

+-----+ 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."

+-----+ Lange conceded the point,
| 052: And Ayot knew that | though he was unaccustomed to
| beneath the shaping of | hearing it stated so bluntly.
| forests and seas there lay a |
| deeper shaping of fate; and | She said, "The scribes who
| this she resolved to keep | compiled the texts understood
| hidden from Azul and from | these contradictions perfectly,
| Imran. And Ayot came at last | yet included them together, not
| to the full measure of that | to confuse the reader, but to
| hidden knowledge, and saw | capture the full, complicated
| its shape entire. | breadth of existence. You
+-----+ should not assume that the
nature of my family is bound by a single verse in Luke."

+-----+
| Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day, year: ACT 2 |
| One evening at supper Mikaela casually remarked to Ariel |
| that she stood in clear need of a male companion, if only |
| to quiet certain persistent rumors passing among the |
| refugees. The following morning, Ariel promptly purchased a |
| stallion. |
| |
| On another occasion, Lange betrayed a momentary, sharp |
| jealousy upon discovering a strange hair clinging to her |
| coat; Ariel simply led forth the horse from which it had |
| been shed, to his considerable embarrassment. |
| |
| Determined to proceed properly, Lange sought out Mikaela |
| the next day and asked with all seriousness, "What must |
| I know of the customs of the Haivri clan concerning |
| courtship?" |
+-----+

+-----+
| 053: Mikaela replied, "If you have a mind toward Ariel, |
| then know that she is wholly free. The Family keeps no |
| rules of the sort you imagine. If there are to be any such |
| customs they shall be appointed by Ariel herself, and it |
| will be your task to discover them. That is the nature of |
| it, and truth be told, Marcus, therein lies the interest!" |
|
| Marcus fell silent as he pondered this. The matriarch then |
| shifted the conversation to a more serious theological |
| footing. "But now I would ask you, Marcus what are your |
| views concerning divorce?" |
|
| "The brethren have always held the New Testament to be the |
| absolute rule for every part of our lives," Lange answered. |
|
| "That is exactly why I asked," Mikaela replied. "In |
| the Gospel according to Mark, the Lord Yeshua is |
| reported to have forbidden divorce altogether. Yet in |
| the text attributed to Matthew, he permits it in cases |
| of infidelity. Paul also wrote that the marriage bond |
| may be dissolved when one party remains in unbelief. |
| Your Scripture says both yes and no, and something else |
| besides." By these remarks, Mikaela demonstrated a grasp of |
| Christian Scripture far greater than Lange had anticipated. |
|
| "Be that as it may, madam," Lange answered, "it is of no |
| consequence. I truly love your daughter, and I solemnly |
| swear to you that the question of divorce shall never be an |
| issue between us." |
+-----+

+-----+
| 054: "Your words do you credit, Marcus," Mikaela said. "Yet |
| even with the veil of affection over your eyes you must |
| have noticed how Ariel has a certain manner with animals." |
| |
| "I am grieved, madam, that you accept the strange notions |
| of Mr. Charles Darwin," Lange replied, genuinely dismayed |
| by the comparison. Certain of his congregation had said |
| much the same thing and he had been thrown into a pique. |
| |
| "We consider it far stranger," Mikaela countered, "to |
| suppose that men, and wen for that matter, and len, and jen |
| are altogether set apart from the rest of creation." |
| |
| "Then, madam," Lange pressed, "do you agree with the less |
| charitable members of my flock who whisper that I have been |
| bewitched by your daughter?" |
| |
| "I do not wish to imply Ariel is using her Mercy to gather |
| you in a snare, Marcus," Mikaela answered calmly. "No. I |
| speak of a deeper matter. As your courtship proceeds, it |
| will inevitably uncover secrets of the family far beyond |
| what you have already witnessed." She went on to offer a |
| measured warning. "Mystery is certainly part of the charm. |
| But do not proceed with undue haste, lest you are overcome |
| by surprises too profound to endure." |
| |
| Marcus took his leave of Mikaela to ponder these words. |
| And whether through wishful thinking or no, Marcus soon |
| perceived that Ariel sought out his company in her turn. |
+-----+

+-----+

| 055: As time went on Ariel seemed to requite his affinity |
| in small signs that waxed at a stately pace. There came an |
| evening when his suit crossed some invisible boundary, and |
| Ariel loosed some of the bonds of her corselet. |
| |
| Ariel discreetly revealed something substantial of what a |
| mortal man was set to receive when an elyonth of House |
| Haivri set her heart upon him in return. To Marcus's mind |
| her show of brown-feathered wings seemed to settle matters. |
| |
| Yet, rather than feeling triumphant, this development |
| seemed to precipitate in him a profound sense of |
| inadequacy. He was a simple rural deacon, anchored to the |
| mud and blood of Maryland, while she was a living marvel. |
| |
| Unable to contain his doubts, he approached her one evening |
| by the stables. |
| |
| "Ariel," he began haltingly, "I must confess a great |
| bewilderment. You have traversed bounds of history and |
| geography in ways that I can scarcely comprehend. What |
| could a woman of your vast experience possibly see in a man |
| of my humble station?" |
| |
| Ariel paused in her work, leaning against the stall door. |
| "Marcus," she said solemnly, "Clear-sighted were they who |
| appointed you deacon of your church. I have never in my |
| life met a man more abundantly possessed of the grace of |
| God and more willing to share." |
+-----+

+-----+
| 056: Then, dropping all pretense of formality that Lange |
| had supposed was foundational to the great game of pitching |
| woo, she went on to say, "But I am genuinely astonished |
| that a man of your age has never received the Mommy and |
| Daddy Talk." |
| |
| Marcus Lange had expected a philosophical treatise on the |
| nature of love across time. The absurdity of her actual |
| response shattered his insecurities entirely. The matter |
| was settled between them, and their course toward matrimony |
| was firmly established. |
| |
| At her bridal gathering, Ariel received numerous gifts, a |
| significant portion of which were, perhaps inevitably, |
| horse bridles. |
| |
| On the day appointed for the wedding itself, Ariel tarried |
| overlong mucking and tending the stables. Regardless, |
| Marcus patiently waited for Ariel to stand beside him, and |
| proceeded with his vows. |
| |
| Father Kendall stands at his pulpit, looking thoroughly |
| delighted. "My friends...the writers of *Angel Academy* |
| gave us a lesson in the sacrament of holy matrimony that |
| should be carved on the door of every rectory in the land! |
| Our beloved Ariel and the Deacon Marcus Lange! To watch him |
| get so tongue-tied and terrified when she revealed her |
| beautiful brown wings!" |
| |
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| 057: He laughs leaning over his pulpit. |
| |
| "Marcus thought he had to be a saint, a doctor of the |
| Church, or a cosmic philosopher to deserve her!" "And what |
| does the archangel say to him? She doesn't quote the Summa |
| Theologiae! She looks him in the eye and tells him he needs |
| the 'Mommy and Daddy Talk'! Oh, it was a magnificent, holy |
| piece of comedy! It reminds us that marriage is not an |
| abstract, high-altitude theological treatise! It is an |
| earthy, physical, and joyful reality! It is about sharing a |
| table, cleaning a stable, and laughing at our own ridiculous |
| human limitations! And that wedding! My friends, that is |
| true, Christian love! He didn't care that her boots were |
| muddy or that she was late, he knew her heart was true, and |
| he was ready to say 'I do' whether she was holding a bouquet |
| or a shovel! |
+-----+

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It was not until the second week of July, in the year following the battle, that the Remnant, having by then adopted the name Root of Jesse Fellowship, set out for the western territories. The House of Haivri made the necessary provisions, securing for them passage by rail for part of the distance.

In retrospect, their departure was well timed. Events in the East soon justified that conclusion. Following General Lee's Maryland campaign, President Abraham Lincoln relieved General George McClellan of command and placed General Ambrose Burnside at the head of the army. Burnside had commanded the bloody and useless contest for the stone bridge.

