

Shadows of the Past

ein englisches Intime, editiert von Kim Schneider;

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Teil 2

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The Host

Finally, the destination is close! The big group lights on the flight platforms of the michaelitic Himmel. Some Engel stagger with exhaustion, to be lead away by considerate monks.

The great Himmel is an astonishing piece of architecture. Gothic elements of all size, carefully arranged in a mass of shimmering white and gold ornaments are to be seen everywhere. The bright sun sparkles off bright surfaces, stained glass windows and fluttering banners. Evidently, even here, in the Himmel above the constant clouds, everyone is hustling with the preparations for the celebration to follow. You can see the order's colours - gold or an orange-ish yellow - everywhere. Together with the sign of the Order, Heavenly Key and Corona it can rarely be overseen.

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All of the Engel are led towards the cellae under the crown of the Himmel. Prepare yourself, rest, eat. The monks will come to prepare you after sunset. New garments will be brought, and you are all advised to clean themselves and bathe.

The cella is big enough for six Engel, with cushioned resting stools for all.

The Engel of the new host arrive bit by bit, with the curious Raphaelite being first. She already sits on the stool, carefully preening her wings, as the others enter. Her small satchel lies beside, the contents spread out in order to her feet. She rubs an aromatic ointment into a sore spot of the tender skin underneath her feathers of the right wing.

*

"I greet you sister." Calahel enters the room, along with his luggage and armament. His latin is clear and his voice sounds melodic, his mood seems to be a mixture of curiosity and excitement. It is clear that this is a very young Engel. His black eyes examine the entire room and finally he manages to enter and unload his stuff into a corner.

"My name is Calahel." he says, approaching to the Raphaelite.

She looks up, rises and offers a little bow, hands on her knees. "I'm Phinael, of the Raphaelites." She curiously glances at him, then, suddenly, her face splits in a delighted smile. "That was you on the flight! You winked at me!" She claps her small hands to her mouth and giggles. "And you're a Raguelite," she completes, after she sobers up quickly. Glancing around, she seats herself on the stool. "Have you seen the others, yet?" She has got a curious little accent. Her words are delicately pronounced, sometimes a bit overstressed.

Blowing away a wayward strand of coppery red hair, she undoes her bun to brush the long curls.

"You'd better sit," she advises Calahel. "It'll become crowded in here when the others enter." She rustles her wings for demonstration, beams at him and starts to wind up her long hair in quick, routined motions. Then she starts unpacking the rest of her satchel to sort and examine the contents.

"No, I'm afraid I don't know anything about them yet. I'm curious to see them, but we'll simply have to wait I guess..." He walks back to his luggage and puts a small tiny metal

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box with coloured buttons on it into his bag, closing it again with the strings. Then he takes the heavy looking, dark metalish shimmering shoulderplate down and puts it next to the lance.

He yawns a bit and finally rests himself on the stool next to the smaller Engel. "You'd been in a hurry when I saw you on the flight, what was up?"

*

The destination is readily apparent, a Himmel jutting up from the clouds. As Egriel approaches closer, he was able to recognize the icons of the Michaelite order placed at key points of the structure. Landing on one of the numerous flight platforms, he pauses to admire the architecture. Shortly, a monk indicates for him to follow. Somewhat exhausted, Egriel was ready for a respite. With a brief shrug, he trails behind the departing monk, observing any murals as he passes by.

*

"I wasn't in a hurry," she says with great dignity, "I wanted to get back to the main group. You can never tell. Probably the same bullies who'd nearly singed me would drop out of the sky just that moment. That would've been my sort of luck." She looks a bit irritated before starting to throw things into her satchel.

"But you don't expect anything else about those Gabrielites these days, do you?" The question seems to be rhetoric. She doesn't pay attention to any possible answers, either.

Finally, she grumbles, "I do hope none of them will be in this host."

*

In the mid of the whole "swarm" of Gabrielites Carniel lands with a little enthusiastic smile on his lips. Now, that he need not concentrate any more on the flight, he watches the Himmel of the Michaelites and tries to stifle his feeling of mistrust. That was something completely new to him. Out of his beloved Nürnberg, in the midst of so many other Engels, Monachs, Begines and Templers he feels a bit lost. But he was a Gabrielite! One of those, chosen to fight for God! Carniel tightens up his clothes, touches his Flamesword and then.. he feels save and secure.

He nods to those he know and follows the monk who should bring him into the cella of his new host.

