialized in front of him was the soul of his late wife. She showed no pain and did not complain, but before he could utter a word, her voice broke the silence.

"Hello my love" Her voice sounded as beautiful as the day he first heard it. It was as if the entire world faded away. He thought back to the day they first met. His discomfort grew, he did like that he was forced to compare himself to the man he used to be. It seemed as if that was a completely different being. Before he could think further the music of her voice filled the air.

“You take great risk in your efforts, and show just as much foolishness as ever” Her expression soured. “You know not what forces you are trifling with. You may be the master of death but you have no idea how the actions taken here have affected you. You think that you have been scrying the future using the dead and that rings true, but for every soul that you rip from eternal rest, you rip off a piece of yourself and replace it with them. These voices will stay with you for eternity, never able to properly rest and never able to leave you. Your actions shall weigh your soul down and you shall become a shell of your former self. The light of your soul shall be shrouded in the darkness of your actions. Nine hundred and ninety-eight souls before me, and I shall add to that number. Your actions will not be seen in favorable light by your brother.” Loss nodded solemnly, his wife’s words hung heavy in the air, threatening to crush him. As he opened his mouth to speak, she broke the silence yet again.

“I know what you will ask of me, as you have asked of others. You will go to the east, there you will find the forces devoted to Ardev that have not been destroyed, not only will you destroy them, but you will destroy yourself. You will create horrors that will be felt for millennia. You will create a great shadow that will linger over the lands long after you depart. Then you shall return and stand before your brother for all that you have done. You know what actions you must take during this campaign; therefore, I shall be the final spirit that you shall awaken from rest. You will not question anyone further, and once we have finished here you will end this spell and set about your task. There are many moving pieces in the world, the effects of which will be felt for years to come.” Loss had the words taken from his mouth, and could not bring himself to say anything further. He could see his entire journey from the moment he released this spell to the moment of his return from his journey. He would not have time for any pleasantries or goodbyes. He struggled to think of any additional questions, his mind racing at top speed while also being notably empty. He said the only words that could come to his mind.

“I love you” Three simple words. The only words he could say to the spirit of his wife. Everything he ever wanted to tell her since she was taken from him and those are the only words he could muster.

“I love you too, now and forever. Now go, my voice shall join the choir of the dead that you shall carry with you. Know that I will always be with you, and above all else, remember one thing.” She reached out and for a moment Loss could feel the ghostly hand caressed his cheek with the warmth and love of her touch.

“Be kind to yourself.”

He released the spell, still leaning into her hand as it faded away. It felt as if a blade had pierced into his heart.

He struggled to move, pain shooting through his body. He left the cave and began his journey to the beach, calling for one of the greatest servants his family could utilize. While he approached the beach, he saw the massive form of the great eagle swoop down and land as gracefully as a swan. The eagle effortlessly carried him on his journey. While the mortal realms were some distance from the Golden Isles, the journey is made tolerable when traveling by eagles. This breed of eagles rarely tired, and could complete multiple journeys before needing to rest.

During his flight, he pulled out his book and began to make notes of the spells he would need for the campaign ahead. The spirits did not have a great understanding of the spells he would use, but he gathered enough information to make the spells work. These were newer magic, and he was both the

creator and the learner. From everything he had learned, unknown magic was dangerous, however, if he was to succeed, he would have to accept some risk. Although if he was the one who created it, it should not be unknown to him.

He began a long rest to pass the remaining time. Time mattered little to the gods, and while hunger, thirst, and fatigue could catch up to them, they were much better suited to deal with these issues.

As he woke from his rest, he realized that the landfall had become visible. The remaining forces of his late father had destroyed much of the land that they were stationed in, and constantly threatened to expand their reach. These wayward humans posed little threat compared to the horrors that Ardev himself had unleashed, but they had the potential to cause much more damage than the clashes with him had.

His transport had landed once suitable ground had been found. He did not expect the eagle to take him too far into the territory as the eagles were a proud species, doubly so for those that came from the Golden Isles. As the eagle began its long trek back, Loss began to walk in the direction provided to him by his interrogations. He walked until the Sun had set and he came upon a fire. There was a team of the forces of his father huddled around. He recalled that they had called themselves the Black Soldiers due to the darker garments that they wore.

Despite being the God of Death, Loss had little taste for violence and killing. Some of his cohorts would happily revel in slaughter, but he did not. He knew the threat that these men posed and what those around them would do. As a god, he could easily overcome a force many times their size, but he did not enjoy that type of work, it was more akin to pest control for him. However, for the larger forces, he would need an army of his own. He set to work with a grim resolve.

It was by no means difficult work, but once all the soldiers had been taken care of, he had decided to test his newer magic. The result was a gory mess, with the skeleton of one of the bodies removing itself from the flesh of a soldier, picking up arms as it had stood up. Bone white and held together by weak magic, the skeleton stood still, waiting to be ordered. Loss understood the gravity of what he was doing. While this was not as heinous as his actions in the cave on the Isles, this was still a crime against the natural world. He set aside the rising number of doubts in his mind and set to work.

