

OC Writing Tournament Round 1: Lier vs. Gregor/Gorger

A lone car pulled up to the decrepit, yet still, imposing Paxton Estate, its headlights briefly illuminating the gothic mansion's weather beaten exterior. Four men exited the vehicle, one taking the lead, two others dragging a somewhat comatose fourth after them, making their way up the steps to the entrance of the building as quickly and as silently as possible. Nonetheless, their steps were raucous, hurried. Though they tried to hide it, unease emanated from the trio. Only one was to remain here, only one was meant to fight.

They swept through the darkened halls, scanning their surroundings for any movement whatsoever. Then, suddenly the lead man stopped, surveying the area for a time before casting a brief glance back at the others. "Here." The two men dropped their captive to the floor, recoiling for several steps before he had even managed to struggle onto his hands and feet. The lead man approached the battered Judicator slowly, producing a syringe from his pocket. "Well, Mr. Lier," he said, scanning for a vein before jabbing into the Judicator's neck, ignoring the grunt of pain from Lier. "Looks like you'll be having a great time over the next few hours and I wouldn't want you to be at a disadvantage. This'll clear out most of the neurotoxin from your body in the next few minutes. That way you'll be able to stand a chance against him."

Lier looked at the man slowly, the effort of lifting his head proof that whatever he'd been injected with was working. "When I get out of this..."

The man laughed, pocketing the syringe. "Save your energy, you'll need it, heard your opponent is pretty nasty. Anyway, we've got to run." The man took a few steps down the hallway, motioning at the others to follow him before bending over to place a bundle on the ground. "Here's your things. By the way, nice fuckin' guns man. I'm tempted to come back here when this is over and get 'em, seeing as you won't be needin' them anymore. Oh, and, don't worry about me, although I won't be watching personally, I've got it recording at home." Lier looked to where the man was pointing, seeing the camera hidden in the shadows. The man began laughing heartily, as though he'd heard a good joke, and then sauntered away down the hallway.

Lier could feel the anger and frustration burning inside him, threatening to overwhelm his rational mind as he struggled to bring himself to his feet. When that failed he did the next thing his mind could think of, scream, which he did. Even as his vision clouded he could sense the strength returning to his limbs. Then everything went dark.

Lier awoke with a start, clambering to his feet as he scanned the hallway for the men but to his great lament the men had disappeared. Myriad thoughts sprang into existence with the revelation of this information. *Gods, what the hell happened to me? How long was I out?*

It was then that Lier finally noticed the bundle on the ground a few feet away. He lunged for it, half of his still foggy mind screaming at him to get the weapons, to obtain the tools with which he could defend himself. Tearing at the thick cloth Lier finally managed to extract the pistols, the feel of their grip bringing his mind some solace. He pocketed the rest of the clips and threw the cloth to the floor, looking at the camera, his

features emitting a wrathful severity that filled the viewers at the other end somewhat disconcerted. With one lightening-quick motion Lier brought the pistol to bear and opened fire, destroying the camera utterly.

It was then, as Lier stood there in the hallway, listening to the sound of the discharge echo through the empty mansion that he heard a frightful shriek. For a moment, Lier's rational mind told him to head back the way he'd come before he realized that he had no idea where he was; he stood in the middle of a four-hallway intersection that seemed to go on for miles. The second howl decided it; he needed to know what was going on here, even if it was what those sick bastards wanted.

Lier followed the darkened hallway to his right, judging from the occasional screams where the sound was coming from; somehow he knew he was getting closer. Eventually, he came to a colossal doorway; one of the two oak doors was slightly unhinged and rotted through, allowing for a fist-sized hole from which a patch of moonlight shone through. Lier moved towards the gap, peering inside as another howl rang through. *There is definitely something in there.*

Lier could see the forms of several men in black suits, similar to the ones who had brought him here. They were standing over a pale man wearing a thin, slightly dirtied, white t-shirt. One of them was speaking something to the others in hushed tones. From the looks of it, the pale man was suffering from the same affliction that Lier had only recently suffered from. Unconsciously, Lier's grip on his weapons tightened as his anger at not only his but this other man's treatment came to light. Lier looked up into a cobwebbed section of the ceiling, spotting the faint red illumination that betrayed the location of yet another camera made him even angrier. *The sick bastards.*

As Lier contemplated kicking the door in and shooting the pale man's tormentors something unexpected happened; the man on the ground let out a bone-chilling cry, his hands clutching his head as he rolled on the ground, writhing in what appeared to be agony. Then, Lier could sense another presence in the room. The suits were suddenly frozen in place, some still wearing their stupid grins as they looked right at Lier. Lier saw none of this; he was too preoccupied by the form that had materialized in front of his line of sight. With a start, he fell back from the doorway, nearly shooting himself in the process of getting as far away from the door as possible.