+-----+ Now he advanced upon
| 058: For in the seeking out | Fredericksburg, where his
| of the first settlers of | operations resulted in a severe
| humankind, when she passed | repulse. A subsequent movement
| through the interwoven seams | undertaken in unfavorable
| of time, she chose not at | weather was halted before
| hazard, but by remembrance. | it could develop, the
| And it was the very pair she | President acting upon urgent
| and Avyah had once beheld in | representations from Burnside's
| a hillside cave, when yet | own officers.
| Earth was young in their |
| observation and Kemen not | Command then passed to General
| yet drawn forth, a thousand | Joseph Hooker, who had
| years by the reckoning of | previously directed the right
| men, before the inward world | of the Federal line during the
| was made. | fighting at Sharpsburg. By this
+-----+ stage of the war a growing
sentiment had taken hold in both armies that Lee could not be
successfully opposed. The impression was not confined to the
ranks, and appears to have influenced Hooker himself. At
Chancellorsville, though in possession of superior numbers, he
failed to press his advantage. Lee, dividing his force in the
presence of the enemy, achieved another success, and in doing so
strengthened the prevailing belief in his army's invincibility.

The President next appointed General George Meade to command
the army, a decision widely regarded at the time as sound.
Meade had previously assumed direction of the First Corps when
Hooker was disabled during the Maryland operation, and was
considered a man of resolution. He was accounted more decisive
than McClellan, yet less impetuous than Burnside.

+-----+ And unlike Hooker, Meade did
| 059: Hava the Milk-Giver sat | not appear overawed by Lee.
| beside a living flame. At |
| her breast she nursed her | When General Robert E. Lee
| young, Kayin the Clinging | again crossed the Potomac River
| One, while with her other | with the intention of carrying
| hand she traced signs of | the war into the North, the
| color upon the stone. Nearby | converging roads brought the
| stood Dimai, the Binder of | opposing armies together near
| Edges. He tended the fire | the town of Gettysburg. The
| and set above it the sap | first day's fighting was marked
| of trees, causing it to | by considerable confusion. Lee
| seethe and thicken. With the | was absent from the field for
| softened gum he bound a | much of the action, and Meade
| sharpened stone to a shaft | would not arrive until later
| of wood, making thereby a | that evening.
| weapon for the hunt. |

+-----+ The Federal forces, pressed
heavily, withdrew to a ridge of modest elevation but
considerable extent, where they established a defensive line.
Lee's position immediately to the west was on a somewhat
lower height. It afforded only a limited view of the enemy's
dispositions; his cavalry, upon which he customarily relied for
intelligence, was not available to provide timely reports.

Efforts were made against the Federal right without success,
after which the left was engaged with even greater severity. The
fighting on both fronts was costly, yet neither effort proved
decisive. The situation thus left Lee with a narrower set of
options than he had previously entertained. The decision was
made to attempt a direct assault upon the center of the Union
line.

+-----+ This was preceded by an
| 060: A noise other than | artillery bombardment of
| the crackling of the fire | unusual magnitude, exceeding
| startled them both. Dimai | in scale anything previously
| took up a torch and went | witnessed on this continent.
| deeper into the cave, to | But the assault itself failed.
| learn what manner of thing | A small portion of the
| had made the sound, fearing | attacking force reached the
| that the cave might be | stone wall, to be sure, but
| the lair of a bear, or | they could not maintain their
| perhaps even the dwelling | position and were captured or
| of other men. He passed a | driven back.
| wall covered with images of |
| animals and hunters, and | The result of the third day
| knew thereby that the cave | settled the contest in favor of
| had been used long before. | the Union. After the action,
| Yet there was also much dry | General Lee withdrew his army
| firewood, speaking of more | behind South Mountain and made
| recent habitation. | for Virginia with what speed
+-----+ circumstances allowed. General
Meade followed on a line roughly parallel, keeping to the
eastern side of the ridge, though his movements were necessarily
cautious.

+-----+
| Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day, year: |
| On the very eve of their departure for the territories |
| a catastrophe nearly struck the migrants as they made |
| themselves ready at the Haivri farm. Confederate cavalymen |
| arrived, quite intent on seizing the gathered horses |
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+-----+
| 061: They had a mind of putting the pilfered to use hauling |
| anything else of value ripe for the plucking, such as the |
| passenger's waiting luggage. |
| |
| Joshua tried to play the brave protector, but he had nothing |
| on hand but his wits and a pitchfork. Ariel's solution was |
| not violence, not intimidation, and not even deception. The |
| cavalrymen tugged on reins. The horses planted their feet. |
| They pushed and the horses refused. They brought additional |
| men and the horses refused harder. One horse sat down. |
| Another began grazing. A third wandered over to Ariel |
| looking for an apple. |
| |
| "What is wrong with these animals?" |
| |
| Joshua, leaning on the fence, says, "You're dealing with |
| Hebrews." |
| |
| The soldier stares. "The horses?" |
| |
| "Especially the horses." |
| |
| The soldiers can seize a horse but they cannot make it want |
| to go. The patrol finally gives up and rides away. |
| |
| Ariel scratches one of the horses behind the ears and |
| says: "You were very brave." The horse immediately tries |
| to eat her sleeve. Because horses are horses, miracles |
| notwithstanding. |
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+-----+
| 062: Father Kendall leaned on his podium and |
| smiled. "Tonight, the writers of *Angel Academy* gave us |
| a wonderful lesson in the power of non-violence. The |
| Confederate soldiers came with guns, with whips, and with |
| the authority of an army. But they could not make those |
| horses budge an inch! It reminds us of the early Christians, |
| the martyrs who stood before the Roman coliseums. They did |
| not raise swords. |
| |
| "They simply planted their feet, sat down, and refused to |
| worship the Emperor. They were 'stiff-necked' in their |
| faith. And like those stubborn horses on Ariel's farm, they |
| proved that you can chain a man's body, but you can never |
| make him want to go. The writers of *Angel Academy* took |
| a historical Civil War border-clash and turned it into a |
| warm, funny and deeply philosophical manifesto on the power |
| of saying 'No.'" |
+-----+

The members of the Root of Jesse Fellowship journeyed north and west by a succession of short rail lines, joined one to another across the Appalachian Mountains. The rails, being of wrought iron, did not permit high speed without undue wear, and the journey was accordingly slow. The terrain imposed further delay; the ridges obstructed a direct course and required frequent deviation.

Numerous stops were made for fuel and passengers, and it was not until the better part of two days and a night had passed that they arrived at Pittsburgh.

+-----+ In that city they left off
| 063: And Dimai guessed that | travel by rail and took passage
| those who dwelt within the | upon a small steamboat bound
| cave had been caught out in | down the Ohio River.
| the storm. The cave narrowed |
| into a tunnel that meandered | Though borne along by the
| onward and grew lighter, | current, they were still in its
| though by all reason it | upper reaches, where the river
| should have grown darker. | ran narrow and winding, and
| Dimai was joined by his | their progress was accordingly
| woman, Hava, and her child. | moderate. The change in
| They came at last to another | conveyance, however, afforded
| cave mouth, deep within the | some greater comfort. Cabins
| interior of the mountain, | were available upon the upper
| and beyond it they beheld a | deck, where most of the party
| strangely mottled sky. | were lodged, the women of the
+-----+ party being assigned quarters
toward the stern. They were spared the necessity, common among
less prepared travelers, of sleeping upon the lower deck among
bales of wool and other cargo, and their meals were taken aboard
in regular fashion.

For several days the company passed the time in quiet
observation as they traveled the river south and west through
wooded hills. The vessel made frequent stops at small
settlements set close against the slopes, where passengers were
taken on or discharged as chance may have it, and where wood and
water were brought aboard for the boiler. This machinery,
working constantly beneath the decks, produced a noise and
vibration that, though soon familiar, remained a source of some
uneasiness.

