

# **Infinite Genesis**

## **Bonus #5**

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### **Midnight Shadow: Takeout**

My city has been overrun with gangs. Namely, four powerful gangs who have made Whitchester their playground, not caring who gets caught between them. Of course, it's not just their war that regular people get caught up in.

Protection rackets, robberies, executions, it all happens. I do what I can to stop them, but there's only one of me, and these gangs have their grip on every level of Whitchester.

Who am I? My name is Dan Zhou, but the people of this city know me as Midnight Shadow. Some call me a hero; others call me a vigilante. At the end of the day, though, I'm just a guy trying to do the right thing in a city dominated by wrongs.

Take the situation I'm currently in, for example.

There's a Chinese restaurant behind me with a smashed in window – that wasn't me – and an unconscious man in the doorway – that was me. I'm in the street outside, surrounded by half a dozen more men, all possessing certain commonalities of appearance with the one I've already taken down: shaved heads, St George's Crosses painted on their faces, and jogging bottoms.

They're called the Knights of St George, though they're as far from noble and chivalrous as you can get. Technically, they're one of the four gangs I mentioned, but they're more of a far-right political movement that's taken to crime to send their message.

So you can probably guess why one of them threw a brick through the window of the restaurant. And imagine the words they shouted at the owners – a lovely couple who have lived in Whitchester longer than the Knights have been a problem. I'd even say that they speak English better than most of these thugs I'm fighting.

Oh, yeah, did I mention that we're not just standing around? These guys want my head, because this is far from the first time I've gotten involved. Whether they're accosting Pride parades, trying to firebomb Mosques, or indulging in their other criminal proclivities, I can't just stand by and let them do it.

Doesn't help that I fit into one of the demographics they hate – not that they know that right now. Still, it means that of all the gangs in this city, I have a special disdain for the Knights.

One of them has a plank of wood that he's found somewhere, which he swings for my head. I duck, grab his arm, throw him over my shoulder. I don't hear the thud or the gasp for air, though, as I'm already avoiding another attack, this time from a knife aimed for my gut. Maybe my armour could take it, but it's not worth the risk, so I keep moving, flowing between the thugs.

The unconscious one was a lucky hit, taken by surprise when I first dropped onto the scene. A few hits while the others scrambled away and he was done. But then the others were charging me before I could draw my guns – loaded with rubber bullets – and disperse them. More than that, though, it turned out there were more of them around the corner.

Yeah, so I *thought* there were only three of them when I got involved. I took down the one who threw the brick, expected the others to either run or go down fast. Instead, they called out and four more racist ruffians appeared from around the corner.

And I haven't been able to properly take any of them down yet. They're chaotic, swinging without discipline, experienced street brawlers relying on numbers and brute force more than skill, but I'm one guy, and that means those numbers are working well for them.

Whenever I go for a tackle, one of them grabs my Kevlar cape; if I try to break an arm, a punch to the back makes me loosen my grip. I already know I'm going to have bruises after this.

Usually, I would have picked off a few more from afar. I thrive when I have stealth on my side, or my guns in my hands, but I failed to assess the situation properly. Honestly, I only have myself to blame – I shouldn't have let my emotions get the better of me.

If I run, though, any anger the Knights feel towards me will be delivered on the restaurant and its owners. So I keep fighting, keep evading, hoping to draw the thugs down the street, hoping the restaurant owners have called the police – even if they are corrupt.

'Just stay still,' one of the thugs snaps at me, throwing a punch that I catch and redirect, sending him into one of his colleagues.

'And let you punch me?' I jeer. 'I don't think so.'

Finally, I experience a small opening in the mêlée, lunging for one of the Knights, grabbing his arm, another hand on his shoulder, twisting around behind him. There's enough of an opening that I can apply pressure, twist, and hear the pop of his shoulder dislocating. I kick him forward, but even as he falls forward, screaming, the others are closing in again.

'Come on, fellas, can't we do this one at a time?' I ask.

'Kill him!' one of them commands. 'For the Voice of St George!'

Now there's a name I've heard a few times: the leader of the Knights, real identity unknown, but certainly the worst of the lot. He's the one who incites them to violence, who sets them against anyone who isn't like them. One day, I hope to get my hands on him, but no one's managed it yet. So until then...

I drive my fist into the painted face of one of the thugs, shattering his nose, sending him down to the road. As one of his comrades grabs my arm, I sweep my leg out, taking down another one. Finally, I'm getting some hits in.

'If I hit you guys hard enough, think it might knock some decency into you?' The attacks keep coming, and I dodge and deflect as best I can. 'Guess not.'

Are they tiring? If so, I hope they're tiring faster than I am; I can feel the sweat and heat gathering under my armour, around my eyes. But I can't show them that this fight is wearing me down.

'If any of you need a nap, I'm happy to help with that.'

I roll away from another punch, taking this brief moment of respite to count my foes. Down to two. Did someone run or have I taken down more than I realised?

Whatever.

Before they can close the distance again, I charge, leaping into one, knocking him into a lamppost, which rattles almost as much as his head. He drops, and I'm on the last one, dodging his wild swings, raising my fists, ready for some boxing – when he jabs at my face, I swipe it aside and slam my fist into his chest.

He staggers back, coughing, raises a hand. Not in threat, though. It's an entreaty: 'Let me get my breath back.'

I step close and swing anyway, clocking him across the jaw, and he drops.

Now, I let my fatigue show, panting, rolling my shoulders, wincing at the ache that's already creeping in. And then the sirens, finally. Enough to get rid of these thugs, even if they'll soon be back on the streets – damn it.

I walk to the door of the restaurant, nod to the owners, and they nod back at me.

'Thank you,' the woman says.

'It's what I'm here for,' I reply. 'Take care of yourselves.'

If I could, I'd help them with the window, but I know I'm needed elsewhere. Despite the exertion of the past few minutes, this is only the beginning of my night. There are more criminals who need to be stopped; more innocent people who need to be protected.