The sounds of laughter and jeering that had been coming from the room were replaced with cries of horror and pain worse than those of the pale man's. Still on his back, Lier scrambled backwards, not even bothering to get to his feet as a wholly different sound began; one of almost satanic laughter that absolutely dripped with malevolence. "So I've heard you all like games. We'll you're in luck, I *love* games. Let's play!" There was a wet noise followed by a disturbingly loud gurgle and the next thing Lier knew someone had been thrown through the doorway minus his left arm and his head, shattering the rotted oak doors to splinters.

By this time, Lier was on his feet and running down the length of the hallway, semi aware that he was being followed by a trio of men, one of whom was currently carrying the severed head in one hand and a sinister looking blade in the other. A quick glance over his shoulder lent him a better view of his pursuers; two of the men and the head were the ones he'd seen around that man on the floor but that murderous psychopath chasing after them was something different altogether; his hair was short, nigh nonexistent.

There was another scream as the thing grabbed a suit by the collar, yanking the man backwards in mid-stride before plunging its knife through the man's back. Lier shuddered, noticing how the pale being's face contorted in what seemed to be unadulterated bliss as the man's lifeblood sprayed over him, drenching his already stained shirt a deep crimson. What shocked Lier most was the thing's tenacity; while it's wiry appearance suggested malnutrition and frailty its strength was astonishing.

A wave of terror ran down the length of the Judicator's spine, *what the hell is this thing?* Of course, Lier's more rational mind had already been working the answer to that question and he believed he'd come up with a suitable answer, no matter how much he disliked it. There'd been scattered files floating around the Judicariate offices for quite some time now, popping up sporadically, never enough to warrant a full Judicariate investigation but unsettling nonetheless. Lier had followed up with these reports out of curiosity, finding what could only be described as a disturbing 'technique' to the horrific slayings. Rumor began to precede any of the said reports and before long Lier had disregarded them like most of his peers. Now he was wishing he'd paid closer attention.

Lier came to an intersection; there were two long hallways; one in front of him and another to his immediate right as well as what looked to be an entrance hall, without wasting any time Lier took a left, noting that the last suit stayed right behind him, screaming incoherently, the monster undoubtedly right behind. Lier ran up the ornate staircase, absentmindedly wondering if the sagging stairs could support his weight. As he ascended the stairs one of the steps gave in, a large portion breaking off and taking his leg with it. Cursing, Lier rolled onto his back, taking aim with one of his pistols. *This bastard wants me? Well, I'm going to cost you.* To Lier's surprise and relief he found no one. Not the suit and more importantly, not the thing that he'd seen killed two people in about as many seconds, the thing that went by the name Gorger.

Taking advantage of this unexpected reprieve, Lier worked his leg out of the hole in the floor, trying not to impale it on any of the jagged strips of wood. Meanwhile, he scanned the area, trying to find not only Gorger but also that last suit; it didn't take long to find him, though Lier was in for a very unpleasant surprise. As the Judicator got to his feet, catching his breath from the chase, he caught a glimpse of the last suit leaning out from behind a statue, hands held high. Lier immediately aimed his pistol at the man, struggling to unholster the other. "Stay where you are, NOW!"

The suit shook his head, "I'm unarmed, don't shoot!" he kept walking.

Lier punched the red symbol next to his weapon's safety, taking a slight bit of comfort as his pistol's beams shone red against the approaching man's forehead. "Take another step and I'll gekking kill you!"

Apparently realizing that Lier was serious, the man stopped just at the edge of the stairs, "Listen buddy, that freak is still out there and I'm sure as hell more afraid of Gorger than I am you. Now why don't I let you co-

Lier cut him off, "What did you just say?"

He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, as though testing his limbs as he shook his head. "What?"

Lier felt his face screw up into a snarl. "Listen buddy, I don't know who you are but I trust you about as much as I trust that thing that killed your two friends back there." In truth, though, Lier had a vague recollection of the man's face, almost as though he'd seen the man somewhere before.

The man's features broke into a dark smirk and he began to laugh maniacally. "Well, that's good to know Lier, trusting others is foolish. The man began making his way up the stairway, in a menacing yet almost nonchalant manner.

For a moment Lier was frozen, the man's face had shifted to an altogether different visage, one that belonged to his friend and partner, Macharius 'Mac' Golsiev. Lier looked on in stunned confusion as his friend approached him, his slicked back hair suddenly replacing the body's previous blond curls. Lier found himself transfixed, wondering to himself how it was physically possible for someone to grow that much muscle mass in the blink of an eye. The man standing not ten feet away seemed a perfect replica of Macharius with one exception; his eyes. They were pits of black, soulless vortices that seemed to reek of depredation and wrongness; it was then that Lier finally understood. Taking aim, Lier fired both pistols at the man's head, emptying round after round into the deformed caricature of his friend's face.