+-----+ At Cincinnati they left the
| 064: A branchless tree, | boat and resumed their journey
| resembling a whip, stirred | by rail, the river having
| into motion and struck the | carried them through a district
| ground before them. The | where the lines were not
| whip-tree seized Dimai's | yet continuous. A similar
| torch and hurled it away, | interruption occurred at East
| whereupon it kindled a fire. | St. Louis, where they again
| The two could not emerge | crossed by boat, there being at
| from the cave by reason | that time no bridge over the
| of the whip-tree and the | Mississippi River except at a
| growing fire. Dimai and Hava | considerable distance to the
| edged back into the tunnel, | north.
| away from the heat. When |
| the whip-tree caught fire, | Once on the western bank, they
| it began to thrash more | took passage again by rail,
| fiercely than they had seen | traveling under the arrangement
| it do before. | made with the General Materials
+-----+ concern, and from that point
their progress was more rapid, as the tracks were newly laid and
in better condition than those they had encountered farther
east.

Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day, year:

As the train slowed on its approach, Marcus observed among those assembled on the platform a woman whom he at once took to be of the House of Haivri. She was of uncommon height, exceeding most of the men present by a full head, and was dressed in a manner not usual among women. Her clothing consisted of leather armor worked in overlapping scales of red and black, ornamented with brass from neck to foot.

+-----+ Straightaway Ariel went forth
| 065: They retreated deep | to embrace her. said, "Lailah,
| within the cave until the | I doubt not that Gabriela did
| tree burned to a lifeless | prevail upon thee to adorn
| crisp, and returned when | thyself for this occasion."
| the fire had abated. A |
| blackened patch of land | Lailah replied, "Nay, Ariel;
| lay before the man and | for I was constrained to bring
| woman and continued to | these wagons hither one by one,
| smolder. They stepped across | and I did fly back unto the
| the hot, burnt soil and | farm to fetch more."
| watched carefully for any |
| movement. When they gazed | Ariel answered, "Then let us
| back toward the tunnel, they | hope in flying that none did
| were startled to see the | see thee."
| mountain was gone. |

+-----+ From Independence they
proceeded south into the valley of the Blue River, which enters
the Missouri River between that town and Kansas City. There they
traveled with Lailah in her seven mud wagons, and under her
direction the whole company moved along the course of the
stream. The route passed a number of small farms and required
several crossings of the river before they came at last to a
substantial structure set close against its western bank. This
place was called by Lailah Big Blue, and it was constructed of
large blocks of limestone fitted carefully together without
mortar and raised only a single story in height.

The structure appeared strong and serviceable, though Marcus
noted that a coating of whitewash would have improved its
appearance.

+-----+ Big Blue stood within an
| 066: The sun did not | enclosure, fenced about, in
| move across the sky, but | which there was kept a small
| seemed to be like a bright | herd of oxen.
| outstretched hand. Still, it |
| waned in brightness, and | The animals had consumed the
| the strange land began to | grass down to the root and
| grow cold. Dimai used some | were thereafter maintained upon
| of the smoldering embers | stored hay alone. The men and
| to rekindle a fire at | elder boys of the company
| the tunnel entrance, and | unharnessed the fourteen horses
| returned to the other world | that had brought the party
| to hunt game. So supper was | from the station to that
| two hares, caught by Adamu | place. Ariel led them into
| and skinned by Chava, with | the pasture, where they were
| milk for little Kayin. | permitted to graze among the
+-----+ oxen, and she provided them
with alfalfa in abundance, which they consumed with evident
satisfaction, as though it were sweetmeat.

Following Lailah, the thirty-three pilgrims entered through the great double doors of the house known as Big Blue and observed the interior. Within was a large bay wherein stood ten prairie schooners yet unfinished, their frames rising nearly to the ceiling under the arc of the roof. At one end of the structure was an area set aside for the taking of meals in common.

Along the walls were arranged chambers of various sizes, allotted to the several families among the company. Lailah then addressed them, saying, "I bid you all welcome unto this place which we have made ready for you.

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+-----+ "There is much that ye must
| 067: In the morning they | learn before ye shall be
| saw that the burned glade | prepared to complete your
| was already sporting shoots | journey."
| of fresh grass. The next |
| day the grass was tall | Lailah further said that when
| enough for the couple to run | those under her charge had
| barefoot and free. It was a | been instructed sufficiently,
| whole new world. Dimai and | it would already be too late
| Hava thought it belonged to | in the season to complete the
| them alone, but that was not | journey and prepare all things
| to be. A small herd of bison | before the coming of winter.
| emerged from the tunnel and | For this reason, she declared
| proceeded to eat the alien | that they should abide at that
| grass, driven before them by | place until the spring.
| a fearsome red-winged beast, |
| with a head like a snake, |
| but with four massive legs |
| to walk upon, and two arms |
| like a man. |
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| Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day, year: As a |
| girl preparing to embark on the Oregon Trail in 1865, Linda |
| Bergin discovered that oxen sometimes did not turn at |
| the touch of a goad. They were called "stiff of neck" |
| and scripture frequently referred to the Israelites as a |
| stiff-necked people. But Sar Lailah said the term had taken |
| on a negative connotation it did not truly deserve. |
+-----+

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+-----+
| 068: She said if one wished to move toward a single goal |
| without turning to one side or the other, as the migrants |
| certainly wished to do, then a stiffnecked character had |
| much to commend it. So Linda took to calling all the |
| pilgrims "Stiffnecks." This term quickly caught on as a |
| self-deprecating moniker. |
| |
| In 1872 Lailah gave the same young Linda an angelic |
| pre-wedding gift, The Blades of Many Colors, with handles of |
| matching hue. "Each one of them has a name, can you guess |
| this one?" Lailah touched the handle of the white one as it |
| lay stowed in the wooden block. "Mikaela, angel of star |
| fire!" Linda answered right away, and as she named each |
| blade, the corresponding angel was seen in silent action, as |
| though she was seeing them in her mind's eye. |
| |
| Next, Lailah touched the silver one, and Linda said, |
| "Remiel, who can peer though time." Violet was for Cassiel, |
| swift of foot and tireless. Blue was for Rashiel the winged |
| messenger. Serael was green, she who goes unseen. Gold was |
| for Gabriela the peacemaker. Yellow was for Lirael, daughter |
| of the Voice. Red was for Raphael with healing hands. Brown |
| was for Ariel, beloved of beasts. Linda herself reached for |
| the black one, and said, "This one is yours, Sar Lailah, one |
| blade for each color the wings of angels have." |
| |
| "And one for each finger you could lose mishandling them in |
| the slightest," warned Cassiel, gently moving Linda's hand |
| away and removing the black blade herself. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 069: She turned it sideways to let Linda see the stiff blade |
| was invisible to the eye when seen edge-on. "In giving these |
| to you, Nana is being irresponsible in the extreme." To |
| demonstrate, Cassiel set one point-down upon an oak table |
| and it sank under its own weight as though the blade was |
| immersed in water. |
| |
| Father Kendall stands at his pulpit, looking thoroughly |
| |
| engaged, holding an ordinary, dull silver butter knife. "My |
| friends, tonight the writers of Angel Academy gave us an |
| episode that cuts right to the bone of what it means to be a |
| stubborn, faithful pilgrim! |
| |
| He taps the butter knife on the wooden pulpit. |
| |
| "The origin of the name 'Stiffneck'! In the Old Testament, |
| the Lord lamented that Israel was a stiff-necked people: |
| stubborn, unyielding, refusing to turn their heads! Yet |
| young Linda Bergin looked at the oxen pulling the wagons to |
| the future site of Havilah and realized something profound: |
| if you want to cross eight hundred miles of rivers and |
| prairie and sand hills without turning back, you need to be |
| stiff of neck! You cannot look to the left; you cannot look |
| to the right! You must fix your eyes on the goal!" |
| |
| He chuckles, shaking his head. |
| |
| "And Sar Lailah's wedding gift! The Blades of Many Colors!" |
+-----+

+-----+
| 070: "Knives so sharp they are invisible edge-on, sinking |
| through solid oak under their own weight! Cassiel called it |
| irresponsible, and from a safety standpoint, the good Scribe |
| was certainly right! But there is a spiritual lesson in that |
| terrible edge, my friends. The Word of God, St. Paul tells |
| the Hebrews, is 'sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing |
| even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit'! Divine |
| truth doesn't need to be forced into the world with a |
| sledgehammer. It doesn't need human violence. If you simply |
| set the edge of truth upon the stubborn timbers of this |
| life, it will sink through by the sheer, quiet weight of |
| what it is!" |
+-----+

"There's the birthday girl!" gushed Dory when Remiel showed up at her house. With a basement and four floors all done up in finely crafted hardwood, it was one of the more magnificent homes in Havilah, lying halfway up Treehouse Hill. Cubby called it the Shybear Hut, as though it were merely an alpine shelter.

