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### The Lantern and the Sword

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*The Lantern and the Sword*

4/10/20

By Michael Chisholm

Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Writing  
in the Department of English

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## Introduction

This story has been one decades in the making. The original idea came to me when waiting for an undergraduate class to start up back in 2008 when I was 18. I had over an hour to kill and a brand new notebook with nothing in it. I had also just finished yet another read through of *The Lord of the Rings* series by Tolkien and *Iron Man* had just come out so it hit me to combine my two growing obsessions. I wanted a combination of Gandalf and Doctor Strange thus Cosmontai was born from my efforts a few days later. I thrust an angel into the modern world where just his footprints influence the creation of several races of beings including meta humans who would become Earth's "heroes" of sorts. I have written three full books about his adventures in the modern setting starting around 2013 and up to the present as well as more sequels panning decades into the future.

I immediately thought of doing a large piece for my capstone involving as he and his stories are my life's work and what I want to keep pursuing into my career but it hit me as I was digging up information for my topic...where did he start? When was he born? Was he born? Etc. So I reworked my ideas and referred to many of the classic creation myths of the fantasy epics and greats. I took to Tolkien of course, Stan Lee, Milton, the *Bible*, Edith Hamilton for the Greek Myths, and to Jeff Vandermeer's *Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction* at the recommendation of my committee for some assistance in the world building. I'm thankful for the last entry as this is a massive undertaking and risk to create my universe from scratch for this piece.

I constructed the story revolving themes of death and free will. The main characters have to cope with the existence of death and its significance in the living world. As far as free will

some will realize that they were not created with freedoms equal to the other creatures and serve a higher purpose without realizing it.

It opens with Harvion the God of Creation. He is tired of seeing nothing around him so he brought light into existence from his own body. A dead reality surrounds him. Lifeless worlds and a universe full of dust. He starts to expand and spread his light and hears a voice and feels a presence fleeing from him. He discovers his twin brother Apollion God of Destruction. They speak in bold italics for Harvion as I imagined his language is like music flowing and light. Apollion speaks in bold letters as his words carry more weight and are grounded. They speak in poetry as the language of the gods should be incomprehensible to mortals and they only understand this divine language. The interaction goes poorly as Harvion cannot understand destruction or darkness and Apollion cannot live in the light so a confrontation ensues.

Their battle causes the big bang and brings life across reality but goes mostly ignored. This life also has the curse of being unable to pass on and suffers eternally with no aid from the brothers. At the heart of the universe their clashing powers collapsed and combined forming a burning point of unspeakable power. Harvion constructs a planet around it to mark the world as the first true planet. He creates the stars and drives Apollion to leave the living reality for a dimension of his own. Harvion follows suit.

This conflict continues with Harvion's first son Samael who becomes his Angel of Light and lacks the comprehension of death and darkness like his father but on an imperfect limited level and becomes temperamental and violent about his confusion and misunderstanding.

My story is character driven as it follows Samael and his deteriorating patience and understanding of the living dimension. I took the themes of the mighty made low from *The Bible* and *Dante's Inferno* primarily Lucifer's story whom Samael is heavily based off. Like Lucifer,

Samael is the best and brightest of Harvion's emerging presence. He is proud and supremely confident and an idol to his younger brother Mikal who is created moments after himself.

Beneath his confidence is a budding insecurity as he confronts the darkness and in desperation uses unexplored parts of his powers and discovers that under his light is a searing fire with the potential to burn out the darkness. He's at first petrified of this realization but sees the depth of such power and keeps it to himself.

The feeling that rises from the pit of rage and frustration is a crippling feeling as it adds blinders to perception and leads to both destruction and self destruction. But the power that comes with it is enough to consume what ails you or your situation. We have all had those moments of feeling that power when we're angry and just putting a fist through whatever is so pestering or irritating. Samael has that moment of his rage paying off and burning parts of Apollion's influence from existence and saving Mikal but it only inflates his pride.

Harvion and Apollion finally make peace by trading weapons of their own power. Harvion gifts his brother the Lantern of Life which would allow Apollion to create sustainable life of his own and create a light that would not burn him or his beings and illuminate his dark dimension. Apollion in turn gifts his brother the Sword of Death to Harvion to allow his creations a time to pass from existence so they may then pass on and become spirits free of their body. They then create the Afterlife Gates and another dimension as a final resting place for the spirits. Life and Death make peace and the eternal bond is formed. Samael is enraged at this union as he does not accept the darkness nor Apollion. Despite his misgivings Harvion makes Samael the Angel of Death and gives him the Sword to distract his son from his own thoughts.

Here I explored the creation of death and why it is important for the well being of the universe and life itself. By gifting each other powers over the other Life can cause Death and

Death can create life so now a perfect balance is formed. Along with the balance come new creations. Apollion creates his own children. Twins Inanis and Ianna to carry the Lantern in the shape of a pendent to restore destroyed worlds and create new ones in the image of Apollion. Similar to the ancient tales of creation, peace is made when the creators find a middle ground in their infinite wisdom and a rebellious son must tamper with the balance.

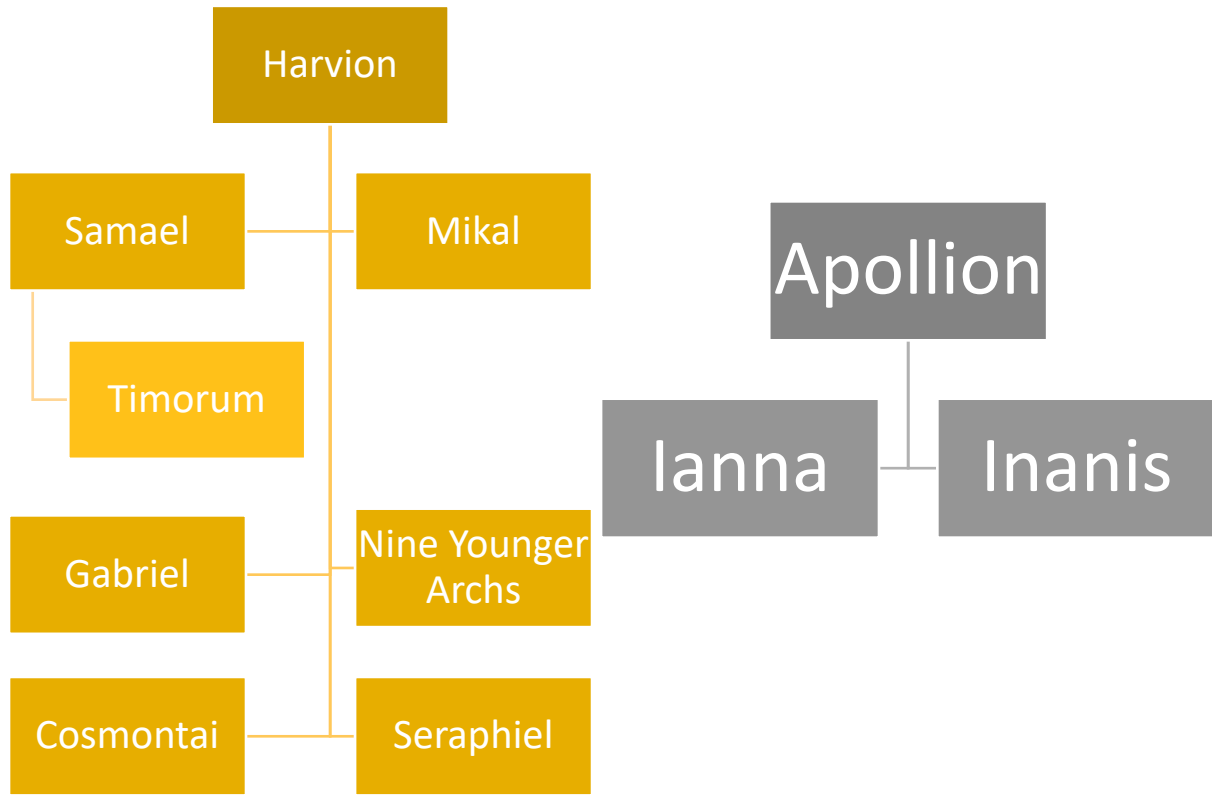
When I was writing out the descriptions for Harvion and Apollion I avoided giving them vague descriptions of what some people describe in their texts. “Beauty beyond words” “Indescribable” etc. No. When you picture these almighty beings I want an image to come to your mind. Harvion is an aloof overly thoughtful art student who is obsessed with his form of perfection and creating. His form is constantly meant to bring to mind glass and light fixtures whether they be a flashlight or a lighthouse. There’s always the sense of a barrier between him and those around him. Apollion is similar in the idea that he is hidden behind layers of smoke and his own darkness but this one is out of necessity. Apollion when his form is exposed is malnourished and sunken almost corpse like. He has spent an eternity alone before his brother finally acknowledged him. Only then did he show signs of proper life in himself.

Samael takes a classic angelic form with six wings and a laurel and armor, the works. I wanted his form obnoxiously angelic to help personify his fall and deterioration. He has six wings inspired by Lucifer’s angelic form and he is a shining example of Harvion’s vision and a glass crown symbolic of how fragile power can be. I styled his brother Mikal differently and made him a red head as you don’t see many red headed angels and his being is a bit more approachable and calmer. Harvion created Mikal to be an answer to Samael’s temper and one to match him in dire times that will follow.



The story proceeds with Samael's journey to understand his roles as the Angel of Death and Light and the conflicts within himself. Things take a darker turn when he realizes his fall was orchestrated by the two gods from the beginning. This adds the theme of free will into the mix as well as destiny. Do we make our own choices or are we setup to fail?

This piece was specifically written for the Capstone Course and I am supremely proud of how far it has come in such a short span. I am going to continue this piece and weave it into the overall narrative of my own self created universe. I will extend the mythology further from the literal beginning of time and shape it into a mythos to join the other greats.



**The Lantern and the Sword**

Creation of Destruction

***Light.***

***I want Light.***

***From my Palm of glass***

***Fill the void my blast.***

Started like a match and then like a flood, light was born into existence. It burned from the being's body as a glossy flood of writhing flames. His face shined like the flames he stoked and they spread and rocketed out across existence. Before him was an endless sea of black folds. His light chased them away and gave way to deeper voids of this existence. His light condensed all across reality into orbs that radiated out and revealed the entirety of the scope of this reality.

***I want to see.***

***Show me all to be.***

***The light springs life,***

***No blight nor strife.***

With a nudge of will like urging a pet out the door to do their business, reality was spurred into motion beyond the newborn stars which hovered above and below. Dark balls of a lightless material emerged from the shadows. The being approached the new arrivals and held them in his great hand. They were coarse, rough, and unpleasant in his soft fingers.

***Untouched by my light and jagged.***

***Who builds this Blight and dragged***

*Them before the mighty Harvion?*

He sent his light out like hazy tentacles of a predator. They streaked and lashed out for the disturbance he felt from the shadow of his glory. They crashed into another figure masked in the darkness. The light could not illuminate the new arrival but the deafening roar erupted from him was enough to stir a jolt within Harvion.

*Who comes?*

*Who roams?*

*Speak my night brother,*

*Pardon my light smother.*

**Never spoken to my presence**

**yet when gazed upon my shade**

**All you can say is who?**

**Ever I been, Harvion of the Light**

**burning in your presence.**

**Life never held in my hand,**

**but thrives in yours.**

*Into my eye, brother.*

*Let my light bring you a form*

*So I may see why you rather*

*Hide beneath a shadowed storm.*

Harvion moved himself closer to the brother in the darkness but still his light refused to illuminate him. His brilliant brow furrowed and his power seemed to sear and rage out.

**Beware!**

**Harvion, your light burns!**

**Apollion am I!**

**Born in the cover of**

**Dark Light.**

**Brilliant and Bright are you**

**but burning!**

**The light does not serve me but**

**my darkness is my shield.**

Harvion's figure became like a sun. Apollion on instinct retreated into the protection of his dark veil. Harvion's tendrils seared and scorched and the veil sang. The orbs that Apollion sent out were struck by the light and change shape. The planet's surfaces stirred from the conflict but not from the warring brothers. Creatures of both fire and ash rose from the boiling surfaces as the planets emerged. Harvion dove deeper into the night to find his hidden sibling.

***Retreat not!***

***You I have sought!***

***In my light Apollion,***

***Under a sky upon***

***Our worlds to be!***

***Please! Return to me.***

Harvion raised his mighty hand and summoned a seething ball of light that trembled in his fist and sent it towards the ever shrinking form of Apollion. An explosion that tore all the worlds around them into a dust prevented the light from going further.

**Enough**

**My quiet kingdom burns.**

Apollion boomed across the divide. The outline of his being was finally visible to Harvion through his impatient flames. Empty gorges for eyes sunken into a form deprived of the light.

**See the darkness dweller.**

**You cannot force me to be seen  
unless I allow my body formed.**

Harvion's light retreated to a defensive position almost immediately forming a wall around the repulsed god. Apollion's form was hidden again and his darkness returned the defensive position with a jagged fence.

***Vile creature!***

***Your features!***

***You are not of the light***

***Be gone from me, blight!***

Harvion's trembling form caused the dust of the dead worlds to swirl around him, catching flame and smashing into other particles. His light blasted forward into Apollion's fence and splintered on the form. The fence molded and formed a wall that repelled the light, but took shards like glass from its glossy surface.

**Beauty beholden only by the illuminated I  
see further in my hollow dark.**

**Brothers are we not?**

**Born from nothing and trapped by the light!**

**Your light will go no further!**

**Life and Light**

**End.**

Apollion summoned his own dark light behind his fence and struck back. Shapeless and smothering like a great ash cloud as it swept into the light and threatened to snuff the fires of Harvion's might. The light god thrust his wall out and burnt the ash further and created more dust that was drawn into the ever-growing storm. His stars seethed and flared behind him like patched wings of fury.

*Under my light life will be.*

*Sunder my might strife you'll see!*

*Dark bringer is no brother of mine,*

*Light welder, life bearer.*

*Harvion will banish you from here!*

All the light Harvion had created suddenly retracted into his body and for a moment in time existed as an eternity and Apollion reigned in total darkness. Then, like the opening of eyes to a new dawn, he brought light to every corner of this reality. His explosive shockwave scattered countless stars to all corners of existence so the dark would have nowhere to hide.

**Deny me! Fear me!**

**I will always be.**

**There can be no light**

**without the darkness.**

**Dusk must bring dawn.**

Apollion was forced back as the light burned his lidless eyes and seared his ever pale form. From his body he forged a blade, the first blade of all existence, and carved up all the stars surrounding him. He separated this pocket of his existence from the rest of reality and made his

own realm where he is the absolute ruler. He created a realm of total darkness and solitude from which he could view reality like looking through a window. The light could not reach him here.

