
Lackaday

A collection of shitty dark stories

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Ambivalence

What a macabre land!

In the days of old, the world was shapeless, shrouded by deep gray fog. A realm of archtrees, crags and immortal dragons. Timeless land with an equally timeless projection. But then, there was flame and with the flame came disparity. Warmth and the cold in its absence, life and the death to crown it, light and the dark in the shadows it cast.

And from the dark, they came, hollow sprites with no purpose, and found souls within the flame. Newyn - The Augur of Death and his Bloodless Legion, Eiddil - The Lord of Sunlight and his faithful golden knights, Naife - The Fire Witch of Wylo and her daughters. And in a shadow by the flame, a frail, furtive man found a small, dark soul, so easily forgotten.

The pygmy shared his soul with the rest of the hollows and so mankind was born, under servitude to the gods. Though tiny, the soul, no matter how many times was it split, never halved in size.

With the might of the souls, they challenged the dragons. Eiddil's mighty bolts peeled away their immortal stone scales. The witches weaved great firestorms. Newyn unleashed a miasma of death and disease. And a scaleless dragon, a foul aberration in the eyes of his kin, betrayed his brothers, and the dragons were no more.

Thus began the Age of Flame, the time of gods. Centuries of prosperity, light and accord. Of course, the inhabitants of the land cared not for the fire while it burnt bright. Yet all flames are bound to wane and only the Dark shall remain. Yes indeed, nothing lasts forever. And the thought of end nibbled away at Eiddil's mind. It was no surprise then, when the disquieted god was the first to summon Newyn and Naife under an olden covenant, to combat the dark at the first sign of fires fading.

The wylean witches attempted to light a second Primordial Flame, but such endeavors were always destined to fail, much like any attempt to cheat the course of nature. And so in retaliation, foul flames scathed the land of Wylo, disfiguring everything in its wake. The Chaos Flame was born and Naife became the Bed of Demons, a horrid, grotesque creature.

When Newyn was confronted with the true nature of the Dark, there was little he could do to resist. Darkness lulled him into a deep slumber, filled with nightmares of a world destitute of fire, a

barren plane of shadows.

In his fear, Great Lord Eiddil bequeathed a shard of his soul to the mortal dragon and, as a last attempt to save his age, sacrificed his primordial soul to the fire, kindling it for a little longer and forever linking it to humanity.

Even the furtive man was met with an untimely end. His humanity went rampart, turning him into an unsightly beast. The beast gave birth to the Abyss, a slow and tenacious cancer on both the dark and the light. Abyss is the absence of light and dark, far darker than the Dark, a damp, mucous, deeply corrupting mass. Those who came into contact with it and lived to tell the tale claimed it felt like a thousand little creatures nibbling away at one's sanity.

As the fire fades, amongst the living are seen carriers of the Dark Brand, a curse denying them the only universal right - the right to death. Humans with little refuge and much consternation. Shunned by former friends, abandoned by their families and exiled from their homelands. The Brand knew well to pair a hole in the cadaver with a hole in the spirit.

Each time a passing was denied, the branded lost a part of themselves, slowly hollowing from the inside, with the only remedy being the humanity of others, their shard of the dark soul.

And so bonfires were lit, to ease the plight of the accursed. A female keeper was bound to tend to each of the fires. Over time, they lost sight, for to be able to truly see the nature of fire, one must perceive true darkness as well. And for the dark accursed, it was the fires what provided a familiar feel to the ones lacking a home.

When the fire fades, the very fabric of space and time wavers, with kingdoms centuries old colliding on a single landscape. Beasts scourge the land; the world decays and writhes in chaos. Yes, indeed, it did, until the time a chosen accursed undead left his prison in pilgrimage, to the land of the Great Lords. The wight defeated the mad scaleless dragon, Bed of Demons, even the slumbering Newyn, reuniting the Primordial souls with his own. In the kiln of the Primordial Flame, the undead champion bested the soulless husk of Eiddil and rekindled the flame using the powerful souls, burning and becoming the first Lord of Ash, a mindless protector of the flame.

The fire regained its strength and the three souls were bequeathed onto new beings. Yet the flames may never last forever and wane, much like the great souls. And so, many came after the first undead, either seeking to save the flame, usurping its power or perhaps letting it fade. For every usurper, for every dark lord, two adherents of Eiddil sought to rekindle the Primordial Flame. Some failed and only became cinders, while others became successors to the first Lord of Ash. For eons, the world was caught in a vicious cycle of life, death, rot and decay.