Remy said, "I've got my heart set on taking a road trip."

Dory said, "Do I need to remind you the first week of June is finals, and you can't afford to miss it. You've already slipped a year behind us. Do you want to make it two?"

Remy said, "My wings are starting to come in."

071: Dory drew close to wrap her arms around her, and sure enough she could feel a pair of bony stubs under Remy's blouse.

"My mother is a nurse, Dory. I can't hide these from her. Dr. Wahkan will tell her it's nothing to worry about, but we both know my mother will take me to a doctor in Lusk for a second opinion. You can imagine what will happen after that."

"Quarantine. Federal agents snooping all over Havilah. You're right, finals can wait. The faculty won't punish you for doing the right thing."

"I need to hide until my wings start actually looking like wings. Then my mother might listen. For now I just want you to show me how to make a halo."

Dory smiled and said, "Oh, you mean like this?"

And suddenly she was enveloped in a bubble just like Glinda the Good Witch of the North, transparent rather than translucent pink. With reduced weight, she was able to do a double backflip in the sight of Remiel before landing on her feet and letting her halo snap off.

Dory said, "It's complicated, like swallowing, but who ever taught you how to swallow? You just know."

"It's my birthday, Dory. Where's my Dizzy Lizzy?"

And Dory's gaze narrowed a bit. "How did you know such things as Dizzy Lizzies existed?"

+-----+ Remiel shrugged and said, "I
| 072: The beast carried a | have a tutor these days."
| two-headed ax to the edge of |
| the burn, where a native | "Anyone I know?"
| plant had taken root in the |
| blackened soil. Before the | "It's not any one of the
| eyes of Dimai and Hava it | professors here in Havilah. I
| laid the ax to the base of | must be a hard case, Dory. I
| the plant and chopped it | drew someone from Upstairs."
| cleanly off. Then it flipped |
| the ax around and used the | Cubby joined them and he
| sharp tip of the handle | caught the tail end of the
| to pry the weed from the | conversation, enough to ask,
| soil. Then the red monster | "Is that a new seraph? Did
| interposed itself between | Avyah finally decide to get a
| the cave entrance and the | living avatar?"
| human family, and drew near |
| to them. | Remiel shook her head. "My
+-----+ tutor's name's Joshua. He said
he's really Davar."

"Davar's back for his famous second run? I thought the elohim on our side were dead set against serial possession. They'll do it once, but never twice. They fear dissolution."

"They have good reason to fear it, Cubby. The living star Ayot and Avram became Ser Uriel, and now Avram's dead and Uriel got rolled back into Ayot. Do that too many times and there would be damn little of the original Ayot left over. She's tried to warn the Other Team, but they never listen. She's watched them do this to themselves time and again for four thousand years."

+-----+ "So you think your Josh is the
 | 073: They backed away until | original Josh."
 | they reached the edge of the |
 | burned area. The beast held | "But he's slumming it now,"
 | out the tool and motioned | said Remiel. "One disciple
 | for the man to take it. | instead of twelve."
 | Dimai trembled with great |
 | fear, but did as he was bade | Dory told her brother why Remy
 | to do. As the Red Dragon | had come. "She wants to see her
 | watched, Dimai found another | Dizzy Lizzy. Somebody spoiled
 | plant that was growing at | the big surprise."
 | the edge of the grazing |
 | ground for the bison. He | Cubby said, "We'll have to walk
 | did as he had seen Moloch | to the campus. Dad's already at
 | do, and killed the intruding | Temple and he took the Woodie."
 | weed. |

+-----+ The Shybear place was usually
 in a whiteout situation that cleared up a little when one
 dropped off Treehouse Hill. Two blocks west of the Academy's
 music hall, Gran Via crossed the brook Eschol on a bridge.

Cubby led Remiel and his sister down the riparian left bank of
 that stream. They went about four hundred paces, until the creek
 turned to the northeast to flow on to Lake Taijitu. From there
 they struck off overland toward the Academy until they arrived
 at a large concrete apron painted with guidelines.

This was an outlying area of the Migdalel College campus.
 Previously, Remiel had no idea it even existed. The shore of the
 lake lay along the north side of the flight line, at the bottom
 of a slope of boulders.

+-----+ Cubby said, "You should see
| 074: After this, Dimai was | this place at night, all lit
| taught how to restore the | up."
| keen edge of the ax with |
| the rough surface of a | Dory said, "Yeah, the lights
| stone. The Dragon returned | pulse and light up the fog.
| to the tunnel entrance, to | When you're looking down at
| be joined by the avatar of | this place from above you can't
| Ayot, which in time yet | miss it.
| to come would be called |
| Turiel, the faceless white | A hangar resembling a giant
| man-shape she had used when | Quonset hut made entirely of
| she created the first spoken | wood was built right on the
| tongue with her mother. | field. There were two giant
+-----+ roll-up doors on each end. Dory
led the way through the offices inside the hangar as though she
owned the place. In a sense she did. Dory had already logged
many hours of flight time.

To Remiel, this place reminded her of the tunnels under the
Temple, a whole new world unknown to her, but simultaneously one
in which the Shybear kids were thoroughly immersed.

Double doors at the end of the hallway past the offices led into
the main space, which was dizzyingly enormous. At a glance, Dory
saw all eight Dizzy Lizzies parked in the hangar and drew near
to one with an aluminum skin. In outline it was a squat
hexagonal pyramid made of metal. She said, "Here's yours, Remy."

And indeed Remiel's name was lovingly painted on the aluminum
skin in white script.

+-----+	The thing was built on a base
075: Azul held up a	five meters flat-to-flat. It
red claw and pondered	rested on three wheeled pylons
what he saw, saying, I	a full meter off the deck
find this an exceedingly	and was itself a meter thick.
strange mode of being,	At the crew positions, two
Daughter. Liquid motes of	separate glass bubble canopies
separated star-stuff. So	lay wide open like book covers,
very sluggish, yet the	on hinges.
combinations are without	
end. Here are	The core of the vehicle
the living creatures I	was a hollow cylinder two
discovered, Ayot said, as	meters in diameter, with flow
though her father had said	baffles slung below and two
nothing, for she refused to	counter-rotating propellers,
be distracted. Now you may	each one with its own motor on
see for yourself whether	a lubricated chain drive.
such as these are a danger	
to our own kind, as you	Cubby ascended a ladder
aver. But now fulfill our	installed on the hull and
covenant, Father, and allow	reached down to pull the girls
me to at least listen to the	up. There were areas marked NO
song and lore of the elohim.	STEP. Dory said, "Try to stay
+-----+	on the non-skid."

Remiel looked down into the central core and asked, "Why does it have two propellers?"

Dory said, "The short answer is Isaac Newton. You know, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. A Dizzy Lizzy would really make you dizzy with just one propeller."

+-----+ Cubby added, "Those baffles
| 076: This place will surely | direct the thrust and tilt the
| kill them if they try to | whole thing, because after you
| leave their small garden. | get airborne the idea is to
| You must bring to this world | actually go somewhere."
| forty more such groups of |
| your creatures. This you | "Why is mine so shiny?" asked
| must do ere I permit you to | Remiel.
| hear the City of Stars, as |
| it will capture your psyche | Dory told her. "These things
| like nothing else, and long | are supposed to match the color
| will you stand heedless. | of your wings. I think yours
+-----+ are coming in silver."

For some inexplicable reason, this made Remiel start to cry, and both Dory and Cubby instinctively moved in close to comfort her. They were confused, and if they only knew what Remy knew, it would break their hearts also. Remiel accepted the love of her friends and seemed to rally a bit. She asked, "Where's your own ride?"

