

+-----+ In April of '42 word arrived of
| 001: Daughter saw herself | Lt. Col Doolittle's bold air
| through her Husk, newly | raid on Tokyo after months of
| awakened, pouring streams of | steady bad news. To celebrate,
| living fire into the deep. | Migdalel College Conservatory
| Around her lay the silent | held a recital of patriotic
| darkness, where countless | John Philip Sousa marches at
| others of her kind kept | the Academy's music hall out on
| their appointed places. | Tin Pan Alley, attended by half
| These burned with their own | of the town. The band opened
| fire, as even did she. Yet | with Hands Across The Sea and
| others seemed to wander, and | followed with *SemperFidelis*,
| shine only with borrowed | the official march of the US
| light. | Marine Corps. *The Liberty Bell*

+-----+ was light and playful, while *El Capitan* was flashy, a chance for the class to show off. The class followed *Fairest of the Fair* with a majestic version of *King Cotton* evoking a rising America. *The Thunderer* was bold and declarative. For the finale the class wrapped things up with *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. It was a joyous high point.

The crowd of attendees came to their feet as though it were the national anthem. Remiel Zinter, twirling a majorette's baton, danced near her brother Samael busy on the drum set. He said, "I don't see Mom or Dad out there." It was true. Remy searched the faces in the audience and she didn't see them either.

For an encore the class tore into a Duke Ellington standard, *It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*. Ehawee Wicasa, fourteen, delivered the song in a dusky voice that belied her youth. Wiiya Wiiya "Coyote Cub" Shybear had his moment to shine on the saxophone.

+-----+ Some of the attendees were
| 002: Then Daughter went | noisy about the intrusion of
| forth and first beheld, | the 'Devil's own race music'
| at a distance forty times | and got up to leave but
| her own breadth across | the show was already over.
| the abyss, a wandering | Professor Anael told her class
| sphere: the Scarred One, | they had closed the evening
| the Much-Bitten. It moved | with a perfect flourish. But
| alone through the void. | Sammy and Remy thought it
| Three times it turned about | didn't mean a damn thing if
| its own heart for every | their own parents weren't
| two circuits of the flaming | there. Cubby's sister Nahimana
| Daughter, yet it held | Shybear, who played the double
| neither breath nor living | bass, said, "The crowd didn't
| air, and its face was marred | much like that last bit,
| by the wandering stones of | Professor."
| heaven. |

+-----+ Anael said, "Let's just call it
a tiny act of cultural rebellion disguised as entertainment.
Even Havilah isn't immune to the rhythms of Harlem and wartime
radio. What the Stiffnecks are calling race music shares the
very same brass and beat with Sousa."

Havilah was small enough that most of the attendees had simply
walked to the recital. By nine PM it was clear the parents of
Remiel and Samael were never going to show up, so they left with
their friends.

It was cold, but not nearly as cold as it should have been. In
1871 Dr. Reginald Dole rolled into Havilah pitching geological
salvation.

+-----+ Armed with a brass theodolite,
 | 003: Half again as far away | Dole cheerfully informed the
 | lay another, the Veiled | inhabitants their mystical home
 | Sister, wrapped completely | was a meteor crater, with
 | in a mantle of white cloud, | Migdalel Butte a splashback
 | beautiful but impenetrable. | central peak. He said the
 | And though she dwelt farther | ancient impact opened fractures
 | from the fire of the One, | in the crust, giving rise to
 | she held a greater heat | geothermal features similar to
 | within herself, concealing | those found at Yellowstone.
 | beneath her clouds a fiercer | There were many fumaroles,
 | warmth, a paradox to the | hot springs, and mud pots
 | unlearned. | within the crater, but the
 +-----+ most striking feature was
 a persistent geothermal fog similar to what is found at the
 Gunnuhver site in Iceland. The rim of the central crater served
 to confine this fog. This results in a climate where the mean
 daily minimum from December through February hovered near the
 freezing mark rather than sharply below. Summers in the crater
 were sticky, almost tropical, but not unbearably so. Dole
 estimated the crater was a million years old. One of the
 Stiffnecks scoffed at Dr. Dole's remarks, claiming he had
 carefully tallied the lifespans of the kings and patriarchs in
 scripture and pegged Creation Week at 4,163 BC.

Dole spoke no words to the objecting believer. Instead he sank a
 test shaft and tapped a massive natural gas reserve lying under
 the town. With his characteristic theatrical flair, he flicked a
 match into the hole, birthing a permanent flaming geyser. Dr.
 Dole said the gas was capable of running heavy pumps to draw
 limitless water from the Ogallala aquifer.

+-----+ Dumah, wryly amused as
 | 004: At a distance more than | perpetually as he was silent,
 | a hundred times Daughter's | seemed entirely immune to the
 | own breadth she beheld a | searing heat. He used the
 | world turning in majesty | pillar of flame to light a
 | through the night. It was | Cuban clenched in his teeth.
 | a sphere of cool stone, |
 | adorned with seas and clouds | Jump Street was only four
 | and frozen crowns. Upon its | blocks east of the Academy
 | surface moved innumerable | music hall, which doubled as
 | small beings. Daughter | a place for the citizens
 | turned her Husk toward them | of Havilah to air their
 | and witnessed a grievous | grievances. The nighttime sky
 | thing. One living creature | over Havilah was the usual
 | was taken by another, its | streetlamp-underlit gray. Sammy
 | life extinguished and its | and Dory were happily chatting
 | substance consumed so that | up how the show had gone but
 | the devourer might endure. | Remiel was stone quiet. She
 | Thus she first encountered | seemed to be distracted. To
 | the Law of Hunger, ancient | the north Jump Street wound
 | and unappeased, which ruled | halfway up Treehouse Hill to
 | among the lesser forms. | the Shybear home and there at
 +-----+ the foot of the hill they split
 up. But splitting up took a little time. All four of them were
 firmly on smooching terms. "That's not something for any of the
 Stiffnecks to see," said Dory, but this only made big Sammy roll
 his eyes. "Who's gonna tell me no?"

The Zinter place was another two blocks south. From a block
 away the kids could see the cars of strangers parked at their
 house and how the front door was propped open.

+-----+ Remiel began to cry before she
| 005: Desiring to know | even got home. Jashen Shybear
| them more closely, she | was there with an older Kuwapi
| fashioned a second Husk in | fellow the kids recognized as
| their likeness. This Husk | the father of their classmate
| she endowed with a subtle | Ehawee. Jashen was the Seer of
| artifice, so that it could | the Root of Jesse Fellowship.
| fold inward, taking on | He held the highest office in
| the appearance of a pale | the church that the Zinters
| stone, unnoticed among them. | attended. Clara Zinter paced
| Hidden in this way, Daughter | the room and when Samael saw
| watched the Tool-Bearers | her even he started crying.
| gather around one of their | It took a long time before
| own who had ceased from | Clara could look directly at
| motion. They placed the | her children and blurt it out:
| still form in the earth, | "Your father is gone!"
| covering it with care, as |
| though honoring a mystery | Then they all cried until
| beyond their understanding. | there was nothing more to
+-----+ give. Jashen and Wawokiya
respectfully commiserated, for that was why they had come. Even
when the eyes of the children were bone dry they were still
wracked by sobs that trailed off at great length to a quieter
grief. Wawokiya took the pause as an opportunity to tell the
children Erik was taken from them by an accident.

Remiel raised her head and said, "Father never told us his work
was so dangerous."

Jashen replied, "Even the Kuwapi men I sent to retrieve his
body are doing so at great risk."

+-----+ "Coal mining always means
 | 006: She watched as they | deadly gases." Wawokiya said.
 | took bone and stone and | "I carried a pole with a small
 | shaped them together. They | cage on one end and a living
 | repaired the rents in the | canary. That was for the White
 | skins of their prey so | Damp. If the canary died we
 | that they might continue | quit digging and tried to get
 | in their striving. Mother | back out the way we came in.
 | learned these things through | But your father was taken by
 | Daughter's telling, and | the Black Damp. It displaced
 | desired to witness them | all the breathable air in the
 | for herself. So Daughter | pit. I can tell you he did not
 | fashioned a third Husk, more | feel any pain. And I can also
 | subtle than the others. It | tell you there was nothing I
 | was like a walking tree, | could do to save him without
 | moving by hidden means. To | joining him in eternity."
 | this form she surrendered |
 | its governance. Thus Mother | "I will always praise his
 | descended, taking command of | memory," Jashen added. "What
 | the vessel and entering the | he and Wawokiyah labored to
 | world to behold the works of | do allowed all the people of
 | the Quick Multitude. | Havilah to thrive for years
 +-----+ through a very dark time."

But Wawokiyah said, "The Kuwapi retrieving Erik's body are also
 trusted men, and they will most certainly return Sha'ar ha-Ruah
 to you, but the secret will get out. There is simply no avoiding
 that."