Perhaps it was destiny, that the cycle that was brought about by a sin would be undone by yet another sin. In the land to the far north, there lived a valiant giant. For eons, mankind and the giants were at odds. There is no soul that remembers why, but after so long, one may only ask if it still matters. The valiant giant opted to protect the northern people in a time of need and soon found himself their ruler. Not by might, but by virtue. Nevertheless, as it always with humans is, there were still ones who doubted him.

In an act to promote solidarity, he gave away the only two weapons lethal to him, a pair of great swords. One to the doubtful humans and the other to his dear friend in the ranks of men.

When he saw the Age of Fire falling apart yet again, he sought to kindle the flame in hopes of protecting the humans he ruled. Yet such act is forbidden, for only humans can kindle the flame. The giant was reduced to a charred carcass and from his sacrifice a new, separate flame was born. A cold, yet furious, profaned flame that never went out and only burnt men blazed his land, fueled by the humanity it felt stolen. And so, the land in the north was no more and the Primordial flame continued to fade. Only embers remained, just few enough for the world to crumble.

At the end of the world, in the soot of countless chosen accursed, one unkindled ash, unfit to kindle the flame, rose from his rotting coffin, at the ring of the bells marking the end of light. Collecting the primordial souls for one last time, the ash defeated all the mindless lords. And with the help of a blind firekeeper, betrayer to her cause, finally put out the Primordial Flame for good.

The light ended and the world was left in the grasp of mankind, a species born in darkness with the only light to seek within themselves. The great souls of lords melted into the Dark Soul, and the

soul bound itself to its owners, only echoing through their blood.

The Abyss froze and withered away, much like soot flies off in the wind. Perhaps a dark world was too cold for the vicious mass, or maybe its father's intents still echoed through the nothingness that was Abyss.

Thus began the Age of Dark, the time of men, with no gods to rule them. The world looked calm and silent, almost as if in peace with itself, indeed, it looked much like the Dark itself. But one day, tiny flames will dance among the dark sprites, a new light will be lit and the disparity will come once again.

Firekeepers' betrayal

And there were two.

In the Age of Flame, the firekeepers were women with a singular purpose - to tend to their bonfire and to tend to the bonfire's soul. They kept the fiery souls in their bosoms, much like a pregnant mother keeps her unborn child. So long as they protected their soul, the flame prevented their death.

In the beginning, there wasn't much competition for the role of firekeeper, yet all the women were somehow connected. A mute woman doomed to spend an eternity locked near a flame as a punishment. A knightess of honor with a disfigured face, who chose the fate of a firekeeper herself, to get away from those who ridiculed her pain. A mutated daughter of Naife, made firekeeper by her sister, who sought to prevent her from dying after she was struck by the Chaos Flame. Yet perhaps the most important firekeepers are the first and the last one.

Back when the fire was still burning bright and there was no reason for consternation, Eiddil's queen gave birth to his children. Eiddilon, the future god of war, Eiddelana, the royal moon guardian and much later, Gwenwyn, the youngest daughter. Gwenwyn was born blind, her eyes oozing with poison. The poison was burning her from the inside out and caused much pain to both her and the ones around her. As the princess got older, the torture only got worse until the day it seemed Gwenwyn would die. In his fear of losing her, Eiddil linked her to the Primordial Flame, thus creating the first firekeeper.

However, it didn't take long for him to realise his horrendous mistake. The pain only worsened and his rash act doomed her to be tormented forever. Tears turned into sobs and sobs into screams. And so, in a rare moment of her clarity, Eiddil tricked his daughter to avert her eyes. When she did so, he had her put under a spell to sleep through the pain forever. Around her resting place a city was built in secret, to protect her slumber till the end of time. Eiddil kept the destiny of Gwenwyn from his family, instead opting to claim the fateful day was her last. It would take eons until the truth of the Hidden City would be unearthed but the city itself would stay out of reach so long as there was flame, just as it was ordained.

And so it was that an order of firekeepers was created. The women there were raised for the sole purpose of being a firekeeper. Over time, through selection, the entire order became blind, in homage to the first firekeeper. The loss of sight allowed the firekeepers to attract the dark souls in humans seeking light. Much like moths fluttering towards a flame. No longer was it true that the mantle of firekeeper was permanent. Through a secret rite, the torch could be handed over. The former firekeeper was then led to true darkness, where she enjoyed a long-deserved sleep.

