

In the time before God created light, He created the Silver City. Before there were people, before there were the waves of the ocean or stars in the sky, the Silver City shone. The city shone brightly, despite there being no sun. The light came from within it, emanating from the largest tower in the center of the city, rising so high one could not see the top from the ground.

The City rested on a flat disc and was surrounded by a large, ornate wall decorated with intricate etchings of gold fire that told the story of the universe that was to unfold. Silver spires rose past the height of the walls reaching further into the Darkness that surrounded it on all sides and stretched on into the infinite void. The City itself had an uncountable number of buildings, all densely packed together, from every age of civilization that was to come. Small, flat roofed houses, industrial skyscrapers with flat, plain exteriors, wooden-like cottages and temples. They were all here and they were all occupied.

While all the features of the Silver City were breathtaking in their beauty, were one to view it from the outside there was one thing that stood out far more than the others: The Gates. Silver and gold inlaid doors stood as high as the walls themselves and shone bright enough to blind. Since the creation of the City these doors had never opened, had never broken or been breached.

The Gates existed to protect the inhabitants of the City from the creatures that dwelled within the Darkness. Their number was infinite, as was their hunger. The creatures had no one form but were part of the body of the Darkness itself and were filled with vicious claws, teeth and gaping maws that only desired to feast.

The City was filled with Angels, and each Angel had a specific function.

There was Raphael, the Angel of Vengeance. His job was to punish those that went against their function or the Word of God.

There was Lucifer, the highest of all of the Angels. Tasked with protecting the Silver City against the creatures that lived in the Darkness.

There was Abaddon, who's function was to destroy so that new and better things could be built.

The city itself, and its inhabitants, existed to prepare for the Age of Man. The creation of the universe, the laws that would govern it, down to every speck of dust that would ever exist and what they would do.

There were many angels and many functions. The least of which was Kiraman. As far as angels went, he was small and meek, with a hooked nose and ears too large for his head. His job was to write and he did it well. Metatron, the scribe, wrote the Word, the laws of creation, while Kiraman had a less straightforward task.

Kiraman was to write the lives that people would live once the Creation of Man had started. These people would think, feel and act exactly as written in his books without variation. The Creation of Man was the reason that the Silver City was created, why *all* of the Angels were created. Each Angel was tasked with working out how a different part of the universe would act when it was Created.

Kiraman wrote each story on silver paper, using silver ink that glowed faintly. When he finished, the pages bound themselves into a book which he picked up and walked to the Endless Shelves of the Library. There he would place the book, then return to his desk to start another story. And for many countless years, he did his job.

Kiraman held his latest book in his hand, staring at the empty space on the shelves of the Silver Library. He had written millions of these books at this point. Every angel existed to perform their function and in all of the countless years since the creation of the Silver City, and himself, Kiraman performed his function. Today, as he busied himself with his work like always, a thought crossed his mind. It was barely a whisper. Just the mere suggestion of a vague thought. He had never read one of his books. What would happen, he wondered, if he took a break and read one of the stories?

Seeing no reason not to, he did. He sat on the silver grass in front of the library, the endless Darkness in the background threatening to consume everything, and he read the book. When he wrote the words flowed from him like a fountain, just one after another; a constant barrage of words, of thoughts, of feelings moving from one event to the other spilling onto the page faster than he could process the meaning of the words.

Yet, he didn't remember. He wrote every word, but he remembered nothing. When he opened this book and just sat, it seemed as if everything had stopped. The vast universe all around, the other angels performing their functions, the warm light of his Father which illuminated the whole of the Silver City, there was nothing but this book, this story.

The story was of a man from China who lived an extraordinarily average life. He was born in a popular hospital, he grew and went to school, grew and fell in love, grew old and died. Unremarkable in every way, yet it was fascinating. When Kiraman finished he sat and stared at the book. Then he opened to the first page and started reading again.

Time does not pass in the Silver City the same way as the mortals on Earth would know it, but by all accounts he spent a significant amount of time sitting in the glowing grass of the city reading that book. When he finished again, he returned to the library to place it upon the shelves. It fell into its place and sat there, unmoving, as it would do for all of eternity. The books were written and they were placed but no one ever read them. It was a shame, he thought. Books deserve to be read.

Angels do not have homes or beds, so he took a few books from the Endless Shelves at random and sat down at his desk. The ink simmered and the silver quill he used to write stood by itself, in anticipation of writing the next book. Kiraman did not acknowledge it, he simply opened one of the books and started reading. When the books were finished, he placed them back into their proper slots, grabbed another and read.

“What are you doing?” Kiraman jumped at the sudden voice and, reluctantly, tore himself from the pages of a woman from Toledo, Ohio who was trying to organize a bake sale. Raphael, the Angel of Vengeance, stood before him. He had short, wavy black hair with fiery red eyes that glowed in the dimness of the Library.

Raphael was not built the same as the lesser angels like Kiraman. He stood several feet taller with a robe long enough to touch the ground, despite his feet never touching the floor. The robe was trimmed in gold and tied in the middle with a rope that looked like it was made of woven brown hair. There were two blood red streaks going down his right shoulder.. His six wings were fully expanded but did not move. This did not seem to affect his ability to fly.

One of the many gifts every angel had been given from their Creator was the knowledge of the name, in many cases names, of each member of the Choir. So even though the two angels had never met before, Kiraman knew him instantly.

“Oh, Brother Raphael. Forgive me, I...” Kiraman’s voice trailed off as he lost the words to describe his actions. “I... I am reading.”

“That is not your function, scribe. Yours is to write, as you have done since the moment you were Created. You have not been writing as you should. You are to write the stories of people, and to place each of their books upon the Shelves. I understand that you are reading, yet I ask again.” Raphael’s voice was deep and threatening. “What are you doing?”

“I’m sorry. I was... distracted. I shall return to my function immediately.” Kiraman bowed his head and kept his eyes on the ends of Raphael’s robe. If Kiraman had the ability to sweat, he would have been drenched. Raphael was difficult to be around, which Kiraman knew despite the fact they had never met before. The aura that emanated from him made the Scribe feel so small, like he might be crushed under his Great Brother’s heel and that Raphael wouldn’t even notice.

Worse than that, Raphael’s function was to punish those that went against their own purpose. Were he to decide that Kiraman disobeyed their Father he would be stripped of his status as one of the Choir, possibly killed or even banished into the Darkness. The mere thought of one of things in the Darkness touching him sent a shiver down his spine.

“See that you do. Being one of the Choir, you know who I am and what I do. I shall not be so pleasant if I must ask again.” In a flash of blinding red light, Raphael vanished as quickly as he had appeared.

Kiraman released a breath he had not realized he was holding. An impressive feat considering Angels do not have lungs and no need to breathe. He had been fortunate this time, but next time he knew something terrible would happen.

Reluctantly, Kiraman closed the books and put them back in their places on the Shelves, then returned to his desk. The quill that he had used to write all of the books, the inkwell that was always full, the paper tray filled with silver paper. They were his friends, his companions. The only ones to accompany him throughout the eons.

He wanted to start writing again, truly, but he felt as though there was something out of place now. He was feeling something he had never felt before. There was no hunger in the Silver City, no needs, no selfish desires. It was all so simple.

Yet, the people in his books were all... complicated. Even the most boring, uneventful of these humans had layers, desires, hopes and dreams. But Kiraman, he had nothing.

None of these layers. No dreams. Just write your books, place them on the shelves. Do not read the books, do not learn of the humans. Just write.

Sighing, he picked up his quill. The feather itself was the size of his arm, trimmed in silver and gold, with a wickedly sharp tip that greedily sucked up the ink. The weight of it felt familiar and comforting. He took a piece of paper from the silver tray and began to write with the silver ink on the silver paper. When writing, he did not think of the words or the flow of the story. They just came to him and he wrote. He was nothing but a machine writing words that were not his. His hand moved but not under his direction. He was a puppet and that's all he would ever be.

That thought echoed in his mind. A puppet. Now and for always.

When the words came to him it felt as though warm water was poured onto his head, traveling down through his insides to his arm, coming out of the quill. The feather would move and the words left him, replaced by new ones that also demanded to be written. Once more, he began to write.

The desire to read had not left him. There was something different when he read these books. When he learned of the people and their stories, he felt as though a hole he had never realized was inside him was being filled. Perhaps this is why, despite the warning of Raphael, when the words started appearing on the page, he slowed. He forced his hand to stop its incredible pace and for the first time he read the words as they were being written...

Her name was Katinka. Like those in the books before her she was born, she lived, and she died. Yet something about her story was more enthralling than any of the others Kiraman had read.

-----Story 1 Start

Katinka stood over the grave of her husband as dirt was being shoveled on top of it. She felt like, with every bit of earth tossed onto the casket, part of her was being buried with him. The family and friends had given their condolences, they had said all the expected words and eventually, they all left her standing there alone, watching the dirt slowly settle.

She was sad, of course, but mostly she felt hollow. Her entire life had been tied to Samuele, her husband. Her whole identity was that of a wife, a mother. How many

parties had they attended where she introduced herself as “Samuele’s wife”? With him gone, what did she have left?

Rain started gently falling, a cinematic cliché that never failed to grate her nerves, and forced her into her car. Having nowhere else to go, she numbly started the car and headed home. She pulled the car into the driveway, killed the engine and then just sat there, not wanting to be alone in the house that, once upon a time, was filled with life.

It took a few minutes but she eventually built up the courage to go inside the rustic house. Two stories tall with a dark trim and a thriving garden she had tended to for over 30 years. She could still remember the smell of the grass and the dirt from when she and Samuele had broken their backs tilling the soil, removing tree stumps. The joy she felt when her first seedlings sprouted. The wonder in her baby daughter’s eyes the first time she saw the flowers bloom. The blood that seeped out of her hand when she pricked herself on the thorn of a rose. She closed her eyes, opened the door, and walked inside.

She went straight to the kitchen and poured a glass of cabernet sauvignon. Her favorite and her husband’s favorite. As the minutes and hour ticked by, one glass after another disappeared, as well as most of a second bottle.

At this point, she was sitting in her favorite chair by the window that overlooked the garden. She had been crying for a long time but finally the tears had stopped. She was looking at their yellowed wedding album, remembering happier times. He was so handsome in his suit. They say every wedding has a story and hers were those damn geese. The honking bastards were pecking at the window during the middle of the ceremony, interrupting the priest over and over again. She chuckled slightly, remembering.

At the back of the album, she found a handwritten letter, from her mother in law, written the day of the wedding. The day she died was the first and last time she had ever seen her husband cry. The letter itself was short, but it filled Katinka’s heart to the brim.

To my darling Daughter,

There is so much I wish to say to you. I could say how happy I am, or proud, or excited. But in the end, I’m saying the same thing over and over again. I love you both and I am so glad you found each other. I can see the change in my son when you two are together. It feels like you have met your missing puzzle piece, that together you

complete each other. There is no reason for living without love and you have found it with my son.

He could do no better for a wife, and you no better for a husband. There aren't words to say how happy I am that we are now family. I can't wait to see what the future holds for all of us.

*With all my love,
Helena*

P.S. I'm waiting on those grandkids!

The last line made Katinka laugh. Helena had always been a fiery woman who wasn't shy about sharing what was on her mind. She was grateful that her mother-in-law had been able to stay with them long enough to meet two of her grandchildren, though she never got to meet the third.

With the last of the wine disappearing from her glass, she reflected on how much that letter had meant to her back then. How much it meant to her now. Words that held such meaning, such power. Even all these years later. How Katinka wished she could do something as meaningful.

Eventually the wine ran out and Katinka fell asleep, clasping the photo album to her chest.

She woke up to the sunlight hitting her face through the window. The first thing she saw was the letter that had fallen to the ground. She vaguely recalled the words written there and felt a sorrow different to that of grieving her husband.

The words in the letter had been kind and written with sincere love. Yet there was something about it that made her feel off. Reading it once more, she figured out what had been bothering her: the implication that without her husband she was nothing. That as an incomplete piece of a puzzle, she had no reason for living.

Her children were grown and gone, the house empty. What did she have left to do? To look forward to? Idly passing time away until she joined Samuele with the Angels? No. She was her own person, dadgummit.

Katinka ran through the options in her head. Book clubs. Bingo halls. Scrapbooking. Crochet. Jazzercise. No thank you.

No, Katinka decided. I will not be killing time until I die. I'm going to do something with the rest of my life that actually *means* something.

What that was, she had no idea. But there was still time to figure that out.

[TODO: Finish story]

-----Story 1 ends

Kiraman turned the final page and closed the book. Her name was emblazoned in fire that did not burn, on the cover. His finger traced the angelic letters, the golden flames dancing around his fingertip. Slowly, with reluctance, he got up from the desk, his chair scraping the floor the same way it had since the beginning of time, walked the short walk to the Endless Shelves and placed the book upon it. The light from the cover flared when it was placed in its final spot, then lowered to a light glow.

The stories never came in order. One story would be about a Knight in the middle ages, the next about a woman walking on the moon. In accordance with the Word of God, each soul deserves to have their story written. But Kiraman, he decided now that a rule was missing from the Word. Each soul deserves to have their story read as well.

When you have an Endless Library full of stories that need to be read, where do you start? The answer was obvious as it's the same as any story: you start at the beginning. He walked down to where the Endless Shelves resided, passing the numerous volumes that had been written throughout his long existence. It would take some time to reach the first book.

As with everything within the Silver City, the room that housed the Shelves was massive, stretching on farther than even his angelic eyes could see in all directions. Stained glass windows adorned the walls, bathing the room in colored light. Candles that never burned out were placed every few meters. Some hung from the ceiling from chandeliers carved out of pure gemstone, some floated in the air by themselves.

Where the building was opulent, the actual Shelves that the books would spend eternity on were stark and ascetic. They were wooden and plain, rough to the touch. Many of the shelves would wobble on unsteady legs and all of them would creak and moan and bend under the weight of the books placed on them.

To Kiraman, this was the most beautiful place in all of the Silver City. Recently, he found himself coming into this room just to stop and think about things. Something about the smell of the books made him feel contemplative, and this day was no different.

“I wonder why,” Kiraman mused aloud, “these books are written if no one reads them? If my purpose is to write the Stories and to make the books, yet I do neither the writing nor the binding nor are they to be read; why do they exist? Why do I? If the things I make and the things I do are not of importance to anyone, what is gained from their existence? And if the answer is to be ‘nothing’, then why was I Created?”

“The thing about us Angels,” replied a voice from behind him, “is that we are very very good at following orders, and very very bad at asking questions. And even when one of us comes along who does ask questions, they’re usually bad questions. You, Brother, ask a very good question.”

Kiraman knew who the voice belonged to even before he stepped out of the shadows. Every member of the Heavenly Choir did, even though they had never met before. The Bringer of Light, Champion of His Armies, the highest of all Angels. Lucifer Morningstar. His face was beautiful and pure, unblemished of any scars or marks, soothing to gaze upon. His skin was studded with jewels of every color and of every shape. Six massive wings black as pitch protruded from his back, feathers fell from them constantly to the ground and another would immediately grow in its place. The feathers on the ground caught fire and burned to ash in an instant.

“Brother Lucifer. I... I...” Kiraman stammered. “You’re here for the same reason Raphael was. To warn me of not performing my function. I apologize, it’s just that... I don’t understand why, but I need to read these stories. Someone needs to read these stories. These souls need to be remembered. I know my function and I will do it as I have been all of these years, but I see now that there must be more. A book has no purpose if it cannot be read.”

Lucifer tilted his head and smiled with perfect lips and perfect teeth. It was beautiful yet at the same time Kiraman couldn’t help but picture those teeth puncturing his throat. “Tell me brother, does a sword have a purpose if there is no war?”

The highest of the angels floated to the ground, his wings folding in on themselves and he seemed to shrink in size until he was only a few feet taller than Kiraman. The Bringer of Light placed his hand upon Kiraman's shoulder. "The questions that you ask now are the same ones I asked of our Father after I walked in the Darkness. There are beasts in there, older than all of His Armies with claws sharper than any blade and teeth that pierce like the point of a spear and hunger that has never been fed. When this city was first Created I battled and I slew and I fought until the Light moved the Darkness back."

Idly, he picked up a book from the shelf and started leafing through it. "A Mongolian farmer. Hm. I don't see the appeal, but I like that you do." He put the book back, but in the wrong spot. Kiraman made a mental note to fix that later. "Once the Darkness had been beaten back, the... things... in the Darkness stopped coming to our door. For millennia I guarded the gates of the Silver City, but none of the beasts could withstand the Light, so now they leave us be. I asked our Father that if I was a sword to cut through the Darkness, if there's nothing left for me to cut, why do I still exist?"

"As an aside," Said the Archangel, "I'm curious. What's the oldest book here?" Without responding, Kiraman lifted a finger and pointed down to the hallway where the Endless Shelves stood.

Lucifer started walking down the hallway, in the direction of the First Book, his footprints leaving divine fire on the ground. Kiraman paused for a moment before realizing he was supposed to follow him and hurried after the Morningstar. "Have you ever talked to our Father? Directly I mean, in his presence." The First of the Choir asked the Scribe.

Kiraman suddenly felt ashamed but did not understand why. His gaze fell to the ground. "No. I have never left the library grounds and I have not had the honor."

The angel with jeweled skin nodded knowingly. "When you're in His presence, words are not spoken. There is just... understanding. What He told me was that all things have a purpose. There is a time that they are most useful and times when they wait until they become useful again. This is part of the ebb and flow of all things. That I need to wait until it's time for me to be useful again, then my purpose, my function, shall be returned."

"So... you're saying that the work I do is useful? And I just need patience until the day comes when it has purpose?"

He chuckled, soft and low. "I expected better from you, Kiraman. That's the wrong question. If you don't know the right question, then I'm wasting my time here."

Kiraman thought for a moment. "When does my work become useful?"

This earned him a slight smile, another flash of teeth that felt more threatening than reassuring. "Closer. But you're still missing the point. Let me answer your question with another question: if you desire to read them, if you find value in reading the stories, aren't they already useful? Have you not, with aid from no one but yourself, given them reason to exist? Reason for you to exist?"

"I... I suppose so, Brother." Kiraman tried to hide it, but his mind was reeling from the revelation.

"Then you have proven, through your own actions," The towering Angel intoned, "that if we have no purpose given to us by our Father, we can give ourselves a reason to exist, correct?"

The words being spoken from the First made sense to Kiraman. Yes, of course. Kiraman had done it himself without even realizing it. Then it follows that it could also be done on purpose. But, why did it feel... *wrong* when the Morningstar said it?

Kiraman said nothing, but thought on everything that had been said. There was something else behind those words, something he couldn't quite reach. They walked in silence for a few minutes, until they reached the First Book.

"What is it like?" Kiraman said, breaking the silence.

The Light Bringer tilted his immaculate head to one side, a puzzled look on his face. "What do you mean, Brother? What's it like to walk in the Darkness?"

"No." Kiraman responded quietly. His voice was barely a whisper, but the echoes of it still rang down the hall. Raphael stood at the entrance to the Endless Shelves, listening to their private conversation. His face was a stone mask. "What is it like to not have a reason to exist?"