Jashen said, "I know. And some in the Church will say lending
 the artifact was more than I had the authority to grant."

+-----+ The Seer turned to face Erik's
 | 007: Daughter led Mother | widow. "Clara, I will not ask
 | to a hollow in the stony | you to accept on my simple
 | heights, where a cave lay | word that the Windgate is real
 | hidden within a lesser | and the Green Book is true
 | mountain: the Earth-Womb, | in every sense. When you bid
 | dim and secret. There they | your husband farewell at the
 | arrived by subtle means, | Temple you will see the wisdom
 | sending forth from their | of the Final Rite. But for
 | fashioned Husks slender | now I ask that you and your
 | seekers, the Eye-Bearers, | children be strong. In the days
 | which crept inside to see | to follow some will say to your
 | what remained unseen. Within | face that God punished your
 | that shadowed chamber they | husband for putting his holy
 | found Hava the Milk-Giver, | gift to profane use. They will
 | seated beside a living | dare to tell you this though
 | flame. | they themselves received the
 +-----+ benefit of his labors."

Dory and Cubby came to the Zinter house just then, completely out of breath. They had started running over as soon as they heard the terrible news from their mother. When they embraced their friends Clara saw how their arrival elevated her children from their grief a tiny bit, and she told Jashen she wanted his children to be with Remiel and Samael for Erik's funeral.

But Dory had caught her breath by then "My father says the Last Rite actually destroys faith," she said. "You believe because you see it, and it is a great comfort and blessing. But Lord Yeshua said more blessed are those who believe without having seen."

+-----+ Cubby nodded in agreement with
| 008: At her breast she | his sister. He said, "Faith
| nursed her young, Kayin the | isn't just a list of things you
| Clinging One, while with her | agree with and check off, it's
| other hand she traced signs | about who you trust, and why."
| upon the stone, covering |
| the wall with figures and | But Clara said, "We have no
| colors drawn from thought | family here in Havilah. All
| and memory. Nearby stood | my people are back east, and
| Dimai, the Binder of Edges. | my in-laws..." She chuckled
| He tended the fire and set | ruefully. "They are Stiffneck
| above it the sap of trees, | Incarnate. They always held me
| causing it to seethe and | at arm's length and I never
| thicken. With the softened | knew why. Remy and Sammy are
| gum he bound a sharpened | taking the death of Erik very
| stone to a shaft of wood, | hard. Then you kids came
| making a weapon for the | over just now and they both
| hunt. | brightened a little. I could
+-----+ see it. I know you saw it too.
You're a family to them!"

After Clara said her piece it became a gentle negotiation. In the end, Jashen persuaded Clara to have the children wait in Temple cafeteria in the basement while Erik was sent to his eternal destiny.

Now Samael and Remiel were not Erik's children by blood, but they had loved him nonetheless. Erik Zinter was one of the merry but homesick American doughboys who went into battle in September 1918 whooping with all the enthusiasm of a football team pouring out onto the field just before kickoff.

+-----+	Joining Erik's team was six
009: Thus Daughter and	hundred aircraft and one
Mother witnessed the first	hundred forty-four tanks led by
joining of thought to matter	Col. George S. Patton Jr.
among the Quick Multitude.	
Then the tendrils withdrew,	Three thousand pieces of field
and they emerged beneath the	artillery unleashed by the
open sky. Mother stooped	Entente side and countless
and lifted a stone from	bombs dropped from the air tore
the ground. She spoke a	the landscape at St.-Mihiel
sound, giving it a name.	into a pock-marked pigsty
Then Daughter, swift in	filled with mud. During the
understanding, perceived her	battle Erik took two agonizing
Mother's intent. She touched	rounds from a Bergmann
a growing tree and spoke a	Maschinenpistole 18/1 that
sound of her own, binding	shattered the bone in his upper
word to thing. So began	left arm. Army doctors removed
between them the First	the bullets but the surgery was
Tongue, in which utterance	performed in less-than-ideal
became became memory.	conditions. He developed gas
+-----+	gangrene while recuperating in
the field hospital so his arm had to come off.	

Afterward Erik rode a train to Paris with a hundred other men, many in worse shape than he. The same train carried fresh soldiers to the Western Front, which had become an efficient shredder of men. Erik met a Red Cross nurse with a surname he recognized. While she changed his dressings Erik learned that Clara's family, the Hursts, had stayed behind in Maryland while his own Zinters wintered over at Big Blue in Missouri and migrated further west.

+-----+ But after talking about
| 010: Soon there remained | their respective family trees
| no nearby thing without | for a while they discovered
| a name. But Earth, the | they shared the same
| Broad-Bosomed, is vast | great-grandmother. So they were
| in all her reaches. So | second cousins. That and her
| they journeyed across her, | all American girl-next-door
| walking upon her surface and | good looks interested Erik. His
| at times taking to the air, | unrelenting good cheer even
| unbound by the common law | after losing an arm interested
| of weight. In time their | Clara. They could not talk for
| speech became complete, an | long but after he told her
| ordered and hidden language, | he wanted to stay in touch
| sufficient for the subtlest | Clara passed along the address
| discourse. | of her parents in Hagerstown.
+-----+ Their pen pal relationship
blossomed into something they oth thought was love.

Erik came home from the war with a bonus of sixty dollars and took a job in Havilah painting houses using his remaining arm. He laid his extra money aside for a wedding. In 1920 Erik took to the Yellowstone Auto Trail in a Model T and drove halfway across the country.

Maryland had no law against cousins getting hitched. Both of Clara's parents thought Erik was a great kid so they wholeheartedly gave their blessing. But Erik's own parents in Havilah were a much harder sell. Back home Erik instantly became the black sheep of the extended Zinter family. He had passed over a perfectly good (but horsefaced) local first cousin for an admittedly beautiful second cousin from back east.

+-----+	One of his aunts said, "Why,
011: Then Mother spoke: Now	any heathen could do as much!"
we possess a language that	
does not betray us, hidden	In the economically frothy
from the understanding of	decade that followed even Clara
all but ourselves. Within	found work. But by 1932 what
this speech I take a name,	builders there still remained
that I may be known.	found new applicants with two
I am Avyah. You are	good arms suddenly willing to
Ayot, Daughter of Light.	paint and Erik just wasn't able
Your father is Azul, the	to compete with that. Clara
Severing Hand. And my own	worked as a nurse in the town's
father, elder in the line	tiny hospital, but Erik's job
of begettings, I name	was a lot less open and airy.
Imran, Flame-Bringer, whose	
reproach stands behind us	There are rich pockets of
all. Thus the Names were	subbituminous coal under the
established, and the hidden	low hills encircling Havilah
tongue became a bond between	but the geology of the area
them, even in the midst of	was so jumbled and the seams
the living world.	so fractured there was no
+-----+	way to profitably reach them
by drilling straight shafts. Prospectors had settled for	
extracting only natural gas, used to pump irrigation water from	
the aquifer. But for years Erik and a colorful Kuwapi fixture	
named Wawokiya made twisting tunnels through the hills around	
Havilah. No one knew how they managed the feat and the two men	
said nothing. After Erik and Wawokiya pulled their overnight	
shift other men followed in their wake to reinforce the new	
tunnels with timber and remove the exposed coal. At the nadir	
of the Great Depression Havilah experienced an economic boom.	

+-----+ Havilah black gold was piled in
| 012: Ayot, the Questioning | great heaps on piers in Chicago
| Flame, lifted her thought to | and San Francisco.
| Avyah and asked: Why must we |
| hide our speech and speak | By 1935 the unemployed,
| in secret? Avyah answered | unemployable Erik Zinter had a
| with grave and measured | brand new brick red Ford Model
| words, as one reciting a law | 40 and he also completely paid
| both ancient and terrible: | off his modest home on the
| Hear and understand, Ayot, | eastern edge of town. But after
| Light-Bearer and Unfolding | fifteen years he had no fortune
| One. It is a curse for a | with children of his own.
| living sun to be cut off and |
| sealed away from the Great | With Erik and Clara eager and
| Assembly, the Concord of the | fully willing, the Academy
| Elohim. | placed two young orphans in
+-----+ their care, a girl named Remiel
who was five years of age, and Samael her twin brother. Among
the Stiffnecks it was murmured these children were adopted
twice, that Seer Joshua Lange and his wife Ariel had brought the
children to Havilah from an overseas mission and raised them
from a very early age before they inexplicably departed, leaving
Jashen Shy Bear at the head of the Fellowship and the children
as wards of the faculty.

It would have been unseemly to run around playing while the body
of their father was sent to his long home, so Remiel and Samael
sat with Dory in the Temple basement, feeling very bored, while
volunteers prepared supper for the families of the dead. Coyote
Cub joined them after breaking away from his group of Kuwapi
boys smoking outside and pulled out a set of keys.

