

## Chapter 14: Repercussions

The Sylvan Glade Triad now waited alone in their conference chamber. They had graciously spent a few minutes with the dignitaries who had stood with them on the platform at the proclamation, including a few extra moments with Ma'am Colina. Prince Rene introduced her to the chief steward of the feast. He was a kind man from a family who had long been faithful in service to the people of the principality, and he was meticulous in seeing to details. His vast experience, matched with the humility and teachable nature of the supplicants, ensured that the feast this year would be memorable.

The feast, however, was not the top priority on this day. The announcement regarding the Forum was foremost on everyone's mind. The Triad members were smothered with questions from the flesh-born, but they had jointly agreed to limit explanations until after the planned operations were completed. They only gave generalized comments, and they declined a request for an interview with media personnel, promising to issue a thorough statement at the appropriate time.

The glorified saints who ruled alongside the Triad did not require explanations. They recognized the authority of the Triad and the limits of their assigned oversight. Robert had sent his thoughts to all of them before the pronouncements were given, and they all held to the Triad's decision for discretion. They remained only briefly after the ceremony was adjourned then Tiladoris led them to the worship center where they joined in prayer.

The Triad knew that something had gone wrong. The grieving of the Holy Spirit was felt in their own spirits. They were unsure whether the actions had been successful or to what extent they had failed, so they continued steadfast in prayer as they waited for Malkiel to arrive and deliver the news, but it was getting late in the day. They began to wonder what they should do. Then they heard the flapping

of powerful wings and rose from their kneeling postures. They expected that Malkiel would enter from the exterior balcony as he always had, but it was not he who had arrived. The second in command, an angel named Girameed entered and bowed respectfully before the governors.

“Where is Malkiel?” asked Robert.

“Forgive me,” said Girameed, “but I do not know where he is. His plan was to capture the Forum leader and bring him to the detention center, but they never arrived. We sent scouts out to find them, but they were not at the man’s property. It appeared as though the man Trask has escaped. His domicile system was destroyed. I thought that Malkiel might have come here.”

“Maybe he is tracking the man,” Katarina volunteered.

“That’s possible,” responded the angel. “He could be searching the forested area. But I have sent him my thoughts, and he has not replied.”

Robert glanced over at Rene and Katarina. They hoped Girameed was correct, but they sensed danger, loss in some manner. “What can you tell us about the actions?” he asked.

“We captured most of the people we intended. Only Trask and a couple of others are unaccounted for. But our success was not without casualties. A Peacekeeper died in the city. And we were attacked at the textile factory. Many were wounded. The Forum has guns.”

“Guns?! How is that possible?” asked Katarina in astonishment. “Men stopped making guns when the Kingdom was established.”

“I don’t know, my lady,” Girameed replied. “The Forum must be making them in secret along with the Solace. We found large quantities of the drug, and the Forum members had many weapons and bullets. If the angel guardians had not been there, more Peacekeepers would have been killed.”

“And the one who did lose his life?” Rene inquired.

The angel knew the true intent of the question without needing clarification. The name of the man would be given later. Condolences and comfort would be afforded to the loved ones left

behind, and the principality would provide a memorial service. But the answer every saint wanted to know when a tragedy like this took place was the only one that really mattered. “He was a believer, counted among the redeemed,” replied the angel, and the Triad breathed a sigh of relief. The young man was even now in heaven, preparing to rejoice and worship God together with all the saints and heavenly hosts.

“Praise the Lord!” said Robert.

“Amen,” replied Girameed and the other rulers.

Robert thanked Girameed for his report and asked him to continue the search for those not yet apprehended, and to inform them of any news regarding Malkiel. The angel assured the Triad that he would comply with their wishes, but he reminded them that their time was limited. The Guardians had to return to the Celestial City before the ninth hour of the night so that they could prepare for the great worship. This was not just an obligation but also the greatest pleasure of God’s servants, all angels and saints. Each division participated with special songs of praise and other expressions of love and devotion. Prince Robert acknowledged the angel’s reminder with a slight nod of his head. Girameed bowed and exited.

“At least now Sylvan Glade is rid of its defiling influence,” said Rene. “We can commence training in righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

Katarina was troubled. “They had guns, my brother. They fired upon our citizens, and what they have attempted to do in Sylvan Glade, they will certainly do other places.”

Robert agreed, but the Spirit of prophecy fell upon him. “This is not the end of the Forum’s influence. We experienced a small victory today, but there still remains remnants of the rebellion within our gates. It will arise again. It will press upon us at our borders, and the day will come when we will have to stand firm and fight. Lord God, give us strength and courage.”