Lucifer picked up the First Book and read the title aloud. "[*TODO: Story 2 Title*]." He handed the book over to Kiraman. The book glowed faintly in his hands, the title burning with golden letters. "Kiraman, my brother, this book deserves to be read. It deserves to

have a purpose even if that purpose is only given to it by you. If you wish to know what it's like to live without reason, I believe this book, rather these books," He gestured broadly to the books on the Endless Shelves, "will give you that answer." The smile and light left his face as the Morningstar grew dark and serious.

"Brother, heed my words: I warn you, be careful of Raphael. He does not see things the same way that you and I do. Continue your work, but read as you are able. I will return again one day, to see how you fair."

With that, the Bringer of Light stepped back into the shadows and was gone. Kiraman started the long walk back to his room, fixed the book that had been misplaced and began reading.

—Story— [TODO]

Opening the trash can lid, Joseph peered inside. He moved a few things around before smiling and exclaiming "Aha!", withdrawing a mostly used bottle of baby powder. Exactly the kind of thing he had been looking for. He tossed it into his shopping cart with the rest of his valuables and continued walking down the street, pausing to peer into a dumpster before heading towards the park.

It was getting colder so Joseph had decided to put on more clothes than usual. When you lived on the streets it was easy for the cold to creep up on you. More than once Joseph had gone to sleep in what he thought was a comfortable place only to wake up shivering as the cement drained the heat out of him like some kind of vampire. He had almost lost a toe once because of that. You didn't take chances with the cold, he had learned.

His tattered clothes were all the same shade of brown thanks to the thick amount of dirt on them, but they did the job of keeping him warm quite nicely. His friend Hank, man he missed Hank, had taught him a lot when he first became homeless. Another good trick is to ball up newspaper and put that inside your jacket and pants. Traps the air and insulates you. Though, Joseph didn't need that today. If his plan worked out, he would be sleeping in the finest motel that wouldn't immediately kick him out as soon as he walked through the door.

When he was a kid, he'd seen a lot of homeless people on the small black and white tv set that his dad, bastard that he was, owned. His dad didn't like to be a parent, not since

his mom had died anyway, and would just plop him down in front of the tv while he read the paper or played with his trains.

Vagabond. Transient. Drifter. The TV had lots of words for them. They always wore fingerless gloves, so Joseph now wore fingerless gloves. They always had a top hat with the top cut out like the lid of a tin can, so Joseph wore a top hat. Albeit with the top part still intact. He knew that it made him look ridiculous, but at the same time it also made him feel important. He liked feeling important.

Arriving at the park, he saw the families enjoying the beautiful sunny day. Kids ran around, breath making fog appear in the chill air in great puffs, adults staring at their phones and occasionally glancing at their children. When Joseph had shown up, he noticed more than a couple of people give him sideways glances. One older lady even grabbed, what he assumed to be, her grandson by the hand and hurry away. He was used to this by now and it didn't bother him. They'd all be paying attention to him soon enough anyway.

At the center of the park was a fountain with a cliché fish spitting out water. It looked like it was designed and built by the lowest bidder, hurriedly made so the city could announce it had a water feature and no other purpose. This would do, Joseph thought to himself, a giant smile creeping onto his face.

Pushing his cart full of valuables in front of the fountain, he began rummaging through it to find all the things he would need. He placed them along the edge of the fountain until he found his pride and joy.

Opening it up, he carefully placed it on the ground, but it was almost blown over by the wind. He quickly took out a couple of bricks from his shopping cart, you never knew what might be useful, and steadied the large cardboard painting.

Originally several refrigerator boxes, Joseph had worked for weeks to turn them into a singular piece and had painted, often not using paint, a castle with a moat and its bridge lowered in the middle of a forest, a singular dirt road traveling into the distance where a small town of thatched roof wooden buildings lay. At the top of the backdrop were the words, in real red paint this time, the words "Trash Theater".

Hank had taught Joseph a lot of things, before his cough killed him. A lot of it was how to survive on the streets, sure, but it was also Hank's love of the theater. That's how Joseph got this idea, Hank used to perform one-man shows for the other *transients*, to

keep them all entertained. He could perform maybe half of King Lear from memory, though he could never do it the same way twice. He was a good guy.

Joseph pulled out his second cardboard invention, this one much smaller than the backdrop. It was about as tall as his chest and had three sections, so it could stand up on its own and still let the back be open. In the center was a large semicircular hole with yet more cardboard jutting out from the bottom of the hole, giving the appearance of a stage. The front had, what once had been, a pillow case attached to a coat hanger, now acting as curtains. He was almost ready.

In the theater, presentation is everything. Taking off his well-worn sweater, he put on his nicest, and only, suit jacket. He didn't much care for this jacket, it being several sizes too big and having a large hole in one side and what he hoped was ketchup on the other. However, it did look nice with the cape he had made from an old bed-sheet. It was black with a yellow trim that had some glitter in it and could still sparkle a little, though it had lost most of its luster.

Finally, his cane. A straight black cane, scuffed and scarred from many years of use, with a white ball now tarnished and yellowing for a handle. Standing there in front of a slowly growing crowd, Joseph felt like a million bucks. He cleared his throat.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls of all ages. You should count yourselves as lucky today for many reasons: it's a beautiful day, you have your health, and a thousand reasons to be happy. If I may be permitted to be so bold, I would like to add one more to those reasons and introduce you and yours... to Trash Theater." He called out the crowd and received a smattering of applause in return. There were about 8 people watching on at this point, the majority of people within earshot still staring at their phones.

"Today I have a tale for you as classic as the genre of fairy tales itself. A kidnapped princess, her dashing hero and an evil dragon that sits upon a hoard of treasure. This is an original production of Trash Theater and I hope you enjoy it. This is 'The Dragon's Hoard'." Joseph took off his hat and made a sweeping bow to the small audience as they answered with another lackluster applause.

Moving behind his mini-theater, he picked up the first puppet and pulled the string that pulled back the curtain. This was the dragon puppet, arguably the most important character in the story and it was made of tin cans held together with pieces of string that connected the cans together like limbs. The wings were made of cardboard and the

head was the only usable part of a stuffed dragon he had found several years ago. You never knew what was going to come in handy.

“Our story begins at Acorn Castle, in the heart of the dense forest known as the Forest of Goblins. Therein, lies a great and mighty dragon feared all over the world. A destructive force of nature that has destroyed entire armies in a single breath just to steal a single gold coin to add to its hoard. Its name is feared all over the world and is synonymous with death itself. This,” He emphasized the last word as he danced the tin dragon puppet onto the stage, “Is the terrifying, horrifying... Blinky the Dragon!”

No one laughed but Joseph noticed a half smile or two.

“There was nothing that Blinky loved more than gold. He had a mountain of gold coins, a hill of golden statues, a mound of jewelry but there was one thing he had just one of and to him it was the most important treasure he had. It was a painting with a golden frame. He would spend hours every day staring at this painting. It was of a beautiful woman with long, golden hair that shone brighter than anything else he owned.

“So it was that Blinky decided he would make this woman with gold hair the centerpiece of his treasure trove. Standing up for the first time in centuries, and having to shake off many gold coins that were stuck to his butt,” Joseph made the tin puppet shake and several pennies fell to the ground, causing a laugh from a couple of the younger audience members, “and stretched his great wings and flew over the Forest of Goblins, searching for his newest treasure. Joseph *swooshed* the tin puppet back and forth a few times, before moving it off the stage.

“On the other side of the Forest of Goblins lay the village of Aurum. And in this village lived an ordinary looking young man, who had just been rejected by his lady love.” The puppet that now appeared was mostly made out of cloth and stuffed with shreds of newspaper. Its arms were pipe cleaners that had been twisted together and its face had been drawn on with a marker. A couple of small sticks in the vague shape of a sword were held in its little hand.

“This boy is named Jin. And he has two dreams: the first is to win the hand of the fairest maiden in all the land, Orla.” From the other side of the stage a female marionette walked onto the stage, bouncing up and down on her strings. The doll had the body of a barbie doll in a frilly red polka dotted dress that had once been an oven mitt. What stood out most about the doll, however, was the perfect silky smooth and shiny hair that flowed down its back down past her knees.

It was this doll that had first given Joseph the idea to do this play. As soon as he had seen it shining on the mound of garbage someone had deposited under an overpass, he knew it was special. He had taken great care to clean the gunk off of it and restore it to the beauty it had once possessed.

“Yet, Orla has no interest in Jin. Whenever he saw her, he could feel her eyes pass right through. As though he wasn’t there at all. Jin vowed that one day he would make her see him. Which leads us to his second dream: to slay the terrible dragon and claim its great treasure trove for himself. So every day, Jin would practice with his sword, slaying the terrible creature again and again in his imagination.” Joseph swung the doll around so the wooden sword it wielded *swished* through the air.

The crowd around the cardboard theater had grown a little by this point, several people who had been on their phones just moments ago now watched with interest.

“It was then that our hero Jin heard a shriek. It was Orla! She was in trouble! Hurry little one, hurry!” Joseph let out his best girly scream and Jin ran off stage in the direction Orla had earlier. The girl doll bobbed onto the stage with a small shriek, turned around to look behind it, then continued running as the tin dragon flew into the center of the stage.

Blinky grabbed Orla in his claws and lifted her off the ground as she cried for someone to save her. “Oh please save me!” She pleaded. “I will most definitely bake a cupcake for anyone that saves me!” The dragon roared, fierce and terrible. “OK, a full cake! And pudding!” The last word trailing off into the distance as the beast carried his new treasure into the sky. That earned a handful of chuckles from the gathered crowd.

Jin rushed in, swinging his sword wildly. “Do not worry Orla, I will save you! No matter what it costs me, you will be freed!” He bellowed at the figures disappearing into the distance.

Joseph continued his narration, “Jin knew the only way to reach the dragon’s castle was to travel through the Forest of Goblins. A dark and dangerous place that no one was allowed to go to, but he was on a quest to save the woman he loved and he could not be stopped.

“Going into the forest was so forbidden that to enter it meant being thrown out of his home, no matter the reason. His friends would no longer talk to him, his family would

disown him. His house would be taken away from him. It didn't matter to Jin, the only thing he cared about was chasing that dragon.

"It took him several hours to reach the forest and now he stood at its edge. With a steady breath, he took his first step inside." Reaching behind himself, Joseph pulled a flap on the backdrop that replaced the image of the castle and town with a dark and dense forest.

"Jin walked through the forest for days, quickly running out of food. He was tired and hungry and cold. He saw not another soul or even heard the sound of birds the entire time. The entire forest was completely dark and completely quiet." Jin slowed his bouncy pretend walk across the forest to the string puppet equivalent of a crawl. "That is... until one day... Jin stumbled upon a monster! A stinky green goblin!" A green sock puppet with pointed ears and snarling face entered the tiny stage from across the Jin puppet.

"The goblin saw our hero and attacked!" The sock puppet rushed forward and Jin took a mighty swing, for a puppet, onto the head of the monster.

"Ouch!" Cried the sock. "You just smacked me with a wooden stick! What'd you do that for?" A couple of giggles from the younger members of the audience could be heard.

"It's not a stick!" Jin said indignantly. "It's a mighty sword. The mighty sword that's going to slay the terrible dragon Blinky and save my sweet love."

"That is clearly two sticks tied together with some string!" The sock monster argued.

"Well... it's all I have. I'm trying to make it work." Jin answered weakly.

"You're going to need a better sword. Have you tried asking the Goblin King? If he's in a good mood, sometimes he might help someone out." The goblin asked.

"So it was," Joseph narrated, "that the two would-be enemies became friends. The goblin, named Frank, helped out Jin. He showed him how to survive in the forest, how to avoid the most dangerous areas, and how to stay warm at night. Perhaps most importantly, for the first time since Jin began chasing the dragon, he felt like he had someone who cared about him.

“After some time, the two approached the lair of the Goblin King. A giant of a goblin, more than twice the height of Jin, making him feel like a child in comparison. Jin stood as tall as he could and called out to the King.” Joseph pulled another string and half the stage was covered by a thin pillow case. He angled a mirror to reflect the sunlight so that it projected his shadow onto the pillow case.

“Who goes there?” Joseph yelled in a deep baritone, the profile of the shadow of his face playing the part of the Goblin King.

“Oh great Goblin King,” Jin answered. “I am a warrior from the village of Aurum. I need a sword to defeat the terrible dragon named Blinky. Would you lend me your aid?”

“Go away, I’m busy. I don’t have time for you.” The Goblin King responded.

“Uh... well of course you are, your majesty. I’m sure someone in your position has many responsibilities. Perhaps I could help assist you, ease your burden?” Jin asked hesitantly.

“I’m playing with my trains. I don’t need your help with that. Choo choo. ALL ABOARD.” The Goblin King called out.

“Trains? Uh... I’m sure they are very important, sir, but my quest is more important.” Jin said, quite unsure of what was going on.

“Your quest is not important.” Snapped the Goblin King. “You are not important. I know what leaving your village and coming here means. You gave up everything to chase that dragon. You have no home, no family and no friends. No job. You became worthless. No, you were always worthless.

“Why would anyone want to help *you*?” The Goblin King sneered.

“That’s not true!” Jin protested. “I have... I mean to say that... Well, I *will* have everything I’ve ever dreamed about. I just need to slay the dragon first.”

“What you have lost can never be regained. No one trusts you any more. They no longer believe your lies or your truths. They are happier without you. I don’t want you here, I never wanted you. Get the hell out of my house you damn junk-” Joseph’s voice cracked. His eyes were watering and he had to clear his throat loudly before he got back on script.

“Get out of my forest.” Said the Goblin King, though more quietly this time. “I will not help you. Choo Choo, now approaching Charing Cross Station...”

“Jin felt defeated. Nothing he said or did would ever change the Goblin King’s mind.” Joseph narrated, retreating back behind the cardboard stage. “We tried, I suppose.” Jin said. “Frank, let’s continue our way to the castle. I still believe I can best the dragon without the help of my da-, I mean the Goblin King.”

Joseph silently cursed himself for almost going off script again.

Suddenly the Goblin King appeared again. “Oh no you don’t. That one will not join you. When you fail, and you will fail, you will fail by yourself. Come here, little one.” The King ordered. Frank the Goblin gave a weary look to his puppet friend, then walked behind the screen so only the shadow of the sock puppet could be seen.

The Goblin King leaned down and took a huge bite of Jin’s only friend. In three quick *gulps* the smaller goblin was eaten whole.

A little girl sitting in the front row that had been watching the play with wide-eyed excitement started crying. Her mother put an arm around her and tried to soothe the small child.

“You monster!” Jin cried out as he drew his wooden sword and charged the Goblin King. “You’re going to get the biggest bonking ever!” He swore. As the puppet of Jin approached the silhouette of the Goblin King, it took in a giant breath and blew with all its might.

The puppet of Jin tried to withstand the hurricane force, but was swept off his theoretical feet and flung into a dark part of the forest. All alone. Picking himself up, Jin turned to the audience. “I must continue my quest. Sometimes, maybe a lot of times, life will beat you down and you’ll feel like giving up. Never, ever, give up.”

Jin slowly started his adventure again. One implied foot after the other. “Days passed in the blink of an eye as our hero wearily continued through the forest,” Joseph narrated, “until he stumbled into a large clearing with a small hill. On top of that hill was the legendary Acorn Castle, home of the dreaded beast, Blinky the Dragon.”

“Jin was approaching castle Acorn when suddenly - in order to save on making a castle interior - Orla and Blinky the Dragon appeared!” Joseph continued.

“Aha!” The puppet Jin cried. “At last I have found you, my nemesis. I shall slay you and rescue Orla. Then I shall have her hand in marriage and we’ll have lots of babies and -” Jin started by was interrupted by the golden haired Orla.

“Um, actually?” Orla interjected. “I like it here. Blinky’s a great conversationalist and a really good listener. Plus, he has lots of board games.”

“Oh.” Jin said dejectedly. “I... I see.” There was an awkward pause for a moment as all the puppets looked at each other then around the stage.

Jin loudly cleared his throat. “At any rate, I still need to defeat you, Blinky. You have been the scourge of mankind for too long. Prepare yourself, dragon! Here’s my ultimate attack: Ultra Super Mega Bonk of Doom!”

With that declaration, Jin leapt at the tin dragon swinging his wooden sword which struck the head of the dragon. There was another long pause as Blinky and Orla looked at each other, then back to Jin.

“Was... was that really your ultimate attack? I didn’t even feel it.” Blinky said slowly.

“Yeah, that really was my best attack. I guess I’m just not strong enough to defeat you.” Jin answered as his wooden sword dropped to the ground. “I, um, I guess you’re going to eat me now?” He asked, slumping to the ground.

“Oh no!” Orla exclaimed. “I convinced Blinky to become vegan. He wouldn’t hurt a fly now.”

The puppet of Blinky shook and let out a mighty burp. “Mmm, it tastes like broccoli.” More laughter from the children in the crowd.

The puppet Jin laughed, sad and quiet to himself.

“I’ve been wrong this whole time, haven’t I? I thought that by defeating you I could achieve all my dreams, but it was never about me, was it?” Jin asked in self reflection.

“I’ve had a long time to think, traveling from the village to here.” Jin continued. “I understand now that it was never about saving Orla. I never wanted to be a hero or be rich. This was always about chasing after you, Blinky.”

The tin dragon’s head tilted as if in confusion.

“I gave up everything to chase you. I knew I should have given you up a long time ago. It’s only now that I’ve lost everything, including the last few dreams I had, that I’ve realized... you were never worth giving it all up for. No matter how long I spent chasing you.

“I don’t need you anymore, Blinky. I’m going back to the forest now. Goodbye, Blinky.” With those final words, Jin turned and entered the dark canopy, disappearing into the darkness.

“Well that was weird.” Orla commented, breaking the silence. “Do you want to go back in and play monopoly?”

“Blinky wishes to be the doggy!” The Dragon roared as it spread its wings. The stage curtain closed to a thunderous applause.

Joseph placed the puppets on the floor and walked in front of his mini-theater and bowed, feeling the pure joy and bliss of being in the spotlight for the first time in many, many years. The crowd had grown to around 30 people, including the children, by the end. Several were on their feet, clapping for him.

After the applause had died down, Joseph had taken his hat off and passed it around. Now he was counting the money that people had donated to him. Not that much, but enough for a night at a cheap motel and a hot dinner like he wanted. Maybe he’d try performing the show again tomorrow.

On the other hand... he knew that there was a dealer that liked to hang out just a handful of blocks from here. He could go and - Joseph shook his head vigorously to get those thoughts of his head. No, he was done chasing that dragon. Packing up his materials, he started pushing his cart out of the park as the sun set. Tomorrow was going to be a very good day.

—Story End—

The Archangel Lucifer and Scribe Kiraman were browsing through the contents of the Library, trying to find another interesting book for Kiraman to read. Well, Kiraman was while the other angel seemed lost in thought.

“Brother I have a sin I must confess to you.” The Archangel sighed.

Kiraman looked puzzled for a moment. “Sin: The transgression of divine law. You have gone against the Word, Brother?”