Finally, he enters the cella quietly and looks at the others. For a moment he stands absolutly still, then suddenly he punches his right fist against his left shoulder and nearly shouts out "Carniel! Gabrielite!".. He seems not to wait for the others to answer and moves into one of the corners of the room.

*

"I welcome you, brother." Calahel is a bit shocked by the way the Gabrielit announces himself. This militaric drill, it seems a bit strange to him, although he himself had a strict education, too. Finally he was the one Engel that would fight side to side with the Gabrielit

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in the front of the host.

"My name is Calahel, and this is our sister Phinael." He waves into her direction and then looks back to the black-clad Engel. A bit insecure, not knowing how to, he finally says: "Why don't you come over to us, have a seat, the flight was long and exhausting, even from Nürnberg."

*

As Carniel has reached his corner and while Calahel has started to speak, suddenly, in his corner, Carniel draws his gabrielitic flamesword. Then, suddenly, the flames are springing out of the blade and Carniel lowers his head, staring into them, void of emotion. As Calahel ends his question, Carniel jerks and the flames die, spluttering. "errh... did you say anything?", he speaks softly. Carniel seems to be a bit ashamed of this situation.

"Uh... Yeah." Calahel is surprised and shocked at the same time. It is indeed not so funny watching a Gabrielite wield his deadly flamesword in such a small room. "I - I told you my name, and the name of your sister. I am Calahel, this is Phinael. And I invited you to sit over here, with us. What was that?!" He lifts his right eyebrow.

*

Phinael, a bit startled, starts to rise, then, slowly lowers herself back to her stool. Her wings start to tremble slightly. With the hiss of the flames of the Gabrielite's sword, she draws herself back, tightening her wings around her like a protective cloak.

After the black-clad Engel is willing to notice her, she nods at him shily and fumbles with the hem of her skirt. Without a word and even without a greeting, she quickly jumps to her feet and leaves the cella. She is a bit pale, even more than usual, and her wings rustle softly, as the door falls shut behind her.

*

Phinael stops beside the door, leaning against the wall and interlacing her trembling fingers in her lap. There she stands and silently waits for the other members of her new host - like a silent guardian.

She nods at an entering Urielite. As the doors swing open, the wave of heat from the Gabrielite's flamesword passes through the opening. Even the newly entering Urielite notices the strange warmth in the cella.

*

"Greetings sisters and brothers", Ronariel shouts as he enters the room where the other Engel already have arrived. He looks for a free place near the wall and takes a moment to put down his luggage, the bow, arrows and his short sword. After that Ronariel sits down and takes a look around towards the other Engel, his dark eyes seeming to stare on the others as he takes a look at them. At the same time Ronariel seems to be very uncomfortable. It takes a while, but then he calms down and his face looks a bit more relaxed.

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*

Egriel, examining a mural, nearly bumps into the monk that guides him, who has stopped and is now pointing to a door. The door has a red-haired Engel standing next to it, as if on guard.

Thanking the monk, Egriel approaches the Engel. Upon closer inspection, he notes the slight tremble from her hands. *She must be nervous about the oncoming ceremony*, he thinks. With a slight smile on his face, he speaks.

"Greetings.", the Ramielite's voice is quiet and his Latin articulate, "It appears that I shall be part of your host." He nods, "They call me Egriel of the Ramielite order."

The red-haired Engel takes a deep breath. "I'm Phinael, of the Raphaelites." She bows to the other Engel. "The rest is inside, but we still await the Michaelite." She gazes at the closed door as if considering something, then opening it. A wave of warm air sweeps over Egriel's face, and the Raphaelite observes his reaction.

For those inside, the door opens, held by Phinael. It reveals a Ramielite, standing in the doorway.

A mild look of surprise sweeps over Egriel's face as the heat washes over him, followed by several greetings from the other Engel. Peering slowly inside, his voice carries into the room, "Well, I certainly know which one of you is a Gabrielite."

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After Ronariel takes a deep breath he begins to look where this warmth is coming from and then he looks towards the Gabrielite and speaks to him. "Excuse me brother, but is there any danger you sense? Or is the temperature in this room not suitable for a Gabrielite?" He speaks the last sentence with a grin on his face.

After that Ronariel notices that the door opens again and the Ramielite enters the room with his greetings. Ronariel looks at him and with and says with a loud voice: "Greetings as well, brother Egriel from the Ramielites, I am Ronariel of the Urielites."