For centuries, the order was worshipped in dark times and ostracized in times of light, when there was little need for firekeepers. Of course, nothing lasts forever, and not even the order was exempt from this rule. When the valiant giant tried to link the flame, there was only one firekeeper left to tend to all the flames and no successor in sight. The firekeeper blindly fulfilled her duty for many years in solitude, until the day an unkindled

ash joined the shrine to rest at the bonfire. From then on, the firekeeper tended to the unkindled one, bound by an old prophecy.

The ash, despite having been dead for a long time, didn't fail to express his gratitude to the blind firekeeper, and so he gave her the very thing she has been missing, eyes. It was much more akin to a curse, rather than a gift. The eyes shew to the firekeeper things, she should never see, a dark world destitute of fire, a place born of betrayal.

It let her see, that the light of fire merely hid the rot, not removed it. The ash asked her to assist him in ending the flame, but the firekeeper was uncertain of her fate, especially should it entail such a foul betrayal. Nonetheless, the firekeeper agreed, bound by her duty to tend to the unkindled one and the darkness within her.

In the end, she put out the very flame she was supposed to protect and at the ash's side, she lead the world into a new age of darkness.

Man's folly

Behold the heir!

From the dark they came, meaningless hollow sprites, to attend the birth of disparity. And they found souls within the flame. Three great lords found three great souls, and in a shadow by the flame, a frail, furtive man found a small, dark soul. The gods sought to take control of the rest of the sprites, much to the man's dismay. The frail man had nothing but his tiny soul and yet, he decided to split it; to share it with the lesser sprites so they can combat the godly threat together. No matter how many times was the dark soul split, each fragment was identical to the original bestowed upon the furtive man. He knew that this was a way to slowly overpower the gods. The knife that cuts slowly and carefully, the knife that quietly slips between the ribs is the most dangerous one.

Of course, what would world be if everything went as it was ordained. His compeers let themselves get blinded by the light and forgot the man's words. The man was shunned and left his old domain to wander the world. He saw the world bloom and with it, the power of the gods. With each day, with each step taken, the man harbored greater and greater hatred towards everything. The men who let themselves be fooled by the gods, the gods for fooling men and the fickle balance of the two. He saw that he couldn't depend on others to meet his goals and so he decided to focus on himself and his deep anger. To gain more power, he developed a taste for flesh. He ate so much he bloated like a drowned pig and then softened to sludge. His humanity was deeply corrupted and dripping with hatred. It was so dense that it was tangible, a rare thing for the souls of men.

The sludge collected itself into a single place, hardened into a sarcophagus and laid in wait. Many years passed, his lair was covered by dirt. On the dirt, men built cities. The cities were destroyed and new ones built on their ruins. It was the same thing for centuries. But nothing lasts forever and the flame started to wane. For the first time in history, the fickle balance of gods was in danger. The scent of rot found its way to the old sarcophagus buried deep under a city. The scent meant an opportunity. The sarcophagus burst open and black mass spilled in the man's resting place. And from it he rose, the beast of man. It let out a horrible scream and the black mass started to boil and produce explosions. In just a moment, it swallowed the city far above, melting the buildings and turning those who survived into unsightly beasts. Witnesses say that looking at the mass was as if looking into a deep abyss, even though they knew the puddle they were looking at was very shallow. And so this deeply corrupting, unnerving mass was named Abyss.

From this lost city, it started to slowly spread to surroundings. First, it took the colors of the vegetation, then black spikes protruded from below to destabilize the ground and finally draw it into the boiling mass. The gods had nary a way to combat the Abyss. Any army that marched into the blackness never returned. Not even the Adherents of the Dark could stand it for too long. And yet, the Abyss was not meant to be what ends the world. The curse gives and the curse takes away. This time, it gave a poor chosen wight tasked with rekindling the Primordial Flame. Already imbued with the mighty of gods, the wight was approached by a moon god. The moon gods were the bastard children of

Eiddil, who in his fear, scattered them across the land. They were the most aligned with the interests of mankind; perhaps they felt betrayed. The moon god gave the wight a blessing of the moon and linked his life to that of the wight.