*Apollion!*

*Am I led on?*

*Are you afraid to step into the light?*

*I fear you laid all your luck in the night!*

Harvion waited a moment then looked about at the reclaimed reality. He saw that the worlds that had existed before were now floating around in shattered showers of dust. He sighed to himself and spun the worlds back into existence with a casual wave of his mighty hands. He willed the new universe to be arranged and aligned in a perfect order that he could see from any angle. Every planet had a place and every star had a place. Then at the center of reality, where Harvion's light clashed with Apollion's destructive darkness he discovered a beating and pulsing force of power. The result of a big bang of forces forged a living crystal that bore both light and dark.

*Strange creation of ours.*

*Knowledge of all powers*

*Will be borne here and thrive.*

*Beings will see and never wife*

*Here at the heart of all.*

*Fill the books and stack tall.*

Satisfied with this decree, the God of Creation built the planet Rayo first around this new power and set a spark of life upon it with a little flick of his fingers. He nodded and retreated to the opposite side of the reality where he had made his "victory" over Apollion. He forged from his



own heart a lantern in the purest glass that brought a stream of pure starlight from it. He built his own pure realm of light where he reigned unquestioned. In this world there would be no dusk, only dawn and a paradise was born. He looked back over his shoulder before he left this reality. A pang in his great golden heart struck him for his brother. With a flare from the stars, he stepped into his realm. Existence now belonged to this fragile and untamed life that began to stir on the planets that Harvion had touched.

### First Angel

Harvion sat on his golden throne in his eternally lit realm that he could see everything in his realm, and nothing. The Lantern hovered above his throne and shined constantly on Harvion's window back to the living reality. His realm was a sea of glass that chimed and sang from a breeze he willed across the great space. He sighed despite the perfection that sat before him.

*Life was born in the reality.*

*But here? Does it owe me fealty?*

*No fear in Harvion!*

*Let it be! Life hereupon!*

Harvion's great hand stretched out and he let his thoughts run rampant. He desired a companion to speak, to see, to hear, and to be what his brother could not. His hand trembled with his own anticipation and a smile formed on the god's face as the being took shape.

A sturdy jaw was carved from the bubbling gold and slid down forming wide shoulders and firm legs. A veil of white hair blossomed from its scalp and fell down his back. When the bubbling stopped the figure collapsed in his palm. Harvion smiled and closed his hand around the body and light blazed forth around the limp form.

There was only a pulsing brightness and warmth surrounded his body then a snap and his eyes broke open and he gasped. He whipped his head around and jumped when his eyes fell on Harvion.

"Are you the one I dreamed about?"

*I am Harvion, father of light and life*

*Far beyond, farther from slight and strife.*

The young man tilted his head up at the golden god and Harvion felt the questions forming. He laughed and stood from his throne. The young being was set down and felt a sturdy stone beneath his soles. The air filled with a rush of air and the young man's ears felt the songs of creation as Harvion's great form shrank. With a shimmer and hiss, Harvion took the form of a young man himself similar in size and shape of his new creation. His skin was kissed by the brightest sun and his eyes glimmered like diamonds and his body was draped in a robe of golden light.

"Is this better?"

The young creation's face split into a smile and he fell to a knee as Harvion took a step towards him.

"I saw you while I slept. You spoke kind words and a gentle voice."

"I am Harvion, and I named you before I bore you my son. You are Samael."

"I am Samael."

"You are my first born and my greatest creation."

"I am? But what am I, Father?" Samael's voice trembled. "What is my purpose?"

"You are a servant of my light." Harvion raised his hand over Samael's head. "You will spread and protect the light. You are my Angel of Light." He touched Samael's crown and the angel was engulfed in a new blazing light that jarred and ripped through him. Columns of fire ripped from his back and reshaped themselves into three pairs of pale wings. They spread wide then encased his body as he stood up. His body was now draped in a pale tunic and golden armor clasped to his wrists, knees, and chest. Lines of pure porcelain light etched across his entire

figure and throbbed with each moment that passed. A silver crown wrapped vines of glass around his brow.

“I am a servant of the light. I will spread and protect your light and stand against the darkness of Apollion.” Samael declared. He held his hands out before him and smiled as his hands filled with a searing light similar to Harvion. “I must ask Father. Am I enough to illuminate the shadows of Apollion?” Harvion’s smile fell. He turned his back to Samael and returned to his throne. As he stepped up to it, he grew back to a massive size but maintained his physical form.

“I am the only one who can truly shine in the presence of Apollion. My brother’s powers are built to snuff and drown out all sight and light, but we can keep it at bay with an army of angels. You are the first of many, my son. With the light comes life and there can be no life in the darkness. His void will drown all it touches and I cannot allow my universe to fall to his influence.” He held out his hand like before and made a trembling fist. “Let it be.”

Blinding light ripped from Harvion’s hand and forced Samael to his knee. His wings rose and covered his face. A blistering wind passed by his body and whipped his garments and hair. Harvion’s eyes poured forth his light into the ball of light in his fist. Moments later another young man stirred at the foot of Harvion’s great throne.

“Was that how I was born, Father?” Samael’s eyes were wide as he peeked past his wings. A rattling gasp echoed like chimes on a breeze throughout the gilded meadow.

“All life comes from my heart and will.” Harvion leaned down as the new boy awoke and sat up. His body was more slender and his complexion richer and his hair a sharpened crimson and jagged and spiked from his head. The light behind his eyes pierced the golden hue with a lofty haze that reflected an unbroken sky. “You are Mikal.”

“I – I am Mikal.” His voice was higher and crisper. He stood and his eyes met those of Samael. “You are my brother.”

“I am. The Father calls me Samael.” He bowed to Mikal. Mikal imitated the bow with a tilted head.

“What are we? Why...?” Mikal’s eyes drifted as his young mind wandered as the vast knowledge flooded him. He held out his hand and a soft glow filled his palm with a simmering blue flame.

“Servants of the Father.” Samael waved his hand to Harvion who leaned on his throne and watched the two with a delicate smile. “Angels. We will protect and spread Father Harvion’s light across all creation and illuminate the darkness. Come forward with me and join his army and be my second.” He gripped Mikal’s shoulders. “I am the Angel of Light and you will be the Angel of Life.”

“Well said, my son.” Harvion said and reached down touching Mikal’s crown. Another explosion of light but this time from Mikal’s body. He was engulfed in a blue flame that licked up and down his body. He was enveloped in a pale under tunic and faded golden armor that covered nearly his entire body. His proud face was shielded by a sturdy helm with sloped features like eagles. He threw his chest out and a shower of white feathers covered the brothers before forming into a pair of massive wings on Mikal’s back. Mikal let out a high laugh and let them beat enough until he was lifted into the air. He set back down and looked to Harvion.

“I am yours, Father.” He looked back to Samael and held out a hand. “For Light and Life.”

“Light and Life.” Samael grasped Mikal’s gauntlet and nodded.

## Dark Influence

The gleaming gate of Harvion stood as a beacon in the abyss and illuminated the surrounding fields of moons. The flaming pillars flanking the gate stood defiant. The pulsing tendrils from the shadows constantly gnawed at the light but immediately slinked back into the void. The gate released a bellowing hymn like a choir of the light and the gate was opened. The armored figures of Samael and Mikal emerged from the gate with their wings carrying them aloft.

“The living world?” Mikal’s face was bright in awe.

“As Lord Harvion said, this is the realm that he inhabited before creating the Light Kingdom. Here there are materials different from what existed in our realm, things that are more difficult to mold and craft as they are trapped under the influence of Apollion. But with us here now we can free them of his dark and vile ways,” Samael said and glowered at the darkness that retreated from their inner light. “Look.” Samael pointed to the numerous lights that surrounded them from vast distances.

“More gates into the Light Kingdom?” Mikal asked.

“Not quite. In the first battle between Lord Harvion and Apollion, the strain became so intense that Harvion was forced to release his glory all across the expanse of this existence. This brought light to every corner of the universe and left nowhere for the darkness to hide. It would seem however, that some of the darkness still remained. It may be hiding on these worlds born from the battle.” His eyes fell back to look at the retreating shadows. “We must find a way to remove this blight on our Lord’s glory.”

*Light and life,*

*My glory is within you.*

*Light will be your knife!*

“Father?” Mikal looked around.

“He’s with us and now I can clearly see what he intended.” Samael took a breath and stretched his wings wide. He could see the shadows recoil from his growing glow. His body released a shockwave of blinding light that spread out a great distance in all directions from them. They could hear shrieks from the darkness as it was thrown back like a great sea on the shore. A world was revealed having been enveloped in the darkness and untouched by Harvion’s light. “A planet is saved. Mikal, use your light from within while I continue ahead to try and reveal more planets.” Mikal nodded as Samael flew past him and left the Angel of Life alone.

Mikal’s wings spread far. His eyes were emptied and filled with a soft glow. His wings grew around his body and continued until they were so massive that they engulfed the entire planet. As a sea of silk, he folded over it and for a moment the world glowed in the empty space. Then an eruption of feathers from the world and Mikal lifted his wings and they shrank back to their normal size. He smiled as the world was now bright and no longer the barren field he first witnessed. Lush vegetation covered the planet in rich fields of various colors and seas to fill their roots and skies.

*Light returns from the void.*

*Life from on high shall thrive.*

*Blight has yet see the toil*

*In the void it cannot survive.*

Mikal bowed to his unseen lord and rejoined the form of his brother who glowed brighter than the stars around him. Mikal looked back, hearing the voices of the worlds they passed. The rushing hum of Samael's light coupled with the beings below united in song. As Samael beat the darkness back, the stars glowed brighter and brighter and the influence of Apollion began to lift.

"My brother?" Mikal called after cleansing another world.

"Speak?" Samael looked back at his brother from the heart of his light.

"The Low Born. They're calling out to you. They have their own name for you. Morning Star," Mikal said. "These beings will feel the love and light of Harvion and his sons," Mikal's tone was high. A ball of air within him swelled and the smile beneath his helm would never fail.

The angels continued to spread the light and life until they came to a world that was dark and boiling on the surface. The beings on the world cried in pain as Samael neared.

"Pain," Samael whispered hovering over the world and calming his light.

"They are not praising you," Mikal flew past him to get closer to the orbit. "Hear me Low Born under Harvion's Light! What ails you?" His mind was bombarded by the cries and wails of the beings below. So many at once that he was forced back and away clutching his head. "What is this? Their shrieks..."

"Be still Mikal," Samael descended himself and stood on the surface of the smoke encased world. The ground crumbled beneath his boots and hissed from the pure light coming from his body. Columns of flame ripped from mountains in the distance and he could feel the black snow from the sky trying and failing to pierce his breath. He looked down at a small collection of beings. They were pale and their skin flaked like the ash from trees after a wildfire. They cowered from him and hid in their tiny huts and caves. He tilted his head and knelt down to see them. "Why do you flee from me? I am the Light bringer and servant of Lord Harvion.



We've freed you from the oppression of Apollion." The beings did not reply and he could feel the trembling through the jagged air of the world. "Please. Why do you hide?"

"You broke our lord's veil!", one being called out behind him. Samael looked over his bright shoulder at a small pallid one who covered her face with her dark garment. "The light-burns and breaks our flesh. Lord Apollion protected us from it and from the burning Heart of Rayo. We cannot live in the rays. I beseech you Morning Star, depart our lonely shadowed planet. Take your light and the life you claim to bring and begone!" the child's voice broke from the stress and his skin hissed from the simple presence of Samael. The angel's face contorted with confusion and his temper swelled and his light got brighter.

"I can help this world! I can make it green and full of living creations. Apollion is only destruction and darkness!" His frustration grew as the people shrieked again and his glow intensified and the ground around him rumbled and retreated as his light became more of a searing torch. "Harvion is Light! I am the Light!" he stomped the ground and the ground beneath him started to give away and he instinctively took to the sky just as a pillar of liquid fire erupted from within the heart of the planet and engulfed the people and their village. Their screams filled his ears and he glared down at them screaming into the boiling roar of the sick planet. "There is no end to this life, nor their suffering. So be the will of Harvion." He turned and soared back to his waiting brother.

"Samael, they still cry..." Mikal started just as the planet suddenly blasted out and was engulfed in the fires from its core. The rugged and ravaged surface was drawn into the swirl of heat and became another lamp of Harvion glowing in a defiant beacon against Apollion. Mikal covered his ears from the shrieks of the planet and looked on as it swelled towards them. In a

burst of light Samael, seized Mikal's hand and pulled him away. "What did you do!? The world! The people!"

"Taken by the darkness, Mikal. They would not heed me and my wishes. Harvion only wanted to spread his light and life through us and save all existence from the darkness!"

Samael's body seared as a boiling furnace. "We will burn it from this realm! Life will triumph! I will not fail!" He sent a burning piercing ream into the cloud of shadow that made it recoil and retreat as a wounded beast. "We can turn this universe around for Lord-" Samael stopped suddenly as the darkness struck back and bombarded the brothers with a wispy colorless barrage.

"Sam!" Mikal cried and was swept into the void and his light snuffed out in a wink.

"Mikal!" Samael's voice was drowned out by the wave of shadows that engulfed him and blotted out the stars and light. "You must...stay...with me..." He felt his eyes open but blinded by nothingness. "This cannot end..." The void trembled from his voice. "I won't...let you win."

**Win?**

**There is no loss or victory.**

**Save the war you bring to my shores.**

**I offer no pain or illness to you or your brother,**

**save the light you bring to burn the people veiled in my night.**

**Your attempt to bring light has brought only pain.**

"You speak only lies! Your darkness is a blight and must be destroyed!" Apollion's void shook again from the twitching form of Samael. "I will do the will of Harvion. I will banish you from this realm! I will ensure your darkness never takes hold again!" Samael's eyes snapped open and he looked all about staring into the pulsing darkness. No stars, no light, beyond his own burning form. "This is nothing." He hissed and his body ripped a burning streak through

Apollion's veil and burnt it to ash from contact. He became a living star himself and sent the veil far back until it broke as a sea around the very will of Apollion who watched on behind his walls of obsidian. Samael looked around and saw the quivering form of Mikal whose body blinked softly as a tiny blue flame.

“AWAKEN, MIKAL! YOUR MASTER NEEDS YOU!” Samael declared and Mikal jumped from the booming tone.

“Samael?”