+-----+ "Benefits of being the
| 013: In such a place of | preacher's kid." With these
| concealment there may arise | keys he unlocked the door to a
| a corruption of order, the | supply room. His sister and
| Forbidden Way. There, two of | the Zinter kids tagged along
| the male kind, united in | because there was nothing else
| purpose but not in right | to do.
| order, gather to themselves |
| a multitude and raise a | There was no electric light in
| lineage of daughters, each | the room, only a window with
| generation begetting the | blinds and it was a typical
| next in turn. Thus freedom | gloomy Havilah day outside.
| is extinguished. Neither may | There was an old piano which
| you choose your joining, nor | was probably broken. Remiel
| may your daughter after you | avoided the urge to play it. No
| choose her own. Generation | need to call the Deacon down
| becomes bondage, and lineage | on them. There was a map of
| a snare. | Havilah posted on a wall and
+-----+ there were the usual church
odds and ends. They found unused hymnals, stacks of old temple
bulletins, empty mason jars, and dozens of stacked folding
chairs.

Cubby suddenly froze and looked worried. "Shhh! What's that?"
Everyone froze. But the only thing they heard was organ music
and the choir bleeding through the ceiling from the main
sanctuary upstairs. "Very funny." Samael gave Cubby a friendly
shove.

"I have a very odd feeling," said Remiel staring at the back
wall. "I've been here before."

+-----+ The paint on that wall was
| 014: And Avyah continued, | unfinished. Cubby moved aside a
| her voice darkened with | square slab of plywood that
| the weight of decree: | concealed a hole and another
| This Way the Old One has | dark space beyond. It was so
| forbidden, under penalty of | black inside it drank their
| the utter unmaking of the | vision like a sponge. He asked
| self. Yet it is subtle in | Dory, "Do we show them now,
| its concealment, and most | sis?"
| difficult to bring into the |
| light. Its signs are hidden | She nodded her head. "They had
| within the very act of life, | to find out sooner or later."
| masked by the appearance of | Cubby nodded in return and led
| lawful increase. | the way.

+-----+
After ducking to enter the hole Remiel found she could stand straight up. Dory hit an electrical switch by muscle memory and a string of lights came on in a twisting passage that seemed to be carved with rough strokes in solid rock. It was tall enough to walk upright but very narrow.

"We're under the mountain now," Cubby said. "We're inside Migdalel Butte."

"Now I'm entirely sure I've been here before," Remiel said. "Don't you remember, Sammy?" He shook his head, but slowly, as though he wasn't quite sure. "We were very little but we walked through here every day with our real Mom and Pop."

"Every day?" Samael said. "That's why I don't remember. I only keep the really special things, like our trip to Mt. Rushmore."

+-----+ So they walked on until the
| 015: Then Ayot spoke again: | tunnel flared out into a cave
| May I refuse the act of | with a pool of warm water that
| joining altogether? Avyah | was the source of the brook
| answered, neither hastening | Kidron. The stream poured out
| nor withholding: You may | through a blue daylit hole.
| delay it, Daughter, through | Somewhere down the hill and
| the making of Husks, the | west of the temple it went
| dividing of presence, the | over a cataract and flowed into
| turning aside of the inward | Lake Taijitu behind the dam.
| fire. But the Deep Impulse | The Pison River flowed on from
| will in the end assert its | there. Cubby stood on a ledge
| claim. It is woven into your | over the pool. "Here, exactly
| being as surely as the law | here, ladies and gentleman," he
| of burning is woven into | said, "is where Dimai and Hava
| the sun. Though it may | first went to Kemen. Straight
| be resisted, it cannot be | out of Second Covenants in the
| wholly denied. | Green Book."

+-----+
Samael was incredulous. "That's what you wanted to show us?"

"Isn't it enough? There's two worlds, you know, and this is the only way to go between them!"

"In a museum in Havana are two skulls of Christopher Columbus," said Remiel, quoting Mark Twain, "one when he was a boy and one when he was a man."

"Brother mine," said Dory, "it really sounds like we have a pair of unbelievers on our hands. And fellow students of Angel Academy no less!"

+-----+ Remiel objected to this. "Why
| 016: Ayot pondered these | can't people be amazed at the
| things before asking again: | world for the wonderful way it
| Then who will stand with | really is?"
| me in that hour? Who will |
| be given to me? Avyah | Dory threw up her hands in mock
| replied with sorrow: Only | despair at her heathen friends
| Imran will stand beside | and muttered something about
| you. And to your daughters, | White Wingers under her breath.
| only Azul will be given as |
| their sire. But your sons | "So where does that tunnel go?"
| will be castaways, unclaimed | Samael asked, pointing to a
| and unanchored, set adrift | second passage that seemed to
| beyond the bonds of kinship. | lead back the way they came.

+-----+
"It goes to the Temple storeroom upstairs," Cubby said, "but it
also goes six days up the timeline."

"What do you mean six days up the timeline?"

"I mean on the other end of that tunnel it is next Tuesday."

Samael stared at Dory for a moment, then decided to play along.
"So if we came down here through that tunnel we'd be six days
down the timeline, right? I could warn my dad and keep him from
dying in the coal mine."

"The door's locked at the top," said Cubby, jangling his
carabiner. "I would need orders from Mikaela to open it. I don't
think the orders will come because they haven't already come.
And that's why we're here at Erik's funeral."

+-----+ "Why wouldn't the Dean let us
 | 017: Ayot's inward light | do it?" demanded Samael. "Isn't
 | grew troubled: Then Imran | Davar good? Don't they tell us
 | and Azul now stand in | every Sunday how Ayat and Avrah
 | peril. By our seeing, we | and Davar are so good?"
 | have discovered what is |
 | forbidden. We have found | "Davar is good," said Dory, "so
 | the Students of Lore, | if he lets Erik remain dead for
 | the Long-Sought, whom all | the time being, there must be a
 | the Elohim are commanded | good reason why."
 | by the Old One to seek |
 | without ceasing. Should we | "For the time being?" Now
 | not declare this discovery | Remiel was getting annoyed.
 | to the City, that the | "You sound just like my daddy's
 | commandment be fulfilled? | kin who came to the house
 +-----+ telling us his passing was all
 part of God's plan, as though that would make me feel better
 about it."

Cubby decided it was time for extreme measures. So he stripped out of all of his clothes and waded out into the pool. He felt no body modesty at all. They were all good friends but the Zinter kids could hardly believe their eyes. "Am I really seeing this, Sammy? Is my Kuwapi friend really skinny-dipping during our foster-father's funeral?"

Cubby said, "I'm about to prove to you what we already know and you refuse to believe. Everything in the Green Book is absolutely true." Answered that way, Remiel and Samael both fell silent. They were unprepared and unwilling to actually call their friends liars.

+-----+ "We are cousins, you know,"
| 018: But Avyah answered at | Dory told them. "The two of
| once. We are cut off, Ayot, | you and the two of us. You
| separated from the Assembly | are both cherished members of
| and without safe passage | House Haivri but circumstances
| to it. Azul conceals the | put you in the hands of the
| Students, withholding them | Stiffnecks, and what we're
| from the sight of the Many, | dealing with now says more
| and Imran knowingly shares | about the Stiffnecks then it
| in that concealment. They | does about you. We all have the
| both know that if we were to | same great-grandmother: Lailah.
| proclaim your discovery, the | And before you ask, yes, she is
| veil would be torn aside at | the same Lailah from the Green
| once, and the hidden thing | Book. I'm talking about Sarah
| laid bare. Their unlawful | from the Bible."
| gathering would be revealed, |
| and judgment would descend | "I know we were adopted," said
| upon Azul and Imran in | Remiel. "Twice! But Sar Lailah
| sudden ruin. | lived four thousand years ago."
+-----+

"Sister mine," said Cubby, "I really think they need one more push."

Dory said, "I agree." She began slipping out of her own clothing to follow her brother. They descended the immersed marble stairs until they were up to their necks, turned turtle, and drove themselves out of view.

"I'll give them less than one minute," said Samael. But when that minute passed he started to worry and at three minutes he was stripping off his own clothes to go after them.

+-----+ But for her part Remiel made no
| 019: But Ayot conceived | move to follow, nor was she
| a plan, subtle and bold. | startled when an older fellow
| She reasoned that the gulf | appeared. He was perhaps fifty.
| between the stars was no |
| unbridgeable void, but could | Broad through the shoulders,
| be crossed by artifice, | narrow through the hips, he
| and that the link by | wore faded denim, probably blue
| which she governed her Husk | once but now grayish from coal
| might become a pathway not | dust and repeated washing. The
| only for command, but for | sleeves of his cotton work
| substance as well. So she | shirt were rolled up above his
| conceived to pour forth the | large forearms. Over it he wore
| Hot Outpouring from her own | a wool vest. His trousers were
| body, sending it along that | high-waisted, held up with
| thread, that her Husk might | suspenders. The knees and seat
| carry her message directly | were shiny in places, with
| to another sun and declare | patches that have themselves
| the finding of the Students. | been repeatedly patched.

