

Dark Future Ch1: Disciple

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Disciple The room was just what he was expecting – white, pristine and so perfectly sterile. Just what you would think would be inside the monolithic headquarters of the Ashcroft Foundation. He found the light painful – it felt like it was burning something into his mind. Or burning something out of it. The door to the room opened and a woman entered. He looked at her through creased eyes – he was finding that squinting seemed to blot out some of the pain. She closed the door behind her and looked at him for a moment. He was surprised when she didn't have the now expected initial look of revulsion in her eyes as she appraised him. Her dark hair was cut short, resting just above her shoulders as she held herself with a degree of poise he hadn't seen in, well, a long time. She was dressed in a well-cut business suit – family must be well off he thought as she walked across, the sound of her heels clicking against the hard floor. She placed her briefcase down on the metal table that he was sitting at – he watched her delicate fingers manipulate the lock and spring the catches free. Her deep brown eyes looked at his, taking in the sight before her. She reached into the metal case and brought out a small device that was shaped like a pen. He watched her press the top of it and a small LED began to flash red. "I am Samantha Ardent," She said in what he took to be some sort of European accent. "I've been sent to discuss your latest assignment. However, before we start, let's get a few rudimentary details resolved shall we?" He watched her remove something from the briefcase – a thin and very flat sheet of Perspex. Her fingers danced across it and it came to life. "You are Eron Mitchell, correct?" He nodded. "And, in your own words, can you describe what your assignment was." "Assignment – you make it sound so...straight forward," Mitchell scoffed. He saw that she wasn't budging. "I had volunteered to take part in an undercover operation – part of the New Earth Government's attempt to infiltrate and understand the Rapine Storm in Southeast Asia." "Understand?" She asked. "Yeah – you know, if you understand your enemy then you can exploit that knowledge – find weaknesses, predict movements, that sort of thing." Mitchell explained, even though he suspected she already knew that. Everything is on the record. "However, how can you understand an army of unspeakable horrors?" "And you volunteered for this assignment?" Samantha asked. Mitchell nodded. "Yeah, yeah," he had this sort of sick desperation in his voice. "I... volunteered ." He paused for a moment. "You got a smoke in there?" He indicated towards the briefcase. Samantha opened it again and removed a packet of cigarettes and a lighter. He accepted them from her greedily and lit one. It was gone in under a minute. The second one lasted longer. "You know, they said to me with the right training and the right disguise that the Rapine Storm would accept me. They told me

that there would be some horrifying things that I'd have to do, but if I was careful I could avoid most of them. The ones I had to do were just the sacrifices that I would have to make in service for the NEG. Everything I did was going to be for a better world." He took another drag on the cigarette. "Is that how you still feel?" Samantha asked. Mitchell shook his head. "Typical fucking psychiatrist's question." He said, lighting up his third cigarette. "They didn't tell me about the rest of it but they had to know – the guys at Intel in the New Earth Government aren't idiots. You know, if they had told me everything then I would never have volunteered." She saw that he seemed to be calming down slightly. "Okay, well we'll get back to that." Samantha said, making a few notes on the e-pad in her hands. "Now, what happened to the others?" "The others," Mitchell looked away into the distance, almost as if he could see past the confines of the room. "Well, Medkowski died about three weeks in – we were hit by some NEG Mecha and the unit he was with was wiped out. Vaporised. I don't know what's happened to Celek." "When was the last time you saw Agent Celek?" Samantha asked Mitchell. He began to scratch his head and a faint trickle of blood flowed from the wound as his sharpened nails dug grooves into his sickly pale skin. "The last time I saw Celek was about a month ago. It was just before the assault on New Delhi. I barely recognised her – she looked so different, so happy – it was like someone had lit a fire inside her and she had embraced it. She was one of the leaders of the only purely human unit who were fully embraced by the Storm. They called themselves the Children of Chaos – a group who would suicidally throw themselves into a genocidal fury whenever the Storm wished them to." Mitchell commented, lighting up his fourth cigarette. "If you ever find Celek again, whatever she has become, she's lost to us now – she's beyond us." "So you believe that she has fully accepted the teachings of the Storm?" Samantha asked the question – anticipating Mitchell's response accurately. "It's not a question of whether you want to accept the teachings or not – it's a question of having to in order to survive." He spat back, giving her a glimpse of that mouthful of sinister looking teeth. "There's no way that anyone back here could understand – you might think you have a good handle on everything here, but the truth is you haven't got a clue." He finished the cigarette and slumped down on the desk, his head in his hands. "Everything is sanitised for your protection. Once you go out into that world it's just a one-way street – there's no way back." Mitchell said, shaking his head. "The last bastion of heaven lies abandoned and burning." "Why do you say that?" Samantha asked. "Because they will get there first – before us – and when we reach it they will have already destroyed it." He looked around the room – the white, sterile room "You wanna know how come the Rapine Storm move so fast?" Mitchell said. "It's because when they breed they swarm – they just consume everything in their path, like a plague of locusts." He began to laugh hysterically. "And, you know, it's funny, because they see us as a plague too – one that needs to be exterminated." "You asked me how I feel? Tattoos or some rite of passage I expected. Extreme piercing, body modification and scarification are something else entirely. My teeth are all filed sharp – I don't know how long it's been since I've seen a mirror, but I'm sure I'm not very human anymore." He was crying now, tears running down his face. "Not that I feel it anymore after the things I've done. I've helped exterminate entire villages and brutally tortured and murdered innocent people. I've eaten the flesh of my own kind – repeatedly and regularly. I've raped women to death. And you want to know

how I feel?" "They can correct the physical scars," she said. "With therapy we can help..." "Can you make me forget?" He interrupted, looking straight at her, making eye contact for only the second time in their interview. "Can you take away the memories and the nightmares?" Samantha watched him, observing the husk of what was once a proud man in the service of his government reduced to this. A quivering wreck, filled with fear and self-doubt. She opened her briefcase again – the next time he saw her hand, Samantha was holding a pistol and pointing it directly at him. "Thank you." He murmured. She adjusted her aim slightly and fired – the single shot striking his head and killing him instantly. The force of the close range shot knocked his body backwards, throwing him from the chair and to the cold floor beneath her feet. She stood up and looked at him. Apart from a few involuntary twitches, Eron Mitchell was dead. "The New Earth Government commends you on your service." Samantha muttered as she returned the pistol to her metallic briefcase. She picked up the tiny cell phone and made a call. "It's Ardent. I need a clean-up crew here." She said as she closed the lid of the briefcase and locked it again. "And we need to remove some elements of Agent Mitchell's operational report – it might deter NEG personnel from engaging in future undercover operations once it's published." Ending the call she took another glance at the body on the floor. Samantha opened the briefcase again and withdrew the pistol. Four more shots were discharged into the body on the floor. Better to be safe rather than sorry, she thought as she left the room.