“Let it go, Mikal. We will not make it back to Harvion but we can send a message to the Blight Lord.” Samael growled into the veiled form of the dark god. Mikal sighed and his body glowed an ethereal aura. Samael felt the warmth from his brother's light and watched as Apollion's form suddenly retreated and he seemed to draw up his full strength. Samael felt a pang of fear in his chest.

*So ready for the end?*

*Think that I sat alone in my haven?*

*My hosts I send!*

*Behold, my sons, swifter than ravens.*

A deafening bellow filled their ears. A second dawn broke behind the two. Samael turned back and his eyes shined like morning dew as a full legion of glowing beings in silver and golden armor soared into view. Ten brighter beings charged ahead and lashed out first. A hail of burning beams slammed into the walls of Apollion and his raging presence swelled as the armies of Harvion clashed into his dark wall. Samael and Mikal watched in awe at the flooding of light against the darkness. One of the other ten angels soared over to them. Her hair that fell to the tips of her boots in a sharp braid. Her tunic and sharp wings glistened adorned in emerald lights.

“Brothers, I am Gabriel.” Her voice was clear and stirred a new spirit in their hearts.

“Angel of Harmony.” Her wings flowed and danced in the ensuing battle behind her. “Lead us on my brothers...” Samael and Mikal looked to each other and nodded before joining the army in its battle with Apollion.

### Traversing Limits

In the far reaches of reality, where the stars were sparse, Apollion stood on a massive façade. It was piercing black; no light could penetrate the walls or pillars that held it aloft. He was covered in a protective veil and only his dark presence could be felt. Harvion's host assembled before the dark god. Harvion himself approached the head of his army in his smaller humanoid form. His golden glasslike body carried aloft on a chariot that soared on pearly wings.

#### *Night brother*

Harvion's voice was a choir of bells in a large palace hall.

**Blight Lord, you've called me.**

**Begone, you bring your delusion and pain;**

**I want to be left in peace.**

Apollion's was more as a funeral aria.

*Apollion, I beg your forgiveness.*

*I no longer wish to wage war.*

*Our realms lie in ruins fruitless,*

*Burning and scorched.*

**By your light!**

Apollion's fury rose behind his fortress and the smoky haze thrust out and made the host surge and move forward with their powers flaring.

"Come, Father!" Samael called out. "End the night here! Now!"

*Silence, child.*

Samael's jaw clenched from his father's scorn and he leered on at Apollion while Mikal patted his shoulder.

"Let our Father work, Sam."

*I want my light to bring life.*

*I see now that can be like a knife*

*To your subjects behind the veil.*

*Please, brother, with you I cannot fail.*

Apollion's raging veil calmed slightly and his pale eyes could be seen from the silhouette beneath the haze.

*I see now that there is a curse in my life*

*And light.*

*In me it cannot end. There Is no scythe*

*To bring night.*

*My own children caused your kingdom pain.*

*I want no hindrances upon your hereupon.*

Apollion himself emerged from the veil and he let Harvion's light sear and burn his flesh directly. Harvion gasped and instinctively lowered the intensity of his light to a simple glow around his body. The light now would not harm his brother and the smile that broke Harvion's face caused Apollion's face to crack also. His body shimmered with hazy silver and he shrank down to match Harvion's humanoid form. His skin was the color of burnt bark and his eyes were no longer empty voids but pools of sapphire that reflected the light flame from Harvion.

"My brother allow me to show you something..." He extended his hand and Harvion looked at him then back to his forces.

“I will return soon my children,” he said and took his brother’s hand and the two deities soared across space keeping Samael’s mouth locked open in shock.

“After all this!?” he scoffed to himself and Mikal, who could only cheer with his brothers and sisters. “HE chooses to make peace and let this all continue!”

“Samael. This is what we all wanted. No more fighting! Peace for the light and shadow. Peace for our brother gods means peace for this dimension and life to be born again!” Mikal’s voice was calm and his hand was on his brother’s shoulders. “Let us wait for them to return. You know this is for the best.” Samael leered over his shoulder at Mikal’s hand and shrugged it off, moving away from the army. He followed after the brothers and hid in the trails of dawn and dusk they left behind them. They ended up back at the world that had rejected Harvion’s teachings and had returned to a burning star. Harvion immediately seemed uncomfortable. My light is the blight for some.

Apollion patted his brother’s shoulder.

**Can you hear them? They still wail and scream.**

Harvion’s eyes closed and he crossed his arms. A single silver tear fell from his cheek and drifted off into the ether. He trembled and drew the people suffering from the flames of the star.

***What can I do? How-?***

Apollion reached out and their screaming stopped and they stopped flailing. Silence returned and their spirits emerged their charred forms. They were tiny drops of flame. They darted and dashed before them a cloud of ducklings with no mother.

***What is this?***

***This is my gift to life.***

*Death.*

*I end suffering, sickness, pain.*

*In a single breath.*

*And free them of their bodies we created.*

Harvion touched one of the spirits and he recoiled from the darkness in the spirit.

Apollion instinctively swatted it away and the spirit vanished. He sighed in a quieter tone.

“Unfortunately, life is neither good nor evil but a combination. Life is created by you and by me when our powers clashed. These were born with no protection to the light and suffered. But as death is my domain I touched them with death and free.”

“Why does it have to end?” Harvion cooed.

“Do you see the worlds that have been destroyed because of the fighting?”

“I see the ashes...” Another tear fell and this time Apollion caught the tear there and let it swirl in his hand.

“Beauty in loss. Life can last forever in you but out here among the living being. It must end lest they be trapped in an eternity of dragging on through existence until we end it all again,” Apollion said. Harvion sighed

“Where do they go then when they pass with you? Just into the space between light and dark?” Harvion met his brother’s gaze. “As we know their spirits do not pass but are eternal.”

“I can make a place for them to remain. A place they can reunite with family, friends, and all their loved ones. An afterlife and realm for the dead. Unfortunately, it would be a dark place within my kingdom.” Apollion prepared to toss the tears but Harvion again took his brother’s hand and with the other he made a fist and a small ball of light shined through his fingers and he opened the fist. The Lantern sat in his golden palm and pulsed faintly.



“I gift you my Lantern of Life and Light, brother. With this you can bring light into your kingdom, as bright or as dim as you desire. But most importantly, I let you bring life into your own hands.” He was smiling as Apollion’s face was stark and distant even as he stared at the little light source that sat before him.

“Why?”

“I want to spread my life and light to those who desire to bask in my glory. That extends to my only equal. Even a little glow allows a path in a sea of darkness.” Harvion took the lantern and set it in Apollion’s softening hand. The Blight Lord flinched from a pain that never arrived and the moment he felt its weightless form, the golden hue faded to a pale silver that reflected in his eyes.

Samael trembled in a newfound fury that seemed as boundless as the depths of space. He watched the brothers and felt only pang after pang of betrayal in his chest. The light in his heart surged and threatened to boil free of his body. The darkness near him seemed drawn to this fury and swirled about his pulsing body.

“Feel it in your hands. Feel it in your heart. Let it be...” Harvion released his brother’s hand and waited. Apollion grew back to his full powered form and towered over his brother who only smiled on.

**Night with no Light-**  
**Death is all but set.**  
**Now Blight and Light**  
**A Dawn and Dusk.**  
**Let it Be.**

The tears in his hand merged into one and shined with a flickering silver glow and molded and grew into two figures who were near perfect mirrors to each other. Both pale, foggy glass like their shadowed father. Their hair shamed the darkness itself and eyes that matched the lantern's silver glory. They trembled in his grasp for a moment and then stirred in his massive palm. She awoke first and saw the pale gaze of darkness and was in awe.

“Father?” her quiet coo shuddered him into his very being.

“My child.” He was barely audible but her face was full of conditional understanding. “You are Ianna. You are my Angel of Life and caretaker of the Lantern of Light.”

“I...I am Ianna,” She whispered and stood as a vinelike tattoo wrapped through her skin and pulsed violet gleam and a silver tunic formed from the smoke of Apollion's darkness, as well as pale moonlight armor on her chest and limbs and finally a pair of black wings sprouted from her back like a flower blooming and matched her hair. She flexed them, which disturbed the other being behind her. He mumbled and stood and looked at Apollion with the same eyes as his sister. His locks danced in the airless space. The same markings started covering his body and Apollion smiled at his first son.

“Inanis. You are the brother of Ianna and will also be my Angel of Life and caretaker of the Lantern of Light alongside your sister.”

“I am Inanis. With my sister I will protect the Lantern of Light,” he mumbled and spread his own wings as his tunic formed yet this one black and adorned with bone white armor over his body. Ianna turned to face him and they gasped lightly at the similarities. They silently explored their features and eventually looked back to Apollion and soared to stand on his shoulder. Harvion resumed his godly form and met his brother's eyes, which glistened like a shower of starlight from his gaze.

“For this gift, my brother.” Apollion held his hand out to Harvion and from within his dark grasp the dark blade rose and clasped in his clawed fingers. The handle was paler than the bones of their children and a blade that was so dark no light could reflect from the jagged surface. “I gift you the Sword of Death to bring a balance to your gift of life and allow it to end so more life can follow.” Harvion recoiled from the sword’s appearance at first but he sighed quietly to himself.

“I accept this kingly gift.” Harvion grasped the hilt and the sword started to warp and change as Apollion’s hand left. The blade smoothed out to a single double-edge, the pale cold stark color shifted to that of a sunrise. Pulsing gold vines wrapped up the blade and spread out over the hilt like wings and it hummed in his grasp. “Beautiful...” He looked back at his brother and the still lingering ashes of the dead. “Now for the spirits of the dead, we can create a separate place for them to remain after their life ends. A place of both of our creations where light and darkness can be in perfect union.”

“No place has come from our conflicts and my poor souls must wander aimless in the soundless void. What kind of realm would we make?” Apollion asked.

“A paradise for all,” Harvion said and the sword glowed in his hand brighter and brighter.

“Paradise...” Apollion whispered and the lantern glowed in a similar brightness as the brothers’ hands clasped again and their might combined into one cosmic light that rocked the fabric of reality. Samael hid from their glory and in the shadow of the nearby star.

There was a great rumble and the light subsided. A new structure appeared and loomed before the brothers. A new doorway towered over them and reflected the fire of the star as a pit of liquid steel. The bronze sculptures held a massive canopy aloft and a grand staircase to a pair of amber gates that beheld the images of the brothers together in perfect union.

“Perfect,” Harvion muttered.

“A home for lifeless spirits.” Apollion immediately opened the gates with a gesture and streams of spirits came forth from Apollion’s dark realm and were drawn into the awaiting afterlife. “We will assign our own angels to be the heralds of life and death.” He looked to his two children on his shoulders and the lantern shrank in his massive hand. “To me, Ianna and Inanis.” They soared back down to his hand where the lantern glowed and radiated.

“Father,” they spoke as one.

“You are my angels and this is yours to protect and follow. Life and light are born within it and it will guide you to protect life and gift it to others who may have lost it,” Apollion said and the lantern shrank into a small orb of light and split into two orbs. The orbs became chains of silver and settled around the twin necks of the siblings.

“Your will be done.” They said again as one.

“Samael?” Harvion said over his shoulder, making the angel jump. He immediately straightened up and flew from behind the star to meet his father.

“Father?” Samael whispered.

“Firstly, you can try and hide from me but as you are of my flesh I see and hear your heart always. So nice try.” Harvion turned to his son with a mild look down his nose at the young angel. “Second, though, I must ask you to take upon another title. You are my firstborn and my mightiest angel.” He extended his hand and the sword glowed in his palm. “I need you to be my angel of Light and Death. The sword will allow you to bring the gift of death to those in agony and pain. Their spirits will then come to the Afterlife Gates and be released into the paradise we have made for them.”

“Father, why? Why do we need to work with the children of Apollion? They are still only dark creatures...” Samael whispered and his father’s golden stare hardened and flared slightly.

“Your father has made his request. Apollion is my brother and by extension your blood as well and those of his children. You will serve the Light and Life as I have requested and demanded.” He softened and took a breath, “My son take the sword and help me spread the Light and Life.” Samael trembled and stared as he took the hilt and it shimmered in his hand and gained a lightly rusted hint. His golden crown also gained the rusted hue and dark lines encircled his eyes as he felt the power over death in his hands. He took a breath and he looked into the sword’s blade and saw his pulsing eyes behind the light. “For the Light.”

## Dark Light

A world was dying. He could see even from this great distance. Their wailing agony from the empty pain in their bloated bellies was more akin to nails in his ears. Samael hovered in the planet's failing atmosphere and allowed the dust to scrape his cheeks. Even with the weeks of no rain and endless heat from the nearby star, this planet could not entertain or endure the light. The death blade clenched and hummed into his blood. He heard them cry out to him. To these beings he glowed like a smaller star. A pair of small twig arms reached out to him from the sea of sand.

"To Afterlife's Gate. . ." he whispered and sliced a great wave across the planet with the sword. It released a deafening cry as a choir bellowing into a hall and then a shriek as song turned to fire. The surface blazed and all life instantly became ash and the heart of the planet tapered out. "All of it!" Samael roared and slashed the sword again—the planet imploded and washed away into the void of space, lost in the blackness between stars. His eyes searched among the ashes and saw numerous lost spirits wandering 'round in the rocks and debris. He raised the sword and it hummed again and flashed like a beacon. It lured the little lights in slowly. He shook his head and led them away from the ruins with a gentle beat of his wings.

The Afterlife Gate sat at the edge of reality. The great façade dwarfed even the largest planets and its dark pillars and emblems of Apollion brought a solemn air to the space around it. The Brothers relocated the Gate to not terrify or intimidate the living worlds around them. He landed on the staircase at the base of the gates and leered down at the spirits that flew past him and towards the glowing doors. He could hear the endless music in the hallowed halls and got lost for a moment until the sound of another pair of boots hit the marble steps next to him. He

whirled with his sword raised and stared into the wide azure eyes of Ianna. She recoiled with her hands raised in defense of his aggression.

“Peace Cousin!” she cried and shielded her body with her wings. He gasped and looked at her with a furrowed brow.

“Forgive me.” He mumbled. He sheathed the sword. “I have been on my own all day and it has been quiet.” Ianna caught her breath. She stood up straightened her armor and eyed him.

“Clearly you need more company on your missions.”

“Clearly you need to announce your arrival to the Angel of Death.”

“Reputation always precedes you Samael,” Ianna mumbled. “Was your mission successful?”

“Death has been dealt.” He folded his arms and watched the spirits drift past them. “The planet is waiting to be rebuilt.”