In the days and weeks since they had first spoken in the Endless Shelves, Lucifer and Kiraman had spent more and more time together. The Scribe found himself looking forward to the First’s visits and the Library felt empty without him there. Since the beginning, the only company that he had were his quill and the books and Kiraman did not want to go back to the way things had been.

On this occasion, the duo had been walking from the silvery lawn in front of the Library back towards Kiraman’s small wooden desk, through the Endless Shelves. The lawn itself stretched for hundreds of meters all around the Library with a single lane, made of the same material as the rest of the City but textured to look like stone, parting the grass and leading deep into the City. They had walked the circumference of the lawn several times already, the furthest Kiraman had ever been from the Library.

“All I have ever done is follow the Word. Both that which was spoken and that which is unspoken.” Lucifer stated bluntly. “No, I have not gone against the Word. I mean to say that I have lied to you. Tricked you.”

“Oh.” Kiraman felt the urge to look at his feet and did not understand why. “How did you lie to me?”

The Morningstar turned away from Kiraman and cast his gaze around the Library, as if searching for something. He did not look at the Scribe as he responded. “The time that you and I walked through the Endless Shelves to the First Book was not the first time that we met. I knew this but I acted as though it were.” He turned back to Kiraman.

“I needed to talk to you, to get to know you, to understand you before I revealed this to you. I worried, I still worry, about how you will react to learning this news.”

Kiraman's confusion had only deepened. "I have been alone since the beginning, Brother. I have never left the Library. The day that Raphael appeared before me to... reprimand me... was the first time I had ever met one of our brethren. I fear you must be mistaken." He said.

Lucifer chuckled and put his hand on Kiraman's shoulder. Idly, Kiraman noted that this was the first time he had ever been touched by another. It felt... nice.

"Oh Kiraman, my innocent friend. There is still so much for you to learn." He turned away from Kiraman and picked up the book that was laying on Kiraman's desk, still unfinished due to his arrival.

"Perhaps it's because you spend all of your time learning about humans, you've never learned about us Angels. Every one of us were given abilities beyond what we need to complete our function. You've seen me hide my wings and change my height to match yours. What else do you think I can do? What else can *you* do?" The Morningstar asked.

Something pulled at Kiraman's mind at this. He felt as though he was being lied to again, even though nothing Lucifer said was a lie. It made him angry, yet another first for Kiraman. "I think you are trying to avoid telling me how and why you lied to me. Tell me." He demanded, surprising himself.

Lucifer stared at Kiraman in shocked disbelief for a moment. The soft spoken, respectful, timid Scribe just made a demand of the First of the Choir? How wonderful. He laughed loudly and smiled that ear-to-ear grin of his. "Finally!" He roared. The sheer exuberance that he showed surprised Kiraman. Lucifer moved towards Kiraman and placed both his hands on Kiraman's shoulders. "Now I know that I was right all along. That you really are the one."

Kiraman has no idea what to make of that statement, but he let Lucifer speak his peace. "My dear brother," The Morningstar intoned, turning around and gesturing broadly at the Endless Shelves of the Library, "I was the voice in your head that gave you the idea to read one of your books. That was when we first met; after I sought you out."

Kiraman's confusion only deepened. He felt... he didn't know how he felt. This was a new feeling to him. He was angry, somewhat. The feeling was deep where his stomach would be, if he had one. It was... uncomfortable. Betrayal? He felt betrayed? It seemed to feel as Kiraman had read it would feel in his books..

“But why? Why would you not just come and talk to me yourself?” Questioned Kiraman.

“Because I needed to see if you would think like me.” Lucifer answered as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. “To see if you were as worthy as I believed you to be.”

This just caused Kiraman to have far more questions. What did his Brother mean by ‘worthy’? Why did he need to know how he thought? Why did Lucifer care about what he thought? But he chose to ask, “Why would you choose me to speak to?”

The First of the Choir visibly relaxed at this, exhaling deeply in relief. “That is another good question, Brother. It is also one that I cannot answer now. But I promise you that one day, one day soon, you shall understand. And I pray to the One above Us that when that day comes, you will be able to forgive me.”

Kiraman felt himself get angry and about to snap at his only friend again. Forcing himself to be calm he took a moment to collect his thoughts. “Brother, regretfully I must ask you to leave the Library. I need time to understand how I feel about this... revelation and for some reason I don’t want you here for the time being.”

The Morningstar nodded his head. “I understand, my Brother. My friend. I shall do as you ask.” He stepped into the shadow of one of the bookshelves but stopped halfway. “May I ask one question before I take my leave?” Kiraman nodded so Lucifer continued, “Is there anything that says you must write your books inside the Library?”

Kiraman didn’t answer. He had never considered the option before. His function was to write the Books and place them on the Shelves. Staying close by had always seemed like the most logical option. After a moment, without saying anything further, Lucifer stepped fully into the shadows and was gone, his oppressive presence leaving the Library entirely.

The Scribe stood there for a long time, pondering. Thinking over his feelings of being lied to, of being betrayed in a sense, by someone who had held his total trust. Did Lucifer actually do something wrong? Kiraman enjoyed reading his books and without the Morningstar’s interference he would still be performing his function as he had since the Beginning. But why would he take such a roundabout method? Why would he confess now to the deception? Kiraman felt as though he was being deceived yet again, now, but try as he might he could not understand how.

After a long while, Kiraman returned to his desk. He sat and stared at the lone silver candle that adorned his desk, giving off a soft and warm light. He understood that he was different now, than he had been. He knew that being an Angel and questioning his purpose made him... an aberration. Having a friend made him an aberration as well.

Yet at the same time, these things also felt *right*. He didn't want to go back to the way things had been before Lucifer had put the idea into his mind to read the books. He was happier being, well, weird.

Brother Lucifer was an aberration as well. Or was he? Kiraman had only ever met two of his brethren, though as an Angel he knew the names of the entire Choir. But he knew nothing of them. Their personalities or if they had thoughts like his. Did *they* have friends?

It was then that he made a decision: he was going to explore the Silver City and meet more of his brethren. He would make friends. So long as he kept writing, which he could do from anywhere, then Raphael could have no objections, right?

He needed to bring paper with him. A lot of paper.

And so it was that a few hours later Kiraman readied himself to leave the Library grounds for the first time. He had realized that he had no way to carry his paper, so he had torn parts of his pristine robes to create a makeshift pouch with two straps that went over each shoulder. He stood on the pathway at the edge of the silvery grass.

Steadying himself, he took that first new step.

—Interlude—

In the entire history of the Silver City, Raphael the Angel of Vengeance, had only ever had to kill two of his Brothers. Only twice had he performed his function against those who went against the Word, and only twice had Azrael, the Guide of Souls, taken those souls to their final resting place.

The first was an Angel named Ioriel. One of the members of the army commanded by Lucifer Morningstar, the two had fought together for eons fighting back the Darkness. The voices from the beasts in there had corrupted his mind and made him turn on his brethren.

loriel had suddenly stopped fighting and flew back to the Silver City, which at the point was little more than a flat disc with the start of a wall being built and a scant few million buildings to house the still growing population. His eyes had turned black as pitch and purple veins started covering his body that hummed with power. The Guard moved faster than he ever had before, his sword was even tainted with the energies of the Darkness, devouring the little light that existed.

Raphael approached loriel and told him to return to his station but the Guard's mind was already gone. He attacked the archangel while screaming, "It's the Darkness! Don't you understand, it is not our enemy! It is the truth, the Darkness is the real truth!"

Across the City, Azrael sat in his room as he had since the Beginning. He had existed for a long time now, but had no method of performing his duty. There was no need for him to, yet. So he sat and he waited. Countless ages passed with the Guide just waiting. While the others built the city, he waited. While others fought the darkness, he sat. He was nothing, if not patient. He should enjoy this time of calm while he could, for after the Creation he would be very busy.

For the first time since his creation, he stood up, knowing it was finally time. His room could be best described as a closet. Barely large enough to fit his massive frame at his full height, completely unadorned save for a simple stool made of the same silver stone as everything else. He had to turn sideways to open the door and step out into the infant Silver City.

He walked slowly, taking his time walking through the streets. The Guide was not taking in the marvelous sights of the fledgling city, he merely knew that he would arrive at the exact time that he was supposed to. Not a moment early, nor late. He wore a dark blue robe lined with waves of silver thread and a cowl that covered his head completely so his face could not be seen. The robe rippled constantly as if in a strong breeze, which did not exist inside the city.

Turning a corner, Azrael was able to see a part of the City that had become a battlefield. There were hundreds of angels in a large circle surrounding two clashing warriors: Raphael and loriel. Each time their swords met there was a violent burst of energy that pushed back all of those gathered around. The two flew at such speeds they were little more than a blur, even to all the angelic eyes around them.

However the Guide had no such issues. He simply walked through the ring of angels, touching none of them. Passed through the waves of energy that threatened to knock

the angelic beings behind him off of their feet. With the same patience he had passed time since the Beginning, he slowly walked to a spot just off center of the ring of Angels, at the same moment that the body of Ioriel smashed into the ground, bounced off it and rolled to a stop at Azrael's feet.

The Guard spit up silvery blood that ran down his face before it boiled off and turned to ash. Azrael knelt and placed his hand on the angel's chest. "It's time." The Guide whispered to the corrupted Guard, just as Raphael landed into Ioriel plunging his sword directly into the corrupted angel's head. Then there was a giant blaze of holy fire as Raphael screamed in triumph that burned Ioriel into nothingness.

The Guard found himself standing next to Azrael. Watching Raphael sheath his sword, order the remaining angels to disperse and then fly off. Confused, he looked around and spotted Azrael standing next to him. "Brother Azrael? Why are you here? Did something happen? Did one of our Brothers die?"

"Yes." Azrael replied as he took the spirit of the dead angel and led him to their next destination.

It took another moment, but the Guard finally understood. "Oh. I see." Ioriel said. The gathered angels had diminished greatly in number, but a few still remained. None of them paid any attention to the Guard of the Guide as they walked along.

"What can I expect next, brother?" Asked Ioriel. Azrael said nothing. It wasn't his place to answer. "Please. I... I think I'm scared. I want to know. Anything you can tell me, anything at all." But Azrael's purpose was to lead the dead to what comes next, not answer questions. So that's what he did.

After some more pleading, Ioriel eventually fell silent for a long time as they walked the streets of the city. Yet there was one last question from the Guard, "Will it hurt?"

At that, Azrael stopped and looked at his charge. He actually considered telling him the truth, but eventually decided against it. He resumed walking and Ioriel spoke no more for the rest of the trip. Soon, they reached their destination, a small shack that appeared to be made of stone bricks. Azrael opened the door and gestured for the Guard to step inside.

loriel took one last look at the Silver City and the Darkness that lay beyond. Turning to the door, he lowered his head and shut his eyes, not wanting to see what was inside. Azrael closed the silver door behind him.

With the Guard being delivered, Azrael returned to his room and sat. And waited.

—Interlude End—

It felt to Kiraman as though he was doing something wrong. He had never been told not to leave the Library, nor to explore the Silver City but somewhere inside of him it was almost like a betrayal to do so. A betrayal of what, that he was not sure of. Ever since his eldest Brother had visited him, Kiraman had felt many new emotions that he didn't know how to process. Nonetheless, he took one step after another.

Walking along the City, Kiraman couldn't help but stare in wonder at the marvels all around him. Intricate stonework no one had gazed upon since the Beginning, each brick perfectly shaped and placed to build the giant towers so tall he couldn't see the tops of them. Even the smaller buildings had ornate steps that lead up to doors that had never opened, twice his height, as though made for a giant.

Every turn that he made there was a new majestic series of buildings that stretched on, seemingly forever. This pattern continued until Kiraman suddenly found himself at a dead end in front of a small hut. The stone's here weren't bricks but flatter and round, connected by what appeared to be mortar. It wasn't mortar, of course, everything was carved out of the same silver material but painstakingly detailed to resemble stones and mortar. The door was smaller than the others and was made to look like it was made of wood.

Ivy adorned the hut and climbed up its sides past the roof and up a chimney that had blue smoke drifting lazily from it. Here there was no such thing as wind so it didn't break up and disappear, it just slowly climbed up and up until it disappeared from sight, taken into the Darkness.

How did he arrive at a dead end? The path was clear and lined on either side with far more impressive buildings just moments ago. Kiraman turned to see if he could find the path he had been on, when he decided to knock on the door.

Almost immediately there was a loud *thud* from within the house. For several moments nothing happened, until a meek voice yelled out, "Y... yes? Is someone there?"

“Yes Brother, I am Kiraman. I wish to speak with you.” he responded.

There was another thud, this time much closer. This was followed by several clunking sounds as the door shook from trying to be opened the wrong way. “Uh, just a moment.” The voice said. After several long moments the doorknob turned slowly, hesitantly. As though the one operating it wasn’t completely sure how to use it.

The latch clicked and the door was finally pulled open, revealing an Angel shorter than Kiraman by at least half a foot, his hair long, white and wispy, standing up on its own in almost every direction. The Angel’s robes appeared to be soiled with something that looked like ink. But what really took the Scribe by surprise was the smell that was coming from the house. It reeked of something foul Kiraman had never experienced before. Taken aback and somewhat ashamed of himself, he covered his nose.

The Angel just stood staring at Kiraman, waiting. He didn’t seem to notice or take offense to Kiraman covering his nose.

“Ah, Brother Uriel!” Kiraman eventually managed to get out. He tried breathing through his mouth and that was somewhat better. Wait, since when had he been able to breathe? A question for another time.

While almost none of the Choir had ever met another of their kind, unless their function had them working with others, all of the Angels knew the names of all their Brethren and, to a degree, what their function was. Uriel is the Angel of Illumination, keeper of hidden truths. What that meant practically, Kiraman had no idea.

“Brother Kiraman, the Scribe. This is... most unexpected. What are you doing here?” As Uriel asked this question, he gazed around the small view of the City he had in front of him, probably seeing it for the first time.

“I wanted to meet more of the Choir,” Kiraman replied, “And to get to know them.”

Uriel was clearly having trouble processing this concept. “You... want to write about me?” He asked. Kiraman gave him his best smile while wondering to himself if this is how he would have responded to a visitor before he started reading his books.

“Not quite. I want to write while we talk. May I come in?” Kiraman asked.

The Angel of Illumination thought on it for a bit before pulling the door open wider and standing to the side. Kiraman mumbled his thanks as he ducked to go through the doorway, into the house where he had to hunch over to avoid hitting his head on the roof. Clearly, the whole building had been made for someone of Uriel's size.

Lucifer had said that all members of the Choir had abilities beyond what they needed to complete their function. Could Kiraman change his height like he'd seen his eldest brother do so many times? He had never tried. Briefly he thought about shrinking to fit the house, but nothing happened. Something to experiment with later, perhaps.

The smell got even worse inside the house, nearly knocking Kiraman over. Persevering, he dutifully followed Uriel into the single chamber of the house. In the center of the room sat a desk that had the paws of a lion on each foot, individual hairs carved one by one indistinguishable from the real thing. The desk was balanced by claws that came out of foot, looking ridiculously sharp and the beasts roaring, face and mane on each corner.

Against the far wall were long shelves upon which sat a number of plates under glass. The contents varied wildly, with some looking like a mushroom and others just brown or black blobs. Each one had a label in front of it, a small placard with Angelic writing that glowed brightly.

Surprisingly, that was not the most impressive part of the room. For every single inch of the other walls, the ceiling and the floor had been covered in writing and numbers. Some large as Kiraman's hand, some so small that he couldn't read them even with his angelic sight.

"This is incredible." Kiraman said, looking around the room in awe like a child in their first toy store. "What is it that you do here?"

Uriel, who had been looking rather uncomfortable at having someone else in his space, suddenly perked up and started speaking rapid-fire. "My function is to design the concept of decay! See, after the Creation things will live and die. When something dies then there are tiny life forms that are so small you can't even see them, but they're critical for the cycle of life. Actually, there are even smaller creatures called viruses or virii and..." This went on for some time.

Eventually Kiraman cut Uriel off by asking if he could sit at his desk and write. Uriel agreed and then went back to standing awkwardly, not sure what to do. He put his

hands on his hips, then clasped them together in front of himself, then crossed his arms, before finally settling on holding his hands behind back.

Kiraman felt like he should say something. He went with, "I don't really get it, but I like that you do." Hadn't he heard that somewhere recently? He couldn't remember. "Is that what you've been working on since the Beginning?"

Uriel nodded. He appeared to steady himself before asking, "Forgive me Brother, but I still don't understand why you're here. What does any of my work have to do with yours?"

"It doesn't, not strictly speaking." Kiraman replied. Seeing that his words only deepened Uriel's confusion, he continued. "I am tasked with writing stories. My function is not to stay in the Library or to not write stories other than of the humans. So long as I complete my function, surely there could be no complaints?"

Uriel looked puzzled and asked, "I suppose so. But why would you want to? Do you not feel fulfilled just doing what you're supposed to?"

Kiraman answered with a sly smile. "Let me ask you, once you have completed your work and the Age of Man has started, what will you do then?"

The look of confusion could have been permanently tattooed on Uriel's face at this point. He understood all of the words the lesser angel was speaking, but they made no sense. "I don't know, but I don't see how it matters, either. I suppose I will just wait to be given a new task."

Kiraman started to write, his hand moving at a speed so fast that it could barely be seen. He smiled at the Angel of Illumination, his pace of writing not hindered in the least. There was a small spark of something in Kiraman, a yearning he had not realized was there. The desire to have another Brother who thought like he would. Maybe it was not a coincidence that he had stumbled across Uriel.

"What if a new task is never given?" Kiraman asked. Uriel pondered this for a long moment, the only sound in the ink covered room being the scratching of the quill against the paper. "Then I will be waiting a long time, I suppose." Was the response.

“Why not go out into the City and meet the rest of the Choir? Why not try your hand at writing or some other activity you find interesting? Instead of waiting to be given a purpose, couldn’t you find one yourself?”

Uriel’s expression had shifted to one of concern. “Why not? Because I only exist to fulfill my function. To complete the concept of decay so that it can be part of Creation. Once I’ve accomplished that I don’t need to do anything else.”

Kiraman stopped writing as the newest book was finished and began binding itself together into a book. The name of the person flared brightly and then settled into a light glow. He put the book into his makeshift sack and took out more paper, starting to write again.

The Scribe took a moment to figure out how he wanted to respond. The change in Uriel’s body language was worrying to him. Kiraman thought that his Brothers would be excited at this new paradigm. He was when he first started reading, why wouldn’t his Brothers also be? An idea came to him then.

He stopped writing and reached back into his pack, pulling out one of the books he had written earlier that day during his trip through the Silver City. “Perhaps you would find this enlightening. Would you humor me, Brother, and read this book? Yes, I know it’s not your function but I think you will find it to be worth your time.”

Uriel sighed and looked uncertain. Then after a moment he reached out and took the book from Kiraman. “As you wish, but know that if Raphael appears you must take responsibility for his wrath. Agreed?” Kiraman did. Thus, the Angel of Illumination began to read his first book.

-----Story----- **[WIP]**

Story about a guy that leaves a high paying corporate job to live off the land by himself

-----Story End-----

Uriel closed the book and handed it back to Kiraman who placed it along with more than a dozen new books that had been finished in that time. Kiraman was excited to hear Uriel’s thoughts on the story and so he asked him.