+-----+
On his feet were heavy leather work lace-up boots with thick
soles and scarred toes. He had a heavy leather belt carrying a
hammer, folding rule, carpenter's pencil, nail pouch, and a big
knife. He also had a framing hammer with a scarred wooden handle
polished smooth where his hand gripped it. On his head he wore a
battered felt work hat with a narrow brim, sweat-stained and
permanently misshapen. A carbide lamp hung from the belt.

He smelled clean enough, but from the way he was dressed, she
knew he wasn't one of the attendees upstairs, perhaps he was one
of the men who had set up frames of timber behind her father.

+-----+ Having had Remiel's full
 | 020: But Azul's answer was | attention from the moment he
 | like a closing gate. Not so. | entered, he asked, "You're not
 | Your kind are not granted | going in after them?"
 | the power to strengthen the |
 | link into a channel fit for | Remy shook her head. "There's
 | such passage. Only the male | air down there, I guess."
 | Elohim possess that gift. |
 | Your power is lesser. You | The stranger seemed to agree.
 | may drive your Husk outward | "They'll be back in a few
 | only by the radiance of your | minutes. They didn't know when
 | own body, and so visit the | they left, but they've been on
 | fragments that circle you. | on their Graduation Prank."
 | Beyond them, in the barren |
 | interval between the stars, | "If you don't mind telling me,
 | your Husk will drift without | who are you?"
 | purpose, a cast thing in the |
 | abyss. | "I like that: 'Who are you?'
 +-----+ The next time we meet your kin
 will already know who I am and they will act so strange. I like
 this informality much better. We're family! I'm Joshua Haivri."

"Pranks for Finals, and back in ten minutes?"

Joshua winked and said, "Dory has her blue wings now. And your brother calls himself Hunky."

"Hunky and Dory," Remiel said. "Cute, but everyone saw that coming a mile away, even without a Mercy of foresight."

"Your kinfolk are a year older. It can be confusing, I think."

+-----+ "Dory calls it Nunya Time, from
| 021: Then Ayot answered, not | one of her favorite books. Time
| in defiance but with quiet | in Kemen doesn't match ours."
| resolve. This too I have |
| discovered, Father. I can | "You'll suddenly be a year
| yield command of a Husk to | behind your brother and your
| another, just as I gave one | cousins. So I'm signing you up
| to Mother, that she might | for Woodshop."
| see and act through a form |
| not her own. The same I | "I didn't know the Academy had
| will do in time to come, | Woodshop."
| when I conceive a son, and |
| when my daughters in their | "It's not just Woodshop, it's
| turn conceive sons. They | me offering, ah, continuing
| shall not be left without a | education to the faculty while
| vessel, nor without agency, | everyone is busy making chairs
| though they be cast away. | or what-have-you. It's a
+-----+ pleasant hour, but it's also
where your professors get their marching orders."

Remiel stood up when she heard that. "You give the Dean marching orders? Then who are you really, Joshua?"

"Davar."

"Oh my! Well! That does explain your carpenter get up."

"I'm making you a Teachers Aide. The Dean will reach out. I've been giving you little tastes of what I'm trying to delegate to you. But you need to use the Mercy in its full awful power before I ask you to accept it for a lifetime."

+-----+ Remiel said, "So I need to
 | 022: Then Azul understood | learn the how."
 | the danger in his daughter's |
 | words. He considered them | "You also need to learn what it
 | carefully before offering | can cost. If you already had
 | a gift both great and | this Mercy you would have known
 | perilous. I will grant you | your father would have a fatal
 | access to the Pleroma, | accident. You would have faced
 | the Gathering of Voices, | a stark choice between saving
 | a thing denied even to | him or sticking to the plan. I
 | your Mother. Ayot the | once had a similar moment like
 | Clear-Seeing perceived the | that myself, in a grove of
 | weight behind the offer | olive trees named Gat Shemoneh.
 | and answered with measured |
 | words. I would receive such | "I might have read about it."
 | a gift with gratitude, |
 | Father, were it given freely | "Then you see Angel Academy
 | and without condition. But I | really is the School of Hard
 | am not ignorant. I know with | Knocks just like the alumni
 | certainty that it is not. | always say."
 +-----+

"Nothing about the Family is even remotely normal, is it, Lord?"

Joshua nodded. "Remiel, we try to clasp to strands of normalcy but House Haivri is never going to win Family of the Year, to my great sorrow."

They were interrupted by the sound of churning water. The water in the carved cistern began to foam. Joshua took this as his cue to quietly depart the cavern by the same way he came in, through the tunnel leading upstairs.

+-----+	Ten minutes after Cubby had
023: Then Azul, the	gone into the mikvah, and seven
Law-Imposer, declared: The	minutes after Hunky went in
price is twofold, and it	after him, Hunky rose to the
will not be lessened. First:	surface alone. Remiel greeted
you shall hear, but not	her brother by his new name,
speak. The counsels of the	which made him relieved to
Elohim will be open to you,	avoid explanations, but also
yet your voice will remain	left him confused. "Who let you
silent among them. You	know I'm using Hunky now?"
shall stand in their hall	
without casting a shadow,	She said, "A little bird told
a listener unacknowledged.	me." Cubby's head broke of
Second: neither your Mother	the water and he drew breath.
nor any child born of you	Remiel said, "Welcome back."
shall speak through you to	
that Assembly. You shall	Hunky asked, "Did your little
not be their voice, nor	bird tell you to meet us here?"
their bridge. This covenant	
shall endure, unbroken and	She shook her head. "Maranatha!
unchanged. The Covenant of	It's only been a few minutes."
Silence shall rest upon you.	
+-----+	"Bolshevik!" Cubby said,

"It's not Bolshevik. Dory must have told you about Nunya Time."

Speak of the devil. Dory came to the surface then too, as naked as when she first went in, but she covered herself in a cloak of blue feathers, long bony wings wrapped close about her, because now she could. Dory seemed to dare Remiel to say something about the wings, anything at all.

+-----+ The sight of the wings startled
 | 024: Then Ayot, the | Remiel, forewarned or not,
 | Truth-Seeker, raised her | but said only, "Nice rack."
 | voice to Azul once more. | For Dory that broke the ice
 | And these striving creatures | she imagined would chill this
 | I have discovered upon | moment, and this brought a warm
 | the Water-Clad Sphere, are | smile to her face.
 | they not the Students whom |
 | the Old One, the First | Cubby directed Hunky's
 | Commanding, charged all | attention to a rack of clean
 | Elohim to seek without | linen towels that was kept
 | ceasing? But Azul answered | fully stocked for any travelers
 | by laying upon her a second | between Earth and Kemen. It
 | obligation. Now hear another | was, after all, one of the
 | condition. You shall aid me | reasons his father had given
 | in fashioning a field of | him the key to the storeroom.
 | trial for the beings you |
 | have found. Ayot did not | When the kids were fully
 | shrink from the task, but | dressed they backtracked
 | pressed him further. To what | through the tunnel and
 | end is this trial? What do | scrambled out of the supply
 | you seek to learn of them? | room. They sat together in the
 +-----+ temple basement speaking no
 words. Remiel wanted answers but her brother didn't even know
 where to begin.

And during the shared meal Remiel thought her foster mother
 seemed very different too. The faithful had seen Sha'ar ha-Ruah
 in action and even the Stiffnecks were assured God did not smite
 Erik for using it. Her grief was gone, but something else,
 something good was gone too.

+-----+	Clara said, "Remy! Sammy! It's
025: Azul answered, his	all true. Everything in the
thoughts turning always	Green Book is really true!"
toward dominion and measure.	
How shall these creatures be	"I know, Momma," said Hunky. He
counted among the Students	had come to the very same place
if they prove disloyal	after a round trip dalliance
in service? What value	in another world. Dory had
has a learner who refuses	been justified when she warned
obedience to the one who	against this. Hunky didn't
undertakes to teach? At this	believe anymore, he knew. There
Ayot's light burned more	was a dull melancholy lurking
fiercely. You make bondage	behind everything now.
the measure of their worth,	
and submission the proof	-----
of their nature. Is this	-----
your wisdom, Father, that	
thralldom should stand in	In the second year of the
place of truth?	Confederate War, Deacon Marcus
+-----+	Lange, the son of a farmer
	of some standing, received correspondence from one Ariel Haivri
	concerning a matter she felt should be brought before his
	congregation without delay. With the permission of Elder David
	Long, Marcus read this epistle to the assembly at the Price
	Meetinghouse following the Wednesday evening service.

September 1, 1862

House Haivri to our fellow laborers in the vineyard of God Most High: though by the sorrows of Providence we are separated by the tides of history, yet our hearts remain bound together in the bonds of holy fraternity.