"I greet the two of you." Calahel waves slightly with his hands and examines the two new Engel. His face shows a friendly grin and he seems calm and self-assured, balancing artistically on the stool. "My name is Calahel." He nods at the two other Engel and then looks to the Gabrielite, curious about his answer. He would like to help his brother, but he doesn't know how to without falling for a sin.

Phinael pops in her head as well and gazes towards Carniel.

"Are you all right again? Or do you still want to roast us?" She frowns at him, popping an inquisitive wingtip into the room as if to test the temperature. Shaking her feathers, she slides past Egriel and settles on her stool, still keeping an eye at Carniel and his sword. "Put that thing away. If the Michaelite sees you like that you'll get brushed. All of us will, and I don't want to. Besides, I didn't do anything to deserve that." She gazes to the other Engel for assistance. "Right?"

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Egriel shrugs, uncertain to what occurred before his arrival. As the flames die off, he props open the door to let the heat out before entering the room, nodding to each of the

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Engel, and then taking a seat. He carries very little with him, save for a small satchel and a rather simple-looking dagger.

"Uhm.. sorry Phinael. I did not meant to make you feel nervous or something...", Carniel mumbles. Then with greater force in his voice: "I also don't want us to be brushed ok? I simply did not thought on the cause, that you are not as resistant against fire like we are. It will not happen again.". He is moving to one of the stools to perch on. There he sits quietly until the Michaelite arrives. As Thommariel enters and greets the host Carniel only says "Greetings, Carniel.. from the Gabrielites."

*

Thommariel enters and nods to the other Engel "Hello brethren and sisters". He sits down so he can watch the other Engel, totally oblivious to what happened just moments before.

"My name ist Calahel, at your service." Calahel nods into Thommariel's direction.

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One thing is clear. Their leader-to-be is not that talkative as Calahel expected, or hoped him to be... He feels a bit uncomfortable, quite normal with such an undefined situation. He slips jerkily on his stool and examines the whole cella once more.

*

Phinael nods graceful to the Michaelite. "Phinael, from the Order of the Raphaelites." She eyes the new arrival thoughtfully, her lower lip between her teeth, a slight frown on her face.

Then, she slowly turns back to her little satchel and starts sorting things in it. She starts preening her wings carefully, looking up suddenly and beaming at the Michaelite. "Uh, you do have a name, do you?" She smiles, not embarassed or nervous, it is a simple, innocent smile at the new Engel.

Egriel nods to the Michaelite, "Egriel of the Ramielites." He continues, amused, "And am I to address you as 'Michaelite', or do you have a more definitive name?"

Thommariel stands up and smiles gently "My name is Thommariel of the Michaelites. It is an honor to meet you". He looks to Egriel, still smiling "I hope that name is definitive enough". He walks around slowly and begins to speak with a more powerful voice "So we will fight together against the enemies of the Angelic Church and the enemies of the One! I hope our first mission will come as soon as possible after our First Flight!".

Slowly he walks back to his place and sits down again, watching the other Engel.

Phinael nods slowly. "Well spoken," she says softly and continues to run her hands slowly through her feathers. Through her wings, she observes the other Engel for their reaction. She adds, a bit louder: "Maybe we should all rest before the monachs come to lead us to the cathedral. It will be a very long night."

Thommariel nods to Phinael, "Yes, Phinael is right. We all should rest now!" He kneels

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down, closes his eyes and starts to pray "God, we are Engel, we are here to bring Your word to mankind...".

*

Nodding solemnly to Thommariel's speech and prayer, Egriel positions himself into a better resting posture. Now at his journey's end, he feels the fatigue weigh down upon him. Yes, some rest would be most welcome.

*

After the prayer, Phinael rises and sighs heavily. "I'll clean myself and will get dressed for the ceremony. Before meditation." She looks at the Michaelite and takes up the fresh, ceremonial and richly embroidered skirt that was lying beside every stool of every Engel here.

"Thommariel, may I?"

Thommariel nods, smiling to Phinael "Of course".

Phinael quietly leaves the room, looking towards the other Engel to accompany her.

Thommariel stands up, takes his skirt, looks for a moment at the other Engel and then follows Phinael.

Although a little reluctant at first (Just when I get comfortable, he silently grumbles), he hops off the stool, scoops up his skirt, and silently pads after Thommariel and Phinael.

As the whole host is moving out, Carniel takes a look at Thommariel and Phinael raising one eyebrow slightly but says nothing So.. this will be our Leader.. the one who we all should trust and who gives the orders... mh'. He takes his ceremonial robe and follows the rest silently.