“I have no thoughts on it.” Uriel replied. “It was simply a story that exists. I could not say it was a good story or a bad one, as I have nothing to compare it to. May I get back to my work now, Brother?”

Kiraman’s mouth hung open slightly in surprise. This was not the response he had been expecting. Where was the revelation? Perhaps Uriel had not connected the dots between the story and what they had been talking about?

“Brother Uriel, perhaps you did not understand the story fully. Here, allow me to explain-” Was as far as Kiraman got before Uriel slammed his fist down on the desk that Kiraman sat at. “No! Brother Scribe, it is **you** who do not understand! I have complied with your request, I let you into my domain, I have listened to your ramblings and...” Uriel took a moment to collect himself. This time he spoke in a softer voice.

“Please leave, Brother Scribe. I wish to return to my work in solitude.” He held out his hand in the direction of the front door. Desolate, Kiraman gathered up the half finished book on the desk, placed everything in his sack and left.

The door slammed into place behind him as he walked down to the street. He knew that door would never open again. Dejected, he started walking back toward the Library. Unbeknownst to him, two of the greatest of the Archangels were flying high above the Silver City, watching the tiny dot that was Kiraman trundle through the immaculate streets.

“Something needs to be done. This is wrong, it’s not what our Creator intended.” Raphael said for the hundredth time. The Angel of Vengeance was the expert on dealing with angels that were going against the Word or their function, he had killed two of them after all.

Michael had grown tired of hearing about Kiraman and Raphael’s opinion of the situation. “When he explicitly breaks a rule, you may take action as you see fit. Until then, you will stay back and do nothing.”

Raphael sighed in exasperation. “If we allow him to do as he wishes, then we will have to allow **all** of the Choir to do as they wish. What if they all decide to stop performing their duties? What if it’s one of our brothers who are more important than a lowly scribe? It will spread and could ruin everything.”

“I do not wish to have to explain this again, brother. A rule is either broken, or it is not. Until a rule has been broken, you shall take no action.” Michael turned his gaze back to Kiraman. The two archangels flew in silence for a time.

Breaking the silence, Raphael spoke again. “Do you remember Davius?” He touched the blood red mark on his shoulder. Michael turned to his brother and regarded him for a moment, knowing where this question was going to lead. He decided to indulge Raphael anyway.

“Yes. What about him?” Michael asked.

“He chose to ignore his duties. I dealt with him and there was never any question that I was doing the right thing. That my work was holy and righteous. You did not question my decisions then and I do not understand why you do when we speak of the Scribe.” Raphael said.

The duo following Kiraman stopped moving and hovered in the air as he sat down against a tree and started writing another book.

“Brother,” Michael said. “There is more going on here than I believe you understand. This has never been about Kiraman.”

“You mean Brother Lucifer?” Raphael asked. Michael only nodded in return. “What about him?”

“He’s planning something, but I’m not sure what. All I know is that the Scribe is at the center of it and is the key to figuring out this mystery. And if you add a third mark to your robe,” Michael stared pointedly at the two red stripes on the shoulder of Raphael’s robe. “Then we lose our best and only lead.”

“Why not confront Lucifer then? Let us get to the heart of the matter and stop this foolishness with the Scribe.” Raphael demanded.

“Tell me honestly, brother.” Michael said patiently. “If Brother Lucifer decided to kill us, with all his considerable might, even if we work together, do you feel confident in being able to kill him?” Raphael just stared at the tiny figure of Kiraman on the ground. They both knew that at best it would be a close fight. If Lucifer struck first, they would be killed.

“If I can show proof of a conspiracy, then Metatron will grant the use of the Court and we can seal his powers. But without that proof, we risk losing everything.” Michael continued. “In addition, the work the Scribe does is important. I don’t know why, just that Metatron told me directly.”

Raphael blinked in surprise. “The Writer of the Word is defending Kiraman? That... librarian... is the lowest class of angel. How could he possibly be so important that he’s the key to some conspiracy that may or may not exist and that Metatron himself intervenes on his behalf?”

“All good questions, brother.” Michael answered. “I hope to have answers for you soon, but as I’ve said: unless the Scribe goes against the Word directly, or stops performing his function, you are to take no action against him.”

Raphael hesitated for a few moments. “I understand, Brother Michael.”

The pair watched as Kiraman finished his newest book, placed it carefully into his sack and started wandering the city again.

“There’s a matter that requires my attention.” Michael informed Raphael. “I will leave you to watch the Scribe.” With that he flew off to another section of the City. Towards Metatron’s tower, Raphael mentally noted. He went back to watching Kiraman, silently wishing something, anything, interesting would happen.

Kiraman continued walking along the city, enjoying the view and variety of the buildings that were packed in tightly. He thought about going up to random doors and trying to talk to whomever was inside, but ultimately decided against it. His last encounter had not gone well and he wasn’t eager to repeat that encounter.

It wasn’t long, however, before Kiraman heard something that he had never heard before that made him stop mid-stride. He knew of no way to describe the sounds he was hearing. The closest thing he had ever heard to it before was like when he was walking down the hallway to the Endless Shelves and he could hear his footsteps echo off of the walls. This was different. This was... pleasing? Yes, this sound was pleasing. He wanted to hear more of it.

Following the sound, he soon found himself in the middle of a large plaza, perfectly square, with silver trees and silver grass and a large fountain in the exact center, carved to look like it was spewing out silver water.

The fountain itself, like all things in the Silver City, was incredibly ornate, stretching higher than most of the trees around in seven tiers that each had detailed carvings of animals that Kiraman didn't recognize. All of them had fins or flippers or tentacles, so he imagined they all swam. It had giant cascades of silver water carved so thin that it was actually transparent. The whole thing was surrounded by a waist high wall and upon that wall lay an angel that held a strange device in their hands. The pleasant sound seemed to be coming from there.

"Brother Camael!" Kiraman shouted at the figure, recognizing him even at a distance as all angels could. Surprised, the angel sat up and turned to Kiraman who smiled and waved as he ran over. Kiraman noted the sound he had come to investigate stopped as soon as Camael sat up.

Camael looked unlike any angel that Kiraman had seen before. All three of them, four if you counted himself. While the angels Kiraman knew all wore white robes, Camael wore robes that were a multitude of different colors and different patterns. Some were square and had blues and greens, some were stripes of green and orange. Kiraman knew the words for these colors, but this was his first time seeing them in person and wasn't really sure which one was which. He made a mental note to ask Camael later.

"By the Gates of the Silver City, Brother Kiraman!" Camael replied, getting up off of the wall and walking up to greet their fellow member of the Choir. He had short, curly hair on the left side of his head, and flat wavy hair that went down past his chin on the right. "What brought you all the way to the center of the city from the Library?" A bright, earnest smile appeared on his face. Genuine pleasure at seeing the Scribe.

It was almost shocking how this angel's personality was so vastly different from that of Uriel. For a moment, Kiraman forgot his earlier rejection and just enjoyed meeting one of his older Brothers.

"I realized that there was nothing keeping me from staying in the Library to do my work, it just meant more walking and carrying books. I shall place them in their proper places when I do return." He said, returning the smile. "I heard something strange and followed it here. Do you know of what I speak?"

"Ah!" Camael replied. "You mean my music! Yes, I've been tasked with creating the concept of music." Kiraman had read of music many times in his books, but had never actually heard any.

Camael was actually one of the 108 Archangels, only slightly less powerful than the likes of Raphael or Gabriel. In truth, Kiraman should be speaking with more reverence, but the aura that Camael gave off was so friendly and comforting that the thought never crossed his mind. Immediately he spoke to Camael as he did his only friend.

“Music! I’ve always wanted to know more about it as it’s mentioned frequently in my books. Could you tell me about it, how it works?” Camael’s smile grew even wider, showing their teeth but unlike Lucifer’s that felt more like a threat, this one felt warm and inviting.

“I’m so thrilled you would ask. But I’d much rather show you.” Camael picked up the instrument and stroked the strings which produced the pleasing notes, which Kiraman now knew was called music. It was a strange feeling, listening to sounds that made him feel happy.

“That is amazing!” Kiraman exclaimed when Camael had finished the song. “Forgive my ignorance, but what is its purpose?”

The colorful Archangel smiled at his younger brother.

[Section still in progress]

[TODO: Kiraman meets the angel Gabriel, messenger of God]

[TODO: Transition from the angels Kiraman meets in the city to to another Story]

—Story—

Susie woke up that morning with the feeling it was going to be a good day. She sang to herself as she brushed her teeth, did a little dance as she cooked herself breakfast in her shitty one bedroom apartment. She couldn’t help it; today was the day.

Locking the door behind her, she started down the hallway to find her neighbor passed out on the floor again in front of the elevator. Sighing, she glanced at her watch and decided she had the time to help him out. He stank of cheap whiskey.

“Damn it, Mark.” She grumbled under her breath.

She was a full two feet shorter than the ex-marine. After some poking and prodding she managed to help him get to the door of his apartment. Empty bottles and take out containers were everywhere. The tall black man trudged forward and fell onto a dirty mattress placed in the middle of the room. He began snoring immediately.

The whole encounter took approximately 30 seconds.

Susie closed the door and headed back to the elevator. She still had time to make her appointment. Her neighbor had moved in about two months ago and the only time she had seen him was when he was walking to the nearby liquor store to buy yet another bottle or when he was passed out in the hallway. He never even said thank you.

Taking the elevator down to the garage, she hopped in her car and took off to the bank. Nothing was going to ruin her mood today, even a stinky alcoholic neighbor.

Today was the day that she got the loan so she could buy her own house and move out of that shitty apartment building. Turning on her music, she sang along to her favorite song, not letting the traffic get her down.

The light in front of her changed to red so she slowed down and came to a stop. Annoying, but she should still make it in time. Just need to keep a positive attitude. Do good things and good things will come to you, her mom always used to say.

There was a horrible shriek as a truck blasted through the intersection and tried to turn too hard, causing it to turn on its side and skid down the road. The truck slammed into the

Had Susie been just a few seconds faster she would have been in the center of that intersection.

[TODO: Entire story only happens because she took the time to help mark]

—Story End—

Kiraman finished reading his story to the gathered angels. Some looked at him with confusion, others with apprehension. None seemed like they understood. Everything was perfectly quiet as Kiraman waited for them to speak.

Standing up from his seated position on the floor, Gabriel gave Kiraman a wide smile, almost as comforting and warm as Camael's.

"Thank you for that story, Brother Scribe. It was quite entertaining. Why did you choose that story to share with us?" The Messenger asked.

It seems as though they just didn't understand, even though the reason seemed perfectly clear to Kiraman. Not an issue, next time he would be more clear. "You see brothers-" Kiraman started.

"Enough!" Roared a voice from behind Kiraman. Turning, Kiraman saw Raphael standing before him, both feet planted firmly on the ground with his immense aura growing every second. "All of you gathered here, return to your functions now!" Ordered the towering angel.

Immediately, the group dispersed, flying off in all directions. Even Gabriel did not stay or say goodbye to Kiraman. The Scribe suddenly felt more alone than he had ever felt before. The Angel of Vengeance almost trembled with barely contained rage.

"You are attempting to poison their minds and I will not stand for it. This is the final time that I will tell you this, *scribe*." Raphael practically spit the word out of his mouth. "Return to the Library now. As fast your little legs will carry you. Write your books. Place them on the Shelves. Do not leave the library. Do not speak to any of our brethren until your work is done. Have I made myself clear?"

"Brother Raphael, as you can see I have been performing my function. My books are here with me and as soon as I return to the Library they shall go on the Shelves, as they are meant to." Kiraman spoke quickly, trying to placate the Archangel.

Raphael sneered at the lowly scribe. "You are skirting the Word and your function. I don't care what Michael thinks, I will not stand for this. You will not disgrace the members of the Choir with your slick words and technicalities. I am ordering you, return to the Library and resume your function. Now." The last word was punctuated with a flare of his already intimidating aura.

Kiraman felt the instinctual pull to go back, to *run* back as fast as he could to avoid the Archangel's wrath. Yet for some reason he stood his ground. Perhaps thinking himself too clever for the brute that was the Angel of Vengeance, he smiled at his Elder Brother. "Were you to do so, you'd be punishing someone that has broken no rules. You yourself would be skirting the Word, brother."

Fire flared in Raphael's eyes, feeling rage at hearing the same words that Michael had spoken to him. His wings expanded to their full size, many times the size of the giant angel himself. His feet left the ground as he floated up hundreds of feet. Heat radiated off of him. It felt like standing before a volcano that was just about to erupt.

It was then that Kiraman felt true fear for the first time in his long existence. He had pushed his Elder Brother too far and now he was going to pay the price for it. The Scribe wanted to run, to fall to his knees and beg for forgiveness. To plead and swear he would return to the Library and only work from now on. But his legs refused to move. His mouth refused to work. He just stared at the holy fire that was building as it was launched directly at him.

In the split second before the flames reached him, Kiraman thought of his books. So many that he had never read, so many that would never have their purpose fulfilled because he wouldn't be there any more. All the stories that had yet to be written. Everything he had ever done would be meaningless. Another angel would be created to take his place and he would never be missed. He shut his eyes and prepared to experience death.

One moment Kiraman felt the heat of the scorching flames and the next, a light coolness. The light from the flames had even dimmed slightly and he was still alive. As alive as angels could be, that is. Opening his eyes, he stared in bewilderment at the scene in front of him.

Lucifer flew in the air above him, blocking the flames with one hand. His six wings fully extended, beating furiously as he slowly, but steadily, pushed back the flames until they died down and disappeared completely. All that was left was a cloud of smoke. A shadow moved at incredible speed through the smoke, piercing through the veil and colliding with the Archangel Lucifer.

Raphael and the Morningstar fell to the ground at such speed that it actually cracked slightly. The first blemish ever made on the City. The two angels stood and faced each other. Neither looked injured or bothered by the enormous impact in the least. The

hands of the Angel of Vengeance were engulfed in holy flames as he charged and swung his fists at Archangel Lucifer.

Kiraman cowered behind one of the tree-like statues of stone. His mouth was agape as he watched the confrontation between the two Archangels. Power like he had never fathomed was on full display, power that could reduce him to ash in an instant. He wished he knew how to grow wings like Lucifer so that he could just leave. His legs refused to obey the voice in his mind that screamed at him to run.

He couldn't believe what had just happened. Raphael, his Brother and fellow member of the Choir, had just tried to kill him? Was Kiraman so far astray from his given path that he really deserved to be killed and escorted by Azrael to whatever came next? And was Kiraman really so deep in his delusions that he was blind to it? But... Lucifer had saved him. At the cost of his own safety, the Morningstar had saved him.

They weren't using their weapons, so perhaps it wasn't that serious? Yet Raphael had truly intended to kill the Scribe.

Raphael's fists connected with Lucifer's stomach, an attempt to block hadn't even been made. Lucifer just stood there, smiling, as though he had felt nothing of the tremendous blow. He grabbed Raphael by the wrist and bent his arm back until the Angel of Vengeance was forced to his knees.

With a burst of strength, Raphael forced himself up, ramming his head into the Morningstar's chin, causing the Lightbringer to take a step back and let go of his hold on Raphael's wrist. Just as Raphael charged forward again and was about to take another swing at the First of the Choir, there was a blur that rushed between the two and sent both of them flying in opposite directions. Raphael slammed into a silver tree, which cracked and broke in half. Lucifer recovered in the air, landed and began walking forward.

"Ah, Brother Michael. How good to see you again." Lucifer smiled. "What causes you to honor us with your visit?"

There was a roar from the furious Raphael as he got back to his feet, spitting silver blood to the ground. "Michael! The Morningstar prevented me from performing my function, in smiting the Scribe. I demand you kill him so I may carry out my tasks!"

“Oh, Brother Raphael,” Lucifer smirked. “You have always been so rash. All I did was stop you from making a mistake. The Scribe, as you call him, has done no wrong. As such, there is no need to punish him.” Turning to Michael he said: “I know you acted out of concern but no harm was done, no need to worry about your older and younger brothers.”

“This is the first time two of the Choir have fought.” Michael said in a voice that sounded like two stones being rubbed together. “Of course that concerns me greatly. This has never happened before and we must make sure it never happens again.”

Michael glanced towards Kiraman, then back to Lucifer, then to Raphael who was shaking with barely contained rage.

“Brother Raphael, you will accompany me back to my domain. Brother Lucifer, you shall escort Brother Kiraman back to the Library,” At this point he turned to face Kiraman, who felt an immense aura fall upon him that immediately caused him to fall to his knees. “Where you and he shall stay and he will perform his function until I call for him. Is that understood?”

Lucifer held out his hands in a placating gesture. “Of course Brother Michael. A very wise and fair course of action. I will return to speak with you and Brother Raphael soon.” There it was again, that smile that reminded Kiraman of a beast waiting to tear out his throat.

With a nod, Michael took to the sky again with a furious Raphael following him. Nothing was said as the Lightbringer and the Scribe turned and started their walk back to the Library. Oddly, it almost seemed as if the streets went in different directions than when Kiraman had walked there on his own. In a fraction of the time it took originally, they had returned to the grounds outside the Library.

The duo paused briefly at the top of the walkway, neither making a move. Kiraman had finally calmed down enough that he said “Thank you,” to his eldest Brother, his eyes fixed on the ground in front of them.

Lucifer placed his hand on Kiraman’s shoulder. A comforting gesture, but Kiraman could still feel the unfathomable raw power that coursed through him. Though the power was significantly less than he felt from his only friend before. It occurred to the Scribe then that, while the Morningstar had made it seem like a one-sided fight, he had expended a great deal of energy in the process.

“You are too important to lose to such a hot-headed brute. You still have much work to do.” Kiraman met the Lightbringer’s gaze and for the first time, the smile that greeted him seemed sincere and earnest. Like this was the first time that he had said the entire truth.

“You mean my books?” Kiraman asked. A shake of the archangel’s immaculate head and a simple “No,” were all the answers Kiraman received before the pair started walking again and entered, once more, into the halls that had been the Scribe’s home for so long.

Eventually they reached the Endless Shelves and Kiraman began placing the new books in their proper spots. Lucifer just stood watching him, arms folded in front of him, as if he had something he wanted to say but didn’t know how to bring it up.

Kiraman cleared his throat and turned to the First of the Choir. “I do not wish to keep you any longer, I know that Brothers Michael and Raphael are waiting for you. I shall return to my duties and await your return.”

“So formal all of a sudden, are we? I thought we had moved past that.” Said an amused Lucifer. “As you wish. Ahm,” he cleared his throat and started making exaggerated movements. “Oh Brother Kiraman, Scribe of Life, Quill of Creation: it was the honor of myself, Lucifer Morningstar, First of the Choir, Leader of His Armies, to come to thine aide.” He threw back his head and laughed. Kiraman noted this was the first time he had ever heard laughter.

Kiraman smiled and felt the urge to laugh as well. All things considered, even though some of his encounters with his brethren had not gone well and he had almost been turned into a pile of dust, it had been a good adventure.

Adventure. Kiraman thought to himself. Adventures were good. He wanted more adventures.