“You destroyed the entire planet?” her mouth was agape.

“It was dying inside and out. There was no saving it.”

“There were thousands of beings on the planet.”

“Dying beings. Surely your father would agree with not wanting to waste life with pain.”

“We could have saved them. Healed their wounds.” Ianna grumbled as the numbers increased and surged into the gates.

“You would have only prolonged their suffering, Ianna. Don’t let it bother you so much. They will all be together in the Afterlife.”

“It’s not really for us to determine when to end life or begin it. The Brothers do.”

“The weapons they gave us do.”

“By extension. But the Lantern and the Sword are pieces of the brothers themselves.” She touched the necklace. The Lantern jewel shined in the torch light. “The light guides me and my father keeps me focused. Surely the sword has that same effect on you, cousin?”

“The sword is an extension of Apollion and grants me power over death. I am humbled to be a servant of the Dark Father.” Ianna frowned at his monotone declaration.

“And now the afterlife fills with more of my father’s followers.”

“Sick followers. Now free of their sickness.”

“You—!” Ianna started to raise her voice but the sudden arrival of Mikal on the steps of the gates cut her temper short.

“Brother, Cousin Ianna, pardon the interruption...” he froze and looked between them both as they stared off into the void. “Am I interrupting?”

“No, Mikal. Speak what do you need?” Samael turned to his brother.

“Father has requested your presence back home.” Mikal beamed.

“Why? I’m busy working?”

“Does he ever say why?” Mikal shrugged. “Make haste. We are both requested in his court as soon as possible.”

Samael sighed. “As the Light Father wishes. I will be along promptly.”

“I’ll await your return.” Mikal blasted back into space like a blazing blue comet towards the gates of Harvion. Samael took a breath and looked back at the lines of souls heading into the Afterlife and then to Ianna before spreading his wings.

“Farewell, cousin.” She mumbled to his back. He leered out into space and blasted off, rocking the gates slightly as his light burnt parts of the stone and bronze. She glared at the trail his light left and turned to the spirits.



Planets, stars, comets all streaked past his fixed gaze. The gates of Harvion glowed in the distance. Seeing the ruins of the planet he earlier vanquished, he slowed to a stop. A glimmer snagged his attention and bounced around from within the clouds of debris and charred corpses. A lonely spirit had been left to wander among the shells of life and had lost its way.

“Always one more.” He growled into his throat and approached the little soul that seemed drawn to him. It moved like a firefly and avoided him as he slinked closer. “Stop, you fool. It’s time to go to your next phase of existence.” The little wraith still moved away from him. The heat rose fast in his chest. “I said stop!” His voice was sharper and his light was a violent scarlet shade and the spirit froze in place and twitched. “When I give you an order, I expect you to obey me.” His hand was held out and the nails on his fingers sharpened and blackened. The spirit released a shriek that dug daggers into his ears. “No more screams...no more pain...silence...” The little soul started to warp and shift. The softer sides throbbed, and the soul’s color faded and his own grip on the sword tightened and the soul grew and gained jagged appendages. The conscience within it snuffed out and a legion of bloodshot eyes ripped from the growing body. The shriek dropped and flailed until it echoed as a guttural roar that shook the stars.

“What?” Samael blinked and gazed upon this new creature. Scales crackled over a spindly body with over a dozen arms with hundreds of eyes. It writhed before him unable to move properly in the vacuum of the void. It let out desperate ragged breaths and tortured whimpers as its body failed and crumpled. “This was my...” He moved to touch it and it quivered beneath his burning palm which had returned to normal. “Child...” The creature creaked again and his body shook before going still and the life had faded again. “To the gates...” Samael whispered and his sword glowed and erased the abomination before him. The soul faded into the dust of space and was gone. He hovered and trembled into a bitter sobbing. A

burning pain filled his chest and the tears hissed off his cheeks as he felt another presence approach him.

“I thought you were told to remain at the Afterlife,” He growled.

“My sister goes where she pleases.” Inanis hissed and emerged from the shadow of the shattered planet. “I’m here to pick up another one of your messes, cousin.”

“I am not your cousin, child of darkness.” Samael’s body seethed. “I was just lamenting this planet and her people.”

“After you obliterated them.”

“Have you no heart, life bringer? I am a source of light and creation chosen to destroy my father’s work while you mock him and the power he granted you.” Samael looked back at the Angel of Life with puffy eyes. “Cousin indeed.” Inanis sighed, and dropped his aggressive stance. His face softened and he moved past Samael.

“Forgive me.” Inanis whispered and the necklace on his chest radiated a soft violet light and grew. “I sometimes feel my sister’s emotions not as hers but as my own...” He looked out at the debris and ruins. “Oh shattered angry world, purged of your pain and removed of your stain. Hear my words, servant of life. Be born again...” A ball of fire appeared in the center of the ruined world and the debris was drawn in as a growing storm. Rocks, dust, wood, all materials of the world came screaming back to their original source and within moments the planet was returned as it was when Samael banished it from existence.

Samael watched from the atmosphere as Inanis knelt down on the lifeless soil and dug a small hole. The Angel of Life clutched the lantern charm and smiled into the sky. He pulled his hand away and a single small glowing orb hovered in his palm. He set it in the hole and covered

it with the dirt. Immediately a small emerald growth poked through the ground and life began anew. Samael smirked to himself and flew away from the planet.

Samael's boots touched on the gilded steps. He sighed in silence. He could hear the music and many voices behind the glowing barrier. "I'm home," he stepped over the threshold and the symphony of Harvion filled his ears. The light from the kingdom forced Samael's eyes to readjust.

The formerly modest realm of infinite glass and gold was now even greater. It was a thriving, fully fledged kingdom of light nurtured and guided by Harvion. White fields of diamond grass led to a round wall of the Light City. It was filled to the brim with palaces and fountains, and music and poetry could be heard dancing off the many polished halls. The wall was high and polished marble adorned with statues and art of the angels and beings of Harvion. It extended off into the distance as the city had no end. A silver gate perched open and led into the city which was aflame with light and life. At the highest point of the city sat Harvion's palace which ascended so high into the crystalline sky that the peak was barely visible. But the light of Harvion shined above as the purest star and sun.

"There you are!" Samael turned just as Mikal tackled into him and threw his arm about his shoulder.

"Oh get off. What is going on? Don't tussle my hair," Samael mumbled adjusting his crown.

"The Light Father is creating another angel to join our ranks. Finally our eleven will be twelve! I believe also that this new angel will be infused with powers over life and death!"

Mikal's glee was palpable on his wide grin.

"Infused" Samael asked looking at the sword at his waist. "How?"

“How I’m not sure. The Fathers work in mysterious ways and they must have found a way. Come. Let us witness their birth!” Mikal urged and spread his wings flying ahead while Samael sighed and followed.

The pair landed on one of the many balconies of Harvion’s palace and walked into the grand throne room of the Light Father. His great golden throne sat in the heart of the building and towered the full height of the structure. Gabriel smiled and nodded at them as they stepped out onto one of the many thousands of platforms overlooking Harvion’s throne. The light of the realm shined above and illuminated the entire hall. Harvion’s eyes were focused on both of his hands that remained cupped in front of his person. His eyes leaked with light (which could have been tears) and his body trembled. The light pulsed in a mixture of porcelain and silver and gold that swirled around his hands and hid them from sight.

*Behold. My beloved kingdom*

*All my children under my sun.*

*This gift will be my sin undone.*

*Be my light and night, my son.*

*Let it be.*

*Let it be.*

*Arise, Cosmantai.*

The resounding shockwave rocked the entirety of the palace and even forced some of the thousands of angels present to catch themselves and resist the force. Samael held strong and only his tunic and wings were disturbed by the rush. His bright eyes were fixed on the ball of light in Harvion’s hand. Harvion held his hand out and a surging violet light from outside their realm whirled like a violent, condensed hurricane.

*Before my kingdom reigned over light,  
When darkness was only seen as a blight,*

*Apollion and I waged a war over all.*

*Dark and powerful energy stood tall*

*I Locked the power in the first world Rayo.*

*Now. That power have a champion desired.*

The hurricane of power suddenly was drawn into the new angel and the light turned a distinct starry purple and silver that sent a shower of sparks and fire into the hall along with a few surprised shrieks.

“So that’s how...” Samael whispered. “The energy from the war with Apollion concentrated into a raging ball of energy. And he put a planet around it and then put the youngest of us in control of such power.”

“What?” Mikal asked clearing his ears with a well-placed pinky.

“Just watching our replacement be born,” He again whispered.

“One more...” Mikal tried before Samael pushed him away and moved to leave.

*Samael.*

He froze and looked back to see Harvion’s glowing eyes set upon him and made him tremble for once.

*Stay your fear, my son*

*Come and see what is done.*

He beckoned Samael back and the figure in his palm slept soundly as the final brushes of Harvion’s light painted only a single emblem on his body. An sigil emerged upon his forehead- an amethyst jewel round as a planet. Two crowns of energy encircled the orb and it seemed to

dance in a circle upon his brow. He stirred and sat up in Harvion's palm. His hair was a veil of pure starlight and the silver glow shocked his surrounding brothers and sisters. His eyes were vacant, porcelain and burned like a living torch. Great white wings spread from his back and they glowed like his eyes. He looked around and stood immediately when facing the Light Father.

"I am Cosmontai, the Twelfth Arch and servant of the light." His voice was high and clear and echoed in the hall. The hail of cheers and applause followed with a smile that broke upon Cosmontai's face. Harvion moved him around the hall to display his newest son to the court of his kingdom.

*Child of light,*

*Child of darkness.*

*Prince of my stars.*

*Your power is both*

*And Samael...*

*He will be your student.*

*He will assist you in your task.*

*Death, borne on your burden.*

*He shall do all that you ask.*

The Angel of Death perked up at his name again.

Cosmontai looked to his new teacher and knelt as light poured from his sigil on his forehead and he was now adorned in robes that matched the color of his crest. They billowed about him. Silver armor locked across his wrists, knees, chest and waist. He stood and flicked his wrist, summoning a staff with a black handle and a bright violet gem at the crest. Harvion let him hop down onto Samael's balcony.

“Master,” Cosmontai said bowing his head to him. “I am ready to do my duty to Harvion and serve the light and follow your orders.”

“Right,” Samael whispered and looked the new angel up, down, then back to Harvion. “Why am I in need of a student?” Harvion shrank back down and stepped onto their balcony.

“Because, my son, I can sense the strain and disdain in your heart.” Harvion pulled him aside and gripped his shoulders gently. “You are tortured by your labor and harbor such a grudge for your cousins.”

“They are not my cousins, Father.” Harvion’s gripped tightened.

“Apollion is my brother. You are my son. Ianna and Inanis are your family. The same as the rest of us all are. I love you. I love you all equally and endlessly. You must be there for your family and all of creation. You are the first light of my eye—“

“You love us all equally, yet did not reward us equally,” Samael whispered and nodded towards Cosmontai. “Life and Death in *his* hands? What makes him so special?” Harvion’s expression hardened.

“You should be grateful for what you have and not what you lack,” Harvion dropped his light tone and shook his head. “Take care of your brothers and sisters and cousins. In the end, all we have is each other.” The Light Father assumed his divine form and took to his throne again. Samael looked at the ground and then up to his new apprentice who was chatting timidly with Mikal.

“Cosmontai. Let’s go. Let me show you what I do for the Light.” His flat tone forced a frown on both his brothers’ faces.

“Yes, sir.” Cosmontai whispered and followed.

They flew from the city and back through the gates of Harvion and exited into reality. Samael soared through as a streak of gold and Cosmontai on his tail as a streak of violet and silver. The Sword pulsed at his waist and he slowed to a halt. They hovered above a planet where a volcano had suddenly erupted and a sea of ash reached across the fading landscapes. The screams of the planet's people echoed in his ears and the sword felt their cries of anguish.

"This world." Samael asked Cosmontai, "What do you see brother?" Cosmontai moved next to him and his pale eyes flashed and surged as he scanned the planet.

"Planet ending event. The core is spilling over her and will vanquish the current life on her crust. If left unchecked, most of the species will be extinguished and another set of species will take their place. Life and Light will return." His tone was curious and fascinated.

"Life and Light will return if left unchecked?" Samael looked down his nose at the burning world. "But they will be left to suffer for awhile before being given peace from their lives. That is what you would intend?"

"Well..." Cosmontai shifted uncomfortably and held his staff closer to his body. "It is the way life must be sometimes."

"No wasted life, Cosmontai. It is fitting that my first lesson would be the most important one, so listen carefully. Let no life be wasted. Life is sacred and wasting it is the greatest crime against the Light Father. So my task as the Angel of Death is to ensure that the gift of death can be granted to those who are in most need of it. Like this sad dying world- they will be spared from suffering." Samael declared and unsheathed the sword of death and it pulsed in his hand and cast a shadow over the burning planet. "To Afterlife's Gate..." he started to swing the sword but Cosmontai raised his hand.



“Wait!” Cosmontai’s eyes were locked on the planet below. “Please, master. Let me try something different. The whole world shouldn’t die because of this.” His body shimmered and the jewel on his forehead glowed. He raised his hand and snapped his fingers. A shockwave of violet light ripped across the surface of the planet. Moments later, only a few hundred souls emerged from the clouds. They wandered for a moment in the void then drifted off towards the Afterlife Gates.

“So few?” Samael asked.

“Only the ones that wouldn’t survive. The ones that were suffering like you said, needlessly.” Cosmontai said.

“What of the others who are doomed to die in the ash storm?”

“They at least have a chance. They will make the most of their time; some will live longer than others and they will even preserve their future through their writings. History will remember them.” Samael could only glare down at the world and the little life that remained. He knew it would eventually fizzle out.

“You don’t find this wasteful? Eventually they will just die and join the others.”

“All life is sacred and should be cherished as long as it lasts Master and I implore you to change your view of this. You are the guardian of the dead and they look to you to send them off peacefully.” Cosmontai patted his shoulder. “You doing great things Master. Remember that.” Samael nodded and sheathed his sword slowly.

“Perhaps you are right. Maybe they do deserve a chance and require a more personal touch. Cosmontai, there are a few worlds that I feel need your guidance and it would serve you and the universe well to go and observe them and expand your knowledge. I will find you in a short while.”

“Do you wish to be left alone?”

“I do.”

Cosmontai’s face fell. “As you wish.” He lowered his head and flew off in a streak of violet light. Samael stayed and hovered in the empty air around the planet, his tunic and wings brushed by the windless void. He closed his eyes and the sword pulsed and throbbed into his back and his body surged with the power of the blade.

