

Sins of the Father – Short Story Chapter 1

Short Story Rewrite 03: “Sins of the Father”

Short Story Rewrite (1504 Words):

1 Sin Eater

At just over three meters tall, the demon towered over its prey. Its naked, crimson-skinned body was lithe yet muscular, with twin curved horns crowning its brow, and a spike-coated, lizard-like tail swinging behind it.

However, this demon knew it had made a grave mistake and was about to pay the price. For the first time since crossing over from Hell onto the streets of London, it hesitated, realization dawning that it was the one being hunted this time. By choosing this seemingly innocent young man as its next meal, it had damned itself to an eternity of torment and suffering.

As it stood in the grimy, dimly lit London alleyway, meters away from its potential victim, the rational part of its brain desperately tried to tell it to cut its losses and run. There was no shame in that, was there? After all, it had already gorged itself on the body and soul of a defenceless drunkard just hours ago, and this new prey was a self-indulgent dessert after its grizzly feast.

They flinch. They always flinch! Why didn't he? the demon thought, confusion flashing across its blazing crimson eyes. Something was very wrong here.

The man didn't flinch. Not even once. Not even as his cheek was gouged open by the Demon's rending talons, his skin tearing away from the muscle underneath like cheap newspaper. This had never happened before, nobody ever fought back.

'Good evening, Barzael.' The man greeted the Demon, casually using its true name, ignoring the recent injury to his face. 'You've been busy around here lately, haven't you?'

No, impossible... Could he not be human...? Barzael realized in a moment of horror, staring balefully at the unconcerned-looking man who was now checking his wristwatch, his smile turning into a sigh as if his time were being wasted.

'Undocumented use of the Marble Arch Gateway is a serious crime. Except that you didn't use the Marble Arch to get here, did you?' The man said, his tone somewhat jovial despite the seriousness of the situation. 'Oh, and the truly appalling number of murders you've committed. Can't forget those, now, can we?'

Barzael's body bristled with barely contained rage. Who did this pathetic being think it was? *The pain I will bring to him... The sheep should not balk at the wolf when it is hungry.*

'I'm really sorry, I have somewhere to be by nine.' Warm blood was running down the man's shredded cheek. He tapped a finger impatiently against his watch, and a single drop fell, making a little splattering sound as it hit the watch face. 'Do you mind if we hurry this up?'

Without giving the demon time to process what was happening, the man held out his hand, which was emitting a dimly glowing, aquamarine-tinted smoke from the palm that coiled slowly around his outstretched fingers.

'Oh, and by the way, the name's Max. Tell your friends down below you ran into me. They'll understand,' came the now cocky voice of the man named Max, his hand wreathed in a thick cloud of the glowing smoke. Max wasn't fully human. He was a Sin Eater for the Supernatural Crimes Division¹ and had been personally hunting this demon from the very start.

'Want some free advice?' Max asked nonchalantly. 'Always watch the hands!'

Barzael's eyes flicked over to Max's hand, which waved to grab its attention, the smoke wafting back and forth in time with the motions. A split second later, the smoke condensed into six ethereal-looking Magnum revolver bullets, hovering in mid-air with faint wisps of the aquamarine smoke curling around them.

'Let me count your sins...' Max's voice came out as a hollow, disembodied groan. His eyes took on an eerie aquamarine glow, just like the smoke. With a sweeping motion of his arm, he launched all six bullets at Barzael, each intentionally grazing different parts of its body before dissipating back into smoke, as if he were taunting the creature.

Caught between fight or flight, Barzael turned its fear into anger, roaring with fury. It rushed towards Max, raising its gruesome talons, ready to strike.

Max sidestepped, watching as Barzael barrelled past him, collided with a restaurant dustbin at high speed, splitting it open on impact, scattering trash bags all over the alley.

‘Ouch, that looked like it hurt!’ Max taunted, his voice back to normal, watching as the demon shook its head, dazed, after smashing into the dustbin.

Max just stood there, patiently waiting for Barzael to regain its faculties. The thing with demons is that they practically hunt themselves; they thrash around in a frenzy of self-destruction, resulting in careless mistakes.

Raging, Barzael attacked Max again, lashing out with its lethal tail, striking the spiked tip towards Max’s face at blinding speed.

All Max had to do was tilt his head to the side to avoid the vicious lunge, smirking at the demon’s clumsy attempt on his life.

Caught in a blind rage, Barzael charged at Max a second time, not thinking straight enough to change its tactics. Raising its talons, it screamed with rage as it lashed out, but once again it failed to meet its mark as Max rolled to the side and the demonic talons sliced harmlessly through the air.

Max counterattacked while Barzael was momentarily off balance. He swung his fist, unleashing a punch that connected with its stomach, causing it to double over in pain and surprise. He followed up with a devastating uppercut that sent it crashing into one of the nearby alley walls, cracking the bricks and leaving a crumbling crater upon impact.

Everything went quiet after that. Even the noise of the traffic and the bustle that bled into the alley from the city streets outside seemed to fade.

Barzael stood up slowly, its breathing ragged from the assault. It opened its mouth wide to reveal multiple rows of shark-like teeth, harnessing the hell-bound flames within its body to create a roiling ball of fire in its throat. As the flames grew, they licked out from between its lips, building up to the critical point of release.

Max saw an opening to finish the fight and took it. Just as Barzael spat out the boiling mass of flame, he dived to the ground while conjuring up another set of ethereal bullets around his fingers and releasing them in a concentrated burst just before he hit the alley floor.

The last words Barzael heard before being torn to pieces by the bullets were, ‘Like I said, watch the hand!’ Gaping holes opened up all over its body, while chunks of burning flesh erupted from the fatal wounds. With its body no longer held together on the material plane by its otherworldly demonic energy, it began to crumble.

As he knelt by the rapidly disintegrating pile of ash and dust that was once the demon, Barzael, Max took out his smartphone and snapped a picture of the smouldering remains. Confirmation of their encounter. ‘Damn, that really hurt.’ He gingerly touched his fingers to the open wound on his cheek and winced. ‘Angela won’t be happy about having to stitch me up ... again.’

Max took a few further pictures of the scene for his report, watching the demonic ashes scatter and blow away, carried into the air by a stiff breeze, then speed-dialled the SCD, giving his location and waited for backup to arrive.

As he waited for the backup he should have called in before engaging the demon, Max contemplated the whole situation. This demon hadn’t crossed over into London via the Marble Arch gateway, and the SCD hadn’t detected any other active gateways in the city recently. This was a problem. If demons were able to cross over unchecked, it would cause mass panic, not to mention more indiscriminate killing.

Ten minutes later an unmarked black car appeared, and a lone figure stepped out and greeted him with a slight nod, which he returned respectfully.

‘Officer Delaware,’ came the laconic voice of Captain Ezekiel Crowe, Max’s superior in the SCD, a tall, lanky man who towered above most people. ‘Making another mess of our fair streets I see.’

‘Captain, you didn’t need to come all the way out here for this,’ Max said, expecting a reprimand for taking out a demon alone.

‘It was on my way home, and considering it’s you, let’s just say I thought I should take a personal interest.’ Captain Crowe laughed softly before noticing the wound on Max’s face. ‘Angela isn’t going to be happy about that,’ he added with a small knowing smile, patting him on the shoulder in a kindly manner. ‘I wouldn’t want to be you right now. Good luck. Now get out of here.’

Max let out a deep sigh of resignation as he turned to leave the alley. He was in big trouble.

Chapter End

¹ *The Supernatural Crimes Division (SCD) is the secretive arm of the London Police which deals with otherworldly beings and crimes connected with them.*