Dory pointed at another Dizzy Lizzy that was identical to hers in every way, except it was sky blue, matching Dory's feathers.

Remiel looked around and counted the aircraft. "Have they taken some of them out? I only see eight, but there's ten elyonim."

Cubby said, "Mom's a runner, not a flier, and Serael's halo may make her invisible but it also makes her totally blind."

Remy crouched to touch the hull of her own.

+-----+ She said, "I want to take mine
| 077: In time, the sons of | up." Dory started at Remiel for
| Dimai and Hava grew into | a moment to make sure she was
| the years of their strength, | serious. She was. Dory said,
| when the time comes that | "Good thing Cubby came with
| they should take wives. And | us. I think the three of us
| Hava came out once more from | together could wheel your Dizzy
| the tunnel, and with her | Lizzy outside. But unless you
| she brought a young woman | can already make a halo, that's
| taken from the Earth; and | as far as it will go."
| immediately there joined |
| her the presence of Ayot, | "Then take me up, Dory. I'll
| in the form of her white | ride shotgun."
| and featureless Husk. And |
| though this form was less | "You've really got your mind
| terrifying than the red | made up about this thing with
| horror of Azul, yet it | your momma, don't you?"
| was deeply strange to see, |
| being smooth and without a | Cubby said, "I wanna go with."
| face, like carved bone made |
| living. | But Dory shook her head
+-----+ no. "It's just a two-seater.
There's a small compartment for luggage, but riding in that
would be about as fun as being thrown in the trunk of a car."

"What about that wheelchair?" Remiel nodded aside. For the first time, Dory noticed a wooden wheelchair sitting there by itself in the middle of the hangar. It was like a material non sequitur.

"Who left that standing there?" asked Dory.

+-----+ Remiel said, "That was Joshua.
| 078: And Hava sought to | He says he wants to teach
| comfort the new woman, | me a lesson about operational
| speaking softly to her and | deception, among other things.
| promising that no harm | But I made the wheelchair
| would come to her in that | myself in Woodshop. Do you like
| place. Then Ayot led the | it?"
| woman first to Kayin, the |
| firstborn of Dimai, who | "Woodshop! I didn't know the
| was in the field gathering | Academy had Woodshop." But
| his harvest. And Kayin, | suddenly all the pieces fit
| seeing the presence of Ayot, | into place for Dory. She said,
| bowed low and brought out | "This is a Prank! You're on a
| the finest fruits of his | Prank."
| yield, offering them with |
| reverence. | Remiel said, "I'm on my
+-----+ graduation Prank, and it's not
a safe one, so I'm glad Cubby can't go along. I've grown quite
fond of him, if you've noticed." Cubby winked at her when he
heard her say that, and he broke out into a broad smile.

"Aren't you quite fond of me?" asked Dory with mock
timorousness.

"Yes, I'm quite fond of you, too, Dory, but I can't fly without
you, and Joshua is of the mind that you should go along."

Dory wasn't even a tiny bit afraid to go, but she did ask, "Why
were you crying just a moment ago?"

"Oh, I was just feeling sorry for myself."

+-----+ "Why?"

| 079: But the woman did |
| not look upon them, and | "Joshua showed me some things.
| turned away her face, for | Terrible things, Dory. I'm
| the offering did not please | going to be drop-kicked a
| her. Then Ayot brought her | couple times."
| to Hebel, the younger son; |
| and he was by the fire, | Dory's mouth dropped open like
| preparing the meat of a | a hatch. Suddenly she didn't
| great beast, dividing it | want Remiel to go anywhere. But
| with the axe that had been | Remy told her, "You won't get
| given to his father. And | hurt, and you won't have to see
| Hebel also bowed before | the worst of what happens to
| Ayot, and offered her a | me. But I do need your help for
| portion of the meat upon a | this first part."
| spit. |

+-----+ "Where did you want to go?"

"Basically due south. A little west. We're supposed to buzz this little place in New Mexico, a new Army base where there isn't supposed to be an Army base."

"The Army mightn't like that," Dory suggested.

Remiel replied, "No shit. And after buzzing this particular one they will go absolutely crazy. Hence the designation of Prank."

Dory grinned at that. She asked her brother to fold up the wheelchair and load it into the "trunk" while she took Remiel to the hangar offices to file a flight plan. She also drew two box lunches, and acquired the appropriate maps.

+-----+ Most important of all, Dory
| 080: And Ayot received it, | arranged for a a fuel truck to
| and placed it in the hand of | meet them at a certain place
| the woman. She ate of it | in Colorado, a place she had
| eagerly, drawn by the smell | already checked out before on a
| and by the hidden impulse | previous flight.
| within her, which turns the |
| fertile toward the scent of | "Your Dizzy Lizzy can only
| blood and iron. And so Ayot, | go about five hundred klicks
| according to the law set | before it needs gas," Dory
| beforehand by her Father, | explained. "It's got two
| took the hand of the woman | engines, and it basically
| and placed it in the hand of | hovers, it doesn't glide."
| Hebel, joining them together |
| by the terms of the trial. | "I get it," Remiel said.
+-----+ "I really do. It's just physics
and there's nothing miraculous about it, not even the halo."

"The Family has several landing pads set up in a ring around Havilah, for refueling, to give us a big footprint, but your proposed Prank is taking us further still.

"So?"

"Before we can buzz that base, we need to hit a gas station somewhere. Granted, you do have an X-ration sticker and plates."

"Then how hard can it be?"

"Gas stations have attendants. Somebody's gonna gas us up. They are going to have quite the story to tell."

+-----+ "Let them talk," Remiel
| 081: Thus was the first | said." "Angels haven't always
| pairing accomplished in | been mythical creatures like
| Kemen under the covenant of | fairies. Joshua told me the
| proving; the will of the | Academy has been keeping a
| higher powers was worked | very low profile since the
| through the appetites of | days of the Enlightenment, but
| the flesh, and the judgment | now he thinks that whole idea
| of men proceeded from that | has played itself out. That's
| which they desired. And | really what this Prank is all
| Kayin departed from the | about."
| presence of his brother in |
| great anger. | Dory squeezed Remiel's arm and
+-----+ walked across the hangar floor
to open one of the roll-up doors. Remiel grinned at Cubby and
said, "Come here."

He drew near and was rewarded with a kiss, but this alone seemed
to worry him a little. He said, "Why do I feel like there's
something you're not sharing with me?"

Remiel said, "This thing I gotta do, this field work, Joshua
says it's going to be a pretty long Prank. Your sister will be
back home fairly soon, but I'm gonna take a lot longer."

"What does a lot longer mean numerically?"

"Five months? In fact, it'll take a whole 'nother Prank just to
get my ass back here. But you'll have my brother with you."

"And all this was cooked up by Joshua?"

+-----+ Remiel nodded her head. "I've
| 082: Yet for a season he | learned more from him in six
| restrained any outward sign | months than all the time I was
| of his rage, and set himself | here at the Academy, and that's
| to labor, so that his anger | really saying something."
| might be hidden. And he |
| took from the vines that | Now, with the door open,
| grew in that land, and with | Remiel, Dory, and Cubby wheeled
| cunning hands braided them | the aluminum Dizzy Lizzy
| together, making a cord both | outdoors. It wasn't an easy
| long and strong. And so it | labor. Sammy and Cubby could
| was, when the lake of fire | have done it alone, but it
| waned in the heavens, that | would still take two because it
| Kayin paused and watched the | was so wide and ungainly.
| woman as she adorned herself |
| outside; and Hebel came out | Seated apart in their
| from his dwelling to lead | individual crew bubbles, the
| her back within, casting | only way Dory and Remiel could
| back a look of pride and | talk to one another was over a
| contempt toward his brother. | headset.

+-----+
The engines started, and Dory's halo expanded to encompass the whole vehicle.

She said, "I'm going with Notch Three," and when Remiel asked about it, Dory further explained that Notch Three meant acceleration inside the bubble would be close to 3 meters per second per second, a little less than what one feel on the surface of Mars.