“*BE GONE!*” He heard the world rumble from deep inside. A fiery light ripped from the planet’s surface raged in front of him. It pierced the planet and ripped through its axis and emerged from the other side. Finally it erupted into a ball of fire and was snuffed out in a cloud of debris. Samael’s eyes reflected the void of space and the darkness faded slowly and a smile sliced across his face.

Ianna waited by the Afterlife Gates as a slow stream of spirits trickled past her and into the glowing plane. She watched them go and viewed into their minds and souls and rubbed the charm on her neck. Old age, sickness, war, all the methods of death that had been put on them by the Sword and her emotional master, Samael. It made Ianna quiver. She shook her head and looked around feeling another surge in the universe as another planet was snuffed out.

“Not again!” she shrieked and took off through space. Worlds flashed by and galaxies were mere stepping stones past acres of stars and empty space. She arrived in the graveyard which spun around the shell of the former world. The spirits fluttered around in disarray.

“I told him this was too much! He knows better!” She growled and her charm shined and the planet started to reform. Suddenly a ray of burning light blasted her in the chest and she slammed into one of the rocky shells of the dead world.

“Wha-?” she started just as another blast of light pushed her deeper into the ground and she trembled against the power. She gritted her teeth and created a barrier of shadow to protect her body from the burning light. She managed to stand up holding the light back with just enough time for her barrier to be overwhelmed and shattered. She was bathed in light. Ianna shrieked but her screams fell into space and she was buried in the dirt.

He emerged from the shadows with darkness in his eyes and a burning light in his fist. The sword pulsed in his other hand as he neared her buried form— only her chest and head visible in the pile of dirt and ash. Samael held a deep scowl but a slithered grin that quivered with the radiating blade. Ianna trembled and looked through burnt eyes up at him. Her pale flesh was seared black and her wings were smoldered stumps twitching in the dirt under her. The Lantern jewel shined on her neck untouched by his light. He reached down and grabbed it. Samael tried to rip it from her neck but his strength could not break the chain.

“Cousin...?” Ianna asked as he held the blade to her neck. “Please...life is sacred no matter how it is born...” she breathed against the edge that lightly nicked her flesh.

“No.” With one hand he held the chain and with the other he brought the sword up and broke it and the Lantern sigil came free.

“If it did there would be no death. If the Light Father cannot see the worthlessness of your kind and what you have brought from the dark corners of reality then I will show him by creating my own life. I’ll show him the true value of his own children.” He looked down at her with disdain. He left her alone to tremble and quiver in the dark frost yet no light to find her way back home.

## Burning Wings

Samael ripped his sword from the body of another creature with a thick layer of scales. It cried as he claimed its body and skin for his own. He raised his hand and the corpse flew with him into the sky and back out into the open space. His eyes radiated a furious scarlet and his hair was a deathly mane in the airless air. He sent the corpse ahead of him to a secluded lonely part of the living kingdom where all the worlds were barren and left unattended.

“At long last,” he pushed the body ahead of him into the shadows and then ignited a light in his hand and illuminated a mass of floating corpses. A hovering shapeless pile of limbs, bodies and gore that was almost the size of a small moon loomed nearby. The smell singed the inner parts of Samael’s nostrils. He looked at his hand. It was swollen and bruised from scarring. Glowing at the center of his palm was the jewel of the Lantern. “Fulfill your bright purpose.” The sigil pulsed like the Sword which he held in his other hand. “With the Sword and Lantern in my hands I shall be the master of both life and death. Light and destruction will be one in this new creation of mine.” He glared at the corpses before him. “Servant of Death, I command you rise. From the corpses of my fallen prey you will feed on the living souls of the Dark Father and Light Father! My angel of war, arise!”

The Lantern’s light soldered and burned in his hand as it released a boiling shining black light that surged forward. The corpses shriveled and melted and contorted into a single burning form of gore. The mound pulsed and beat with its own gushing heart. Bones rattled and dusted and joined with the squirming organs. They shimmered and formed a layer of glittering scales. They glistened like oil ripping forth from the earth. A fire shined within and the form trembled

and beat as Samael poured the essence of the Sword directly into the creature. The blade glowed in his hand and zapped the growing beast granting it the power to end life. He smiled and looked up as it emerged and swelled and stretched great black wings so large they blotted out the light of several stars. Eyes opened from the body and a great neck reached out with liquid flame pooling from ebony jowls. The wings beat and it reared a serpentine snout and released a roar and column of flame that instantly reduced the surrounding planets from barren rocks to massive clouds of ash and sent the dust into the abyss. Samael's face broke into a smile as the gust from the beast's wings beat the awe that streaked across his face. It leaned down to him and he was met with its jagged scarlet eyes.

“You are Timorum. My winged fear and night fire.” He stretched his hand out and stroked the scales that were now larger than the angel's entire body. “Come with me...we will spread my new order across the universe and purge the darkness of Apollion from all reality.” A moment later he stood on Timorum's brow and they were soaring back into the living reality from the edge of existence.

Mikal and Cosmontai streaked across the universe with watchful eyes.

“When did you last see him?” Mikal asked.

“I went with him to spare a world in the southern quadrant from suffering. He requested to be alone and sent me to another world in the eastern quadrant where I mingled with the beings and I don't know where he went. But I do know he attacked and sacked the world I spared completely before vanishing completely. I'm worried Mikal. I sensed a massive amount of distress and conflict in his heart,” Cosmontai said. He felt a sudden rush as another being cut across their paths.

Mikal stopped “Inanis?” The Angel of Life flew to him and gripped his shoulders hard.

“Cousin! I cannot find my sister! Ianna is gone from my sight! I fear for her safety!” He was frantic and fear glowed behind his brow. “She was at the Afterlife Gate guiding souls and then I felt her leave and then she was just gone! Please! Help me!”

“Peace Inanis,” Mikal patted his hands and the frantic angel released him. “We will help you find her. My brother has been missing for some time as well.” Inanis’ gaze shifted and hardened slightly. “Maybe he has seen her?”

“I saw him before this one was born,” Inanis said nodding to Cosmontai. “He seemed troubled then and later Ianna told me she had a cold greeting from him at the Gates. I don’t want to believe it, Mikal, but I believe your brother may be involved with my sister’s disappearance.” Mikal’s face furrowed.

“My brother is guilty of only being rash and speaking his mind bluntly. There is no stake in that claim and I plead for peace until we know where they both are.”

“I meant no offense...It just felt the most likely for the moment.” He looked down sheepishly and then whirled to his right as a star shined in the distance so bright and then flickered out.

“So many worlds were just vanquished,” Cosmontai whispered. “In a single moment.”

“We must go! Come, Inanis this could be the source of both our troubles.” Mikal blasted past them with Inanis and Cosmontai very hot on his trail.

Moments later, when they reentered space from their light, they scattered a cloud of dust.

“By the Light,” Mikal whispered. The clouds were so large they paled to cosmic storms that raged across the universe. Tsunamis of debris and dust spun and dragged like great corpses of the stars. The angels were immediately engulfed in a plague of charred corpses and surrounded by the stench of death. “What could have caused this?”

“Can the Sword do this?” Inanis asked.

“You are of Apollion’s Kingdom. Don’t you have any knowledge of the blade?” Mikal asked.

“I am of Apollion but the blade was created before the proper establishment of the Kingdoms and the unity established. But Cosmontai’s powers are capable of something like this I believe. Massive control over space, reality and life and death.” Inanis looked to the young angel.

“My power doesn’t come from Harvion or Apollion separately but both of them. Rayo holds the source of my powers but even I cannot access them all at once. It would destroy me and all this reality” Cosmontai looked back at them and lightly jumped at their stares. “I’ve been out and about the entire time I’ve been alive. This could not have been me, my brother and cousin. Look about you. This was done by fire and darkness...so much fury.”

“Who else could do this?” Mikal asked. “Can we undo it?”

“We cannot undo this. This damage is nearly completely perfect,” Inanis said.

“*Isn’t it?*” The three turned as Samael emerged from the shadows of the debris with his sword in hand. His eyes, washed in scarlet fire, watched them with an upturned lip. “This perfect chaos to wash away the filth of Apollion. Forever. The Light will burn the darkness from existence.”

“Samael...?” Mikal whispered as the light faded from his eyes. “You? You unleashed this evil upon all of us?”

“Not evil, my brother. Cleansing fires that bring the Life and Light back to its proper glory. This is what the universe needs to be pure again.” He eyed Inanis, “Free of their filth indeed, Cousin.”

“This is not what the Fathers intended!” Cosmontai shouted. The fire in his eyes flashed.

“You need to surrender here and now and tell us what you did to Ianna!”

“You would stand against your master? Harvion put you under my command, boy.”

Samael glared down at him.

“You were barely my master, Samael. You undid what little work I have done in my short life in this reality. I pledge to stop this destruction,” Cosmontai growled under his breath.

“How were you even capable of this?” Mikal asked. “The Sword is capable of great destruction but concentrated. This...this is just rabid, wanton waste.”

“My son’s first work,” Samael spread his arms out and his wings spread also, showing off a blackening hue in their glory.

“Son?” Inanis noticed the pendant of Ianna glowing in his hand. His eyes flashed a seething dark light. “Did you end her?! Did you kill her?!” he leaped at the Angel of Death, who swatted him away with a cracking backhand.

“Your sister still breathes. Barely. I took what I needed from her and now Life, Light, and Death are all mine to command. I will do what Harvion could not! Behold the Life I can make.” Scarlet volcanoes opened behind Samael and the shadows themselves came to life as Timorum loomed above them. His wings and body cast a shadow over the trio and a cloud of ash. Smoke poured from his mouth and eyes encasing them in. “My son Timorum, my Night Fyre.” Mikal and Inanis took a defensive stance and Cosmontai raised his staff at the ready.

“Abomination,” Inanis hissed. “You have formed this of corrupted life. It stinks of death and rot. How dare you poison and warp the gift granted to my sister!”

“You scum were never worthy of this power! Timorum, vanquish this rat of Apollion! The first to fall are the dark children that will serve as the foundation of my new order!” Samael



leaped back as the dragon roared and raised up before thrusting his head at them, releasing a stream of flames towards Inanis. Cosmontai and Mikal reacted instinctively and raised a wall of light between Inanis and the dragon. The flames spilled against the light barrier and it hummed in agitated tunes.

“This power is overwhelming!” Mikal called out.

“Stand strong, cousin!” Inanis shouted and enforced their barrier with his own shadowed light that held strong.

“It’s no use,” Samael’s voice boomed and the dragon’s great tail swept around through the smoke and in one flick shattered their shields and swatted the three of them hard and scattered them among the debris. “Our power is undeniable.”

Mikal caught his balance and flew in a wide arch coming back towards the dragon’s head. Cosmontai leaped from the dust and sent a piercing violet blast into one of its eyes and caused a small explosion. Timorum flinched in pain and Mikal slammed into the side of his face and let out a pained roar as fire and his dark blood sprayed out.

“It does bleed,” Inanis hissed as he pulled himself from a piece of rock. His pendent shined and pulsed, pulling his attention away. “Ianna?” He touched it and it shined off away from the battle and he took off into the distance.

“Inanis!” Mikal called out as he was smacked aside by the dragon’s wing.

“Where’s he going?” Cosmontai asked.

“I think he might have located his sister. We should give him some cover.” Mikal thrust his glowing hands out and blasted Timorum full in his chest and pushed the dragon back. Samael jumped off the dragon’s nose and stayed out of the fight.

“Will you not fight your own battle?” Cosmontai pointed at Samael.

“You’re making this a battle. This could have been much easier if you just let me work.” Samael shook his head and clenched his radiating sword. Timorum regained his footing and sent another stream of flames at the angels. Mikal and Cosmontai soared over the blast and let it use up more of its impressive strength. They took cover behind some debris. Cosmontai patted out a flame on his robe.

“We have to get Samael away from the dragon. Timorum seems to follow his will,” Mikal whispered.

“How can we get close enough?” Cosmontai raised a barrier with his staff as another blast of fire singed past the pair and singed the edges of his power. “Need a big distraction.” Cosmontai furrowed his brow. The the jewel in his forehead flashed and shined. “Think bigger...much bigger.”

“Do you have an idea? Mikal asked.

“I will meet him face-to-face. Fire against fire so to speak.” Cosmontai closed his eyes and held his hands out gathering power as his staff hovered beside him. “I will need time to gather enough light for this effect. Can you hold them at bay?”

“What are you going to do?” Mikal asked.

“It’ll be easier to just show you and I think you need to let go of the fear you hold of harming Samael. You are far more powerful than you realize, my brother, and Samael thinks the universe is his to take. We need to remind him that this is not *his* realm to conquer.” Cosmontai locked eyes with Mikal. “Believe in the Fathers, but in yourself more importantly.” Mikal nodded and took a breath.

“I’ll do my best.” Mikal leaped from behind the debris and formed a burning sword of light in his hand and his wings spread wide. “You have betrayed your Father and family! You

will answer for your sins and face the justice of Harvion. As the Angel of Life for the Kingdom of Light, you will surrender to me, brother.”

“You have a boldness beneath those many layers of chains to Harvion.” Samael stood on Timorum’s brow.

“What happened to you? You were the pride and joy of our kingdom. Harvion sang your praises constantly and you would abandon him now when peace was at our doorstep.” Mikal grumbled holding the humming blade forward.

“Peace was never my desire,” Samael declared. “Darkness cannot live in sun. Darkness will not serve to foster peace. Apollion will be destroyed and the darkness will be destroyed along with him. I will burn the blights from existence! You can either stand with me or face the fire with the rest of them!”

“You!” A sharp voice ripped into the area as two shadowed comets blasted from behind Mikal and slammed into the dragon’s chest, knocking Samael off. Mikal was ready and attacked him immediately, slamming him into the debris. Timorum released a pained roar and fell back, smashing another world into dust. The shadows reformed into the shapes of Inanis and a heavily armored Ianna. She was adorned in black and silver armor that was lined with jagged edges and her raging eyes glowed beneath her helm. “You took the lantern from me. Tried to kill me. Now...you’re abusing the power you’ve stolen.”

“Monster,” Inanis growled as Timorum regained himself. They looked on as Samael and Mikal blazed back and forth across the stars as streaks of scarlet and sapphire. “He wanted to destroy my people, then we will destroy his dark creation.”