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Magistrate Blanchet entered his palatial estate through the wide double gates that guarded the path through the Eden-like gardens to his large manor house. Everything about this property was ostentatious, beyond necessity. To his credit, if there could be any credit given for a vulgar display of wealth and power, he was not a

hypocrite in this regard: He truly believed that he was superior to other men and was not ashamed to show it. No, his hypocrisy was that he himself enjoyed his position in life and selfishly held onto it, while at the same moment condemning others for not being more humble, more generous, more caring. It was a mask that any discerning person should have been able to see through. Many did see through it, but many others were willfully blind to the obvious. Even in the Kingdom of Christ, the flesh-born had free will. They could envy others for what they had and tolerate vulgar displays of greed as normal, rather than acknowledge their own fleshly desires for what they were.

Blanchet was met by the steward of his house who received his long magisterial robe. “Where is my wife?” he asked.

“In the drawing room, sir.”

“Did the food arrive for tomorrow night?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Prepare the meal for this evening. Family only.”

“Yes, sir.”

Blanchet proceeded without further delay to the drawing room and found his wife seated on a lounge chair by the wide window that looked out at the garden. She prepared game pieces for the next evening’s entertainment with friends. As usual, she was finely dressed in light apparel, elegant in quality and high in price. She looked up from her task as her husband entered the room.

“Ah, you’re home early. How was the ceremony?” she asked.

“What are you doing?”

“I learned about a wonderful game for tomorrow night. It involves name cards...”

“Didn’t you watch the proclamation?”

“Seriously, sweetheart, why would I bother? It’s the same every year.”

“Not this year. Contact our friends and cancel the party. We will be fasting tomorrow night.”

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Trask had arrived in Caranya an hour after darkness had fallen. Under normal conditions it would not have taken nearly as long to get into the city, but he had exercised extreme caution. He had followed mountain trails through heavily wooded areas so that brush and forest would conceal him from above, and he had made frequent stops as he approached the border. Only when he was thoroughly convinced that it was safe, in the muted twilight, did he finally cross into Caranella and make his way through the residential districts to the city proper and the Forum's office facilities.

He rode the hovercycle down into the subbasement of the multi-level complex where personal transports could be parked on a metal slab. The slab would then retract into the wall of the structure. A moment later the slab would return minus the transport vehicle. Where it went was not a concern of the owners. They didn't know what happened to it, nor did anyone really care because the procedure never failed to return the vehicle when the ID code was entered – just another of innumerable examples of Kingdom efficiency.

Thalia was anxious to hear from him. News of events in neighboring Sylvan Glade had already spread to Caranella and beyond. Caranya City was now her permanent residence in order to be close to Trask and help oversee their plans for all the surrounding regions. The plot hatched in Sylvan Glade was just one of many the Forum was conducting simultaneously in this part of the world.

Trask entered the first level without speaking to anyone and from there into his private office. Thalia saw him from her work station and followed.

“Privacy mode,” she said, as the sliding door closed and the glass windows instantly went from clear to an opaque frost color that ensured they could not be seen from outside. Likewise audio dampeners made it impossible for someone to overhear their conversation as Trask removed the weapons and other items from his satchel and secured them temporarily within the storage repository in the wall behind his desk. This vault was of the same design as the one in his cabin.

“I heard what happened,” she said. “I was concerned that you had been captured.”

“What are they reporting?”

“That the Forum has been banished and many of its members have been detained for questioning and crimes against the King.”

Trask grunted. “Anything about the textile factory?”

“There was a gunfight. Our people did well. They wounded many Peacekeepers, but the angel protectors interceded, captured our followers, the Solace, and our guns.”

Trask took his empty satchel and flung it with all his might across the room to smack hard against a piece of artwork. “So it’s common knowledge now that we have guns.”

“Yes.”

“What about the celestial weapons? Did you hear anything about them?”

“No, nothing,” she replied.

“They haven’t found the vault. At least we might be able to salvage something from this disaster.”

“The Master wants you to contact him immediately.”

Trask paused. He was not one to show obvious signs of fear, but there was certainly reason for concern. He had convinced himself that Lucifer would not hold this debacle against him because the plan had been made known and approved, but that confidence was hours ago when he had more pressing concerns. The closer he came to Caranya the more time he had to think on the matter and the more uncertain he had become. The blank expression on his face might be seen by most observers as cold indifference, a total lack of apprehension, but Thalia could see the wheels turning in his mind, calculating his options, weighing his potential responses. Thalia knew to give him space without interruption.