"What's Notch Zero?"

+-----+ "Notch Zero is nothing. You
| 083: And in the morning, | just float. Notch Ten is normal
| Dimai and Hava brought | gravity."
| out garments which they |
| had made for the wife of | Remiel felt euphoric. It was
| their younger son, and they | her first experience of reduced
| clothed her; but to Kayin | gravity, but the feeling was
| they paid no mind. And Kayin | short-lived. Dory throttled
| likewise turned his heart | up, and the Dizzy Lizzy rose
| away from his father and his | into the low cloud layer that
| mother, but continued in the | perpetually draped Dole Crater.
| finishing of the cord which |
| he had begun. | Remiel's heart seemed to drop
+-----+ into her stomach. But soon they
reached altitude and leveled off. They were above the fog,
but still at Notch Three, and the euphoria returned. Remiel
saw Migdalel Butte, the central splashback peak of Dole
Crater, poking above the fog and the undulating rim enclosing
everything.

The sky is never visible from the town of Havilah. There are no
stars evident, no moon, and no sun. The high humidity modifies
the temperature gradient between night and day. Street lamps
backlight the fog by night, and by day things don't get much
brighter. There are no discernible shadows in Havilah, so
sundials are useless.

Havilah exists in a timeless suspension that plays havoc with
circadian rhythms, and the perpetual lack of direct sunlight
adversely affects the psychology of people in Havilah. Only a
certain breed can stand it.

+-----+	Angel	Academy	operates
084: And all that day: Hebel	one	local	radio station,
and his wife made sport with	broadcasting	from the	summit
one another openly before	of Migdalel	Butte. It	offers
him; yet Kayin answered them	no	current	news and plays a
not, but looked on with a	diverse	mix of	songs from every
quiet face, until his secret	preceding	decade, doing	nothing
labor was complete. Then he	to give the	townspeople	a firm
rose and went out alone	sense of	the	present.
by a narrow way that led			
from the dwelling, the only	The Dizzy	Lizzy	had one
safe path leading out from	radio	apiece in	each crew
that place. And he went	compartment.	Once they	were
apart, taking counsel with	clear of	the Havilah	fog,
himself concerning a new and	Remiel	wanted to	know what
terrible thing that might be	music they	had in	places where
done in Kemen.	it	actually	was the first of
+-----+	June	in	1943.

The nearest town big enough to even have a radio station was Lusk, Wyoming, about thirty-five miles away to the south and west. It wasn't a very powerful transmission, and there was a lot of static, but Remiel caught half of "That Old Black Magic" by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra

Remiel asked how fast they were going.

Dory said, "We're making the usual one hundred ten knots. So about two hundred klicks per. I'm not so much in a hurry as I want to get to that waypoint in Colorado with a little bit more than just fumes left in the tanks."

+-----+ "Comin' In on a Wing and a
| 085: And at the going | Prayer" by The Song Spinners
| down of the light, Hebel | was a massively popular song
| and his wife walked out | about a damaged bomber limping
| idly upon that same path, | home but Remiel didn't much
| departing from the dwelling. | like hearing it just then,
| And when they came to | considering the circumstances.
| a certain place, Kayin, | Besides, it was getting too
| who had prepared the trap | staticky now. She turned it
| beforehand, pulled upon the | off. Such was life on the
| cord. And the whip-tree, | Great Plains, with big zones of
| which he had bent and bound | nothing between radio stations.
| for that purpose, was loosed |
| from its hold; it fell upon | A half hour later when Remiel
| them with great violence, | saw the green band along the
| striking them again and | North Platte on the horizon up
| again, beating them into the | ahead, she went searching for
| ground. | music again. She heard "You'll
+-----+ Never Know" by Dick Haymes. It
was a sentimental song about separation and longing, popular
among sweethearts separated by the war

Next was "I've Heard That Song Before" by Harry James and His
Orchestra, and featuring Helen Forrest. It had been dominating
the charts for over two months. By the time they crossed the
Arkansas River, Remiel decided Wawokiya's kid, Ehawee Wicasa,
knew exactly what she was doing, running the Academy radio
station back in Havilah. Lirael kept everyone up to date. She
just liked to mix older things in with the new.

Dory began to descend to the waypoint.

+-----+ Remiel asked, "Do you know who
| 086: In the very first | is supposed to meet us there?"
| strokes their bones were |
| broken, and the shards of | "The front office said it'll
| them were driven inward, so | be Cadence." And Remy was
| that their life was undone | delighted. Cadence was her
| within them. And their blood | favorite lan, her favorite
| poured out, and their cries | among the immortal Nephiloth.
| were heard for a moment, and |
| then ceased. And the tree | Cadence once told Remiel a
| did not stop its striking | story about something that
| until Hebel and his wife | happened when Remy was still
| could no longer be known as | very young, perhaps only two.
| the living children of men. |
+-----+

+-----+
| Angel Academy season x episode xx, month day, year: |
| A massive black stallion became the terror of three |
| counties. The animal broke fences, escaped corrals, bit |
| handlers, and kicked down stable walls. A Stiffneck breeder |
| arrived in Havilah and sought out Remiel's birth mother. |
| |
| "Professor Ariel," he said, "I will pay five hundred dollars |
| to the person who can break that horse." |
| |
| She accepted because she knew the money could go toward |
| building homes for certain of the Kuwapi poor. |
| |
| Ariel slowly approached the animal. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 087: The horse stared back and rolled its eyes. Ariel |
| discovered this was really Cadence, who was a shapeshifter. |
| She was also something of a castaway in time. Moreover, she |
| was a Nephiloth exchange student from Kemen and a notorious |
| truant. |
| |
| Cadence insisted she wasn't hurting anybody. "I'm taking a |
| gap year. Back home everyone expects great things from me up |
| here. Instead, I'm struggling. So I ran away." |
| |
| The breeder assembled a crowd to witness Ariel tame the |
| monster. |
| |
| Ariel walked into the paddock and scratched behind one ear. |
| The horse transformed into a naked young lan. Ariel quickly |
| covered her with a blanket on account of the assembled |
| crowd. |
| |
| The Stiffneck removed his hat. "Well. That explains some |
| things." The reward money was paid. The Kuwapi council of |
| elders built their houses. Cadence returned to school. |
| |
| Dory's waypoint was a well-marked concrete pad, a miniature |
| version of the Academy flight line. Soon after Dory made her |
| landing, a fuel tanker arrived. It was a big aluminum gas |
| tank on a steel chassis with black trim. |
| |
| The massive semi hauling it was nearly all black. Two |
| pillars of black soot rose from the exhaust pipes. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 088: The truck stopped. The engine stopped. The cab opened, |
| and the driver who got out looked like an equally menacing |
| human version of his giant truck, all black leather and |
| chrome studs, with a chain for a belt. Remiel expected to |
| see a cigar clenched in his teeth to make the resemblance |
| complete, but this was strictly a non-smoking operation. |
|
| When the driver saw Dory and Remiel standing near the Dizzy |
| Lizzy, he smiled broadly and began his transformation, |
| shrinking down to become a slender, unclad waif. One bat |
| wing covered her breasts and the other one covered her |
| privates. Cadence in the flesh, as Dory promised. Remiel |
| asked, "Why the big burly dude just now?" |
|
| Cadence gaped at her with mock astonishment and said, "Look |
| at me, Remy! My grandma wouldn't hesitate to steal this |
| truck out from under me looking like this!" |
|
| "Don't knock grandmothers," Remiel objected. "My grandmother |
| is the angel of fire." Cadence conceded the point. Her eyes |
| scanned the sleek, unorthodox lines of the experimental |
| aircraft, and she ran a slender finger along the cold metal |
| skin of the fuselage, "I think this little bird of yours is |
| going to turn some heads if you fly her too low." |
|
| The leather jacket and boots had been part of the illusion, |
| but Cadence brought along a wide-brimmed hat that was real |
| enough. She had parked the truck alongside the Dizzy Lizzy |
| with enough room to work in and around the craft. |
+-----+