Thanks to the power and the blessing, the bearer of the curse made his way into the heart of the Abyss and confronted the beast of man. The battle was long and arduous, with the beast having the upper hand most of the time. But the soul of man can produce things most peculiar. In the times of greatest desperation, the men can cast away their boundaries and let their hearts become a cocktail of light and dark. This twisted transient marriage allows the man to tap into a power most forbidden - the black flame. A flame that produces no heat and nary a sliver of light, and yet, it can burrow deep into living flesh.

The flames caused a great pain to the beast of man and ate away at his carcass. It tried to struggle, but it was too late, the chosen undead shattered the beast into thousands of little shards that flew into the skies. Over time, these shards will settle and from them, enchanted soulless women will be born. They will be called Daughters of the Abyss and will seek men of great power. Armed with free will, perhaps they will corrupt the hearts of men they seek or tend to them. Maybe they will latch onto them, maybe they will rule them. Future holds many secrets indeed.

Shard's refute

Who am I?

A forgotten crypt beset by untended graves. The moon watches over the bones of those who lie there. Soft soil, eroded; it makes for a soft blanket. No soul out there and nary a plant. And yet, whimpers can be heard from the crypt. Ah yes, in there, she lies. A little more than a girl. Sealed in a small room with a cadaver. But no man hears her. Only the ravens.

And on this most auspicious of nights, the ravens listen. Perhaps it is not them, but their lady, Velka, the goddess of sin. She is not like the other gods, born of the Primordial Flame. Velka is born of men. And the other gods interest her none. It is only human to commit sin and indeed, Velka was very human. In silence, many black feathers fall around the crypt. With them, Velka arrives. To give her a chance to commit sin or choose not to do so. For everyone deserves that chance. A smooth hand touches the seal of the crypt. The stones start to waver and twist. Fragments fall onto the ground, their impact dampened by the soft soil. Soon, moonlight fills the unsealed crypt. The lady extends her arm towards the girl. Soon, they stand, eyes to eyes. Velka, who dons a long black feathery dress with a matching cape and the girl, in a plain antiquated garb. The goddess witnesses an immaculate blank slate, lingers for a moment, and vanishes with a feathery gust of wind. A faraway bell tolls.

Once again, the girl is alone in the dark. And the moon watches over her. She has nothing, not a smitheren. But she yearns to have something. She collects the black feathers dropped by the raven deity. The maiden sits on the ground, strips of her garments, and starts to weave the feathers into the garb. She is absorbed in thought, who knows how long it takes. One feather here, one feather there, one here, one there. The raven dress is finished. The girl doesn't feel cold anymore. Her feet are bare, but that troubles her not. Slowly, she leaves the untended graves. They are glad she is gone. Perhaps out of shame for their desolation.

For her, there seems to be no way but forward. Time slowly loses its meaning when one keeps walking straight ahead through a barren landscape. But it's never forever. Sunrise breaks the monotony. The sunrise reveals the nature, a forest. Why, such a nice place to walk into! Gentle breeze tucks the feathers and she quickly finds herself enamored by the forest. It offers solace, peace, and most importantly of all, color.

In the forest, there is a road. Merchants and priests travel through there from time to time. It leads into a nearby village. There isn't much commotion; it is in the very poorest region of the land to the east. The maiden walks into the village, where she is spotted by the children. The joyful pests want to play with her, but she doesn't know how. But it doesn't matter, she picks up the pace quickly. Soon, she is seen by the mother of the children. She notices the maiden is dirty and apart from her ravenly garb, scantily clad. The mother takes her inside, helps her to some clothes and allows her to clean herself. She tries to question her, but the girl can't offer her any answers. It is a chance encounter, but a welcome one. But every chance is brief, and maybe some are briefer than we would prefer.

The mother and her children weren't the only ones whose interest the girl piqued. Sadly, the others aren't endowed with motherly instincts or childlike innocence. For them, it is clear. The raven dress, the muddy face and a noticeable lack of footwear in tandem with her sudden appearance mean one thing. She must be an evil witch who has come to destroy them. They drag her away, ready to drown her in a cauldron filled to the brim with boiling water, just like every witch. The entire village goes into an uproar. The angry mob wants blood. They submerge her, and the world goes black. Sounds quickly fade; there is just pain, and darkness.

Limbo, emptiness and nothing. The void. The Abyss. Perhaps a dark spark could've been lit, but as all know, frailty of the weak disrupts the Dark. Reality becomes relevant once again as soldiers start killing the rioting villagers. The village burns and screams echo through the air. She is released from the cauldron. Torches are lit and thrown and shortly, the village is no more. Some prophecies do come true if we want them to.