Eventually the laughter died down and Kiraman felt a question burning in chest that had been there for a while now. He decided to ask it, even though he knew that he may not like the answer. “Brother... I’m just a scribe that writes books no one reads. Why do you think I’m so important? What work is it that you think I still have to do?”

The smile finally left the Morningstar's face and he grew serious. Sighing, he appeared to be considering his words. He placed his hands on his hips and tilted his head to the side. After a few long moments of silence, he finally answered. "It's... not time for you to know that yet. But know that it's true and if you are patient, you will find out in time."

If those words were meant to placate Kiraman, they did the opposite. He felt... annoyed? He was pretty sure he felt annoyed. "Brother... when I first decided to start reading, do you know what thought I had? It was that I was a puppet. Being controlled and not having any choice in the matter. The tasks I do I did not choose, I do not bind the books nor fill the inkwell. I did not build the bookshelves. I don't even decide the words that go on the pages. I was just a puppet going through motions I did not understand for reasons I did not understand.

"Then you come along and, by your own admission, you gave me a new purpose. I didn't choose it, but you made me think I had. Now I'm being told I have more work to do but I can't know what or for what reason. I'm beginning to think that I'm still a puppet, just now instead of being our Creator's puppet, I'm yours."

Lucifer's face fell at those words, looking deeply hurt. "I never forced you or tricked you to choose anything. At most what I did was give you a push in a direction to make your own choice. I only gave you the ability to do that. Everything you have done since then has been of your own volition."

"Then why can't I know what it is that makes me so important? I am the lowest tier of angel, yet since I've met you I have encountered so many of the highest of the Choir. If I was important, wouldn't I have been created as one of the 108 Archangels?"

"That's... that's because..." The Morningstar stammered, unsure how to respond. Eventually, he sighed deeply and looked at the ground in front of him, to avoid meeting Kiraman's gaze. Quietly, almost mumbling, he said "Because if you knew, then you wouldn't do it."

Kiraman felt his annoyance turn to anger. There was a tightness in his chest and a feeling like a lump stuck in his throat. "What? So you *are* manipulating me then?"

"It's not like that. You are not the first one of our brethren that I've spoken to about these things, but you're the first one to understand. The first one to grow and ask questions. The first to make a choice all on their own. I just need you to trust me." The archangel pleaded.

“You have lied to me multiple times. You manipulated me back then and you’re trying to manipulate me now, aren’t you?” Kiraman accused the Bringer of Light. He took a step towards the archangel and raised his voice. “Why should I trust you now?”

The Morningstar didn’t respond.

Kiraman felt his anger rise even further. “Fine. Don’t answer. Instead answer me this: why do you think I would do your mysterious work now that I know the truth of how you’ve used me?”

Lucifer smiled that annoyingly perfect smile of his, the real one not the threatening one, spread his arms out, and simply replied: “Because you’re like me.”

“I am *nothing* like you!” Kiraman almost spat the words. He was so angry, and hurt. He wanted to make Lucifer hurt as well, so he spoke that which he knew would wound the Archangel most in a quieter voice. “I still have a purpose.”

“Enough!” Roared the Morningstar as he grew to his full height. His six obsidian wings flared out spreading a dozen feet in either direction. The Archangel put his hand around Kiraman’s throat, lifted him off his feet and slammed him against the wall.

For the second time Kiraman felt fear. Genuine fear. The full fury of the First of the Choir was on display and it was nothing like anything the Scribe had experienced before. Lucifer could snuff out his life like the flame of a candle. The divide of power between them was more than Kiraman could ever have conceived of.

When Lucifer had lunged forward to grab Kiraman, he had knocked over one of the candle stands which now lay on the floor casting light upward between the two. Kiraman couldn’t look into the blazing eyes of his elder brother and so he looked at the shadow being cast on the wall. The book Lucifer had placed open on the shelves gave the appearance of horns and his huge wings, instead of looking like six looked like two. It reminded him of the creature called a “bat” he read about in his books.

“Please... brother...” Kiraman managed to squeak out. The room was going dark despite all of the light, he was starting to lose consciousness. Angels had no real blood and no need to breathe, meaning the Morningstar was quite literally draining the life from him.

Suddenly the fire and the fury in the Morningstar's eye dimmed. Aghast, he placed Kiraman on his feet and backed up against the far wall, as far away from the Scribe as he could. A look of horror adorned his usually flawless face, mouth agape. He slid down against the wall, shrinking in size and his wings folding into themselves, until he sat on the cold floor while staring at his hands.

Angels did not have the ability to cry, and yet tears were falling down Lucifer's face. Kiraman massaged at his throat as he slid down the wall closest to him, almost mimicking Lucifer's action. After a moment Kiraman said, "Brother I... I am so sorry. I did not mean to anger you so. I give you my word it shall not happen again."

"No, brother. You did nothing wrong." Replied the Archangel after a few moments, his voice so quiet and soft that Kiraman wasn't completely sure he hadn't imagined it. Eventually Lucifer met Kiraman's gaze. "I... I offer you my apologies. On my oath to our Father, it shall not happen again." This entire time the tears did not stop flowing.

"I didn't used to be like this. When I first was created I was beyond arrogant. Beyond calm and collected. I knew that I would protect everyone and everything and not a single tooth of the things that live in the Darkness would get past my blade.

"There's more than just teeth and claws in the Darkness. There's more than just the mindless, savage beasts that only want to feed. There are voices. Voices that spoke to me time and again. They would try and get me to question my loyalty to our Creator. They would try to distract me and they would scream in my mind louder than anything. They didn't want to eat me like the others, they wanted to break me.

"They failed, of course. Not that I could forget their words, nor could I forget the feeling of the Darkness creeping into my mind, my essence, my soul. The longer I stayed in the Darkness, the longer I fought and the more blood I spilled the more I could feel their words finding cracks in my skin. But it was my function to fight them, the entire reason I was made. I fought them physically and I fought them mentally and against a never ending flood of pure hunger and hate, I performed my function and I did it well."

Lucifer stopped speaking to move his gaze from Kiraman and stared at the ceiling of the Library. He took a moment to collect himself, stopping the tears before continuing.

"It was difficult. It was tiring. Yet it was what I was made for, so I was happy. Everything was fine until the wall of the Silver City was made. Once the Light started shining and the Darkness was kept at bay, then I lost that. I would remember what the voices in the

Darkness would say to me and I wondered, to my horror and shame, if they were right. So I took it upon myself to start walking in the Darkness once again.

“The voices were still there, waiting for me. I would fight the creatures of the Darkness and I would hear the voices, and I would feel at peace remembering the days when I had a purpose. They were the ones that first made me question my existence. The work I was doing was pointless. I was protecting no one and nothing but I still longed for a reason to exist. A reason to be happy again.”

“I spent a very long time thinking. I stopped walking in the Darkness. I came up with a plan, and it is a very good plan. I will return to the Darkness once more before my plan is done and it shall be the last thing I do.” Lucifer stood, wiping the tears onto his robes, staining them. “Goodbye, Brother. This is the last time we shall speak. Thank you. You are very important to me. The most important save for our Lord. And I trust you.” With that, Lucifer stepped into the shadows and disappeared.

Soon the Archangel’s footsteps had burned out as well as the candle he had knocked over earlier, leaving Kiraman in the dark. He felt something wet in the corner of his eye and then screamed in frustration. And screamed. And screamed.

—Interlude—

Lucifer stood on top of the massive Gates protecting the Silver City, gazing out into the endless Darkness. Streaks of tears marred his usually perfect face and the golden locks of hair were frayed. With a thought he summoned a golden spear from nothingness, unfurled his wings and fell into the Darkness.

Immediately he felt the familiar touches of the teeth and claws of the beings inside trying to devour him whole. As he had done for countless millennia, he killed and slaughtered the things without mercy, taking out his anger and frustration on the endless, constantly breeding things. It was an unusual relationship, for certain, but it was theirs.

These were the oldest friends that had ever existed. And before Lucifer’s plan was complete, he would willingly feed himself to the Darkness. That’s just what good friends did.

The voices came to him as soon as he entered as well, a torrential rain of overlapping voices trying to break his mind.

Yes, my friends. He thought back to the voices as he continued to cut their bodies into nothingness. *I will destroy the Gates. I will let you in. I will let you feed. Not now, but soon.*

—Interlude End—

—Story—

A story about the life of a character who survives a natural disaster that destroys their home and community. As they participate in rebuilding efforts, they discover strengths and skills they never knew they had, leading to a new sense of purpose.

—Story End—

With a flourish, Lucifer landed on top of the Gates that protected the Silver City from the Darkness. The silver and gold trimmed gates were massive and thousands of feet thick, made from a pure white stone where the interior of the City was made of silver stone. He dismissed his spear, it fading back into light, and stood watching the emptiness that surrounded the City.

He felt the aura's of Michael and Raphael approaching and knew when they landed behind him, even though they didn't make a sound. It wasn't them trying to sneak up on him, they just didn't need to make any noise unless they wanted to. The gifts given to the angels were many and varied.

"Do you ever miss it? The Morningstar asked Michael, without turning. "Flying through the Darkness, fighting for our lives and the lives of our brethren?"

"I do not wish to have that conversation with you again." Michael replied curtly. "I want to know what happened between you and Raphael. I have already heard his side of the events, and he has been punished as is my right, but I would like to hear your thoughts as well."

The Bringer of Light was surprised at hearing that Raphael had been punished and raised an eyebrow. He turned and looked at his two brothers. Michael stood as glorious and perfectly sculpted as a statue, overly muscled and literally glowing with golden light.

Raphael seemed his normal self as well. With that, in many cases literal but not this one, holier-than-thou smirk on his face. The Angel of Vengeance was also built like

chiseled stone, though not quite as excessively muscled. Raphael didn't have the same glow as his older brothers, but one could feel the immense energy coursing through him at all times.

"Punished how?" Inquired the jeweled Angel.

"A little evisceration." Michael answered dismissively. "Nothing that will cause any lasting damage."

"Can I expect a similar punishment then?" Lucifer smiled at Michael, flashing those impossibly white teeth at him.

Michael drew his flaming sword and held it at his side. Not in a threatening manner, but still at the ready. "Depends on the circumstances. Why did you prevent Raphael from destroying the Scribe?"

"If I hadn't he would have been making the gravest mistake it's possible to make. Kiraman is important; even if you, he and the rest of the Choir don't understand it yet." Lucifer had lost that ever-present smile of his and just stared at the other two Archangels coolly.

"How is he so important that you would raise a fist against your own brother?" Michael continued to question.

Lucifer didn't answer. He was thinking, mulling over his options. It was earlier than he had planned, but it was the only thing he could think of to do at this point. His two younger brothers were clearly on edge and ready for a fight. Lucifer had no plans or desire to hurt them, or any member of the Choir. He had to choose his words very carefully.

For the first time in the Lightbringer's long, long life he was nervous.

"Michael. Raphael. If I were to confess something to you, would you promise me a fair trial?" Lucifer asked.

A surprised Raphael exchanged a glance with Michael, who nodded. Raphael spoke for the first time, a slight hint of confusion and worry in his voice. "We swear on our oath to the Creator, you will receive a fair trial."

Lucifer turned and looked back at the Darkness one more time, before changing his view to the Silver City and its seemingly endless skyline, soaking in the views of the two things he loved more than anything. He wanted to remember these views, because he would not see them again.

The Lightbringer let his hands fall to his sides. This was so much harder than he ever thought it was going to be. Most thought Lucifer's greatest strength was his spear, but in his mind it was his conviction. He knew this is what needed to be done for his plan to come to fruition. Yet it was still difficult to get the words out. He didn't want to see the looks of hurt and betrayal on his brothers' faces.

He had to. If he didn't follow through, then no one would. So it was that he steadied himself and forced himself to meet the gaze of the Champion of His Armies and the Angel of Vengeance.

"I plan to destroy the Gates that protect the Silver City. I plan to allow the Darkness to sweep through our streets, devouring everything in their path. I plan to let every member of the Choir drown in the nothingness that surrounds us. I plan to destroy everything that our Creator has created."

Lucifer felt a flush of relief as the words came out. He was done. Everything he had worked towards, the purpose he had given himself after being cast aside, was over. Everything was now out of his hands and soon, oh so soon, he could rest.

The other two Archangels just stared in stunned silence at their elder brother. They knew his words to be true, there was no trace of deception. He meant what he said and he truly did plan what he had just confessed to.

Michael felt as though Lucifer's spear had just pierced through his chest. The pain would have felt no different. He felt a welling up of emotions he didn't know he had: confusion, betrayal, anger. He looked over at Raphael, already knowing what the Angel of Vengeance was going to do next.

Raphael gave a guttural cry and rushed towards Lucifer. He put every ounce of his considerable might into a blow across the Morningstar's face. Then another into his chest, then his stomach. Strike after strike landed on Lucifer's body as he made no move to protect himself.

Each punch caused the Archangel to slide back a few feet, pushing him closer to the edge and threatening to knock him off into the Darkness. Still, Lucifer did nothing but accept the many blows, over and over.

As they approached the edge, Michael flew forward and grabbed Raphael's wrist and threw him backwards. Raphael righted himself in the air and landed on his feet, eyes seething with pure fury. "By the light of the Creator, Michael! Let me end him! Let me fulfill my function and destroy this traitor!" He roared.

"We swore he would be given a trial. His oath may mean nothing to him, but it is sacred to us and we will keep our word. Brother Lucifer, will you follow us willingly to the Court?" Michael asked his older brother, while focusing as much as he could to not break the impassive look on his face.

The Archangel had suffered many small wounds and cuts from Raphael's barrage of attacks, yet they had all already healed and he was back to looking his normal immaculate self. Lucifer stared at the ground in front of him as he answered in little more than a whisper.

"Of course, brother."

Without another word, the trio flew off to the Court to decide the Morningstar's fate. Lucifer spared a glance back towards the Gates and watched them shrink into the distance.

—Interlude—

Uriel was still walking through the City looking for inspiration. He didn't understand the point of the massive individual buildings when there could have just been one large one that everyone shared. He didn't understand the fake trees and fake fountains if no one was meant to see them. It all seemed so... inefficient.

After a long while, Uriel realized that he was lost. He had been lost in thought while walking and hadn't paid attention to which way he went, eventually stumbling into a large empty square with a massive fountain in the center. And standing on that fountain, was another of the Choir that he meekly called out to.

"Ah! Uh... Hello. Brother Camael." The multicolored angel turned to the Angel of Illumination and smiled, genuinely happy to see another soul.

“Now this is a surprise.” He said. “I go eons without seeing one of my brethren and now two in such a short time? Things must be changing.”

Blah blah blah

“Oh, anything can be music.” Camael said. “Allow me to demonstrate.” Camael stomped his foot on the ground, the sound echoing across the empty plaza. He waited until the sound faded, then followed it with a stomp of his other foot. Getting into a rhythm, he began alternating the stomps of his feet, increasing the tempo each time.

Camael brought his hands together and started clapping along at the same time. He began singing without words, just alternating tones. After a minute, he stopped and turned back to Uriel. “See, all of what I just did are normal noises that on their own are not considered music. However, with the right rhythm - that is to say pace - and put together, they become music. Not all sounds go with all other sounds, but there’s a harmony with everything. You just need to find it.”

Uriel pondered over this for a moment, an idea forming in his head. It wasn’t a solution, but it was the beginning of one. If he could just... no that wouldn’t work. But if he instead... that wouldn’t work either. Unless...

The duo sat in silence as Uriel thought over everything he had just learned. Camael quickly grew bored and started strumming at his harp again, filling the plaza with its dulcet notes.

“Can anyone do it? Make music, that is.” Uriel asked his elder Brother.

“That’s the beauty of art. Everyone and everything can do it. It doesn’t even have to be particularly *good* to be *good* art. There’s art in writing out your equations. There’s beauty in your concept of decay. I don’t know what that is exactly, but I know it’s there.” Camael responded proudly.

“How can there be beauty in decay? It’s all about breaking down something, destroying it. It’s like calling Abaddon and his function beautiful.” Uriel was staring at his hands, imagining them melting away down to the bone, then turning to dust that piled on the floor in front of him. Would his dust stay there forever, until someone happened to step on him?

“Well, from what you’ve told me, there are a lot of comparisons to be made between Abaddon’s function and your work. While both can be...” Camael paused briefly to carefully choose his words, “Unsettling at times, their purpose is to allow new things to come into being. I think that Creation is beautiful, so a necessary step leading to that must also be beautiful.”

[TODO: Finish section]

[TODO: Transition from fight with Lucifer to Kiraman being told he needs to be escorted to the trial by Gabriel]

[TODO: Add section talking about all the angels being called to go to the trial]

Gabriel sat on the floor of his room at the center of the large ornate house that he spent most of his existence in. He held a rock he had “borrowed” from one of the stone parks in one hand and was trying to carve angelic script into the tile.

“And then... and then... I’ve used “and then” to start a sentence 14 times. This writing thing is much harder than I thought it was going to be.” The Messenger of the Choir muttered to himself.

Recently, Gabriel had been overcome with the desire to write his own stories after hearing the one that Kiraman told him. Lacking things like paper and ink, he made due with what he could find, thus the scratches on the floor.

Blah blah blah

All across the Silver City, the winged denizens stopped what they were doing as they heard Gabriel’s proclamation. They were being summoned to the Court, one of the largest buildings at the center of the City. All, save for a Scribe in his Library.

Calling it a building is being generous, as it really was a giant dome that could house their entire population. Like everything else, it was carved from a single piece of stone and was completely smooth to the touch.

The dome itself was covered in angelic script that burned with a faint golden light. It told the story of their Creator deciding to create the City, the Choir and battle the Darkness. All hand written by Metatron, of course.

For the first time since the Beginning, the streets of the Silver City were filled as all of the angels left their dwellings, most for the first time, and walked or flew to the Court. Even the lower castes of angels, beings that would best be described as creatures and some that could be called horrors, slithered or crawled their way.

While many of the angels were chattering and wondering what was so important that it could take all of them away from their tasks, all of them fell silent when they saw what was inside at the center of the Court.

-----The Trial of Lucifer

Kiraman was ushered into the chamber by several Malakim, the messengers of the angels, appearing as flickering flames enveloped by thin wisps of smoke. The chamber was pure smooth stone that felt cold under his bare feet. A very strange sensation indeed as Kiraman had never felt anything cold before. An arch made of the same stone but shaped like bricks sat in the middle of the chamber on a series of stone disks which floated off of the ground and rotated. The chamber itself was encapsulated by a massive dome of black glass, the Malakim fluttering about to light the enormous cavern. On all sides ringing the dome, sitting, standing and floating were the rest of the Choir. All of the uncountable ones that lived in the Silver City. What drew Kiraman's eye, however, was what was beneath the stone arch.