The concept of time is a different idea to the gods. Unless interrupted, their divinity allows them to live forever. They view time in a different light than most humans, and without effort to keep aware of the passage of time, they often will not notice. This can be offset by keeping a host of mortals to ask about the current state of time. However, in the army of the God of Death, there would be no mortals.

So began the campaign of the God of Death against the remnants of the Black Soldiers. As Loss moved about the continent, he began to gather more bodies for his ever-growing horde. He did not only animate the bones of an individual but he also began to animate their corpses into zombies and other unsightly creatures. While he did not find killing or military conquest notable, he did find experimentation and academics a fascinating topic, and he had more than enough time, power, and test subjects to engage with. He ensured that he took note after note, carefully creating a reference point for the magic he could use. However, he could not perfect his raising of the dead, as they came back mindless and without a soul.

In truth, his campaign did not seem to be of any noteworthiness to Loss. At least, until it reached the end. His forces had taken out camps and patrols aplenty, but nothing came close to the great fortress that stood before them. Before this Loss had cleaned up much of the Soldiers that occupied their territory, and held a sizeable horde. As impressive as this fortress was, he knew how his victory would be assured. His horde amassed at the walls of the fortress and was able to pour inside, spilling throughout.

Before long, Loss was standing before the leader of this faction. He seemed more than a mere human however, this man was given a taste of divinity by Ardev himself. Loss could see how brightly his soul burned compared to the others. He then decided to try an experiment on the living. Without any words or exchanges, Loss reached out both physically and spiritually, ripping the man's soul from his body. The only suitable container he could find nearby was a jar, so he placed the soul in there.

With this done, the greatest threat to his remaining family was eliminated. Exiting the fortress, he bid for one of the eagles to return him to the Golden Isles. However, while there was usually a response or acknowledgment, he did not receive one. He waited for days, occasionally trying and seeing if one would respond. Loss grew impatient, as he realized none of the eagles were coming. He decided that he would return home all the same.

Loss set about his task, taking parts from the bodies all around him. He assembled a great wyvern, his greatest creation yet, it flew through the air swifter than any of the eagles that he had ridden before, best of all it was loyal only to him. Ready to be home, he climbed atop it and set out.

As excited as he was to be home, it seems as if the same could not be said for his welcoming party. He had arrived in high hopes, having eliminated the last threat to his house and removing the remnants of the war with his father.

Instead, he was met with the cold gaze of his brother's elite guard to escort him to the great hall. It was a quiet trip, and Loss did not realize it, but he felt exhausted as if his robes were made of steel. As he approached the doors of the great halls, the weight grew heavier. He was not sure how long he was gone, but his eyes must have adjusted to the drab color pallet of the mortal realms. Everything else seemed so much brighter here. As the doors opened, the guards carefully watched him enter.

As he walked through into the great hall he spied his brother atop his throne, with his place next to him empty as usual. The members of the court all had solemn faces while some even looked aghast. The brightness inside of the hall was far worse than outside, and as soon as Loss stepped inside to make the walk to see his brother, the weight on his shoulders seemed to double. He slowly made his way, before giving a customary bow to his brother before he reported.

"Brother, I bring good tidings from the mortal realms, I have disposed of the last of the Black Soldiers" he beamed.

"How did you accomplish this, brother?" Argalev questioned. There was something off about his brother that Loss could not place.

"I saw to it myself. After the incident I felt it was fitting for me to take care of it personally."

"I see, and what ends did you go to in order to accomplish these goals?" Argalev's voice began to shake with frustration. "I will tell you what ends, you have violated the laws of men and gods and tampered with forces beyond our comprehension. The being that stands before me is not my brother, but a

monster similar to whatever it is that you rode in on. These actions cannot be ignored just because you provided a service to us. You must be punished.”

Loss attempted to open his mouth, but no words rang out. His brother spoke true.

“You have allowed the loss of your wife to consume you. You have become a shadow of what you once were, a shade who only can see what he has lost. Therefore, you shall become that loss. By my decree as the greatest of the gods, your name shall be known as Loss, now and forever. Any records, stories, or knowledge of you shall become changed by this. Your previous name shall cease to exist and will be forgotten to time, destined to be taken up by another who will bring that name justice. This I decree” Loss’ brother concluded his decree and it was made into reality, every memory he had of any other name faded from his mind.

“Furthermore, your punishment will befit the crimes you have committed. You will face the same torture you put others through. You will suffer in mind, body, and spirit, for a time unspecified. You will never adapt to this punishment, nor will it lessen. Your only respite will come when this is over. Your disregard for the lives and souls of the mortals we protect is befitting of this punishment. It is to be carried out immediately.”

With that final line Loss found himself swept away to the dungeons of the palace he called home. He was pulled into the room that would be his torture chamber for however long his brother decided. As he stripped off his garments, he realized that he was missing his book. That book could be devastating if it could fall into the wrong hands. At that moment, he remembered the ominous words of his late wife.

You will create a great shadow that will linger over the lands long after you depart.

He had not realized the weight those words held at the time, nor could he imagine how they would come to fruition.