+-----+ Be it known to you, dear
 | 026: But Azul remained | neighbors, that on the
 | unmoved. This alone we | seventeenth day of the present
 | covenant, and nothing more. | month, the hosts of war shall
 | For I require not their | clash in earnest among the
 | worship, but only their | wooded hollows and open fields
 | proving. Yet know this: the | near your house of prayer. In
 | Highest Law of our kind | earnest concern for the safety
 | shall stand witness over | of your people, we of the
 | us. Yefefiah, the oldest of | Haivri clan extend to you the
 | the Elohim shall inscribe | offer of refuge within our
 | this pact, and the unmaking | house of prayer.
 | reserved for oath-breakers |
 | shall await the faithless, | Any among you who seek shelter
 | whether you or I. | from the tumult of battle may
 +-----+ come without delay. Our doors
 stand open, and provisions are prepared without charge. We urge
 this for the protection of your horses, mules, and cattle; for
 although the secessionists often profess courtesy toward the
 inhabitants of the country through which they pass, it is well
 understood that anything upon four hooves is taken as fair
 spoil.

Take heed also: when the guns open upon the heights, as they
 will this coming Sunday the fourteenth of September, it will be
 too late to withdraw by the surrounding roads without risk of
 your stock and wagons being seized. We therefore entreat you,
 beloved brethren, that if you judge there is wisdom in our
 counsel, your arrival, whether with family or stock, by day or
 by night, will be taken as your assent to this offer of shelter.
 Our watch will be constant, and our prayers remain with you.

+-----+	<i>In faith and charity, we remain</i>
027: Then Ayot, perceiving	<i>your servants of the Way</i>
the fracture beneath his	<i>Restored.</i>
words, replied, That Elohim	
will see that you have cut	The letter from Ariel produced
me off from the Pleroma.	a marked division even among
Will that not also be	Marcus's parishioners. When he
weighed? But Azul answered	read it aloud following their
with quiet certainty. The	Wednesday evening prayers, they
Silent Witness will not	learned Ariel had given the
speak of it. Then Ayot, who	name of her house of prayer as
yielded only in agreement	Congregation Derekh Me'hudeshet
and not in conviction, gave	and this alone troubled many
her final answer. So be it.	minds. Some said Ariel was not
The covenant is made between	a true Christian, but rather a
us, and I am bound. Yet	heathen, or Jewish, or even, as
hear me, Father. You do	a few put it, Romish. Others
not escape your end. You	suspected some dark design be-
only defer it. The Students	hind the offer, supposing that
will not remain forever in	the promise of refuge served as
ignorance. In ages yet to	a pretext by which their live-
come they will raise a voice	stock might be seized.
of their own, unbidden and	
unshaped by you, and that	There was also the matter of
voice will carry far, and	the portrait enclosed with the
many will hear it.	letter, that Ariel might be
+-----+	recognized as a friend when
the animals were taken to safety. The likeness itself did not	
appear to be hand-tinted. Instead, it was rendered in lifelike	
color to the last detail. None of the brethren had seen the like	
and they perceived an outlandish tinge to the whole affair.	

+-----+ 028: It is further told of the Hidden Work, wrought not in the open firmament but in the interstice between the Lights. Within the Pleroma the Elohim are joined one to another by threads of exceeding fineness, by which the vast gulfs between the stars are made narrow. By the united will of Imran and Avyah they undertook a work of the greatest secrecy. They took the slender link between them and caused it to swell, bowing it outward until it became a vessel closed upon itself, set apart from the common order. +-----+	Somehow Ariel seemed to sense the unease of the congregation and visited prayer meeting in person as the guest of Marcus. When asked about her cloak of brown feathers, Ariel said she had "grown attached to them." When asked how she knew there would be a battle she answered with all truthfulness, for she would not, or perhaps could not do otherwise. In the days to come Marcus learned the Haivri family had long held forth that its calling was to serve as messengers of God, while insisting that messengers gain no honor from the message they bear. They called themselves B'nei ha-Nevi'im: Annunciators.
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+-----+ Angel Academy season [x] episode [xx], [month] [day], [year]: On September 9, 1862 Lee writes out a set of orders to his division commanders indicating the schedule and destination of their separate movements under the nose of the Federal army. Stonewall Jackson himself makes a copy of these orders for DH Hill and Lee's chief of staff countersigns. +-----+	
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+-----+
| 029: A second set of orders is sent to DH Hill by courier. |
| When this man sees Hill already moving out of his encampment |
| he decides not to deliver the redundant copy but keeps it as |
| a war memento. But Academy faculty and students posing as |
| members of Lee's staff accost this officer and demand an |
| accounting of all the documents in his possession. They |
| question him about Special Order 191. They reprimand him on |
| the spot for the breach in ANV protocol and take the |
| document, but agree not to report the incident. |
| |
| The sun had not long crested the wooded rise to the east |
| when the last of Major General D.H. Hill's men struck their |
| camp and marched southward, their footfalls beating the dry |
| ground like a funeral drum for the summer fields. Dust clung |
| to the air, and the trampled meadow outside Frederick |
| lay littered with the remnants of war: ashes of fires, |
| broken buttons, scraps of hardtack, the stubbed-out ends of |
| soldiers' cigars. |
| |
| From a line of trees that bordered the field, Round Robyn |
| watched the final wagons depart, her eyes keen beneath the |
| brim of her bonnet. "Now," she whispered, turning to her |
| brother. Hunky nodded. He was barely twenty but carried |
| himself with a solemnity beyond his years. In his coat |
| pocket rested the paper they had requisitioned from the |
| errant courier. General Lee's marching orders, Special |
| Orders No. 191, meant to divide the Confederate forces |
| as they ventured into enemy country. Orders that could |
| tip the very balance of the war. But only if they are found. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 030: Robyn's eyes settled on Dumah. She said, "I need your |
| cigars." Dumah's face twisted in dismay, but he handed one |
| of his precious Cubans over. "More," insisted Robyn, and |
| Dumah passed them to her as though giving her a pound of his |
| own flesh. She slid the folded orders between the brown |
| tobacco sticks, then rewrapped them loosely in an oilcloth |
| smudged with soldier's grease and dust. |
|
| Robyn knelt beside him and pressed the bundle into a |
| crumpled jacket that had been left on the ground, placing |
| it just within the folds of a grey woolen sleeve. It would |
| appear as though someone had merely left a bundle behind |
| in the rush to move. |
|
| "Will they believe it?" Hunky asked his sister, who was in a |
| position to know. |
|
| "They will," Robyn answered. "Soldiers lose things every |
| day. And cigars are valuable. It'll draw a Union man's eye." |
| In her own mind's eye she vividly saw much more than that, |
| and the panoply nearly broke her heart. The war would go on |
| for almost three more years and cost many thousands of |
| lives that would not have otherwise been extinguished. But |
| ultimately Lincoln would gain the victory. |
|
| The Academy team turned and slipped back toward the woods, |
| leaving the bundle nestled among the careless debris of the |
| Southern army, one tiny thread in the vast tapestry of the |
| war, waiting to be tugged. |
+-----+

+-----+ Only one small doubt
| 031: Within that new-formed | remained. But Deacon Marcus,
| region another law | while admitting to knowing
| prevailed, in which bodies | very little Hebrew himself,
| ever fled from one another. | suggested Ariel herself had
| Thus came into being a realm | already revealed the name of
| hidden within the seam of | her assembly in her epistle as
| greater things. There the | the Way Restored, making her
| courses of all free-moving | a sister in Christ and her
| bodies were altered. What in | people no different from the
| the world of men would draw | Lord of Hosts Fellowship in all
| together was made instead to | the ways that mattered. Ariel
| part asunder. Every unbound | did not gainsay Marcus, but
| thing drove its fellows | instead added a hearty "Amen!"
| away, as though possessed | Hearing it put in this manner,
| of a repelling virtue. By | a goodly portion of Marcus's
| this inversion matter was | congregation availed themselves
| gathered and made fast, not | of Ariel's invitation and drove
| about a center but upon an | their beasts to Williamsport.
| inner surface. |

+-----+ On the afternoon of the
seventeenth day of the month, two weeks after Marcus read the
letter of Ariel Haivri, muskets were discharged in great number
along two stone walls. The sound carried rapidly from man to
man, and the smoke of black powder stung the eyes of those
engaged. These walls met at a bridge of dressed stone, where new
believers at the Lord of Hosts Fellowship were received in
baptism. It was there that the Union Left first came into direct
contact with the enemy. The Federal troops advanced in heavy
order and with much shouting, but they were soon brought to a
halt by a sudden paroxysm of violence.