Lucifer knelt naked in front of Raphael, his arms bound by vibrantly green vines that had many thorns, each wickedly curved and sharp as a sword burrowed into his flesh. Abaddon sat off to the side hugging his knees to his chest, rocking back and forth slowly. Sickly thin with protruding bones and a tangled mop of pitch black hair. Only his eyes were visible, which glowed a deep, disturbing red that pulsed faintly. His robe was drenched in blood and he was collared, with a silver chain held by Michael. He had eaten Lucifer's wings, the flesh and the sinew and the feathers and the bone had been sucked down into the bottomless void that was his stomach. Abaddon's mouth was the same as the Darkness that surrounded the Silver City. Perfect blackness that nothing could ever come back from. There were those who thought that maybe Abaddon was never an Angel in the first place. The Angel of the Void eyed Lucifer hungrily, as though he was a tempting snack waiting to be consumed.

Holy fire burned atop pillars of bone at either side of the court that the vines wrapped themselves around. The heat from them was incredible. Michael, the last of the Archangels, stood near them. His flaming sword was sheathed but the heat emanating

from it still was enough to rival the pillars. Michael seemed not to notice the heat from either.

“So here we stand as you have summoned us, Brother Michael.” Raphael began. “You asked for this tribunal and we agreed. Brother... no, he is no longer one of our brethren. Lucifer,” He said, almost spitting the name, “asked for his advocate and we have brought him forth.” Turning to the Light Bringer he said, “You will now answer for your crimes against the Word. You plotted to destroy the Silver City. You have betrayed the trust of our Father. You have failed in your function.”

Blood was pouring from Lucifer’s mouth. Kiraman realized that the Archangel’s tongue had been removed. His most dangerous weapon had been taken from him. Despite all of this, the First of the Angels smiled, beaming, from ear to ear.

Kiraman stared in stunned silence. He had never seen one of his brethren, let alone The Greatest of the Choir, reduced to such a state. Even those that had been lost in the Darkness never knew such shame. What had Lucifer done to deserve such a punishment? More pointedly, Kiraman reluctantly admitted to himself, why was he there?

Raphael turned to Michael. “Brother Michael. As you preside over this Tribunal, I shall take the role of Accuser. Our Brother Kiraman shall take the role of Advocate. What say you, oh Brother of Books?” All eyes turned to Kiraman, who felt himself shrink. A lowly scribe defending the First against the other Archangels? What madness was this?

He swallowed, a strange gesture as angels did not salivate or have human anatomy, but he had read of this many times in his books and somehow the act had a small effect of calming himself. Kiraman steadied himself mentally before speaking.

“My great Brothers, I fear I am not adequate to give defense to Brother Lucifer. This is not my function. I know not why we are here nor why I would be chosen for such a thing. If Brother Lucifer did something to go against the Word, I have no knowledge of such a thing. Wouldn’t the Heavenly Scribe, Metatron, be more suited to such a task?”

Michael looked as though he were chiseled from pure marble. Even under his flowing robes his muscles were clearly visible. He was taller than any of the other angels, by at least a foot with golden curly locks that spilled down past his shoulders. His eyes were of the purest gold and shone brightly with the Light gifted to him by the Father. There was a terrifying aura that emanated from him, so strong Kiraman thought to himself that

he could almost taste it. It weighed on him like a physical weight, an enormous rock that had been dumped on his shoulders and it was all he could do to keep on his feet.

Since Kiraman had entered the chamber, Michael's eyes had never left the form of the Archangel Lucifer. Even now, as he spoke in a deep baritone that sounded like a storm of fire, his eyes did not stray. "Brother Lucifer did not ask for Metatron, nor for Jophiel or Samael, all of whom would make a better choice for an Advocate. He asked for you, Brother, and by my decree you shall act as such."

Kiraman just hung his head in subservience and said nothing. Michael continued after a slight pause.

"Our Brother, said to be the favorite of our Father, is accused of plotting to destroy the gates of the Silver City and block the Light, allowing the Darkness to consume us all."

The statement was so absurd that Kiraman actually laughed. At this the Archangel Michael finally turned his gaze to the lowly Scribe. Kiraman immediately felt himself blush and was embarrassed. Since when has he been able to blush? He absently wondered before catching himself. "Forgive me, Great Brother. No disrespect was meant. I just find such a claim to be so... impossible. There is not one among us that would do such a thing. Not one among us that has the power to destroy that which our Father has created. How could one be guilty of that which cannot happen?"

Michael drew his sword from its scabbard. The blade was of pure white light, curved like a scimitar and wreathed in silver holy flames. The hilt was of gold, matching the Archangel's eyes, and decorated with a single, flawless ruby on the pommel. Kiraman averted his eyes. Not that he couldn't stand to see the blade, but because it was an item so holy he was not worthy of casting his lowly gaze upon it. Michael stabbed the tip of the sword into the stone ground in front of him and rested his hands clasped together on the pommel.

"Do you know the name of this sword?" Michael asked Kiraman. Kiraman did, and spoke its true name. "It is so. If you know this, then you know that no lies can be spoken before it. Prior to your arrival, our Brother spoke the truth to myself and the rest of the Choir present. There can be no doubt as to his actions."

Again, Kiraman was taken aback. Lucifer had admitted to trying to destroy the Silver City? But how? Why? What could the Morningstar possibly hope to gain from such a vile and malicious act? And once again, why was Kiraman here?

“That... I... I am extremely displeased to hear that, Great Brother. Of course my intent was never to question, merely to understand.” Michael had already turned his gaze back to Lucifer and gave no indication that he had been heard. After a moment, Kiraman found the courage to ask his question.

“Great Brothers, if Brother Lucifer’s guilt is known then I fear I must ask: for what reason was I brought forth?” This time it was Raphael who answered.

“After admitting to his crimes, Lucifer asked for you to serve as Witness and Advocate, then threw himself to Abaddon and fed him his tongue, as to not answer more questions. I’m sure you know that anything that mindless beast eats cannot be restored by any means. Thus the restraints now on both Lucifer and Abaddon. We know not why he took these actions, nor do we know if he acted alone. What we do know is that you and our former Brother have spent much time together. We know that during this time you stopped performing your function. You are here to give us answers.”

A few things made sense then. The reason that Michael had drawn the sword was so that Kiraman could not lie in its presence. Not that the thought would ever cross the book writer’s mind. He guessed Lucifer’s missing wings were also eaten by Abaddon, the punishment for not answering the questions being asked. Kiraman thought back to his conversations with the Light Bringer. All they had discussed in the Library.

“I am not part of Brother Lucifer’s plans. I have no knowledge of their breadth or their scope. If others of the Choir are part of this conspiracy, it was never told to me. Whenever we spoke, we spoke only of our functions; our reason for existing, of being created by our Father. He... he told me many times of how he had lost his function. My guess...” The sword Michael held flared up slightly at these words, as if suddenly given a gust from bellows. Michael’s eyes narrowed but he said nothing and continued staring at Lucifer.

“Apologies,” Kiraman continued, “I know. I mean to say I know, not from being told directly but by understanding.” The flames of the sword died down to where they had been before. “I know that the reason he concocted this... scheme... is because he wants nothing more than to restore his function. To battle back the Darkness and protect the Silver City once more. To have a reason to exist. I am sorry I cannot be of more help.”

Raphael turned to Michael as the Archangel pondered things over. Lucifer spat out a mouthful of silvery blood, which burned to ash immediately before the flames of Michael's sword. He was still grinning from ear to ear. Michael sheathed his sword again before he spoke. "Your words have been shown to be the truth. You will not be sharing in the Morningstar's fate. However, your task here is not yet finished. You, Brother Scribe, have been selected as Lucifer's advocate. As such, you must give him a defense. You shall do so now."

Looking around at the countless number of his Brothers, Kiraman felt so small and unsure of himself. He found himself thinking that if only he could be more like the Morningstar, more confident, he wouldn't be crushed under the weight of their combined stare. At that, Kiraman had an idea. He would show the Choir what he had learned of himself and the purpose of his function. Taking a step back he turned to one side of the chamber and lifted his arms. He began slowly spinning in place, palms facing upward. When he completed a full circle, he stopped.

Kiraman closed his eyes as he began to speak.

"Brothers, I cannot begin to defend the undefendable. I cannot make the senseless make sense any more than I can ask you to forgive the unforgivable. My function is to write the stories of those who are yet to come into being by His Divine Grace. But what I have learned is this: that is not my only function." A murmur went through the crowd of Angels at that. "The books that I write sit on shelves where they are forgotten. Never opened, never read, never appreciated. I ask you, my Brothers, why do they exist if they have no purpose?"

"Our Father has decreed it so! That is all we need to understand!" Raphael spat at Kiraman in a fit of rage. "Our former Brother has corrupted you. This is not the thinking of one of the Choir!"

"Just so." Admitted Kiraman. "It was Brother Lucifer who opened my eyes to the idea that there could be more to us than our singular function. For me, I discovered that in the reading of my books that they were given purpose, that their own function could be fulfilled.

"In the reading of these books I learned many things. Did you know that when the humans are to be created, they will not know their own function? Each and every one was created by our Father for a specific reason, but they have no knowledge of it. Many of them will spend their short lives searching for it, only to die without ever having

realized it. Or perhaps they did fulfill their function in their quest for it? This is not ours to know.

“Allow me to tell you the story of one such man. His name will be Markus and his life will be difficult and terrible and will end far too soon, even for a human.

---Story---

Heavy boots crunched dry leaves. The man's ragged breathing being carried off by the wind. The sun was beginning to set, a gorgeous golden glow enveloping the world with its warm embrace. It had been a long and difficult trip, but it was almost over now. Reaching the top of the hill, the valley below was fully exposed.

It had been very dry lately, too dry. The normal lush green hills and trees were all turned an ugly brown, but the golden light made even that beautiful. The view wasn't the goal of his trip, that was much more selfish, but it did make for a nice bonus. Taking a deep breath he screamed at the top of his lungs, venting all of his anger and shame and frustration, and listened to the dying echo.

Then the small mound of dirt he was standing on gave way and he lost his balance, tumbling down into the untamed forest in the valley below.

Mark had proposed to her before he got stationed overseas in that god forsaken desert, while she was pregnant with another man's child. He knew then that he loved her and even if the kid wasn't his he would still love the child like it was.

He had raised that child as his own for four years before getting deployed overseas. They'd never been able to pretend he was the father, he was black and the child a pale white with a shock of bright red hair. It didn't matter to him. As far as he was concerned, this child was his and always would be. Even after getting back from that god forsaken desert, when he would wake up in the middle of the night covered in sweat and shaking, remembering what his LT's face looked like before a sniper put a hole through it, even then he tried his damndest to be a good father.

His wife, Peggy, took notice too. How they played together, how they laughed. How he would hold his son in his arms as he fell asleep and the genuine contentment on his face. When the nightmares were at their worst, Mark could go to his son and hold him and the nightmares were kept at bay. That's why they decided to have another child.

There was a loud *thud* sound as his body slammed into a tree trunk at the base of the hill, finally forcing him to stop rolling head over heels. With a groan he sat upright and tried to collect his thoughts. His head and chest were killing him. Touching his temple he noticed blood on his fingers. No blood on his chest but probably a bruised rib. The universe just couldn't resist kicking him when he was down.

During the fall he had somehow lost his backpack, the contents scattered over the steep hill he couldn't possibly climb back up. He didn't have much in the way of supplies in the first place. He didn't need the water, didn't need the food, but there was one thing he needed. One thing that, ironically, he couldn't live without. After about 10 minutes of searching he found it, the dying light of the sun reflecting off the metal. Cradling it in his hands he breathed a sigh of relief and tucked it into the waistband of his pants.

"That was a close one." He said quietly, laughing slightly under his breath. It was then that he heard the terrified howling, really a scream, coming from deeper in the forest.

He was moving before he fully understood what was happening. He heard something, like a scream, but not human, and he was running. In the back of his mind it reminded him of when he was in that piece of shit desert, running to save his friends who were already dead.

He followed the cries to a small grove. The flowers and the grass were stained red with blood. The bodies of small dogs, of puppies, covered the ground and a pack of wolves, gray save for the blood and viscera dripping from their muzzles, stood triumphant, surrounding one last survivor that was cowering under the body of its mother. A tiny pup, obviously the runt of the litter, was howling, screaming in terror.

Mark was already moving without thinking, he found the gun in his hand and aimed at the lead wolf. He fired, the shot going wide and missing his target, but the sound scared the wolves and caused them to back away from their prey. He ran towards the pup and scooped it up, its eyes barely open, and held it to his chest. That was the only bullet he had. It was the only one he thought he'd need.

The wolves were starting to regroup, gaining back their courage and approaching the man and the pup. Mark threw the now useless pistol at them. The wolves watched with disinterest as it flew by them. So he ran. Through the briars. Through the branches. Through the densest parts of the forest. The thorns cut his arms and his legs, drawing blood and leaving an easy trail for the wolves to follow.

He ran for what seemed like hours. The sun had set and everything was pitch dark. He couldn't continue any further without tripping and breaking a leg. Then he really would be dead. But once a Marine, always a Marine. You made the best of a bad situation. The hills formed a kind of natural barrier, impassable from one side. That was good, it meant no sneak attacks from that side. There was a small clearing that would work well for an impromptu campsite, with a large tree that had a hollow opening at its base in the center.

Mark put the dog down. It was still shivering and terrified and crying for its mother, as he gathered some branches. Starting a fire was a simple task, he had to survive with less in that fucking desert and here he had had the foresight to put matches and a survival knife in his pants. Soon the warm glow of a fire replaced the cold and the dark and the fear.

The fire would help keep away the wolves, at least for a while. He threw a couple of dry branches into it and listened to them pop. The pup was sitting next to the fire and shaking despite the warmth.

"This is all your fault." Mark said to the shivering animal. "I had a plan. It was a good plan. It was a fitting plan. Everything would be over now if it wasn't for you. I've been planning this for months. My dress uniform was in the pack I lost, along with three days worth of MREs I had. They taste like wet sandpaper but they'll give you the energy you need to keep going. Could use that right about now." He pulled out his canteen and took a swig of water. He was putting it back when he caught the eye of the dog, seemingly pleading with him. Mark rolled his eyes and poured the last of his water in his palm, which when offered was lapped up greedily.

"You're just a little shit, aren't you? That's a good name for you. Lil' Shit. That's what I'm going to call you from now on. Lil' Shit." The tiny dog laid down next to the giant's shoe. His large floppy ears covered one of his eyes. It still hadn't stopped shaking and soon it began whimpering. Sighing, the soldier picked up the dog and put it in his lap. After a few minutes it finally stopped shaking. A few minutes after that it's breathing slowed and became even. Mark continued speaking to it.

"I only needed one bullet. Then those fucking wolves made me waste it. What was I supposed to do? The fuckers ate your family and while I couldn't give two craps about you, they were going to eat me too. I don't want to go out like that. I didn't survive all that shit out there in that God forsaken desert to end up as dog food.

“It’s not like I blame them, y’know? They’re just animals doing what animals do. There’s been no rain lately, so all the vegetation around here is dead. No vegetation means the animals that feed on those plants aren’t breeding and there ain’t too many of ‘em. Wolves go hungry, so they become desperate. It ain’t nothin’ personal. But fuck ‘em anyway. That bullet was supposed to be for me, that’s why I only brought the one and I used it like an idiot. Didn’t even hit the damn things. Some Marine I am. If the boys could see me now.”

For a few moments he stared at the animal sleeping on his lap.

“Just one bullet. I wanted to see the countryside where my dad and I used to go camping. I was going to take my son here one day. I love camping and the outdoors. I wanted him to love it as much as I did. And now I will never be able to do that.

“My dad taught me lots. He taught me how to trap, how to hunt and how to shoot a gun. I joined the military because that’s what kids from my neck of the woods did. Got shipped off to some hellhole where people wanted to kill me just for being an American. I killed some of them, they killed some of my friends. After less than a week there I couldn’t wait to go home to my family. Two fuckin’ tours. Two fuckin’ tours with sand getting everywhere: in my socks, in my boots. Up my ass. Fuck sand. I don’t even want to go to the beach any more.

“I survived it, dreaming of going back to my family. My wife and my son. Peggy and Jack. I spoke to them as often as I could and the picture of them back home was the last thing I saw every night before I slept. Can you even imagine how excited I was when my time was over and I got to go home?”

The sleeping animal chose not to reply. Instead it just snored lightly.

“I was home for all of a week. I surprised my son at school. They got it on video when he turned and saw me. How he ran up to me and hugged me and cried. Even went viral on one of those internet websites. I was so happy then. When you’re in that desert, that fuckin’ sand is everywhere and gets into everything, so you learn to clean your equipment regularly. So a week after I get home, one lousy fuckin’ week, I’m still dealing with the habits I learned while on tour. I’m cleaning my service revolver.

“Now, in my time I’ve cleaned my guns a thousand times. I can take apart a rifle and reassemble it blindfolded in about 10 minutes. I learned from my dad that the first thing you should always do when handling a gun is figure out if it’s loaded or not. You

shouldn't store a loaded weapon in the first place, but when it comes to gun safety you can never be too careful. I pulled the revolver out of the safe and realized there was still a round in the chamber. That was my first fuck up. My friends and I had gone and shot clay pigeons the day before. I don't have any excuse. I just fucked up and somehow forgot about a round in the chamber."

Absently he started stroking the brown and white puppy on his lap. He was staring deep into the fire. Feeling neither the fire's warmth nor its brightness, he continued.

"Then Peggy called me from upstairs. She needed my help getting something off the top shelf in the kitchen. I think that's the primary reason that short girls love dating tall guys, so they always have someone to reach things for them." He chuckled.

"I got up from my workbench, left the basement and walked to the kitchen. It's the stupid things that stick with you the most. I can't remember what I was reaching for or what she was cooking or anything. But what I remember is that the thing she wanted was so far back on the top shelf that even I had to stand on my tiptoes to reach it.

"I remember running, moving as fast as I could, even before I fully realized the sound of the gunshot. The door to the basement was open and I leapt down the stairs four at a time, but I was too late. Far, far too late. My son was already dead. He was only six years old."

Tears flowed down Mark's face and mingled with his thick, curly beard.

"Jack died because I wasn't careful enough with my guns. Because I left a chambered weapon within reach of a child. Fuck me. Fuck me. FUCK ME!" He roared as loudly as he could, jolting the small animal awake, which immediately started shaking and whimpering.

Mark stroked Lil' Shit to calm him down. His eyes never left the fire. "Peggy left me shortly after that. I lost everything with one pull of the trigger. Moved into a shitty single room apartment. Drank my savings account. When that ran out I came up with this plan." He gestured broadly with his free hand.

"Come out here and see my home-away-from-home. Stare into the sunrise and use the same gun my son killed himself with to kill myself. Why would I bring more than one bullet? So someone else could find a gun that had live bullets in it? Yet another stupid mistake. All I do is make stupid mistakes."

He stared at the creature in his lap that was still shaking and trying to hide inside his jacket for protection.

“Then I stumbled across you, Lil’ Shit. I wasted the most important bullet in my life trying to save you from those wolves. And I fucking missed. How much of a screw up can one guy be, eh? What do I do now? I could make a noose, I guess. Guess I don’t really have the materials for that. Could just throw myself off a cliff or let the wolves eat me. None of those sound like a fitting end for me though. And now I have you to worry about. I need to get you somewhere safe, then I’ll finish this.

“It’s not like I like you, y’know.” He said to the dog that had finally closed its eyes again. “Just... you deserve your own shot at fucking up your own life. It’s not fair if you die too young.”