Finally, like a cybernetic manufacturing unit awakened to life following a shift change, Trask left his momentary trance and pressed the corner of his desk which turned on the surface panel. He sat down, took a deep breath, and unlocked the system to receive a direct signal from the Veld matrix. For security reasons, none of the Founders could initiate a connection to the Veld, but they could open their system to receive a link from Lucifer through the array matrix, a connection which could not be detected or intercepted by any technological means. It only took a moment before the image

projected beneath the array was visible above Trask's desk. Lucifer's avatar was able to communicate with the Founder being contacted, but it was only a projection and not able to interact like the one at headquarters, with manifestations of power through the array. The image went from a cloudy mass to its congealed three-dimensional representation. Lucifer's demeanor reflected stern displeasure.

"I have been monitoring the events in Sylvan Glade. Remind me. Wasn't the point of your plan to discredit the authorities in that principality?"

"That was our plan," responded Trask with reticence, though he said everything possible in his defense by choosing to say "our plan". Surely, Lucifer caught his meaning, but Trask felt it necessary to justify himself. "I followed it precisely. We even built a hidden vault to store the extra Solace and all but a few of the guns. They must still be hidden. I'm sure you're aware that no mention of the celestial weapons has been reported."

"Are you there, Thalia?"

"Yes, Master," she replied.

"Stand by Trask so that I can see you both."

Thalia moved around to stand behind Trask. The seconds always were seated behind the Founders and the camera in Trask's office was stationary, so there was nothing unusual about this request, but the fact that Lucifer had chosen to simply ignore Trask's distinction of responsibility for the plan was disconcerting.

"What is the status of operations in Loiden and the Hinterlands?"

Trask cleared his throat and jumped in. "The reports from..."

"No, Trask," interrupted Lucifer. "I was asking Thalia."

Trask shut his mouth, smiled and gestured with his hand that Thalia should proceed with the report. His gesture was a face-saving move, for Thalia did not need permission to answer their master, but she was shrewd enough to realize that Lucifer's interest in her was less an acknowledgement of her abilities than it was a rebuke of her superior. Self-promotion at the wrong moment could lead to regrettable repercussions, so she had waited for Trask's permission to speak.

“Most of our operations are going well,” said Thalia. “Membership has reached our goals. Supplies and key personnel are compliant within the local governments, and Founder Lundgren has done a wonderful job providing our needs.”

“You said most of the operations are going well,” Lucifer sought clarification. “Other than the mess in Sylvan Glade, what else needs attention?”

“Loiden did not receive their celestial weapons, and they received two shipments loaded with defective guns. The ammunition did not fit the chambers or clips so the guns won’t fire. I have contacted all our operatives to check their shipments and report back to us.”

Trask muttered “They’re not all defective.”

Lucifer’s projected face turned again to Trask. “Explain.”

“The shipment that came to Sylvan Glade was functional,” Trask continued. “The ammunition fit properly. I tested one of the guns. Our followers fought with them and inflicted casualties. Even the celestial weapons work.”

“How can you be certain?”

“I used one on the angel who tried to capture me. He won’t be bothering us again.”

Satan’s anger rose to the surface, contorting his image into an intense expression of rage. “You fool! You have revealed our greatest advantage!”

Trask leaned back. He had seen Lucifer’s power at the matrix array, and he momentarily forgot that what was done there could not be done in Caranya. “I’m sorry, Master. I had no other choice, but the weapon evaporated him. I saw it with my own eyes. Our secret is safe.”

“You’re even too stupid to know what you have done!” growled Satan. “If there ever had been a way to destroy an angel, don’t you think I would have used it long ago? These weapons can only send spirits away to a far place. This angel will return. In the past I could have sent forces to hinder him, but now it is just a matter of time before our advantage is gone.”

Trask didn't know what to say. He knew that nothing would suffice, and there was a danger that anything he said in his defense would likely make matters worse. So he accepted the safer option and said nothing.

“I want both of you to come to me. Take the usual precautions. Wait until the Passover is ended and many people are travelling. I expect to see you on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.”

“Yes, Master,” Trask contritely responded. “We will be there.”