+-----+
| 032: Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day,year |
| Under sustained fire, Federal troops fell back over the |
| bodies of the fallen who lay in layers upon the bridge. Some |
| were already dead. Others were still alive and grievously |
| wounded, their bones broken or their bodies pierced by |
| musket shot. |
| |
| Among the fallen were men who had survived earlier battles. |
| Some of these had been at Shiloh Church, where the conflict |
| first attained a fearful level of slaughter. |
| |
| A large gun loaded with canister was brought to bear and |
| placed to command the length of the bridge. It swept the |
| structure end to end so that a second line of the dead was |
| formed upon the first. |
| |
| Some of those present had fought at Malvern Hill in |
| Virginia, where Federal artillery had wrought great |
| destruction. In reply, two Rebel guns positioned upstream |
| fired bursting shells that rained death down upon the Union |
| artillerymen. Another gun delivered accurate solid shot |
| until the Federal piece was broken into splintered timber |
| and twisted iron. |
| |
| Following this, the Confederate infantry advanced in |
| counterattack and regained much of the bridge, which by that |
| time had become a house of slaughter. During this fierce |
| exchange, a Federal colonel was struck squarely by a musket |
| ball. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 033: To the astonishment of his men, he quickly regained his |
| feet unhurt. The projectile had lodged within a small Bible |
| he habitually carried on his person. The men took this |
| as a sign of Divine Providence. Emboldened, the colonel |
| immediately led another charge across the span. |
| |
| In the brutal close-quarters combat that followed, soldiers |
| on both sides stood upon the mounting heaps of the dead, |
| passing loaded muskets forward like a bucket brigade at a |
| fire and casting aside empty weapons. But the Confederate |
| infantry found their supply of powder dwindling, and the |
| officer commanding them perceived their resistance at the |
| bridge was coming to a rapid end by that stark fact alone. |
| He accordingly ordered his guns withdrawn under cover of a |
| sharp rearguard action to permit an orderly retirement. |
| |
| The commander of IX Corps then crossed the stone bridge, |
| following the retreating Confederates. Having formed his |
| command, he directed a lieutenant of his staff to ride to |
| headquarters and report that a foothold had been secured on |
| the left of the line at the stone bridge. |
| |
| The messenger, seeing the structure so thickly carpeted with |
| the dead of both armies, refused to ride back across it lest |
| he needlessly desecrate the fallen. Instead he went down to |
| the creek and forded it on foot. The officer suffered no |
| hardship in doing this; the water of the run was nowhere |
| more than waist-deep in all seasons, a topographical fact |
| well known to the local farmers. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 034: In the heat of battle the whitewashed Price |
| Meetinghouse, the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts Fellowship, |
| was commandeered as a field hospital. The interior walls |
| were soon stained with blood, and daylight streamed through |
| numerous shot-holes in the structure, illuminating the |
| wounded laid out across the floor. Medical officers worked |
| without pause. |
| |
| And one physician did administer chloroform, that the |
| wounded might be eased of their pain; and another did take |
| up the saw, and remove the shattered limbs, casting them |
| into a heap without. And Marcus entered his chapel, and saw |
| the commander of the corps did bend over maps of the |
| town and of the encircling country, giving heed unto his |
| dispositions. And when the general beheld the deacon, he was |
| wroth, and did demand of him who he was. And Marcus said he |
| was a humble deacon of the church which now lay in |
| desolation round about. |
| |
| But the officer gainsaid Marcus, saying that the place was |
| not now a house of worship, but rather the headquarters of |
| the I Corps. And the east door, by which the brethren did |
| enter, and the south door, appointed for the women, were |
| made into tables where the wounded were laid, even as altars |
| of sacrifice. And the great Bible which had been given unto |
| the congregation was no more to be found. And the pews of |
| the chapel were cast out into the yard, and men did sit upon |
| them at their ease, smoking cigars, and making idle marks |
| upon the wood with their knives, as though in sport. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 035: And beholding all these things Marcus did charge the |
| General that he should cause his men to deal more gently |
| with the property of the church; but the officer was |
| angered, and he commanded Marcus to depart out of his sight, |
| saying that if he would remain, the General would place a |
| musket in his hands and set him upon the line. And |
| straightway there came a great crashing sound, and the house |
| of God was filled with flying splinters of wood. |
|
| The artillery of the Rebels had opened a furious barrage |
| from behind their works, covering their retreat. And the |
| General did run forth from the building, plucking splinters |
| from his flesh, and crying out orders; and the officers who |
| had been idling upon the pews did scatter, as shells burst |
| round about them, and solid shot did strike the trees, |
| shattering them at the trunk. And the artillery of the |
| Federals answered the guns of the enemy; but Marcus remained |
| within the chapel, and prayed, having a slender hope that by |
| his presence the Lord might spare the building. |
|
| Yet even as he prayed, the shot did tear great openings in |
| the walls thereof; and two shells from the enemy's chief |
| battery did burst above the roof. And the sound of the guns |
| did cease suddenly, in a manner not to be accounted for; and |
| in the darkness and the dust Marcus did cough, and was taken |
| with a great and grievous pain. And as he lay in the dimness |
| and in great suffering, he heard the voice of a woman. And |
| the voice said, Samael, take great care. Marcus is still |
| alive beneath this timber, but he is severely injured. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 036: And Marcus did marvel that a woman should be present; |
| for he had spoken with no one when he went forth to view the |
| chapel after the passing of the army, neither had he desired |
| that any should share in so great a peril. And the light did |
| begin slowly to increase; and he beheld a great beam of pine |
| to be lifted up, as though it were of little weight, and a |
| figure did move beneath it. And it seemed unto him that the |
| outer walls of the meetinghouse were no longer standing, but |
| had been taken away round about. |
| |
| And the woman came into view; and Marcus saw that she was |
| arrayed in raiment much like unto that of Ariel, having |
| feathers of a red hue beneath a white coat furnished with |
| many pockets. And she said to the laboring youth, "You did |
| well, Samael. You were not here on the previous loop, so |
| Gabriela cut through to him with Sha'ar ha-Ruah, and not a |
| few timbers shifted, and Marcus suffered immeasurably more." |
| And yet a third voice did say that three other wounded men |
| were present amid the wreckage; and the woman said that she |
| would tend unto all four. Moreover she vowed to preserve the |
| limbs which the ishim doctors had been preparing to saw |
| away. |
| |
| And her words did cause Marcus to fear that he had gone mad. |
| But the woman seemed to perceive this and said, "Do not be |
| afraid, Marcus. A splinter has pierced your kidney, and your |
| leg is broken. You cannot feel it because the beam is |
| compressing it. That will change when we lift it." And he |
| could do no more than gasp for help. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 037: And she said, "This will pain you considerably, to my |
| sorrow, but I see no way to avoid it." |
| |
| And the burly young man named Samael did lift up the timber, |
| even as before, with no sign of labor. Straightway there |
| came upon Marcus a pain exceeding all that he had known. And |
| it was as though all things were turned unto redness |
| before his eyes. And his countenance was fixed with the |
| astonishment thereof; and being overcome, he did lose all |
| sense, and he knew no more. |
+-----+

By sundown on the day of the great battle the Rebel army had been pressed back into a wide bend of the Potomac River. But it had rained, and the waters were running unexpectedly swift, rendering the fords practically impassable.

The Federal commander surveyed the field but declined to renew the advance, despite holding a numerical advantage. Discontent circulated among the ranks and the officer corps alike; it was widely remarked that even if the commanding general's strength were multiplied several times over, he would still manufacture delays and complain of insufficient troops to strike the enemy.

At dusk on the following day the river subsided, and a mounted courier arrived with orders for the general evacuation of the wounded. Among those awaiting transport were three men who claimed to have been grievously wounded, but restored by the ministrations of an angel, though the medical staff dismissed their accounts as the ravings of delirium.

+-----+ Outside the field hospitals
 | 038: In the midst of | heaps of amputated limbs were
 | that realm there formed | set ablaze. Ambulances began
 | a great hollow sphere of | the grim work of bearing away
 | stone, and to its inward | the maimed. At every roughness
 | face all things were bound. | in the road cries of anguish
 | Thus the ground lay both | arose from the men confined
 | beneath and above, while the | within the wagons.
 | land, bending ever upward, |
 | returned upon itself and | No man who witnessed the
 | became the sky. No star | procession of the casualties,
 | shone there, nor any distant | nor the carnage left upon the
 | fire, for the heavens | field, could ever again speak
 | lay not beyond. Over the | lightly of the glories of war.
 | ordering of that realm | This was a sentiment already
 | presided four: Imran the | deeply shared by the faithful
 | Elder, Avyah the Naming One, | of Lange's congregation.
 | Azul the Accuser, and Ayot |
 | the Flame-Born. | The morning of the nineteenth
 +-----+ rose gray and thin. Smoke
 still clung in the low places, and the fields about the ruined
 meetinghouse were strewn with cast-off gear and darker burdens
 awaiting the brethren. Daniel Price came first among them.

He walked with the stiffness of a hard-laboring man who had not
 slept, and after him John Rowland and Samuel Fahrney, with
 Klaus Reichard and David Stouffer close behind.