+-----+
| 089: On the edge of the concrete pad was a kind of kiosk |
| with fire extinguishers and two reels. Per procedure, |
| Cadence checked to make sure the preventive maintenance was |
| current, but she had absolutely no doubt it was. Then she |
| grabbed a clip on one reel and walked the cable out to |
| ground her truck. Dory did the same thing with the other |
| cable and attached it to Remy's Dizzy Lizzy. Everything was |
| sitting at Earth ground potential. |
| |
| Cadence found the fuel port on the rear of the Dizzy Lizzy |
| and attached a special nozzle bonding clip directly to a |
| clean, unpainted metallic spot that was tied internally to |
| the tanks. She opened the cap and dispensed the fuel while |
| keeping the nozzle touching the tank neck. While the tanks |
| were being filled, she said, "It's all about keeping sparks |
| away from vapor, ladies. When people see you in this thing, |
| they're gonna think it came from Mars. But if we screw up |
| refueling, you'll actually be headed straight there." |
| |
| |
| From long experience, Cadence could tell from the sound of |
| the filling operation that the tanks were nearly topped off. |
| She didn't let them overflow. Cadence stopped fueling and |
| disconnected everything in exact reverse order. She gave the |
| cable to her truck a little tug and walked the grounding |
| strap back onto its self-winding reel. Dory did the same for |
| the strap to the DL. |
| |
| "First day and this Prank is already a legend, Remy. Do you |
| know what they're calling it back in Havilah?" |
+-----+

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+-----+
| 090: "Not a clue, Cadence." |
|                               |
| "Operation Veilburner. The students at the Academy are of |
| two minds. On the warm side of the pillow they're running a |
| betting pool on how many newspaper stories appear with |
| locals thinking they had a brush with the divine. " |
|                               |
| "And what about the cool side of the pillow?" |
|                               |
| "The other betting pool is on how far south you get before |
| the Army Air Forces shoot you down." |
|                               |
| "How sweet!" Remy gave Cadence a hug before sliding into her |
| seat. Dory was already running through the takeoff litany. |
| As the bubble canopy sealed shut, locking out the smell of |
| aviation gas and sagebrush, the quiet hum of the two engines |
| vibrated through the floorboards. Far ahead of them lay the |
| massive snowy twins known as the Spanish Peaks and beyond |
| them lay the state line. |
+-----+
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Remiel tuned her radio to Denver's KOA AM 850 and heard a news bulletin about fighting on the island of Attu in Alaska, and the end of the only battle fought on US territory in the war, at least so far.

This was followed by afternoon broadcast of the Glenn Miller Sunset Serenade. When they were passing high over Route 50, Remiel drifted out of her reverie and said, "You know, Dory, I've almost forgotten what they looked like, my real parents."

+-----+ Dory said, "I'm sorry, hon. I
| 091: And Dimai and Hava, | do know why they had to make
| hearing the cries, ran | themselves scarce, and I think
| swiftly along the path to | it broke their hearts, both of
| see what had been done; | them. In fact, I know it did.
| and when they came to the | Your momma, at least, never let
| place, they were struck with | you go."
| great horror at the sight. |
| And Hava could not bear to | "What do you mean?"
| look, but turned aside and |
| retched, for the ruin was | "I mean that trick Cadence
| terrible beyond words. And | does, turning herself into a
| soon after, the avatars of | mean old horse or a mean
| Ayot and of Azul drew near | old truck driver. Elyonim
| to that place; and Kayin | can't quite go that far,
| stood there, the end of the | but we can do a passable
| cord still in his hand, and | imitation, especially with
| looked upon them all with a | faces. Certainly your mother
| hard face, neither bowing | can do a convincing job of it."
| nor seeking to hide what he |
| had done. | "Please explain."

+-----+
"Remy, of all the professors at the Academy, don't you have an
absolute favorite? Isn't there a special one who makes you sorry
when the hour's up and she has to stop teaching?"

"Are you talking about Anael?"

"Of course I am. I know you love her dearly and so do I."

"But she's a nephiloth, like Cadence, and, well, she's black!"

+-----+ "You've seen her wings. She
| 092: And Ayot would not | looks like a plucked chicken.
| watch the judgment of her | And she's not black, she's a
| Father fall upon this first | gorgeous mahogany. At least she
| shedding of blood in Kemen | is now. So, yeah, her Dizzy
| by the hand of man; and so | Lizzy still matches the color
| she withdrew her presence. | of her wings."
| Her vessel left that place, |
| returning to the opening in | "Dory, are you telling me
| the wall of the dwelling, | my real mother is our music
| and from there passed again | teacher and I never knew it?"
| across the hidden bridge |
| between the worlds, back to | "Anael is indeed Ariel, and
| the hillside cave on the | I really think you did know
| Earth, where she had first | it on some level. Think about
| found Dimai and Hava in the | that while you go through with
| days before Kemen was made. | this birthday trip of yours,
+-----+ and piss off the government,
and get yourself caught. Yeah, wherever they take you, we can
break you out again, but you know after that they'll never stop
looking for you, so you'll have to do exactly what your mother
did. No more green-eyed, red-headed Stiffneck girl. Maybe you'll
be Kuwapi like me, why not? Changing skin color isn't even the
trickiest thing in the Elyonim toolkit. And now, with Anael, you
know how convincing you can be."

As Dory and Remiel flew south, they began to see broad benches
and rolling hills covered in a mix of shrubland and shortgrass
prairie, with mesquite, yucca, prickly pear, sagebrush, and
scattered cholla. Very few trees existed away from the rivers,
only scattered mesquite, yucca, and the occasional juniper.

+-----+ There were low hills, benches,
| 093: And Ayot did not | and shallow draws. Sandstone,
| return to that world in | siltstone, and mudstone formed
| all the days of Dimai and | low ledges and sharp slopes.
| Hava, nor in the lifetime | Irrigated fields stood out
| of Kayin, nor in the many | sharply against the dry
| generations that sprang from | surrounding grassland.
| them afterward; for she had |
| turned her face away from | Remiel was beginning to worry
| that great work, and left it | about their fuel, and when she
| to unfold according to the | was worrying about something
| covenant that had been set. | the worry was real. Dory put
+-----+ her mind at ease. "Gas up
ahead."

"How do you know?"

"I see a dinosaur."

With both motors shut down, Dory and Remy coasted off the street and rolled right into Martin McCall's Garage and Service Station. Inside, a dusty Philco tube radio hummed. The smooth, melancholy strains of Dick Haymes singing "You'll Never Know" drifted through the open screen door. Dory set the brake, and the girls flipped open their glass canopies.

Roy McCall was the owner's son. Two other attendants waited with him, identified by the names Bill and Bob on their white oval name patches. Dory and Remy were drawn to the toothy grin of Bud the Tyrannosaurus rex, twenty-five feet tall and greener than the attendants' uniforms.

+-----+ Every customer visiting Martin
| 094: And so it was, upon | "Bud" McCall's gas station
| the Earth in the place of | for the first time invariably
| the hillside cave, that the | stared open-mouthed at his
| likeness of Azul, the red | namesake, a giant dinosaur made
| dragon, drew near to Ayot, | of concrete and rebar.
| who had withdrawn herself |
| from Kemen; and he spoke | The arrival of Dory and Remiel,
| to her, saying: How deeply | however, had done something
| instructive was that which | brand new. Bud, his son, and
| we have seen of men; do you | the two attendants stared with
| not agree? | equal astonishment at the
+-----+ strange, shiny vehicle riding
high on three-wheeled pylons.

Dory snapped them out of it. "We need some gas, fellas!"

Roy realized he was being asked to fuel this gleaming hexagonal contraption and it was wartime. He called for his daddy to come out. Behind the plate glass, Bud McCall abandoned his coffee mug. The screen door banged open, and the station owner stepped onto the porch, wiping his palms on his stained canvas apron. Immediately, he stopped dead in his tracks and gaped at the sight, wearing the same dumbfounded expression as his son and the two attendants.

"Ladies, what in the world do you have there?"

"It's an experimental vehicle, sir," Remiel offered. "Product of Migdalel College in Havilah. We're taking this thing south to let the Army see it."