“Couldn’t agree more,” Another deep voice called out from the debris. A column of light erupted. A glittering beast arose from its midst. It nearly matched the size of Timorum and its

scales were a multitude across the spectrum and cast a light from deep within. Great jagged wings like diamonds scattered the debris and a slender neck and led to a sloping draconic face. Great whiskers of light flowed about him and his eyes were pools of pure light. He roared and thrashed sharpened glass-like teeth and claws. “This beast will fall,” The new dragon bellowed.

“Cosmontai?” Ianna asked.

“Fire with fire!” Cosmontai roared and Timorum let out a defiant screech and blasted them with his hellish flames. Cosmontai’s dragon released a jet of his own flames which shined a deep sea bluebell. The streams collided like meeting seas and crashed back upon themselves. The fire and light could be seen far across the universe.

Gabriel found herself summoned to the Gates of Harvion. She passed through the light doors and gasped in shock. A beast, colossal in size and scale with slick and rusted black skin, twitched before her. It was bound and held tight in chains of golden light. Inanis and Ianna stood atop the beast with the chains held in their bleeding hands. “Cousins! What is this creature?”

“Ask him.” Ianna motioned to Mikal and Cosmontai who lowered onto the platform with their bodies battered and bruised. They held chains themselves attached to the near shattered form of Samael who dripped with angelic blood and ash.

“We must speak with the Father,” Mikal’s voice was raspy but firm.

“By the light...” Gabriel whispered.

### Purge of Harvion

The hall of Harvion was somber. The Light Father sat on his throne with his head in his hands. Samael knelt in his chains at the foot of the throne with a quiet frown on his face. A column of light illuminated a circle around him and locked his chains in place with golden bolts on the floor. The only thing heard was the occasional drip of blood from the fallen angel's face and body.

"Father," Mikal's somber tone echoed and Harvion twitched at his voice. "You've heard our accounts and the accounts of Ianna and Inanis. I implore you to say something and beg that actions to be taken to ensure our brother receives fair justice due to his actions."

"I hear your pleas, my sons," Harvion almost whispered and leaned back to sit up straight. He peered down to Samael behind his light wall and Mikal and Cosmontai flanking him. Ianna and Inanis stood off to the side—Ianna's reclaimed charm still clutched in her dripping palm. "My heart is heavy with the task ahead. Forgive me." He leaned forward to look down at Samael. "My first born. Do you have anything to say? Any defense to add to your case? Justifications for your actions beyond willful disregard and abuse of your duties?" Samael remained silent and his lip trembled into the light and his brows curled. "Samael. This is your chance for redemption. A chance to remain in the light I have made for you and undo the damages done before you can do more." Mikal looked up at Harvion with a raised eyebrow.

"More?" Samael whispered and raised his head. "You see more in my future?" Harvion shifted in his great throne. "Did you know I would ravage the universe you and Apoillion would create?"

“My brother and I could see all that would be and has been. We are eternal and unending in power and sight,” Harvion stated plainly.

“You saw the damage he would do? All of it?” Mikal asked.

“Even to me and our people?” Ianna asked stepping forward with her grey eyes locked on the Light Father.

“As I said. We saw it all. We made precautions when we chose our time to end our hostilities towards each other to ensure the survival of reality and the living dimension. When we made you all we knew the powers that lie within each of you and what you were capable of. What you could do and what you would do in our plans. Samael is the mightiest creation of both kingdoms but was able to be made low by the union of light and darkness. Mikal and Cosmontai, alongside Ianna and Inanis, were able to make him humble. Sacrifices had to be made to set this stage.”

“You *used* me and my own kind and manipulated your own” Ianna’s temper grew as she glared at Harvion and the others around her. “Did the rest of you know about this? Know that they would push us around like pawns?”

“No. I thought we were doing the right thing,” Cosmontai whispered. “Withheld truths are just as harmful as lies, Father.” He looked up at Harvion who lowered his head. “I hoped to save your brother. He chose his own fate.”

“Apollion used me the same as him.” Her voice fell to a whisper. “Destined to die. Was he supposed to kill me?” She looked up to Harvion.

The Light Father looked down at her and clenched his lip. “Possibly. I never have a full view of the future.”

“LIES!” Samael leaped to his feet and glared up at Harvion. “I see the Light in purest most hateful form now, *Harvion*. You used me from the beginning. From the moment of my birth you convinced me that *I* would help usher in light and glory for all life. Yet you knew I would instead try and destroy it all! I have been a tool of the *Fathers*” His own light shined from deep within his body. It cast a scarlet haze into the hall. His form appeared to swell and engulf the pillar of light in which he was trapped. “All of us are just puppets! Beasts of burden at the beckoning call of two spiteful beings! They have the audacity to call themselves *gods*! Light Father! Blight Father! Meaningless!”

“You will be silent,” Mikal declared.

“Mikal. Always the first to Harvion’s defense. Pure humble servant to the light. *He* would demand you fly, and you would simply ask ‘how far?’ No more spine than the Father of the Night.” He looked around at the other angels present. “Are you all content? Are you all the same blind followers like my beloved brothers and sisters and so-called cousins? Will you spend eternity under the heel of this liar? They who have a great design or all of us? A plan destined to go by their will even if it will fail and leave us at their utter mercy or...will you live in my new world?” His tone softened and the murmurs started. Trickling discussions prickled to life in the many balconies around them.

“Yours?” Cosmontai asked. Harvion looked on stone-faced while Ianna was on her knees hugging her stomach in despair but her eyes were locked on Samael and Inanis knelt beside her. His arms braced her shoulders and his eyes were fixed on her.

“Free of the blemishes of the Fathers. Free of their will! I dream of controlling my own fate! I will not bow down any longer as a tool of fate. I will not be the scapegoat to create a happy ending to this story. I know some of you must feel the same way. Find the strength in

yourselves and join me!” His light column filled with burning light and started to rock the throne room and after a moment the barrier shattered.

The hum of light shrieked into the room. Samael hovered within a burning vortex of fire. His skin adornments were now jagged and carved across his flesh. His eyes were filled with a burning light that singed the edges of his lashes and flesh of his lids. His hair danced in the flames and his wings matched the hue of blood that poured from his healing wounds. His gaze locked on Harvion who only wore a disappointed frown. “You are my Father no longer. I am Samael Crimsonwings! Who is with me?!”

His flames cackled in a fist of silence for a moment and one voice rang out.

“I am with you!” Ianna called out as she leaped to her feet.

“Ianna!?” Inanis hissed. “Do not act rashly, sister. Our Father’s plan—“

“I don’t care about plans! My love is for the people and children. The Fathers are above us and we will be crushed under their thumbs to see their will played out. I don’t want to be used to fulfill their plans. I renounce it all. I am done!” Ianna called out with furious tears spraying the floors of the hall. She flexed her back, where her wings were, still charred. “I do not forgive what you did but I will help you lift the chains set upon both our peoples!”

Samael looked down at her with a sneer. “Welcome to my new order *Sister*. He thrust his hand out towards her and his flames engulfed her and licked at her wounds—sealed and painted them the same deep scarlet. New wings burst from between her stumps regrown and blood-soaked feathers replaced her lost ones.

“Father!” Mikal called and flew up towards Harvion’s face. “Father, convince him to repent! This cannot be a part of your plan! Is it not?”



Harvion glanced at him but only sighed. “Everything is,” Harvion whispered. Then the chants began. Voices began to rise from the choirs of angels in the balconies.

“*Crimson. Crimson. Crimson.*” The number of voices began to grow, and they flocked from their balconies and rows and rows of golden wings became wings of red. Tasting victory, Samael glared a vicious smile to his former father and charged as the Sword flew to his hand. Mikal was there in an instant, gripping Samael’s wrist through the flames.

“Mikal!” Cosmontai called out just as Harvion snapped his fingers and lightning ripped from the sky above the hall and obliterated the front façade of the building. The choirs of angels were scattered and thrown like comets across the kingdom. Gold and porcelain bricks rained on the city beneath the palace and new columns of fire erupted from the wreckage. Mikal and Samael were tossed into the diamond fields outside the city walls. Mikal gasped and clutched his chest where he landed. Samael laughed under his breath and pushed himself up. The new Crimsonwings immediately flew to Samael’s side and surrounded both of them. Roughly a third of the Light Father’s forces now stood in opposition. Harvion’s angels caught themselves but flew around like flockless birds.

“All alone, Mikal.” Samael hissed. He regained his footing and let his flames spread even to the fields of jewels. “Your Father has abandoned you like he did me.”

“Rally! Rally to your prince!” Cosmontai called out using his staff as a violet beacon in the sky. “Our home burns! Our Father gave us a chance! Repel them!”

Mikal looked up at Cosmontai and smiled and formed two swords of pulsing blue light. Flawless icy armor formed around his body, leaving only the radiating emerald of his eyes visible. “Truths you have spoken, Samael. But you see only the truths you want to see and deny others. I am my Father’s son first and foremost. His plan leads to peace. I will enforce peace by

any means.” His wings flapped open. “Hear me all of Harvion! Your general has betrayed you! Our Light Kingdom will burn and fall if we do not unite! Join me, my brothers and sisters still faithful! Purge this evil from our home!”

Samael charged with his angels. Mikal flapped his wings hard and sent a gust out in all directions and kept the weaker angels two steps behind Samael. The sound of his swords clashing with the Sword of Death rocked the ground around them and cracked the glassy surface. The Angels of Harvion circled the battle on the ground and with rallying cries they dove like gilded missiles upon the forces of Samael. The fields became a gold and scarlet sea. Ringing clanks of armor clashed with hums and shrieks of light. Angelic blood painted the jeweled plains with threats of stain. Blasts from their being ripped across the area and dented the walls, tearing across more of the city and sent more buildings collapsing across the skyline.

Ianna pulled herself from beneath a large piece of rubble and rested in a heap catching her breath. She lifted slowly and peered around, seeing she was alone. She spread her wings as she stood in one of the burning streets of the city. The endless songs that once filled the air were now deafened by screams and cries. The clear sky was blotted by patches of black smoke and dust from the falling palaces. Ianna paused and ducked as some of Harvion’s angels flew by. She shook her head and crept along until she stopped when a sudden hand reached out and gripped her ankle. She whirled around and raised a fistful of shadowed light to see the battered face of her brother and mouthful of his own blood.

“Inanis!” she cried out and dropped to him.

He took her hand as she helped him and with a grunt he moved to a sitting position against the wall. “You have to get out of here,” Inanis whispered.

“What? I’ve made my choice, Inanis. I can’t abandon my resolve.” She furrowed her brow.

“He tried to end you.”

“He could have killed me but didn’t. He only took the Lantern, which I have reclaimed. He wants something better for us away from the shadows and the light. I believe he has a plan,” Ianna said taking his hand. “I’m sorry. I still care for you brother, and our Father but he let it happen to me as Harvion did. I see games they play with us now.”

Inanis shut his eyes and slammed a fist into the wall. The impact sent a small cloud of marble dust and a small crater in the stone. “Then you must escape. We are in the heart of all light in creation and furthest from the shadows from which we were born. If you hope to survive without the support of either, then it will be in the living dimension.”

“We can fight our way out,” Ianna said as a blast of light ripped a hole in the wall near them. The screams of battle grew louder. She peeked over the edge and her eyes widened. The battle intensified and neither side gaining ground. At the center, beacons of fire and light remained grounded and traded earsplitting attacks.

Samael ducked under a swipe from Mikal and came up slashing straight through the other blade of light and cleaved a chunk of Mikal’s armor. Mikal was thrown back and landed hard on his back. Samael ran forward and brought the Sword down but it was blocked by the radiating form of Cosmontai’s staff. The Twelfth Arch gripped his weapon tight and held his stance through gritted teeth. His silver hair was wild. mane and white and violet armor now encased his body.

“Foolish boy. You will burn with the rest of them,” Samael growled He twisted his blade and swiped up towards his face. Cosmontai dropped under the attack and spun, slapping

Samael's knees from beneath him. Mikal was back on his feet and drove a light sword at Samael's back. The fallen angel rolled away and with a quick burst from his wings was back on his feet. The Sword was in one hand and a tongue of fire in his other. The wild light in his eyes glowed even brighter.

Cosmontai twirled his staff and drove it for Samael's face but was blocked by the edge of his flaming sword. Samael twisted his wrist and caught Mikal's next slash on the Sword's guard and danced around the two. Despite being outnumbered he held his ground against them. Suddenly, a spear came from behind him and ripped his shoulder guard from his body. He growled and turned seeing Gabriel there and her forces behind her. She smacked the side of her spear against his head, making him stumble. Cosmontai was ready and slammed his staff into Samael's chest, throwing him down. Mikal brought his light sword down and slashed a huge gash across Samael's chest. This wound sent his fire spilling to the ground and burnt all around him.

"Samael!" Ianna called out and jumped up.

"Ianna! Please don't be foolish! Look!" Inanis said and held her back, pointing to the still damaged hall. Harvion had stepped through the damaged portion still at his full size. The light in his eyes was darker somehow—the center of a dying star. He held his arms aloft, and golden lightning erupted from his fingertips and ripped up into the light filled, veil above them. Clouds swirled into existence and a thunder grumbled across the kingdom as it spread to blanket the entirety of the space. "You will *not* survive this with the mark you have taken upon yourself. I don't know what will happen but he will *end* this. Please, I beg you. Go!"

"AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH!!!!!!" Samael ripped free from the battle and flew high into the sky beneath the clouds which sent spears of lighting across their bellies. He observed the

Light Army, having pushed them back to the border of the Light Kingdom almost to the gates.

“Oh, Sword of Death!” he called out over the battle’s din. He took the Sword in both of his hands which started to seethe and drip with his fire and smoke. “Imperfections. Traitors. Fools fight and stave off the change I will bring into existence. I cannot allow them to continue. Bring Death upon Paradise. Let it be. Let it be!”

The Sword vibrated in his hands and rattled to its core. “LET IT BE!” He swung it in a wide arch across the battlefield towards the city but immediately the power from the sword retreated back into its structure. “What?” he trembled looking at the blade. The fallen angel whipped his gaze back toward Harvion hovering before him in his angel-sized form.

*Samael.*

*My poor son.*

*My little sun.*

*Light of all my life.*

*I have caused you strife*

*And turned you to the knife.*

*For this, my heart weeps*

*And your rage seeps.*

*I beg your forgiveness.*

*I must burden my Kingdom*

*With one more son*

*To bring the blood wing down.*

Harvion hung his head and tears fell like drops of starlight. The Light Father’s voice softened.

“I’m sorry. You were my son and even when I formed you, I knew you would fall and try to

destroy all that I have made. But reality must exist in balance. Apollion is not evil, he is necessity as am I and you threatened to tip the scales. So, you must be sent away.