He sat in silence for a while until his eyelids got too heavy to keep open. Eventually the world faded from his vision and was replaced with a dream of him back in the desert. The insurgents were hunting him and he was cut off from his squad.

A loud bark, honestly more like a squeak, woke him from his fitful rest. The fire was almost dead and the sun was still an hour or so from rising. The small dog was still on his lap, but standing on all fours with the hair on his back raised. The tiny animal was showing its teeth and barking, little more than a yip, into the darkness. Mark noticed the glint of a pair of eyes in the darkness. Then another, and another, shining off of the dying firelight. The pack had found them and they were hungry.

No sudden movements. He said to himself. With one hand he picked up the yipping dog and placed it into the hollow of the tree behind him. Mark stood and slowly removed the survival knife from its strap around his thigh. The wolves were moving closer, step by step, as their hunger overcame their fear of the fire. There were three of them that he could see, blood still staining their muzzles.

Stepping closer to the fire pit, he picked up one end of a burning log and held it. Yelling, he swiped at the approaching wolves with the flaming stick and they took a half step back. They were so skinny, Mark could count their ribs from where he stood.

With a loud and vicious bark, the lead wolf lunged forward, aiming for Mark’s throat.

A shockingly short few minutes later, the fight was over and only the victor remained standing.

Mark held his arm against the hole in his stomach, trying desperately to keep everything inside that belonged there. Despite his best efforts he could no more hold back the flow of blood than he could catch every drop of rain in a storm. It flowed freely from him.

He sank to his knees, Lil' Shit was running around him excitedly, barking and jumping on him. He didn't understand why his giant wasn't moving. Was he going to play with him? After a moment the dog sat in front of Mark with a whine.

Mark slowly, gently, reached out and stroked the dog's head, leaving the white and brown dog with a section of hair that stood up and was stained red with Mark's blood. The dog whined louder, sensing something was wrong.

"You're a good boy... Jack." Mark whispered. As the life left him and everything faded into darkness, his arms fell to his side. Jack the dog jumped on his friendly giant and whined as loud as he could. When Mark didn't move he tried barking, then howling.

Later, the rescue crew found Jack by following the soul wrenching howls, but it was too late for Mark. His story had ended and the book was closed.

---Story End---

"And what, exactly, does any of that have to do with our former Brother trying to destroy the Silver City?" Snarled Raphael. He had obviously been growing more and more impatient while Kiraman recounted the story, pacing back and forth and shooting the Scribe perhaps the most displeased looks that had thus far ever existed.

"A fair question, Elder Brother." Kiraman replied. Turning, he addressed the entire Choir. "When one has lost their reason for being, their purpose, their function, what is left for them? Should they - perhaps it would be more poignant to say 'should we' - stand around doing nothing but taking up space for the rest of eternity? Or should we be killed? Thrown to the beasts in the Darkness?"

"Once the wall of the Silver City was built and once the Light pushed back the Darkness, Brother Lucifer lost his purpose. I am not saying he was right to do so, nor am I saying it justifies his actions, but I believe he came up with this plan to give himself a purpose again. To renew his function and have a reason for existing once again.

“In that sense, having a purpose beyond what we were originally created for, I do agree with Brother Lucifer. I told you of a human who protected a life when he had no reason to. *He gave himself* that purpose. The Library where I perform my work is filled with stories of people who *choose* to give their existence meaning. Our Brother and I are proof that we are capable of doing the same for ourselves. We can become more than what was intended for us.”

“This is not the place for your heretical ramblings, Scribe.” Snarled Raphael. “We were created to perform our duties and nothing more. That’s all we need, that’s all we are. Enough of this! Michael, I insist that we pass judgment on both the traitor and,” He glared pointedly at Kiraman, “the librarian.”

Michael turned his gaze to Kiraman, then back to the Archangel Lucifer. The Morningstar stared back at him, that smug, devilish smile still plastered on his face. There was complete silence as every member of the Choir waited to hear the judgment that would be passed. Even if the angels didn’t have perfect memories, none would forget the first trial that had ever been held.

“Might I have a moment to confer with you, Brother Michael?” A voice called out from near the entrance of the grand cavern. All eyes turned to see Metatron, the Writer of the Word, walk into the center of the room. He was short for an angel, and looked much older than the others, all of whom were gifted with eternal youth. His hair was gray and long, falling well past his shoulders. He wore a blue robe, trimmed with silver and stitched with angelic letters that burned faintly.

The letters read “Quills” and “Truth.”

If Michael was surprised, he showed no indication. His stone mask of a face remained as impassive as always as he answered, “Of course, Brother.” The two angels unfurled their many wings and flew to the top of the dome where they would not be overheard.

Kiraman held his non-existent breath as he waited for the Archangels to finish their conversation. Raphael looked furious with impatience, pacing back and forth. Abaddon kept his gaze firmly on Lucifer, drool dripping at a steady pace out of the void that was his mouth. Lucifer was looking at Kiraman. To borrow a phrase from one of Kiraman’s books, he looked as happy as a pig in shit. Whatever those would be.

Suddenly, the Scribe felt an overwhelming urge to return to his Library and start writing again. To go back to his desk and his chair and his paper. The safety of what he knew. Instead, he shook his head and forced the feeling away. Yet the one feeling he could not escape from was that he had been tricked by the Morningstar. What was it that Lucifer wanted? How could he be so pleased while his fate was being weighed? What was his plan? How did Kiraman fit into it?

The Choir showed far more patience than any of the angels in the center of the chamber. They all remained perfectly still, save for some whispers here and there, as they waited for the verdict to be delivered. The appearance of Metatron was certainly an interesting twist they had not expected.

Eventually, a few minutes later, Michael and Metatron floated back down to the ground. Metatron turned and left without another word. All eyes turned back to Michael. There was complete and total silence as every single member of the Choir waited to hear what he would say. Finally, he spoke:

“First I shall address the Scribe, Kiraman. Brother, I have heard your defense of Brother Lucifer. It is my decision that it means nothing. If a crime has been committed, then there is no justification for it. Simply put, the reason behind the crime does not matter.

“Brother Lucifer. After hearing your defense and your confession, you have been found guilty of the crimes of which you are accused. Your punishment is to be carried out immediately. Abaddon! Consume Brother Lucifer. Leave not a single feather behind.” In one swift motion he drew his sword and cut through the chain that bound the Angel of the Void to the bone pillars. Instantly, Abaddon scrambled forward on all fours, eyes ravenous with hunger. His jaw unhinged and expanded as he bit into Lucifer’s shoulder and tore off a large chunk of meat.

The entire Choir watched silently as bite by bite the Archangel was devoured. Silver blood sprayed everywhere and boiled and burned wherever it landed. The only sound was that of chewing and chomping.

Yet the smile never left the Morningstar’s face until it was bitten off.

Once the Archangel’s punishment was complete, Abaddon dropped to the floor and started licking the stone, trying to find the smallest speck of blood that might be hiding in the cracks and the grooves. With its tongue still touching the stone, the Angel of the Void stopped and turned to look at Kiraman. The drool started pouring out again.

Kiraman could only stare at the scene with abject horror. He had never seen that much blood before, let alone a man being eaten alive. Nothing in his books had prepared him for this. He had read the descriptions of some horrific events but seeing it first hand was completely different. Just the smell of the blood made his non-existent stomach churn. Had it been possible, Kiraman would have been sick all over the floor.

It was the realization that he was next, that the... *monster* that had eaten his best friend would turn its voracious hunger to him. Already Kiraman could feel those needle-like teeth tearing off parts of him and swallowing them. He was afraid. He didn't want to die. There were still so many stories to write, so many to read.

What could he do? Throw himself at Michael's feet? Try to fight the Angel of the Void? Run? Where would he go? The Archangels would find him in less than a moment. There was nowhere they couldn't see inside the Silver City. The only place they couldn't see was inside the Darkness...

No, that was a terrible idea. He'd just be eaten by the things in there. No, his only option was to stay right where he was and hope that Michael would be merciful. Kiraman tried to steady himself and not look as nervous and scared as he felt. He wasn't very successful. Michael turned to face the Scribe.

"As for you, Brother," Michael intoned impassively. "I have found reason to believe that you are also guilty of betraying the Word, being corrupted by Lucifer and failing to perform your function adequately." The coldness of the stone beneath Kiraman's bare feet spread throughout the rest of his body, freezing him to his core. He had done no such thing. He only read books. How could reading books, books that he was tasked with writing and caring for, be betraying the Word?

He wanted to say something but his voice caught in his throat. He could only look into the blackness of Abaddon's mouth and imagine himself being eaten alive, piece by piece. Kiraman had never felt pain before his scuffle with Lucifer back in the Library. How much would this hurt? Deep inside of himself, he knew the answer would be "a lot".

Abaddon slowly inched toward Kiraman, its chain scraping along the ground. It knew the order to eat was coming soon and it would be ready. The angel of the Void had been hungry for so very long and the Archangel it had just eaten did nothing to satiate that hunger. But Abaddon could wait just a few seconds longer to have another meal. As soon as Michael spoke it would pounce and feast once again.

Kiraman took a couple of steps back from Abaddon without thinking about it.

Michael spoke again, almost sounding bored. "You will have your own trial at a later time. You are ordered to return to the Library and continue your work until the time is right."

Abaddon was too hungry and didn't hear the words the Archangel spoke. It leapt at Kiraman as soon as Michael started speaking, but the Archangel grabbed the chain that was attached to Abaddon's collar instantly, moving so fast that Kiraman didn't even see his arm move. Abaddon was yanked backwards mid-air, hitting the ground hard and rolling to Michael's feet, where Michael placed a bare foot on its chest, pinning the Angel of the Void to the ground.

It struggled weakly for a moment, reaching out to Kiraman and gnashing its horrible sharp, pointed teeth. Abaddon gave up but kept staring at the meal it almost had, drool pooling on the floor. Raphael, normally impassive and stone-faced, was smiling broadly. It looked strange and foreign on him.

When Kiraman didn't move, Michael gave one last order: "Go now. This trial is over." With that, he flew off, dragging Abaddon along in the air behind him. One by one the members of the Choir left the enormous chamber until Kiraman stood alone, unable to comprehend what had just happened. The fires on the pillars burned out, the vines that had impaled Lucifer withered and turned to dust and the room fell to darkness, leaving Kiraman to walk alone inside it.

—Interlude - Abaddon—

Abaddon was unceremoniously thrown back into his room, which in truth was more of a jail cell than anything else. It was a fairly spacious room, with enough space that the Angel of the Void could build up a decent speed before slamming itself into the wall. The contact was most satisfying when it was moving as fast as it could.

Since the Beginning, Abaddon had been hungry. That was the whole point to his existence, a neverending hunger that could not be sated even if it devoured the entire city. Not that it could actually eat the stone that encompassed him - it needed meat.

Lying on its back, Abaddon let its long tongue fall lazily out of its mouth. Staring at the ceiling, it tried to remember the sweet taste of the archangel Lucifer. How soothing the

blood pouring down its throat had been. The crunch of the bones with the savory marrow inside.

It thought about the meat that others called Kiraman. Abaddon knew the meat's name, it just didn't care. Everything was just food in a different container waiting to become its next meal. One day, Abaddon would eat the food called "Michael", then nothing would be able to stop it.

"Oh no, Abaddon. You're so scary and strong. Please eat me and leave my brothers alone." The angel of the void said in a mocking voice, imagining the moment of Michael pleading for the life of his brethren. It deepened its voice slightly.

"You think you could treat me like you did, throwing me into a cell for untold amounts of time, then beat me and abuse me and I would just forget? No. I, Abaddon the Angel of the Void, will consume you whole and then one by one I will eat *everyone* and *everything* that allowed this abuse to continue."

"Please Great Abaddon, I beg of you! I, the weak and powerless Michael, implore you. What can be done to make amends?" Abaddon continued his self-narration while staring at the ceiling.

"I am nothing if not benevolent," said the hungry monster. "If you crawl to me and lick my sandals, then I will consider sparing *some* of our brothers."

"Of course, O Great Abaddon, greatest of all the angels. Here I am, on my knees, doing as you asked," Abaddon imagined Michael saying.

"Haha! I lied, now I will eat you!" Abaddon jumped to its feet and acted out consuming his elder brother. Tearing open his throat so that the sweet blood would drip down his throat. Chewing chunks of flesh off of his perfectly chiseled body. It imagined eating every single part of Michael until there was not one drop of blood left.

When the scenario it concocted had been completed, Abaddon returned to lying on its back, staring at the ceiling. So hungry. How it longed to know the feeling of being full, of just not being starving, for a moment. Something that it could latch on to when the hunger was at its worst.

For more times than there were numbers, Abaddon dreamed of going into the Darkness because it knew the beasts in there were infinite and it could eat until it could eat no more. Then it would allow itself to be eaten and never have to feel hunger again.

It hadn't understood what happened earlier, during the trial. It didn't care to, honestly. No effort was given to understanding what was happening or who was involved. Abaddon had spent the entire time straining against his restraints, simply waiting for Michael to release him so he could eat.

It had been so unexpected that Abaddon had forgotten to savor the moment. It should have taken its time, listening to the sound of the blood dripping onto the floor, the muffled screams of the archangel as a bite was taken out of it, one after another. But then there was that other bag of meat that got away. That meat looked tasty.

Still staring at the ceiling, Abaddon raised its arms and started swinging its hands left to right rhythmically. They all thought Abaddon was stupid, Abaddon thought. They all thought that Abaddon couldn't learn, couldn't grow. That was not true. Abaddon knew it was smarter than almost every other angel, it was just too hungry all the time. But if it could eat until it was full... It would be the greatest and strongest of all the angels.

If there was one thing that Abaddon had learned over the eons, it was patience. If it let enough time pass, then it could feast until it was full. It would devour everything that was born from this "Creation" that was planned, and when another universe came to replace the first, it would eat the old one to make room for the new. That was its function. It just needed to wait until it was time. It would eat Michael piece by piece and make the angel suffer for making Abaddon suffer.

After a moment of silence where the Angel of the Void contemplated its growling belly, it started again from the top. In a high pitched voice it said "Oh Great Abaddon. I'm so sorry..."

And then Abaddon ate him. Again and again.

—Interlude End—

Raphael and Michael were in Michael's room at the heart of the Silver City. Michael sat on top a throne made of stone that stood upon a dais. Braziers were placed in even rows on both sides of the throne, illuminating the large room. Michael was staring at Raphael who was busy stitching a third red stripe onto the shoulder of his robe.

“You take great pride in those marks, don’t you? Allows you to relive your glory?” Michael asked.

Raphael looked up from his work to the Archangel Michael for a moment, then focused his attention back to his stitching. “No.” Raphael said simply. “They’re a reminder of how many times I’ve failed.”

Michael was taken slightly aback by that answer. The normally stoic archangel made a conscious effort to return his face back to its impassive form before his Brother noticed. “I always assumed those marks were counting how many times you’ve needed to punish our brethren who strayed from their ways.”

Cutting the thread with a pair of golden scissors, Raphael finished his stitching and smoothed out the robe, inspecting his handiwork. “They are one and the same. The first was the Guard Ioriel, who lost his mind to the Darkness. Tell me, Brother, do you think killing him was the only option we had? Was there not another way to save him?”

Michael didn’t answer, he just kept looking at Raphael, understanding for the first time that his Brother was more than just a brute waiting for an excuse to hurt others. “Then there was the second, Davius. What if I had been able to convince him to return to his duties? I had to kill him because I wasn’t clever enough not to. Now with Lucifer... I spent so much time watching the rest of the Choir that I never gave a second thought to him. Had I been more attentive, had I seen the warning signs, he never would have felt the need to do what he did.

“And then there’s the Scribe, Kiraman. I know he was tainted by Lucifer, another one of my failings. I don’t want to kill him either, but I can’t allow him to stray from his purpose. Soon he will be sentenced and I will be adding a fourth stripe to my robes. And, Michael, I am afraid. I am afraid that this pattern will continue, adding more and more marks to my robes, until I no longer care enough to add another stripe.”

Michael took a minute to process what he had just heard. These were words he never thought he’d hear from the Angel of Vengeance. Lucifer had changed the way that Kiraman thought and acted, could it be he also changed Raphael? If so, what of himself? Was Michael the same as he had always been?

Clearing his throat, Michael responded, "I never said that Kiraman's punishment would be death. While death is not an impossibility, it's not what I had in mind. He still needs to be tried and found guilty, as well."

Raphael stood and stretched his arms and wings. Holding out his hand, Raphael summoned his sword. Unlike most angels who summoned their holy weapons from nothingness, Raphael's came from within his own body, formed from his blood. It was a long, straight sword with a silver-tinted red edge and pure white handle of bone.

The Archangel Michael smiled and stood, drawing his own weapon. These sparring sessions were always a highlight for him. Of course, he couldn't fight his own brother while at full strength, so he mentally suppressed the flames that enveloped his sword. With a shout, he rushed forward and clashed blades.

The two exchanged blows before a blast of pressure from Michael's aura pushed Raphael back to the far side of the room. He used that opportunity to stretch and get back into a fighting stance. "What did you and Metatron speak of, during the trial?" Raphael asked, in part from genuine curiosity and in part trying to unbalance Michael.

Michael took to the air and dove at Raphael, his sword held directly in front of him like the tip of a spear. The Angel of Vengeance could see the attack coming, despite Michael's incredible speed. He parried the blow, stepping to the side to avoid the attack, and swiped upwards to cut through Michael's stomach, but the Archangel was already long gone, rebounding against the wall and soaring directly back to Raphael. Their blades clashed again, the two pushing against each other.

"That is a secret between Metatron and myself," Michael replied. He placed his foot on Raphael's stomach and kicked him away, flipping backwards and taking to the air. Raphael glared at him.

"Keep your secrets then. Tell me though, did what you two talked about influence your decision in the trial?" Raphael was often seen as a brute who was quick to anger, but in truth he was one of the more clever of the Choir. He just didn't often have the chance to show it. Michael realized this was the real reason that he had requested the sparring match. With his own sword out, no lies could be told, not even from Michael himself.

Raphael flew up to meet Michael and the two started clashing again. Michael wasn't being given the option to sheath his sword. Finally, Michael was forced to answer. "Yes,"

was all he said. The Angel of Vengeance landed and let his sword dissolve, the pieces of it flowing back into his body.

“I think that’s enough for now, Great Brother.” Raphael said. “Thank you for the sparring session, as always. I look forward to the next one.” With that, he turned and left, not giving the Archangel a chance to respond.

Michael sheathed his sword and returned to his throne. None of the events that happened lately had gone anything like he thought they would. When he had spoken with Metatron, it became clear that there was a plan in place beyond what he had imagined. It was a shame that Lucifer had to die for it to come to fruition. He had been planning on jailing the Morningstar like Abaddon, but Michael believed in the Word and he would die following it.

That being said... Michael sighed. Reaching behind his throne he pulled out the small bundle wrapped in cloth he had hidden there. From that bundle he retrieved the only thing he had ever stolen. The only thing he had ever done wrong in his entire existence. A book he had taken from the Library while Kiraman was out exploring the Silver City.

