

# **Infinite Genesis**

## **Bonus #3**

---

*Copyright © Kyle J. Durrant 2023*

*All Rights Reserved*

*These stories are works of fiction, based in a reality parallel to our own.*

*Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events, is purely coincidental.*

---

### **Midnight Shadow: Deal, Interrupted**

Another night, another fight.

It had become something of a routine for 24-year-old Dan Zhou – or as the people of Whitchester knew him: the Midnight Shadow. Every night, he donned his armour and hood, heading out into his city's seedier neighbourhoods to battle the quarter of super-gangs warring for absolute control.

Tonight, it was the sadistic Black Mask Gang on the receiving end of his attentions. As their name would imply, the men Dan battled wore black balaclavas to obscure their identities. That didn't stop Dan from hitting them as hard as he could.

Until a few minutes ago, this usually empty building, nestled beside the railway, had been the venue of an arms deal. Two nights ago, Midnight Shadow received a tip from a dealer working for the Knights of St George – another of Whitchester's gangs.

Now, the arms deal had become a gunfight. The product had become a real and present danger. Sellers – some unknowns from outside the city – and buyers – Dan's enemies, the Black Mask Gang – were both firing into the darkness. Bullets ricocheted off walls as Midnight Shadow darted from cover to cover, dashing out here and there to deliver a forceful punch to vulnerable criminals.

Fists weren't his only weapons, though. He had guns of his own, strapped to his thighs – now, however, was not the time to use them. The act of lining up his shots, and the resulting muzzle flash, would give away his location. His cape and hood, lined with Kevlar, could only protect him so much.

And the criminals had automatics.

*Can't let these out onto the streets, Dan told himself. Too many lives at risk. It would be all-out war.*

He lunged out of the shadows again, planting a punch in one gangster's gut. As the gun clattered on the floor, Dan followed with an uppercut, sending the criminal stumbling back into one of the weapons crates.

'Now just stay there and sleep well,' Midnight Shadow remarked, slipping away as the gunfire turned in his direction.

‘Idiots,’ a criminal snapped. One of the Black Mask Gang stepped into the light, revealing not a black balaclava but a red one. ‘Don’t shoot where you think he is; shoot where you think he’s going.’

‘Sharpshooter,’ said Midnight Shadow, putting a welcoming lilt into his voice despite the venom that lurked underneath. ‘I thought a few shots came close to hitting me.’

More gunfire, and Dan dived to a new area of cover. Amidst the hail of bullets, one did, in fact, land close to him.

‘The Faceless Man wants to kill you himself,’ Sharpshooter boomed, invoking the name of the Black Mask Gang’s mysterious leader, ‘but I’m sure he’ll forgive me if I bring you to him barely breathing.’

‘Yeah, well,’ Midnight Shadow replied, drawing his twin pistols, ‘I’d rather not see him tonight. Hey, how many shots do you think I can take whilst your men reload?’

‘Reload?’ No sooner was the word out of Sharpshooter’s mouth than the building was filled with the rattling of clips and cartridges being checked and changed.

It was a successful gamble on Midnight Shadow’s part. He had no idea whether any guns needed reloading, but he had been counting on his enemies not knowing, either.

He rose from his hiding place, guns ready, and took his shots. Rubber bullets flew towards the gangsters, striking hands and chests. One took a shot to the temple and went down screaming.

Two return shots sent Dan scrambling for cover again, both fired by Sharpshooter. One bounced off the post Dan had been hiding behind. The other skimmed his head – too close.

‘Rubber bullets?’ Sharpshooter laughed. ‘He was right. You are scared of killing someone.’

‘Scared?’ Dan reloaded his guns. ‘Not scared. Killing scum like you won’t solve anything. People will take your place. But locking you up? That sends a message.’

He rushed to a new spot of shadow-swathed cover as the criminals retrieved weapons and took aim. Again, Sharpshooter’s shots cut close, though still not close enough.

‘As for the rubber bullets...they may not kill, but they’re more useful than yours.’ Midnight Shadow sprang from cover, firing his guns in myriad directions. As Sharpshooter lined up another shot, the bullets hit their targets: the floor, walls, crates.

Bouncing off the surfaces, the rubber bullets ricocheted into the criminals, pelting them like hailstones.

Sharpshooter lost his focus, sending a bullet whizzing into the ceiling. And then Midnight Shadow was there, swinging the butt of his pistol into Sharpshooter’s head.

The villain fell and Midnight Shadow flowed into the other criminals, taking them down with well-placed kicks and punches. Crunches betrayed broken noses and hobbled knees; guns were kicked out of reach whilst the gangsters writhed on the floor.

‘No arms deals, no bruises,’ Dan remarked, holstering his weapons, suppressing his breathlessness. He eyed up the crate, now only half-full of weapons. He had to do something about this, too.

The unfortunate truth was that letting it end up in a police evidence locker meant it could easily end up on the streets regardless – most of the force was in the pockets of one gang or another. And that was assuming they got here before the gangsters recovered.

He hurried to gather up the weapons, forced to stamp on one of the criminal's hands to stop them from reclaiming their gun. Each weapon retrieved was tossed straight into the crate, clattering amongst the straw that had been used as packing material.

Once no weapons were left on the floor, he sealed the box of the weapons crate and started pushing it. Though hardly light, and though his muscles ached from the exertion of the gunfight, Dan succeeded in pushing it across the concrete floor of the empty building, back towards the door through which the dealers had carried it.

'Yeah...' he murmured. 'I see why it took more than one of you to carry this.'

He heard a shoe scuff the ground behind him; tensing every muscle, he waited a moment, recognising the slight change in air pressure at his back, then spun and caught his would-be assailant across the cheek with a punch.

Sharpshooter plummeted to the floor.

'Huh.' Dan turned back to the crate and continued pushing it out of the building. 'Didn't think you'd be the first one back up. Must have a metal cap under that mask or something, I suppose.' He shrugged, not truly fussed.

Sweat gathering under his hood, Dan succeeded in extricating the crate from the building. On the stones and uneven earth outside, it proved more difficult to move, but he dragged it several metres from the building, to a patch of loose pebbles. There, he stopped to dig around in his belt, locating a small flare.

'Bye-bye, guns,' he remarked, his grin obscured by his mask, igniting the flare. As he dropped it into the box, he broke into a run, putting as much space between himself and the conflagration about to form as possible.

Orange light bathed the building, the nearby road, and the railway tracks as the straw caught light, flames surging up from the container. The immediate inferno quickly claimed the box, too, and the weapons inside were reduced to heaps of melted metal and plastic, bullets exploding.

And the Midnight Shadow was gone, retreating into the gloom of Whitchester. There were still several hours until dawn; perhaps he'd go stir up trouble for one of the other gangs.