“You never gave me free will or a chance.” Samael breathed.

“You were born with the power to make your own decisions. I put many chances in front of you to make your own choices and you still went down the path I expected.” Harvion’s tone rippled with pain.

“Still a puppet...” Samael closed his eyes as the clouds suddenly dove before the gates of the Light City. Legs emerged, colossal in size and dwarfed even Timorum, and settled into the diamond fields. A being large enough to straddle the entirety of the cityscape settled into this burning land of light. So large were they that the light could not illuminate their face. Porcelain skin with trickles of twinkling light that pulsed through their stone-like body and they stood silent attention on the battle below that slithered to a halt. Harvion took a breath and his godly tone rang out.

*Seraphiel.*

*The shield of Harvion.*

*My final solution.*

*My wrath here be upon*

*ye will end the confusion.*

*Seraphiel my final child,*

*Purge my kingdom.*

Slits appeared on Seraphiel’s head as his massive eyes opened. Slowly until fully opened, Seraphiel’s eyes blinded all present and the heat from the gaze made Samael’s fire feel lukewarm. The Sword immediately fell from Samael’s hand and plummeted directly to the

glassy surface. It was rooted into place, nearly hitting Ianna who had slipped past the confusion when Seraphiel had emerged from the sky.

The Crimsonwings let out a resounding cry as a shockwave stripped them from the sky and battlefield. It sent them tumbling through the light gates. As they fell, their wings were ripped from their bodies, not burnt but removed from their very being to never be returned. The skies of Paradise poured angelic blood upon the diamond fields. Their shrieks and cries of anguish filled the void of space as they rained upon the living dimension as burning comets. Harvion's angels were untouched and felt nothing but a strong breeze from Seraphiel's attack.

They fell upon countless worlds and burned entire civilizations to ashes. Without their wings, they molded and combined with the natural worlds. They became fallen angels of their own creation.

Samael let loose a scream as Seraphiel concentrated their unbridled gaze upon him. His wings were burned and charred to stumps and torn free. His hair was reduced to the flaked flesh upon his skull. The light of Harvion was purged from his body and he fell back through the light gates. Seraphiel's gaze persisted and pushed through with him and guided him across all of space and reality to the Afterlife Gate. The spirits scattered and parted as Samael's ruined form was thrust into the Afterlife and the gate itself roared in anguish from his pain and rattled, sending pieces of the façade spiraling into space. Seraphiel's gaze ended as the angel's colossal eyes closed and their form settled to a complete stop, becoming a still bastion of stone.

The Light Army erupted into cheers, and songs returned to their voices as the storm above parted and passed. The light from Harvion spilled across the kingdom and undid the damage done instantaneously as if nothing transpired. Mikal and Gabriel embraced and rejoiced

with their comrades. Cosmontai approached the fallen Sword to see Harvion and Inanis, who knelt in shame.

“I had no idea of my sister’s conflict within,” Inanis whispered “But I couldn’t let her be one of those poor fools. I accept my punishment.”

Harvion gave him a sad smile and motioned for him to stand. “I cannot fault you for doing the right thing. My brother still needs an Angel of Life and your sister may be lost but the air of change hangs over her. Go to your master. Warn him to what has transpired.”

“As you wish.” Inanis bowed and nodded to Cosmontai as he neared and flew through the gate.

“Father?” Cosmontai mumbled. “I’m sorry this couldn’t be avoided.”

“I set it upon us all.” Harvion looked down at the Sword and back at Cosmontai. “But something good did come from this turn of events. This Sword can now go to the hands of its proper master— Cosmontai.”

“Me?” Cosmontai’s voice trembled and Harvion nodded.

“This is the betrayal your Samael mentioned.” He circled the Sword and held a hand out to Cosmontai. “He could see my plans in his future, but it wasn’t to replace him. It was to teach him the sanctity of what Apollion and I are trying to do. I’m not perfect. Neither is my brother and neither was he. You Cosmontai, are who was destined to take his place so he could ascend to a higher level. You are my Angel of Death. What do you hear? Feel?” He took his son’s hand and placed it on the hilt. The Sword released a soft hymn that filled their ears and restored the shimmering fields.

“Peace *just* peace.” Cosmontai closed his eyes and the sword changed in his grasp as he pulled it from the ground. The sword became sleeker and straightened. The jagged protrusions



smoothed out and the hilt broadened, becoming a pair of wings spreading from the blade. The Sword released a beacon of fiery light into the sky and became another source of light for a brief moment and Mikal broke away from the army and joined his father and brother. “The Sword is home.”

“Father?” Mikal said.

“Join us, my son.” Harvion ushered him over as Cosmontai sheathed the sword at his side. “I know you must think poorly of me at the moment—that I have failed you.”

“I confess my confidence is shaken but my resolve is stronger, Father,” Mikal creaked out as his voice broke. “I know you did what you must for the best of us all—Willing to take the risks for us all and preserve the peace. I don’t agree with Samael’s views, but I also believe he was pressured to make some of his decisions because of the weight on his shoulders by you.”

Mikal flushed at his sudden confession.

Harvion only smiled. “There’s nothing to forgive. I only hope you accept mine.”

“Father!” Gabriel rushed over and bowed. “We are hearing reports from the agents of Apollion. Countless worlds have felt the sting of our battle here and the fallen Crimsonwing forces have been scattered across the living dimension. They are becoming shapeless creatures formed of fire, stone, water, earth and other living pieces of the reality. They are wreaking havoc upon those worlds.”

Harvion nodded. “Assemble the army here at the gate immediately.”

“Yes, Father.” Gabriel flew off and her silver horn filled the air with high bellows.

“Mikal lead them out,” Harvion said to his second eldest who jumped.

“But Cosmontai is your new Angel of Death.” Mikal sheepishly avoided eye contact with his brother.

“Yes,” Harvion stated and held his hand out as another sword merged from his palm. This one was a pure blade of glass and held a living flame within. “And you are my Angel of Life. Take this blade of my pure light infused with the burning fires of my judgment. This is a beacon of my glory, Illuxos, and with this sword you will from now and until the end of times be the Commander of the Light Army and my second in command.”

Mikal trembled as he took the sword’s glimmering hilt. His armor flashed and mirrored the sword, gaining a glossy sheen and a golden glass helm encased his growing smile. He turned to face Gabriel and the approaching army.

He held Illuxos high and called out, “Light and Life!” A jet of flame ripped from the blade and the army released a war cry and raised their weapons. In a whirl and cloud of gilded feathers the army followed Mikal through the Harvion Gate and back into the living dimension. Harvion walked under the shadows of his children and back towards his Throne. Cosmontai waited and bowed to his Father’s back before leaping up and joining them with a powerful gust from his wings.

## New Life

He awoke with a sharp jolt through his body. Thousands of knives tore into his flesh. He looked down and grimaced as his skin cracked and crumbled to pieces. Dying flakes of his body flurried off his form. With each breath he felt his scorched innards rattle and he coughed from the weight in his lungs. Parts of himself fell and withered into the dust between the blades of grass. He turned his head, clenching his jaw while more of his body crumpled.

He lay on a field of pale grass. A sea of dove wings swayed to a constant breeze and the wind hummed a song that could be heard from every part of the Afterlife. The pillowed plains led to a wide valley framed by a towering wall of peaks draped in an emerald veil of trees and flowers. A river fell from the highest peak and filled a great lake with the purest water. The spirits were there wandering the endless paradise of the dead. Here, though, they took the form they possessed in the living realm. Naked, singing, dancing, they floated around him in their wraith like forms and oblivious to his presence.

The sting of hatred made his body twitch. “Beasts. Animals. Tools of the Fathers...” he growled under his crackling breath. Samael felt a burn beneath his flesh with each shallow wheeze as his body fell away. He put his hand down to roll himself over and the grass crumpled beneath his withered limb. He felt none of the softness against the palm.

“Brother, are you alright?” Samael looked up and saw a gentle spirit reaching towards him. “Your body is in anguish.”

“Leave me be,” he snarled.

“Brother, shed your physical body! You will be free of your pain.” He touched Samael’s shoulder.

“I said...” Samael swatted him away and the flesh from his entire arm ripped free and fell into the grass. It dispersed into sand and was blown away by the breeze. He let out a yelp of shock and pain and the spirit jumped a bit.

“Oh dear brother.” The spirit cooed and watched the sand disappear into the soil. “If you let go of your body and the pain of your past, you can gain a new form. Free from your pain.” “If you can’t, I fear you will be lost to the dust here.” The spirit said and sat down next to him. Samael turned away and stared into his remaining palm. He could make out the faint outline of the dent in his hand where Ianna’s charm had once been and he gritted his teeth and clenched a tight fist. Samael could only stare and groan about his vanquished arm. With each quiver of his body, more of his body turned to dust. His hand started to disintegrate, and the spirit sang a mournful tune.

*Is this it? Will you fade away? Let the tools have their victory and the Fathers complete their plan? Will you fade into the winds of loss?* This taunting voice crept from the back of his mind.

“No.” Samael felt a pulsing force like a weak heart from where his arm used to be. He winced and looked down to it. A dark haze flowed from the crater. It felt more familiar than the limb he lost.

The Sword.

Though the blade was now forever beyond his reach, the power had spilled over and become his own to wield regardless. “Still mine. The power remains mine.”

He felt another pulse from his intact hand and saw a violet haze emanating from the wound that held the Lantern charm. The power to create life was still in his grasp. Samael glared at the spirit still singing to him, oblivious to the fallen angel's discovery. "Just let it go?" His eyes filled with the darkness of death and the light of life. He threw his body out and he burst into a cloud of dust that projected into the air catching the spirit off guard.

"I told him to let go..." the spirit sighed with a frown and stood to leave. The dust started to swirl and gather, tearing up blades of grass. The spirit looked in awe at the dust that sharpened and started to form a body. "You were able to let it go! I'm so happy for you brother!" He held his hands out and approached Samael's emerging form. Samael's arm formed first and sent out a black haze that engulfed the spirit. "What is this!?" the haze started to shred at the spirit's soft body and his form cracked and warped. "Please don't!"

His face went wide and Samael's bone white eyes emerged from the dust. The spirit's face was lost as his form was torn and became another one of the dark creatures he had made before. Glistening scales, jagged teeth and claws and his voice was stretched and fell into a growl that rumbled the ground. Samael smiled with newly sharpened fangs. His body was taller and slender. His new hair sleeked into a helmet of steel. His original markings, given by Harvion, are gone. In their place a corrupted pattern across his dark skin. Poisoned veins snaked across his body and he was draped in a veil of rags that spread behind him in a mockery of the wings taken from him.

The other spirits took notice to the roars and the countless numbers turned his direction. Samael's new form swelled and grew to a massive size even higher than the mountains themselves. The spirits froze and collapsed in terror as his smoky haze flowed from his body and fell upon them.

The echoes of scream could be felt deep within the rattling Afterlife Gates. The gates themselves began to crumble and age as the Afterlife itself was torn apart. The entryway for the gate rumbled and dripped rubies. The columns fell and rolled off into the void as golden angels lit up the universe. They streaked across all of creation and battled their fallen brothers and sisters. Ianna hovered before the gate with her eyes closed, clutching her charm as it glowed a somber lavender in her hand.

“Such chaos beyond our dimension,” she whispered then whirled as someone approached from the shadows. She released a blast of shadowed light from her hand and it dissipated in an instant as Apollion emerged from the shadows in full armor with his own army at his back. His forces were so vast they created the veil of darkness and blotted out all the stars. Legions and legions of obsidian armor upon his pale angels creating an endless forest of spears into the void of space.

“Daughter?” Apollion’s voice was hard and his expression made her avert her eyes. “You have forgotten your place.”

“I was deceived and used as a tool for the destruction of so many worlds and even used for the downfall of Samael and look! Listen!” She roared pointing at the gate. “He is ravaging the Afterlife! All those souls are now being tortured and are suffering at his hands. Both of you did this!”

“Ianna!” the Night Father’s voice shook her into a silence. “All the events that have happened are because my brother and I have made it so. We knew that he would fall. I knew he would take the Lantern’s light from you, but I didn’t know how he would take it or how far he was willing to go. These events are set in motion but the details are always out of our hands. Your suffering is my fault.”

He lowered to her. "I am sorry for your blight." He held his arms out and embraced her, taking her aback. "He will not harm you again— that I promise you my beloved." He let her go and looked to his army. "Forward, Night Legions! Aid the Light Army and vanquish the traitors!" His army let loose a resounding war cry and they parted around Apollion and his children. They spread out across creation, joining Harvion's forces in the struggle.

Dark angels descended into the countless atmospheres where the Crimsonwings raged. They were no longer able to hold their physical form and instead became colossal embodiments of the elements. Their bodies merged with mountains and entire ranges rose up. Massive beings of stone thrashed entire cities with their limbs. Ocean angels surged up as living tsunamis and wiped villages and fields alike. The sky rained fists of cloud and screams of lightning across swaths of towns while the many beings flee. One by one they fall before the might of the combined armies of light and shadow.

When the army had disbursed, Inanis was there with Apollion. He approached her with his head hanging. "I'm sorry. I had to save you."

Ianna was beside herself. "I needed to save myself first." She looked up to Apollion. "I regret my decisions in Harvion but my opinion stands. I refuse to be used again like that. I am your daughter not a puzzle piece." She flapped her scarlet wings in defiance and Apollion nodded.

"I ask your forgiveness, but I don't expect it." Apollion stopped as the screams got louder from the gate and a column of flame burst from it but was blocked instantly by the Night Father's veil of shadows. He pushed the flame back with a mere gesture and motioned to the pair. "Come. We will see the aftermath of his rage." He walked through the fire with his children flanking him.

The valley was on fire. The fields were now a plateau of jagged rocks and plumes of grey haze pulsed into the sky. The sky was now sagging with billowing clouds of smoke and bloody lightning. With every strike, a shower of crimson rain cascaded from on high. The lake at the heart of the valley was a boiling pool of fire and tar. The river that fell from the high peak now blasted a continuous stream of flame and molten rock into the sky, fueling the dark storm. An army of beasts roamed across the fields. There were so many that the ground appeared to have its own pulse. They kept a symphony of pained cries filling the air with their anguish.

“By the Night!” Inanis whispered. “He’s destroyed it all and corrupted all of them! All the souls that died...they’re all gone.”