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On the outer edge of the universe, where the last belt of stars still travelled away from the center of God's moment of Creation initiated by His words “Let there be...,”<sup>2</sup> an anomaly was taking shape. It began as a pinprick-sized ball of swirling gas that grew exponentially, glowing with heat and energy like the birth of a miniature star. Yet, there was no star being formed within, no center mass around which the gases circled. Rather, as the anomaly grew, it began to form a hollow in the center like a bowl, deeper and deeper until the gases formed a funnel that disappeared within its depths, as if stretched invisibly through countless galaxies to an opening in another distant location or another dimension altogether. This anomaly was a gateway, one of many that could venture from the dimension of time and space where the earth existed and the King of Kings ruled over mankind, to the highest heavens where the essence of the Almighty Father dwells.<sup>3</sup>

There is no audible sound in the vacuum of space (not that could be heard with human ears), but there are other kinds of sound that ears cannot hear yet are as real and resounding. The stars and planets send out their constant praises to their Creator, and even as the gateway formed it made a sound that could be heard by the heavenly hosts,<sup>4</sup> a sound like an intensifying note of a stringed instrument that then sustained its tone when the anomaly reached its full size.

Soon, something became discernible, approaching through the depths of the funnel. It was indistinct at first, a formless cloud of light energy that left the gateway and promptly began to congeal into a figure. The dispersed white cloud grew in light intensity as it formed into the appearance of a body with a head and arms and legs.

Lastly, the remaining mist formed loosely into wings upon the figure's back, not solid wings but long glorious wings of pure light energy that dissipated as it shot outward into the darkness of space.

It was Malkiel in his spiritual form, his true nature, not the image by which he presented himself on Earth. The final element of his being now joined his spirit as he became conscious and found himself floating slowly away from the portal. He saw it collapse, disappearing before him, and he realized what had happened. He had been attacked with a weapon that had not been used since the demons resisted being cast into the Lake of Fire, a weapon that had dematerialized him and transported his essence through the nearest universal gateway, releasing him in some unknown destination.

He floated. It took several moments for his ethereal substance to form. He willed himself to turn around in a circle. He also looked above his head and down below his feet. He quickly realized that he was as far from Earth as he had ever been, at the very edge of Creation, for he could see stars and galaxies in the direction where he had seen the portal, but nothing behind, above or below him, just darkness.

Where God's Creation had not expanded, there was nothingness, no light, no positive or negative energy, no gravity. Nothing. Angels had always tried to ponder the mystery of what lie beyond Creation, but God had chosen to keep this knowledge to himself. He knew all things, for He existed eternally before Creation, but He determined that it was sufficient for his subjects to know that from nothing He had created the universe by the breath of his mouth.<sup>5</sup> There are so many mysteries to ponder and explore, but not at this moment. Malkiel had only one concern: to return to the New Jerusalem as quickly as possible.

He had never before been in this kind of situation. Even during the great conflict in heaven, when myriads of angels fought against their own kind in Lucifer's attempt to elevate himself above the heavenly throne, he had not been struck by a celestial weapon, but he knew what to expect from such an occurrence. Many of his fellow Guardians had undergone the *traversion*, as they called it. Angels caught in a spiritual weapon of this sort would have their essence dematerialized, captured, and sent to merge with the nearest interspatial thread.

The universe was constructed together like a three-dimensional tapestry. Interspatial threads, more like tunnels, were woven throughout to allow rapid passage from one galaxy to another, or from any location in the created universe to the Third Heaven (the highest heaven) where God's holiness resides. These passageways were similar to the pulse system in the Celestial City, but on a much grander scale, and there was one other overriding difference: once in a thread, you had no idea where you might come out. Only a few were completely stable; most opened and closed within a period of time, never to appear in the same places again. The thread through which Malkiel arrived was gone. He would need to find another and hope that it would take him someplace familiar, someplace from which he could return to Earth.

His wings, though beautiful, were not useful as such in the coldness of the Second Heaven where no atmosphere existed, but the angels had another use for them. In their spiritual state, angels were not limited in shape or size. They could transform themselves into a variety of shapes, and the most beneficial for traveling the expanse of the universe was the *cocoon*, so named for the capsules in which Earth's caterpillars enclosed themselves so that they could transform into a butterfly or moth.

He stretched forth his wings and wrapped them around his body core so that he appeared as an elongated ovoid. He aimed his head towards the nearest galaxy and began to move towards it, slowly at first but increasing his speed with each passing moment. The faster he moved the larger his shape became and the brighter he glowed until he held the appearance of a comet coursing through space, but without the long contrail and faster than the speed of light. Even then, relative to the vastness of Creation, it would take him centuries to return on his own. He had to find a thread gateway, and the likeliest place to find one was at the center of the spiral galaxy before him.