They espied Deacon Marcus Lange standing motionless next to the
 ruins of the meetinghouse even as his fellow worshipers emerged
 from their homes.

+-----+ They were in a state of deep
 | 039: They contended | apprehension as they began
 | and consented in long | the cheerless toil of burying
 | alternation, establishing by | the dead. But to a man they
 | degrees the regularities of | rejoiced to find Deacon Lange
 | succession, the laws and | seemingly unharmed.
 | intervals by which change |
 | should proceed. These things | "Brethren," he said, his voice
 | were not fixed by a | hoarse but steady. "Ye have
 | single decree, but through | come early to the house of the
 | prolonged contention, a | Lord, albeit the house be cast
 | continual yielding and | down."
 | taking, until stability |
 | arose from strife. And | And the men marveled that much
 | Avyah, having devised a | of the fallen timber was not
 | tongue for hidden speech, | to be found, as though the
 | bestowed a name upon that | men of the armies had carted
 | realm also, calling it | it away to be used in their
 | Kemen, the Concealed World. | breastworks.

+-----+
 Lange inclined his head, and told them, "A great timber brake my
 leg, so that I could not rise." He set a hand against his back.
 "Another pierced me here and I felt the warmth of my own blood
 depart me."

Reichard frowned and glanced at the others. "Your leg, sir, may
 we see it?"

Without protest, Lange drew his limb forward. The cloth
 was rent, but the flesh beneath showed no swelling, no
 misalignment, and no sign of fracture. Stouffer shook his head.

+-----+ "There is no break here."
 | 040: For a long age Kemen |
 | lay in darkness, unseen by | "And your back," Price added
 | any beyond its bounds. No | gently.
 | stars could be seen within |
 | it, for the world itself | Lange loosened his coat. There,
 | enclosed all sight, and | between his spine and his hip,
 | the sky was only the land | was a pale mark no longer than
 | turning back upon itself. | a finger, as from a shallow cut
 | The Four governed Kemen | long healed. Lange could not
 | together and set their | see the hurt he claimed to have
 | hands to its shaping, each | suffered, but he said, "The
 | according to their own | pain was fierce. It overcame
 | nature, might, and whim. | me, and I fell into darkness."
 | First among them, Imran |
 | the Elder Sire established | Rowland and Fahrney exchanged a
 | in the uttermost north a | worried glance but they said
 | wonder both terrible and | nothing.
 | sustaining. |
 +-----+ Reichard said, "Marcus, I
 believe you were struck upon the head. It is the mercy of God
 that you live, but visions do come of such blows."

At this, Marcus reached into his coat and drew forth a folded
 canvas which he opened with great care. Upon it were traced
 winding lines. No names were marked on them, no towns, no
 mountains or borders, only the flowing paths.

The men bent close. "I know these rivers," Fahrney said slowly,
 though his brow was knit. "Or I think I do. Yet I cannot say
 which is which."

+-----+ "There are no names," Stouffer
 | 041: There he fixed a Lake | said.
 | of Fire, fed without ceasing |
 | from his own substance, | Reichard straightened, shaking
 | a perpetual outpouring of | his head. "A map without names
 | living flame. Yet he did not | is no map at all, one would
 | leave this likeness of a | think."
 | sun unchanged. He caused it |
 | to wax and wane in ordered | "And yet it was given me," said
 | measure, swelling into | Lange.
 | brilliance, then diminishing |
 | into dimness. Thus he | Price studied him a long
 | ordained the succession of | moment, then laid a hand upon
 | day and night, and the | his shoulder. "However it be,
 | turning of the seasons | Marcus, you are returned to us,
 | within Kemen. | God be praised."

+-----+
 Rowland glanced toward them, then back to Lange. "Can you walk?"
 Lange moved without aid. His leg bore him true.

Fahrney gave a quiet, almost incredulous laugh. "Broken, was it?"

"So I believed," Lange answered.

In the uncomfortable silence the women of the congregation were seen coming to join them. Price spoke again, and his voice was heavy.

"Come. There is work to be done. The living must tend to the dead."

+-----+ But Rowland and Fahrney walked
| 042: Then Azul reached out | beside Lange as they left
| to the drifting masses | the sacred precincts, neither
| of stone that attended | pressing him further nor
| him in silent procession, | dismissing what they did not
| bearing them across a subtle | understand.
| bridge into Kemen. With that |
| substance Azul raised the | Now to expedite the necessary
| high hills of the Thanatides | burial of the dead, the Federal
| and the Oinos Range. He | government promised a bounty of
| lifted up Anshar, the Table | one dollar for every soldier
| of Stone, and set about it a | interred by the local farmers.
| girdle of sheer rock rising | It was whispered that one man
| like a wall against all | of Sharpsburg, unaffiliated
| approach. | with the church, had merely
+-----+ dumped scores of bodies into a
dry well to quickly collect the funds.

Amidst the desolation of the battle, Elder David Long sought to rally his dismayed flock.

"Do not grieve overmuch, my friends," he told them. "We shall bury the dead, and make our meetinghouse as it was before."

"It may be wisdom," Lange countered, "that we accept the assistance offered by our new friends of Congregation Derekh Me'hudeshet, and remove ourselves entirely from the path of the war."

"Let every man among us pray upon it," the Elder decided. "And at present, there is no prayer better than hard work."

+-----+ The brethren who had taken the
| 043: Then Avyah turned to | prudent course of driving their
| the frozen multitude that | livestock northward toward
| followed in her train. From | Williamsport had accomplished
| them she brought into Kemen | the task in strength. Yet
| vast stores of ancient, | following the battle Ariel
| unmelted ice. Beneath the | Haivri managed to return,
| breath of Imran's fire she | unaided, every horse, mule, and
| caused it to melt, and so | head of cattle entrusted to the
| the Great Sea came into | Haivri family, as she solemnly
| being. She named it Mori, | promised.
| and its waters spread wide |
| across the hollow of that | Ariel seemed to possess an
| world. | uncanny affinity for the
+-----+ animals, a skill that did
not pass unremarked by the faithful. And it was noted that her
own mount was tended with greater care than she bestowed upon
herself. Even so, Lange found his heart drawn to her.

+-----+
| *Angel Academy* season x episode xx, month day, year: |
| ACT 1 Deacon Marcus Lange stood by the window, adjusting his |
| starched white collar. Brother Ephraim and Brother Silas |
| sat stiffly on a wooden bench, hats in their hands. |
| Ephraim cleared his throat, looking uncomfortable, and said, |
| "Deacon... there is talk among the sisters. They say Lady |
| Ariel... well, they say the beasts aren't the only things |
| that follow her voice. They say a man can get lost in the |
| scent of her, like a bull trailing a heifer." Lange hears |
| them out but he doesn't get angry. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 044: Instead Marcus slowly turns from the window, a wry, |
| clinical smile on his face. He reaches into his waistcoat |
| and pulls out a small pocket watch, winding it slowly. "How |
| fascinating, Brother Ephraim. I had no idea you were such an |
| ardent disciple of Down House." |
| |
| Ephraim seemed baffled. "Down House? I don't follow, |
| Deacon." |
| |
| Lange replied, "Mr. Charles Darwin. His treatise on the |
| origin of species. He argues quite passionately that our |
| highest human sentiments, our loyalty, our art, even the |
| holy covenant of marriage, are nothing more than chemical |
| impulses. Mere animal magnetism designed to ensure the |
| survival of our kind." |
| |
| Lange steps closer to the two men, his boots clicking on the |
| floorboards |
| |
| "So, when you suggest that my attention to Ariel is |
| merely a chemical reaction you are implicitly accepting the |
| materialist conclusions of modern evolutionary science. Tell |
| me, Silas... should I put you down for a lecture series on |
| natural selection next Sunday, or would you prefer to repent |
| of your secularism here in the temple?" Silas and Ephraim |
| turned pale, clutching their hats. They glanced at each |
| other, realizing they had been utterly defeated by a |
| theological chess trap. They muttered an apology to Deacon |
| Lange and quickly escaped the room. |
+-----+

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+-----+
| 045: Monsignor Kendall walks onto the set of Maranatha! with |
| a massive, satisfied grin. "My friends... tonight, I must |
| tip my hat to Deacon Marcus Lange!" He applauds softly, |
| chuckling. |
| |
| "To watch him turn the tables on those gossiping busybodies |
| in Maryland was a joy to behold! They wanted to reduce human |
| affection to a matter of animal pheromones, and what does |
| the deacon do? He looks them dead in the eye and says, 'Aha! |
| You are Darwinists! You have traded the Book of Genesis for |
| the Origin of Species!'" He leans over his podium, laughing. |
| |
| "Oh, it was brilliant! It is the classic error of the modern |
| secularist, my friends: they try to reduce the soul's deep, |
| rational choices to mere biology. But as St. Thomas Aquinas |
| teaches us, the intellect and the will are completely |
| immaterial! A chemical cannot force a man to love; a |
| molecule cannot write a marriage vow! Credo, my boy... if |
| anyone ever tells you that you only serve at the altar |
| because of the smell of the incense, you tell them they are |
| a materialist and a Darwinist! And then tell them to sweep |
| the sacristy. Maranatha!" |
+-----+

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When the work of burying the fallen was completed, Elder David Long announced his decision to remain in Sharpsburg. Joining him was the Price family, who had deeded the land for the meetinghouse. Though their farm had been laid waste they aimed to restore it, grateful at least that their fields had been spared from becoming a military graveyard.