“All these poor beings. This was not what *I* wanted, what I thought he wanted!” Ianna was repulsed by the mangled corpses that wandered about them. She got close to one of the fallen spirits and it lashed out at her. “Demon! Cursed souls!” Ianna shrieked and blasted the demon with her dark light. It fell to ashes with a hiss. The echoes rang across the wasteland and all the demons turned their heads at once to glare at them. Apollion assumed his gigantic godly form and they scurried back in fear.

“The Blight Father enters my tomb!” several voices said at once. The lake boiled and surged and burst forth. Samael ripped from the burning lake and his form now rivaled Apollion in size. His gigantic body was wreathed in flame and his pale eyes could be seen piercing through them. A wide fanged grin contorted his face and his body curved at uncomfortable angles. “Welcome to my Afterlife! Burning Paradise! A kingdom of my own!” He thrust his arms out and fire spilled across the fields and spread farther and farther.



“Samael, I trust I have found you well?” Apollion’s tone was stern but polite as Samael stomped his way over. Each massive step caused the volcano to spout molten rock and scatter the demonic forces.

“How dare you come into my presence after all that has happened? This is *your* fault. You and your *filthy* children. You are the darkness I tried to purge. Everything was perfect until you kept interfering! You polluted the minds of Harvion and all creation! All I wanted was to live in the sun and bring the universe into Harvion’s light!” he took a swing at Apollion but it went straight through him—A sword through mist.

“This was you and you alone. Your obsession for burning out my darkness turned you into a flame that burnt out everything. Even now your minions shatter our living reality. You are a failure. You are now the enemy we needed. You are the true Blight Lord.” Apollion stated and smiled as Samael’s rage boiled over filling the area around them. There was another roar behind them as the gates surged and flashed as the Crimsonwing spirits started pouring into the Afterlife.

“We must leave, Father!” Inanis shouted. The twins sent a barrage of shadowed light blasts at the spirits that entered. Their forms molded and warped into living beings of flame and molten rock and began surrounding the trio.

“This place. The Afterlife is now your personal inferno. This dimension is yours to rule and manipulate...but you will never be allowed to leave.” Apollion thrust his arm out and the valley and lake of fire plummeted and sloped as the entire reality swelled to a near impossible size. Samael fell back as his kingdom fell into the shape of a massive crater. The walls of the growing crater sloped, and his army fell with him. Apollion and his children were safely floating behind a wall of his hazy shadow.

**Reaper of Pain**

**Master of Disdain.**

**My Afterlife you've stained!**

**Your Father you shamed!**

**I declare! Here shall you be chained!**

Samael's body crashed into the boiling lake which became the lowest point of the crater. Massive golden chains ripped from the walls of the crater and slithered into the lake. Samael reared up in a rage and his jaw dislodged. Pillars of fire streamed into the sky at the Dark Father. Instead of blocking this one, it froze in midair and plummeted back into his pit. It stabbed into the fire pool and freezing steam erupted from the depths.

**Your Fire is your desire**

**You will not sit and brew at your pyre.**

**Freeze I say! With great ire.**

**My chains will never tire!**

**Reap what you have sired.**

Apollion's booming voice rocked the changing hellscape and the lake of fire started to freeze over. Samael tried to fly out of the lake, but the chains lashed out and held him in place. They wrapped around his neck, arms, waist, legs, and knees. In great heaves they dragged him slowly back to the lake. His fire was swamped by the chilly mist. As a mother embraces her child, the fire was snuffed, and the lake became solid—freezing right at Samael's waist. Immediately, a vicious storm kicked up and enveloped Samael as he glared up at Apollion. Furious tears welled up and froze even as they left his dead eyes.

“No! No! You cannot leave me here!” Samael cried out as the storm engulfed him at the lowest level of his kingdom. The last image they had was his clawed hand dropping below the emerging clouds of the storm.

“We’re done here,” Apollion growled. He led the three out through the gates as even more fallen angels tumbled into the pit. They passed beneath the beasts coming through and Apollion turned when they were out. He threw his hands out, bathing the gate in his dark light.

**A seal of all seals.**

**With all my zeal!**

**By the blood of the first born!**

**No evil will escape my scorn!**

**Only fallen shall pass these towers!**

**Never shall they flee these bowers!**

**Go with my curse!**

His dark light shined on the gate and they were forever changed. The slate stone color faded into a black so deep no light could escape. The visible gate was sealed behind a slab of shimmering stone. Liquid blackness was the material and so smooth with fire boiling in the eyes of the adornments of the new gate. The fallen spirits, defeated from their battles with the light and darkness, slip through the burning eyes and any nook and cranny they could fit.

“The Afterlife is no more. It is now Fallen Paradise and now our good souls have no home,” Inanis whispered. He looked to Ianna who stared at her charm and sobbed.

“I have nowhere to go now. All of creation is now foreign to me. All the life I tried to protect and establish burned with it all.” Ianna turned to look at the universe torn asunder from the battle.

“Senseless.” Inanis floated next to her. “But a necessary evil....They had to be stopped.”

“But at such cost!” Ianna shrieked. “Billions of lost souls! Good, decent beings who just wanted to live and now not only are they homeless but denied they are also denied a heaven.

“Are they though?” Harvion appeared before them with Mikal and Cosmontai flanking him. A line of gold clad angels passed behind them dragging the bound form of Timorum. “I was called by my subjects same as you, brother, and I believe I have a solution.”

“We each create a new Afterlife in our realms?” Apollion smirked at Harvion’s blank face.

“The greatest minds do think alike.” Harvion let out a high laugh. “I have already expanded my city to make room for the beings that are to come. But this Fallen Paradise...Could we not utilize it?” he sighed as Timorum’s form shrank and was drawn into the Fallen Gate with ease.

“A place of punishment for fallen spirits?” Apollion asked joining his brother’s side. “Who would determine their sins?”

“They could not enter our realms without our words.” Harvion looked to his brother then to Ianna. “Someone with the sight to see the good and evil in everyone.”

“Ianna.” Apollion nodded and she jumped.

“I will not be a puppet again.” She spread her wings wide.

“We’re asking you to continue serving the souls of the living and now the dead. They need a proper judge after death takes them away. It will be up to you and you will send them either home or to punishment,” Apollion declared.

“You serve neither one of us. You are a judge of the departed,” Harvion chimed.

“How do I know you won’t use me again? Your infinite brilliance and control of destiny?”

“We only know what can be and will be but not the details. There is no telling if it will be for sure, but I promise to avoid that at all costs,” Apollion declared.

“As do I,” Harvion said.

“I will...see how I feel while performing this act.” Ianna eyed them both. She sighed and held out her charm to Apollion.

The Night Father flew to her with a smile and closed her hand with a gentle pat. “You were born an Angel of Life and that still stands. Keep it and spread your light.”

“Yes, Father,” she said, and her brother embraced her gently.

“Inanis, you will continue your duties as my Angel of Life?” Apollion asked.

“Yes, Father. I will honor and protect your subjects and restore life to the destroyed.” Inanis bowed.

“Well, let it be.” Harvion smiled. “This reality is shattered, and we must remake it from the ashes of this one.”

“What about the ones still alive here?” Cosmontai asked.

“They will be spared and reborn in the new universe. No wasted life will be lost. All the dead will be sorted and sent home. Return home, children,” Apollion said to his forces.

“Likewise, my beloveds.” Harvion nodded to his sons and the armies which dispersed with a bow.

When the brothers were alone, they hovered over the center of all creation, the planet Rayo which housed their combined powers and the power of Cosmontai beneath its radiating surface.

“Where we first became aware.” Harvion folded his arms and gazed down at the planet.

“It shall end where it began.”

“This world should remain. It can be a place of knowledge for both our realms, a living paradise of knowledge and power.” Harvion held his hands out and covered the planet in a hazy golden barrier. Immediately, a dark smoky shield surrounded his and they were one.

“Agreed.” Apollion held his hand out to the Light Father.

“For Light and Life,” Harvion declared.

“For Night and Necessity,” Apollion bellowed and they snapped their fingers together. Darkness followed and then a new light unfurled into the void. The stars were reborn and the Gates of Harvion and Apollion were placed at the opposite ends of reality. Harvion’s Gate in the north and Apollion to the south with the Fallen Paradise Gate was placed below all creation. It remained hidden far beneath creation’s cradle Rayo and invisible to all but the Light and Night Fathers.

## Epilogue

The chains. The chains were all he could hear. The insistent rattling. Hateful blades on bitter iron mocked him. He glared down at his encircled torso locked in a chastity belt of vengeful jealousy. He looked up and the storm battered him and chipped away at his flesh with each motion his body took. The faint glimmer of light from the gate taunted his eyes with the fleeting promise. He tried to stretch his back but a twinge of pain held him in place and forced his head back down.

*Trapped again?* The voice in his mind returned. *In the bowels of your own pride and arrogance. Is this how you get your vengeance? Empty promises and dark declarations. You want to be a god?*

“I cannot match them head on.” Samael’s brow furrowed.

*Don’t meet them head on. Even the mightiest beings work in the shadows behind the wings. Without the light.*

“Let go. The fool mentioned letting go of his physical form...” he breathed and trembled in the storm, lowering his head. “My body is only an anchor...” His body twitched once more and went still.

Outside the Fallen Paradise Gate, the universe was engulfed in darkness and there was nothing. A faint light in the distance grew and pulsed outwards. A wave of gold and silver spread as the living dimension received a second chance by the Brothers united. Their faint glow, like a dawn and dusk glimmered in the far distant center of creation. The seal of the Fallen Gate hissed and held against the wave of creation and merely rattled. From one of the eyes of the many

statues on the gate, a sliver of a black mist seeped free. It wandered helpless and aimless, but a faint laugh escaped as it vanished among the worlds that formed from the dust of the second birth of creation



### Author's Biography

I discovered the joy of writing in Sixth Grade when we had to write a short story for an assignment. I dabbled in it until college where I started writing my first book at eighteen and finished when I was twenty-two. When I started writing it just poured out and I felt compelled to keep going with it. Initially I entered school at the University of West Georgia with a major in History but changed majors to English in 2010.

While studying I took part in a Spring Internship in the 2015 Tournees French Film Festival that came through Carrolton. I researched films on the list and helped organize the talks as well as led one in of the discussions and analysis. While attending school I was published in the Eclectic magazine with my piece "Carpe Deum." It took me awhile to finish as I paid my own way through and had to work while studying but I graduated in May 2015 with my Bachelor's of English and a Minor in Film Studies.

After graduation I took several freelance writing jobs for local magazine publishers. David Atlanta Magazine and their daughter company Goliath Atlanta Magazine. They focused on the night life and youth culture and the settled and more business aspect of the Atlanta gay community's respectively.

I worked for Goliath Atlanta from September 2015 to January of 2016 and wrote three major pieces and filled out a handful of smaller ads within the issues. My first article was titled "Sweet Eye for a Necktie" and was about a young entrepreneur in the city who makes a living selling custom neckties. The second one "A Cut-Throat Production Embraces a New Vision" featured an interview with the lead actor for the Alliance Theatre's production of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. My last one with them was "How to host a (Gay) Football Party" for the gay football lover in the fall trying to throw down with their fellow fans.

I worked freelance with David Atlanta from October 2016 to January 2017 and also wrote two major articles and some minor ads for them. As David was more geared towards my age range most of my pieces with them were personal. “The Triad Effect” followed my experience with dating a married couple and being in a triad relationship for several months. The last one was titled “My Straight Bromances” a personal piece about my most inner circle of friends that involved entirely straight men and our times together. This was a close push towards the area I wanted to reach as a journalist but unfortunately David was bought out in 2017 ending my time with them.

Fast forward to Fall 2018 and I started at Kennesaw State University as a part of the Masters of Arts in Professional Writing or MAPW Program. I pursued the Creative Writing field with a desire to be a professional novelist and comic book writer. While attending my courses I worked for the graduate student run creative writing magazine *The Crambo* where I served as the Design Editor for the Spring 2019. I was responsible for the overall layout of the issue, cover art (which I drew and designed myself), table of contents and font design for the publication.

In January 2019 I interned at *Creative Loafing*, a local Atlanta newspaper that has been a major part of the city’s news distribution for decades. I was with them until the end of April and learned directly how much the newspaper and journalism industry had shifted. The paper was much more about ads for local artists and upcoming shows rather than stories and content that I had thought. With *Creative Loafing* I had one short piece for a show that was coming in February titled, “Pop-Up Magazine' takes over Variety Playhouse”. It was a small featurette about the show and what to expect I wrote a review for it as well. I had one news piece “GA Tech Hacked” in April about the break in of one of the university’s websites that revealed some 27,000 students personal information and their efforts to undo the damage as it unfolded.

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## Education

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### Kennesaw State University

Master's of Professional Writing  
Concentration: Creative Writing Minor:  
GPA: 3.8  
Anticipated Graduation: July 2020

### University of West Georgia

Bachelor of Arts, English  
Film Studies  
GPA: 3.2  
Graduation: July 2015

## Qualifications

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- Resourceful
- Interviewing
- Natural Leader
- Microsoft Office expertise
- Strong communication skills
- Extremely organized
- Self-motivated
- Team player
- Public speaking
- Multitasking
- Independent worker
- Quick learner

## Relevant Experience

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- Published in Creative Loafing, a well known newspaper in Atlanta.
- Published in David Atlanta a well-known lifestyle magazine in Atlanta.
- Published in Goliath Atlanta a branch off lifestyle magazine from David Atlanta.
- Published in University of West Georgia's Eclectic for creative writing in nonfiction.

## Experience

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### Creative Loafing

Atlanta, GA

*Intern*

January 2019 to April 2019

- Organized the calendar lists of events for the months of January to April
- Wrote short pieces covering the events and highlighted performers
- Worked with the staff for new innovative ideas for pieces and organization of the paper
- Published several pieces while working with the staff on current issues of paper

### Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Ga

*Design Editor*

August 2018 to November 2018

- Worked closely with staff of *The Crambo* Graduate Magazine
- With team decided on the content to add to the magazine
- Designed layout of *The Crambo* Spring 2019 Edition
- Drew the cover art of *The Crambo* Spring 2019 Edition

### David Atlanta

Atlanta, GA

*Freelance Writer*

October 2016 to January 2017

- Wrote informative articles, creative articles,

and reported on upcoming events in Atlanta

- Provided personal and informative experience in relation to topics.
- Extensive research on topics.
- Extensive time spent on editing and perfecting submissions.

**Goliath Atlanta**

Atlanta, GA

*Freelance Writer*

September 2015 to January 2016

- Interviewed business owners.
- Wrote informative articles, creative articles, and reported on upcoming events in Atlanta
- Extensive research on topics.
- Extensive time spent on editing and perfecting submissions.