In the split second before the man died Lier saw his face return to normal; surprise, fear and anguish etched into his features as he suddenly awakened to a harsh and unfair reality for the last time. However, the mind blowing realities of what had just happened persisted, with or without the man's survival and now Lier had to face them; Gorger had abandoned his host, deciding to take the fight directly to Lier.

Gorger slashed at Lier, arm extending inexplicably to slash at the Judicator's arm with inhuman speed and power. Lier was lucky; as he reflexively ducked from the blow he tripped, falling to the floor while maintaining his fire, Gorger's slash catching air. Several rounds found their mark; tearing holes throughout Gorger's slender frame, blood staining his white shirt as the high-velocity rounds tore through flesh.

As Lier struggled to scramble up the steps, maintain a constant stream of fire, and reload his spent pistol simultaneously. To Lier's dismay, his hits seemingly had no effect; Gorger just laughed maniacally, dodging rest of the Judicator's rounds effortlessly, tossing the occasional taunt Lier's way.

Gorger, finally bored with toying around, sprang at the Judicator with extraordinary speed, grabbing Lier by the throat with one hand, raising him off his feet. "Hmmm... looks like you managed to get me pretty good right there, nice try. Gorger clawed Lier's chest, opening five deep, long gashes before throwing the Judicator down the steps.

Lier screamed louder than he'd ever screamed before, the shock and severity of his wound instantly taking effect. A dizzying wave of pain assaulted Lier's consciousness as he struggled to get to his feet, realizing with some small amount of comfort that he had managed to hold onto both weapons.

Gorger stood at the top of the staircase for a long while, examining his chest as his wounds began to close, turning towards Lier so that his victim could witness the impossible sight. "You see, I can't die. I'm not really even real if you think about it. So why don't you just give up and accept your death? I promise I'll kill those lazy bastards who set you up to this." Lier strained his eyes up towards Gorger's form as the monster's arm shot out, impaling a well-hidden camera that had been hidden in a chandelier, shaking his head. "You know, I think they thought that it was safe there, hidden. Just like they think they're safe," Gorger moved towards Lier, taking slow, deliberate steps down the staircase, "you want to know a secret, Judicator? They're wrong." Lier's vision

finally cleared enough for him to get a decent sight and he opened fire, spraying the area with both pistols as he clambered to his feet, nearly fainting from the pain and exertion.

Gorger moved down the steps with an ethereal grace, essentially floating down to the injured Judicator. As he ran, he unsheathed his blade, rearing to make the final, gratifying blow when something completely unexpected happened; a pale figure appeared in the hallway entrance; it was Gregor, his useless host. Gregor dove towards the Judicator, tackling him to the ground as swiftly as he'd appeared. Gorger couldn't believe it, *the fool! Trying to kill yourself again?* Pirouetting towards the downed pair Gorger placed a hand on Gregor, throwing him back against a winged statue of Hieronus whilst cursing his name aloud.

Lier had used the Gregor's diversion to regain his footing and start ascending the stairs once again. However, Gorger had other plans for the Judicator, he easily caught up to Lier and with a quick jab to the neck floored the battered man, emitting a sinister chuckle as he picked Lier up off the ground again, slapping Lier back into consciousness. "Up and at 'em, Mr. Lier, you don't have much time left. I'd hate for you to waste it sleeping." As Lier stared through his fogged vision he saw Gorger's sinister eyes, wondering if that horrid blackness was what awaited him on the other side. Gorger raised his blade menacingly, "only if you're lucky, Judicator."

A single blast sounded and Lier was dropped to the steps, gasping as air rushed back through his throat. Behind Gorger stood Gregor, holding one of Lier's pistols with both shaky hands; the red tracer trained right on the fist-sized hole in Gorger's back.

Gorger turned slowly, his facial expression simultaneously filled with surprise, anger, and dread. Gorger rushed towards Gregor but it was too late, Gregor put the gun to his temple and fired, spraying the golden statue with gore. Gorger let out a earsplitting shriek, hands clawing at his head as he fell to his knees in anguish.

Sensing an opening, Lier brought his other pistol up, emptying it into Gorger's slim form. The Judicator's aim stayed true, round after round impacted into Gorger's body, ripping it to pieces. Lier didn't wait for the thing to die, he ran for it, adrenaline fueling his much abused body as he sprinted down the atrium's main hallway, stopping only for his other pistol as he passed by the pale man's gruesome corpse. As he pounded out of the mansion, out into the estate grounds he frantically searched for a car. *The other group never made it out of here; there should still be a car here.*

Just as he was about to give up and find a place to lie down and die Lier spotted the car, hidden behind an overgrown hedge and a portion of what had seemed to be a gatehouse. After shooting the window in, Lier scanned the car for the key; luck seemed to be on his side, he found the keys in the glove compartment and quickly started the car, racing out down the winding road, never once looking back.