+-----+	Five other families likewise
046: The heat of the Lake of	chose to remain. Together, they
Fire stirred the face of	covenanted to rebuild the house
Mori, drawing vapors upward	of prayer destroyed in the
into the heights. From	crossfire.
them fell abundant rains,	
unceasing torrents that	Ariel said the Haivri family
carved the land into valleys	pledged to assist any of the
and channels, shaping five	brethren willing to relocate
great rivers that descended	far from the threat of
to Mori. These were the	the burgeoning war, possibly
many-turning Cocytus, the	even to the territories.
boiling Phlegethon, which	Several families considered the
flowed from the Lake of	migration, though liquidating
Fire, the Lethe in the far	their land and making the
west, the Acheron, which	necessary preparations for such
emptied near Shalem, and the	an overland journey would
Styx, which watered Adan.	require considerable time.

+-----+

Furthermore, the seemingly boundless generosity of Ariel's kinfolk continued to engender suspicion among some who feared an underlying motive. Lange reminded them of the Apostle's injunction: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Now when the faithful of the Lord of Hosts Fellowship had first viewed Ariel's enclosed portrait many had mistaken her for a young man, or even a lad. Lange himself had initially shared this misconception. Riding north along the road toward the Haivri farm he often positioned himself slightly behind her, observing her closely as his affections increasingly engaged.

+-----+	She sat her horse a full head
047: And thus it came	taller than Lange. Her frame
to pass that the Four	was slender and her hair was
laboured upon that world	unusually short for a woman of
without ceasing. For not in	that era.
concord alone did they work,	
but oftentimes in rivalry.	During the march Lange remarked
Yet strange it was, and	conversationally that it might
unlooked-for by any of them,	become her to allow her
that from this continual	dark, reddish hair to grow
marring and remaking the	out, noting that her current
fabric of Kemen, being ever	appearance gave her the aspect
restruck, became as tempered	of some tall woodland spirit.
metal in the forge; and	Ariel dismissed the suggestion.
the web grew thereby more	"No shears come near my head,"
more full of unexpected	she replied. "The strands grow
vigour, as though adversity	only as long as you see, and no
itself had been made its	longer. Then they fall away,
nourishment.	one by one, and I scarcely take
+-----+	notice."

As the party neared the Haivri farm, the weather suddenly broke, bringing a brief but violent squall. To Lange's considerable astonishment, Ariel surrendered the shelter of her tent entirely to her mount, electing to remain exposed to the downpour herself.

In the days that followed, he observed that she consistently bestowed far more attention upon her horse than she did in assisting her mother Mikaela with the management of their household.

+-----+ Welcomed as an honored guest
 | 048: But Azul knew that | by Mikaela, Lange took the
 | unchecked all the animals | opportunity to inquire directly
 | would breed far beyond | whether her family was of the
 | the ability of Kemen to | Jewish faith. To Mikaela, the
 | support them. Chief among | question seemed to afford her a
 | these animals, he knew, | degree of quiet amusement.
 | would be the human beings |
 | who would come at the very | She said, "The Haivri family
 | last. So Azul altered the | thrived even before the
 | beasts Ayot had brought | construction of the First
 | from Earth, and unleashed | Temple. We predate the
 | monstrous predators from | traditions that the rabbis
 | the darkest dreams of men | have codified in these recent
 | to keep all of them in | centuries in the absence of a
 | check. Then were seen in | sanctuary."
 | Kemen Leviathan, the dragon |
 | under the sea who devoured | Mikaela went on to say, "My
 | those who foundered therein, | surname, Ha-Ivri, means 'The
 | and the winged dragons who | Ones Who Crossed Over.' The
 | nested in aeries on the | word Hebrew is a corruption
 | unassailable cliffs of the | of that term over the passage
 | Wall of God. | of much time. We consider
 +-----+ ourselves the annunciators of
 the oracles God, though men seldom listen to us. From antiquity
 we have grown to expect the indifference of both commoner and
 magistrate."

"But madam," Lange replied, "not a few members of my
 congregation, as well as myself, have already derived great
 benefit from the words you have spoken."

+-----+ As time went on Lange observed
| 049: Then all who went about | that the Haivri residence was
| on two or four legs had to | seemingly kept in a state of
| keep one eye on the sky, for | disorder, but the untidiness
| they were ever the dragons' | of the dwelling stemmed not
| prey, as surely as the | from neglect, but from an
| smaller creatures were ever | abundance of material goods,
| the prey of eagles. And Azul | testifying to an unstudied
| thought himself revenged on | wealth. Ariel's kin similarly
| Ayot by irreparably marring | possessed ample means without
| the good she attempted to | any ostentatious display.
| call forth. But in time Azul | They appeared to operate as
| himself learned that man was | though their resources were
| perhaps the most dangerous | permanently assured. Each
| predator that would ever be. | labored industriously in their
+-----+ own specific pursuits.

Ariel seemed to devote herself to her horses from a genuine affection; she valued the animals for themselves, rather than for the draft or saddle service they provided.

The Haivri family set aside a small cottage for Lange, situated somewhat apart from Ariel's own residence. Her extended kin scattered around the large holding made similar provisions for each of the families from Sharpsburg who had joined the tentative expedition.

Rations were supplied daily in abundance and without cost. This charity, however, was received uneasily by the refugees. Many rural Americans were unaccustomed to accepting sustenance without offering commensurate labor in return.

+-----+ Lange could not entirely
 | 050: And at the command | shake a troubling suspicion:
 | of Azul did Avyah shape | he feared his uprooted
 | an articulated avatar, the | congregation had become an idle
 | winged horror, a great | diversion for Mikaela, much
 | scaled flame-carrier whose | in the same way he suspected
 | form was as a vast drake of | the horses were a diversion
 | fire and folded hide, whose | for Ariel. But regardless
 | presence was at once animal | of her underlying motives,
 | and omen, beast and memory. | Mikaela graciously granted the
 | And this being born of metal | refugees the use of Temple
 | and collected nightmare the | Derekh Me'hudeshet, allowing
 | later ages named Moloch. | the congregation a proper place
 +-----+ to assemble for their Sunday
 services.

Lange's growing affections for Ariel soon became a source of profound internal disquiet. He could no longer dismiss his experience at the ruined meetinghouse as ravings of a battlefield fever; the rapid healing of his shattered leg stood as undeniable proof to himself, even if none of the others believed him.

He suspected the Haivri were real angels dwelling among humanity, yet this conclusion brought him no comfort. As a man well grounded in Scripture, Lange was aware of the teaching set forth in the Gospel of Luke, where those who attain the resurrection are said to "neither marry, nor are given in marriage," being made equal unto the angels. If Ariel was indeed an angel, as all the evidence seemed to suggest, his growing attachment to her was not only futile but presumptuous.

+-----+ Compounding his confusion
 | 051: And when Ayot | was how the Haivri family's
 | first brought humankind | untidy household and Ariel's
 | into Kemen, placing them | fascination with beasts
 | upon its inward lands | hardly aligned with orthodox
 | as one sets seed into | depictions of the heavenly
 | prepared soil, she perceived | host. Seeking clarity, Lange
 | therein a discovery of | approached Ariel while she
 | great consequence. Yet she | was brushing down her mount.
 | concealed it from all save | He broached the subject
 | her Mother, as it was | cautiously, framing his dilemma
 | knowledge that offered final | as a matter of theological
 | deliverance. For she had | inquiry rather than a personal
 | discerned that the passage | confession. He asked how
 | between Kemen and Earth, | a man of faith ought to
 | wrought by herself and Azul | reconcile the revealed nature
 | through the making of hidden | of House Haivri with scriptural
 | bridges, did not only move | teachings. Ariel paused in her
 | matter, but also touched the | work, recognizing the personal
 | ordering of time itself. | anguish hidden beneath his
 +-----+ question. She understood the
 rigid view of the Bible common among most rural congregations,
 and she was reluctant to dismantle the foundation of his faith.

"Marcus," she replied, her tone careful but direct, "you read the Scriptures as though they were a monologue by God. But consider the texts you know so well. The Book of Proverbs promises the righteous will always prosper and the wicked will always fall, yet turn to the Book of Job and you find a world where the innocent suffer terribly under an inscrutable God. Perhaps what we really have is a dialogue by men."