A bit relieved Calahel drops from the stool and follows the other Engel, to the enormous washing halls. Everything here in the center of the Angelic Church is so overwhelming it is hard to believe. This could certainly only be the work of the One.

*

One hour later all of the Engel come back from the halls. Washed, with still damp hair, dressed into the new garments. With the still damp feathers, all of the Engel walk with slightly extended pinions, waving them to let them dry a bit quicker. Back in the cella, it starts to get cramped. The smell of incensed soap and the fresh clothing is thick in here. Phinael opens one of the windows to let in fresh air.

"Now, I'd like to meditate a bit," she says, stretching her wings carefully. She settles on her stool, carefully unwinding her long reddish hair to let it dry. "I'm limp," she moans. "I could drop in a feathery heap. What did happen to my bones?" She arranges herself into meditating position and carefully props up both wings to her sides without touching walls or other Engel.

"Urmmpf." Egriel shifts uncomfortably on his stool, "Those loose threads itch." Think-

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ing for a moment, he opens his satchel and pulls out a small tool. He unfolds a pair of twin blades and proceeds to assault the offending strands of twine, humming a nameless tune. Satisfied, he places it back and sighs in relief. "MUCH better."

Turning to Phinael, "If you had no bones," he points out, "you literally would be a feathery heap."

Thommariel returns, sitting down and whispers a prayer before he falls into meditation.

Also, Calahel rests himself on the stool, as well wearing the ceremonial skirt and soon rests his hands on his thighs. He closes his eyes and searches for his inner pole to glide into the warm spheres of meditation.

In his new deep black ceremonial robe Carniel walks with his head high in the cella. He walks as farthest as he can from the other Engel and then he starts to dry his hair which is still wet. As he finishes, he puts his hair into the typical Gabrielite style by winding the long ribbon around his hair. Then he sits on one of the chairs, closes his eyes and meditates.

Phinael watches the other Engel take their place and observes the Gabrielite. Before he settles, she says softly: "You'd better integrate, Carniel." Then, she lowers her head, closes her eyes and sinks into meditation like the others.

Egriel notes the Gabrielite's distance.

Bringer of Death, he thinks, *The epitome of God's righteous wrath. A hard task, sometimes cruel, and a great burden to bear. He tilts his head in continued thought, Does he isolate himself for the actions he must partake? Does he feel guilt towards those he must smite? Surely, there is no remorse, no quarter, to be taken toward the enemy of the Church.*

He brings his gaze over to Phinael, who meditates peacefully, *And here we have the Raphaelite, the holy healers of the Church. In contrast to the Gabrielites, they are the incarnations of God's eternal kindness and forgiveness. Ahhhhhh....* Egriel nods slightly, in realization, *So that explains the anxiety I witnessed when I first approached her.*

The Urielite, Ronariel. Egriel continues, *The Messenger of God. His keen senses shall prove helpful when discovering danger. He grins, I surely could have used his guidance when I walked around carrying that great stack of books in front of me. I didn't even notice the monk until I collided into him. What a mess!*

Breaking out of his brief reverie in remembrance, Egriel shifts his sight to Calahel, *The Raguelite, Warder of the Past. Here is someone who I could call close to "brother". We both are knowledge-seekers, but his order is dedicated toward the ancient forbidden technologies of the mortals.*

He turns to Thommariel, *The leader of our host, the Michaelite. May his guidance direct us safely as we combat the foes of our Church and further the glory of God. I pray we bring great benefit through our actions.*

Last, Egriel finishes, *There is me, the Ramielite, Keeper of Knowledge. We read the*

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books, write new ones, and maintain records of the deeds of our Church. It is with this insight that I assist my host in making knowledgeable decisions. Pray tell, I hope my contributions will be worthy additions to the Cathedral.

At this, Egriel engages in further meditation.

After the Michaelite introduced himself to the others, Ronariel chimes in: "Greetings, my name is Ronariel from the Urielites. It will be an honour to serve under your command."

After Phinael and Thommariel are about to leave the room to clean themselves and at the time that the Michaelite raises his eyebrow, Ronariel looks at him and says: "Yes of course (with a sharp and loud voice) he is the one who gives the orders that we all will follow - what ever the cost or the reason, my brother." After this statement he takes his new clothes and follows the others to clean himself as well.

After this final task Ronariel sits down on his stool in his new clothes. He looks at the other Engel and for a moment and then begins to look back over the past years and speaks to himself. "What a long way for all of us to come this far!" But now he only takes care of his hair, winding it into a stiff pony. At least he takes a final look to the other Engel and then starts to meditate.