+-----+ Angels find it almost
 | 095: Then answered Ayot, | impossible to lie, but
 | whose face was veiled but | everything Remiel said was
 | whose mind was not: The | perfectly true. She turned to
 | end of the trial was | ask Dory, "How much gas do you
 | contained already in its | think we need?"
 | beginning; for the outcome |
 | follows the conditions which | "About forty gallons of
 | you appointed. This thing | premium."
 | the Elohim will not fail |
 | to discern in the day of | "I can't turn that crank
 | judgment. | without seeing your book," said
 +-----+ Bud.

Dory reached into the deep pocket of her tailored flight trousers and produced a pocket-sized booklet bound in stiff, blue-gray cardboard. "Will this satisfy the United States government, sir?" she asked, extending it down over the aluminum fuselage.

Bud reached up and took the booklet. He flipped it open and stopped cold. Glued to the inside front cover was a heavy, gummed paper classification sticker. It wasn't the black "A" sticker carried by your run-of-the-mill civilian passenger cars, allowing three miserable gallons a week. It wasn't the blue "B" of factory shift-workers, nor the green "C" carried by country doctors and rural mail carriers. Printed across the face in bold, red-orange letterpress was an enormous capital letter: X . An X coupon. In Taos County, the only men who carried an X book was the chairman of the draft board and an elderly federal judge who occasionally drove up from Santa Fe.

+-----+ An X sticker meant
| 096: And Azul said: | unlimited essential mileage,
| Nevertheless, you have | wartime priority above all
| delivered to me all | civilian restrictions, reserved
| the tillers I required; | for high-level couriers,
| therefore I will fulfill | cabinet-level officials, and
| what was promised between | executives of secret defense
| us. Lower your vessel now, | plants back east.
| my Daughter, for it is not |
| right that one such as you | "It's an X," said Bud.
| should fall prostrate as the |
| lesser beings do Then Ayot | "Holy Moses," Roy muttered.
| lowered her Husk, and set |
| it upon the summit of the | "Check the sticker."
| nameless hill; and Azul took |
| his place beside her, his | Roy squinted up at Remiel's
| form vast and terrible. And | canopy. Pressed neatly against
| for a moment they looked | the inside curved Plexiglas
| together at the land that | above the right seat was a
| lay before them. | matching gummed X placard,
+-----+ stamped with an official purple
federal seal.

"Sticker's there, Pop," Roy said. "And there's a plate mounted up front."

Bud tore out one sheet and handed it to his son. "Roy, I want you to verify that what's inked on the back matches that tin plate on the nose. If the numbers don't match, and we pump, we're going to jail, the ladies are going to jail, we're all going to jail."

+-----+ "Everything matches, Pop," Roy
| 097: And Azul spoke again, | told him. "Down to the comma."
| in a voice less harsh than |
| before: I envy you this | Bud McCall looked up at the two
| world, my Daughter. For | young women. The pilot gave him
| among such worlds as may be | a brisk, cheerful nod, while
| brought into being this is a | the tall passenger in the right
| glorious one, rich in life, | seat remained quiet, her serene
| unlike any that lie within | gaze drifting back up toward
| my own dominion. | the toothy, concrete maw of the
+-----+ giant dinosaur.

Bud exhaled through his teeth. "All right, I'm gonna tear out nine dollars' worth. Bill! Bob! Stop gawking and grab the squeegees. You see any bugs on that glass, you wipe 'em off."

"Yes, sir, Mr. McCall!" Bill called out, scrambling for the wash buckets.

Roy hooked his thumb under the perforated coupons and tore eight more of them cleanly from the booklet. He slipped the paper scrip carefully into his shirt pocket. Those nine scraps of inked paper would have to be turned over by hand to the Taos County Rationing Board on Monday morning if Bud wanted his bulk distributor to refill the 500-gallon underground tank.

"Nine dollars worth of seventy-five octane, miss," Roy announced. "Where do we put it?" Dory reached down to her left console and flipped a recessed toggle switch. A circular flap on the port flank sprang open with a soft pop, revealing a threaded brass filler neck that looked completely, reassuringly ordinary.

+-----+ "Right in there, handsome,"
| 098: And it was, just as | Dory said with a grin. "And
| Azul had warned her, that | don't spill a drop. We've
| the entry into the Pleroma | got an appointment across the
| was like a flood without a | mountains." She got up out of
| shore; and the multitude of | the cockpit to stretch and
| voices among the Elohim was | carefully stepped down off
| so great that it overwhelmed | Remy's Dizzy Lizzy. "I'm gonna
| her at the first. Therefore | go powder my nose."
| the vessel of Ayot remained |
| unmoving upon the summit | Roy dragged the heavy black
| of the hill; and there it | rubber hose across the gravel,
| stayed through the turning | unscrewed the brass cap, and
| of many seasons. The winds | seated the brass nozzle into
| beat upon it, the snows | the neck. He signaled to
| covered it, and the beasts | his father, who engaged the
| of the field touched it | mechanical hand-crank on the
| without fear; yet it did not | side of the tall pump. Gasoline
| stir, nor give any sign, for | sloshed up into the glass
| her attention was withdrawn | sight-bowl at the top of
| into the hearing of the | the cylinder, the little red
| Great Assembly. | indicator balls dancing as the
+-----+ clear, amber liquid drained
down the hose and into the belly of the craft.

Meanwhile, Bill Hatcher and Bob Whitaker circled the machine like two nervous terriers around a sleeping bull. Bill soaked his horsehair sponge in soapy water and reached up toward the high curved canopy.

"Careful there, Bill," Bob warned, "don't scratch it."

+-----+ "Look at that finish," said
| 099: Now a day came in Kemen | Bill. "Ain't a rivet on
| when Azul laid a command | the whole damn thing." He
| upon the children of Men, | stared through the transparent
| saying: "Build up strong | bubble at the pilot's cockpit.
| storehouses, and encircle | The instrument panel wasn't
| them with walls; and fill | cluttered with the dials,
| them with food and with fuel | needles, and vacuum tubes of an
| in abundance, so that your | AAF bomber; it was an array of
| lives do not perish, nor | dark glass plates and brushed
| the lives of your beasts, | metal levers that looked clean,
| against the great frost | sparse, and utterly alien.
| which is prepared to come | "Say, miss...what kind of crate
| upon the land." | is this? Army?"

+-----+
"To tell you the truth," said Remiel, "I don't know much about
it. I never even saw it before today. My galpal is having me
along for company."

"So you're just couriers?"

"We fancy it up a little bit, we like to call ourselves
annunciators."

"I saw a picture in Popular Science of something sort of like
it. For crossing mine fields. It can hover over the ground a
little bit, right?"

"Something just like that," she said with a broad smile.

Roy clicked the fuel nozzle shut.

+-----+ The meter dial was at precisely
| 100: Nevertheless, only the | nine dollars. He pulled the
| people who lived in the | spout clear, carefully wiping
| land of Adan gave heed to | the lip with his rag so not a
| the warnings of the Red | drop stained the silver hull,
| Dragon; and they set their | and screwed the brass cap back
| hands diligently to the | down until it clicked.
| labor appointed to them. |
| And a mighty forest of | Dory came out of the gas
| gopher-trees was cut down, | station just then.
| and the timber was stored |
| within the warehouses, to | "All set, ma'am," Roy said,
| serve as fuel against the | handing the ration book back up
| cold. | to her. He fished into his
+-----+ leather coin changer and held
up a strip of small, green gummed paper squares. "Here's your
S&H Green Stamps. Nine dollars gets you ninety stamps."

Dory accepted them but she asked, "What are these?"

He was genuinely surprised, "You don't collect these?"

Dory shook her head and said, "I don't even know what they are."

Remiel offered a sheepish explanation. "We're a little out of
the way back where we came from. It's almost like Amish country
in some ways."

He said, "You lick 'em until you're dry, twelve hundred to a
book. Fill up twenty books, maybe you can redeem 'em for a nice
toaster, or butter knives, or maybe even an S&H catalog."