He needed to know. He needed to understand what caused the Scribe to change. What made Kiraman risk his very life for. And so it was that Michael began reading his first book.

—Story—

Elena, a young artist, loses her eyesight in an accident. Explores how she adapts her artistic expression, using other senses to create masterpieces and finding a new perspective on life.

—Story End—

—The last Book—

Eventually Kiraman had returned to the Library and gone back to work. He kept himself busy and as time passed he filled the Endless Shelves. Seeing no reason not to at this point, he kept reading while he worked and learned so much more about the humans that were going to be.

[TODO: Add section discussing Kiraman's thoughts on the trial and how he feels now that Lucifer is gone. Emphasize how he feels lonely and hollow. Hit reader over the head with it.]

The Library was too quiet now, too empty in Kiraman's opinion. There had been no visitors since the death of the Morningstar, and the Scribe deeply missed his companionship. It had been quite some time since then, though Kiraman couldn't say how long. Years? Decades? There was only work and nothing more.

As Kiraman was placing his latest work onto the Endless Shelves, something caught his eye. All of his books were bound in the same way, as they had always been. Sewn together with silver thread, a brown cover and spine with the name of the person the book was about emblazoned on the front in angelic script that glowed with fire that did not burn. So this book, which had a black cover and was written with black ink, stood out starkly.

Kiraman obviously didn't put it there; it wasn't one of his books. He finished placing his newest book in its proper place before picking up this strange new book. As far as he knew, no one else had been in the Library in ages, so it should be impossible for it to be here. Kiraman picked it up and examined it.

Reading the title he felt his mouth dry and his chest tighten. For some reason the corner of his eyes felt wet. He had been warned that Raphael would be watching and any further alterations from his function would be dealt with swiftly, yet Kiraman needed to read this book. He had no other choice. So it was decided that the Scribe would perform his first act of subterfuge. He tucked the book under his robes and walked as nonchalantly as he could back to desk.

As someone who had never tried an act of deception before, anyone watching him would have noticed his odd behavior as he tried to act "normal." Hands in the sleeves of his robes, his failed attempts to whistle, taking unnaturally large steps. Though when he finally reached his desk he congratulated himself on a cunning performance.

Now onto the next deception. Kiraman hadn't read any of the older stories, but he kept up with his trick of reading as he was writing, which was difficult. Without concentrating, he would write incredibly fast, much faster than he was capable of reading. He needed to forcefully slow his hand down, fight against the words pouring out of him. Reading while doing that was not an easy task, but he had gotten much better at it recently.

Elsewhere, the angel known as Uriel sat in his room, staring at the latest equation he had written on his wall. He felt he was getting close to completing his goal, but this last piece eluded him.

It didn't help that thoughts about Kiraman kept intruding into his mind when he was trying to focus. Why did that annoyance have to show up at *his* door and interrupt *his* work? Uriel had been fine, content even, just focusing as he always had.

What would he do when he completed his task? What if a new purpose never came? These questions had echoed in his mind over and over since the Scribe's visit, and Uriel didn't like them.

Uriel sighed in annoyance. This last piece of his puzzle was proving to be quite tricky and staring at it had not helped produce any results. Maybe he needed to look at the problem from a new angle. A new perspective. Uriel had only ever met Kiraman in person before, and knew that he had a different way of looking at things than the Scribe. Well, what did he have to lose by trying?

Focusing on the equation, he tried to imagine what Kiraman would say in his place. Probably something haughty and philosophical. What's the point of Creation if everything was going to decay, eventually? What was the reason behind all of this work when everything would be gone someday?

Suddenly Uriel felt very uncomfortable but didn't understand why. Maybe... maybe he would leave his room and see the city. Perhaps he could find another perspective out there that could be of help with his problem.

So the Angel of Illumination opened his door for the second time ever, and ventured out into the Silver City. In the distance, he could only just see the peak of the Silver Library.

Inside, Kiraman placed the new book on his desk, open to the first page, and immediately covered it with paper so that just the top line was visible. He started writing and actually managed to get to the end of the first line before he found a critical flaw in his masterful plan: he needed to move the paper and expose more of the book to read the second line. Eventually he'd need to have the entire thing uncovered anyway. Deception was much more difficult than he realized.

Still, his earlier performance at acting normal had proven in his mind that he was a natural at deception. He just needed to come up with a clever solution that would look to

a casual observer that he was still working at full capacity. After a few moments, he had his answer. When he finished a book he would go back to the Endless Shelves to place it and he would read the impossible book as he walked there and back.

It would likely take a number of trips and quite some time to finish, but it was the best plan he could think of. With a plan now in place, Kiraman went back to work. He felt the words pouring onto and into him, washing down from his head and traveling through his body like liquid fire, moving into his arm, through his hand, and out the quill.

This story was about a woman who lived in a small, poor, village that hadn't received any rain for years. Normally, Kiraman would have found this story to be fascinating, but now he couldn't focus on it. He rushed through it as fast as he could and when the woman had been sacrificed and the rain started, he picked up the pages that bound themselves into a book and hurried into the hallway, where he slowed and opened the book hidden in his sleeve.

—Story—

The first thing that I can remember is standing before my Creator. His presence filled me with a comforting calm. He told me that my name was Lucifer Morningstar and I was the first of his Choir. An angel, a perfect being made to serve Him. He told me of the Darkness and the things that lived inside it.

My purpose was to hold them back as He built what would become the home to a countless number of angels, and that I was special. I would be the strongest of them all and, because of this, I was to do everything in my considerable power to protect them. To lead them. To do whatever was necessary to make them the best they could be.

I told my Creator that I understood and would perform my function with honor. I don't think I actually understood what 'honor' was at that point. But I knew that this was something I was supposed to say. That happens a lot when you're in His presence. It's not manipulation, it's just... you forget what thoughts are your own.

There are no spoken words. There is just understanding. I understood my name and my purpose. He understood I would do it. The intent is more important than anything else. Communication with my Brothers can be... tricky, but there's no such problem with Him.

And so I stood from where I had been kneeling and willed the weapon I would hold for eons, my partner that I would entrust my existence to, into existence for the first time.

My purpose was that of a soldier, and thus I was given the ability to use any weapon, but I chose a spear. In a way, I'd say that I saw myself as a spear as well.

This spear was special. It was twice my height and made of pure silver. It would never lose its edge, it could never break. Its tip was as wide as two hands side by side and could cut through anything that dwelled in the Darkness.

With that I left my Creator's presence and entered the Darkness for the first time. There is quite literally nothing in there, yet I could feel *them* all around me. Tongues and teeth, claws and tails. When my spear would cut through them, they made no sound. The things there simply died and became inert darkness.

For every one of things I killed a hundred took its place. It was like trying to block the light of a giant fire with a piece of string. The fighting, the killing - these things I was good at. I don't know how long I spent in that vast nothingness battling those creatures, but it is the reason I was made. Looking back on it, I think it was even *fun*. Yes, I enjoyed my work.

It wasn't the claws and the teeth that were dangerous to me. Even if I lost an arm or a leg or my wings, or my head - all of which I did more times than I care to remember - they would grow back in an instant, and I was ready to fight again. No, the real danger was the voices. The things in the Darkness, they are not mindless monsters. They think. They think, and they feel. They would speak directly into my mind, in a different way from our Creator. They would tell me things.

For most of my existence to that point I was fighting in the Darkness and listening to these voices. There was no other choice. They would tell me that my Creator was a false God, that only the Darkness was real. That they would devour me whole and I would become one of them. That I was nothing but a tool. That I would fail. Thousands of voices all at the same time, trying to break my mind as they could not break my body or my spear.

Sometimes, I wonder if they succeeded. I wonder if my thoughts now are not my own. What if my plan isn't my own? What if I'm broken and wrong? I only survived so long in that nothingness with all of those voices because of my conviction. If I stopped believing in my Creator for one moment, the smallest wavering of my certainty, I would have been lost. If I stopped believing in myself and the righteousness of my work, I would have succumbed.

At some point during my endless fight, the Silver City came into being. The light from the City pushed back the Darkness, and for the first time since I was created I no longer needed to swing my spear. The voices stopped and there was silence. Perfect, complete silence. Nothing was said to me, I was not relieved of my duty. I was just left there, by myself.

It occurred to me that I had nothing to do. My purpose had been to hold back the Darkness while the City was being built, and I had succeeded. Maybe, I thought to myself, if the Gates surrounding the Silver City broke and the Darkness was let in, it would smother the light and all my Brothers would become food for those neverending mouths. I tried standing guard by the Gate in case it broke, but that was a fool's errand. It was perfect, like all of Creation, and would never break. So again, I remained with nothing to do. I abandoned my self-appointed post. Nothing was ever said to me, not by my Brothers or by my Creator. In a city quickly filling up with my brethren, I was completely alone.

I don't know how to defend it, or even if I should, but eventually I made the decision to go back into the Darkness. There was no point in fighting them now, but it was all I knew. The feeling of my spear slicing through them was satisfying. Fulfilling. It shames me to admit it, but I relished the voices coming back. It was comforting, like seeing an old friend.

They told me that they had been right. Everything they predicted came true. That my Creator had lied to me and abandoned me, but *they* would never lie. They had no reason to. And that the Darkness was infinite, it would always be there for me.

I seriously considered letting them eat me. Ending my existence then and there. It would be so easy to just stop swinging my spear or stop moving, dodging their swipes and bites and the lashing of their tails. If they consumed me whole there would be nothing to regenerate. I would just become more Darkness.

I don't know if I was too strong to allow that to happen, or too weak. But I returned to the safety of the Silver City and resumed my guarding of the Gates. It became my habit then, that every once in a while I would return to the Darkness to greet my old friends. None of my Brothers ever questioned what I was doing when I left the Gates. Was it because they didn't care?

After thinking about it for a long time, I decided the answer to that question was both yes and no. They cared that I was their oldest Brother, but so long as it didn't interfere

with their function it made no difference to them. Even had I been killed in the Darkness, they would still only care about fulfilling their given purpose.

I cared about them. I wanted to save all of them from the things in the Darkness, but they weren't a threat any more. Most of the angels that now occupied the Silver City had never even seen the Darkness, let alone fought in it. I wanted them to care. About me, about themselves. To care about *anything*, no matter how small, so long it was outside their function.

When the plans for the creation of Man were made known through the writings of Metatron, I felt betrayed. My earliest memory was that of being told I was perfect. To be then discarded, forgotten, in favor of a dirty, short lived species that only existed to create more of themselves? It was disgusting.

That anger faded very quickly. I realized that it wasn't their fault, as they had as much choice in existing as I had; which is to say, none. They would be created with less purpose than my Brothers and I had, not even knowing their function. It's not like they could choose...

...but I could. I could choose to do things myself. I chose to guard the Gates. I chose to go back into the Darkness when there was no reason to. This is when the first inklings of my plan started. I didn't know how to accomplish it, I didn't even know if it was possible, but for the first time in a long time I was excited. Almost happy. But I couldn't do it alone.

So it was that I visited my second Brother, Michael. He and I had fought in the Darkness side by side for longer than any of the others. If there was anyone that would understand me, it would be him.

It did not go well.

He could not understand me or my thoughts. Instead of acceptance, I was told that I needed to accept having my function fulfilled. That if there was a need for it, I would be called into service again. If not, then I should wait until our Father gave me another purpose.

Dejected, I turned to my third Brother, Raphael, but that went even worse than the conversation with Michael. Again and again I met with the same results. I took this as

proof that I really was broken. Obviously, I was the aberrant one if none of my Brothers thought the same as me.

The one thing I had that was stronger than my spear was my conviction. And my conviction would not let me believe that. I wasn't broken. I wasn't wrong. They just didn't understand because they were too blinded by their devotion to see that there could be more. Maybe if they could be shown, told by someone that wasn't me, so they knew there was more than one who thought as I did. If I could prove that I wasn't broken.

Then they'd understand. Then I wouldn't be alone any more.

That's when the rest of my plan took shape. I only needed to find the one missing piece, just one of my Brothers who would believe what I knew to be the truth. Once I found him, everything else would fall into place.

Scouring the Silver City, I observed my Brethren in secret. But they were all the same. Anything that wasn't part of their function was unimportant. The few I spoke to didn't understand.

I am *not* broken.

It took a long time, but I finally found him. My Brother who would listen, who would understand. He was curious. With just a small nudge, a tiny suggestion, he took it upon himself to learn more through his books and to ask questions. To challenge things that no one, save for myself, had ever even thought to question.

Finally, it was time to start enacting my plan. It was time to let the Darkness in.

—Story End—

Kiraman was standing at the Endless Shelves, placing his latest book in its proper place. He noted that the Shelves were looking rather full lately, some so much that the dull wooden board sagged under the weight. He was just about to return to his desk when he felt a strong aura at the same time that there was a knock on the doors of the Library.

Surprised, he hurried to open the doors. The heavy wood-looking doors creaked, showing their age and just how infrequently they had been opened. Kiraman saw the Archangel Gabriel standing before him, with a number of guards just behind him.

Gabriel, the Messenger, did not wait for any greetings from the Scribe. When he spoke with authority, as he did now, all that could hear his words were forced to listen. Unable to control himself, Kiraman dropped to one knee. "Kiraman, by the order of Michael, Commander of His Armies, you are to appear before him to be tried and potentially sentenced for your crimes, if any exist, in conjunction with the crimes of Lucifer Morningstar. You will be confined until the trial starts."

Kiraman said nothing as the Guards grabbed him by the arms and took flight with him in tow. The group flew in silence towards the far edge of the Silver City, where a small, perfectly square, building stood. All of the buildings in the City were heavily decorated, with many intricate details, but this building was completely plain, looking like just a hollowed out square.

It had no windows, no chimneys, nothing save for a small door in the front that opened to a short hallway with two more doors at the end. The Guards opened the left door and thrust the Scribe inside.

The door locked with a heavy thud behind the Guards and Kiraman was alone in the small room, barely enough space to spread his arms wide. The room was completely unadorned, save for a simple chair built into the back of the wall.

Taking in his new living space, Kiraman understood the feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness he had read in so many of his books. People that had been imprisoned for one reason or another and would live out the rest of their lives with only four walls to keep them company.

Looking at the door, there was a small window at the top, just slightly higher than his head. Peering out, all he could see were the walls of the corridor, also completely unadorned. Everything in the Silver City was opulent and over-decorated, if anything. The only things that weren't, Kiraman thought, were the Endless Shelves and this prison. Why? To add insult to injury?

Opting to forgo the chair, Kiraman pressed his back against one of the walls and slid down it to a seating position. It's not so bad, the Scribe told himself. Angels are very good at waiting. After the Creation of Man, they would all be waiting for a very, very long time. This would be nothing.

Yet, after only a few minutes of staring at a blank wall Kiraman found himself getting exasperated. He needed to get up, he needed to move but there was nowhere to go in this tiny prison. He needed to do *something*.

Wait, what was the last thing Michael had said to him during the trial? He had been told to keep writing until his function was fulfilled. How was he supposed to do that in his tiny cell that had nothing? If he could read and write at his leisure, he could at least pass the time that way. But how would he get his paper and quills?

Going to the window in the door, he yelled out "Guards! Guards! Michael ordered that I keep writing. Bring me my quill! Bring me paper!" He waited several moments but heard nothing, so he tried shouting again. Still nothing. So the Scribe yelled some more. When that failed he tried hitting the door and kicking at it. The door seemed not to care.

Eventually Kiraman gave up and returned to his sitting position against the wall. He felt like he wanted to cry but wasn't sure how. The only time he had ever done it was when Lucifer had attacked him. Even in this situation he didn't want to relive those memories.

With nothing else to do, Kiraman started reciting one of the many books he had memorized. After reaching the third chapter, he was suddenly interrupted by a voice that sounded very near.

"By the Gates of the Silver City, would you please shut up!" The voice called out to him.

"Forgive me Brother, I cannot see you and I do not recognize your voice. Who are you?" The scribe asked of the voice.

"Hmm... let me think... maybe you'd recognize me if I made these noises?" The voice then proceeded to make loud chewing and gnashing noises. Kiraman recognized the sounds immediately and felt sick to his non-existent stomach.

"Brother Abaddon." Kiraman said. "I did not know this is the place where you stayed." He was trying his best to be measured and polite, but the image of the Angel of the Void tearing Lucifer's body to pieces, it licking the floor searching for just one more drop of blood, made him scared and angry.

Yet, Kiraman also knew that it wasn't Abaddon's fault for doing what he was created to do, any more than it was his fault for writing books. That was their purpose in existing,

their function. He still felt angry. Maybe he should feel anger towards Michael and Raphael for telling Abaddon to kill his friend.

Maybe it wasn't even their fault. Maybe it was the fault of a higher power. The same instant that thought crossed the Scribe's mind he dismissed it. No, we make our own choices.

"Not by choice." Abaddon replied. "But where else do you keep a monster when you're not using it? Would you feel comfortable if I was standing behind you while you sat at your little desk, writing your little stories?"

Kiraman let a few moments pass in silence. "I suppose not."

There was a loud bang from the cell next door as the Angel of Void threw itself into the door of its cell as hard as it could. They both knew the effort was futile, but they didn't have anything better to do.

After a few dozen tries, Abaddon gave up and started trying to gnaw on the walls. The sound reminded Kiraman of Lucifer's death and he felt sick again.

In this manner, the duo passed the time together. Occasionally talking, sometimes listening to silence, and Kiraman trying his best not to hear when Abaddon attacked his surroundings.

The only other thing that broke the monotony was when one of the Guard arrived on their patrol. When Abaddon heard the sound of the Guard's armored feet approaching, he grew quiet even though he had just been in the middle of a fit.

The Guard that Kiraman couldn't yet see approached the window to the Angel of the Void's room and peered inside. Abaddon said and did nothing, as far as Kiraman could tell. Seemingly satisfied, he approached Kiraman's window. Kiraman recognized him as being named Rakti.

The Scribe immediately jumped up to the window and spoke at a fast pace.

"Brother! Thank goodness you're here. I was supposed to be given the supplies I need to keep writing my books, as ordered by Michael but I have been given nothing. Please help." He pleaded.

The Guard said nothing but glared at Kiraman with an unmistakable look of anger. Kiraman hadn't expected that, he had never even met Raktil in person before. Why would the Guard be angry?

Still without answering, the Guard reached into one of the pockets of his garb and produced a vial of silver ink, which he placed into the window. As Kiraman reached out to grab it, Raktil pushed it and let it drop and spill over the floor of the interior of the cell.

The action was clearly deliberate, and Kiraman looked at the Guard with a confused expression. "Why, Brother?" He asked.

Raktil reached into another pocket and pulled out a stack of silver paper, clearly taken directly from the Library. Slowly, methodically, he crumpled a single page of the paper into a ball and threw it into the cell. Slightly faster, he took another page and balled it up, then threw it into the cell again. Again and again he repeated this until he ran out of paper.

After the first few hundred pieces of paper, Kiraman had stopped asking why the Guard was doing this.

Finally, Raktil took out the Silver quill and broke it in half, dropping the writing end into the pool of ink and pocketing the rest. Kiraman just stared at his jailer as he sat on the floor at the far end of the tiny room.

"Do you remember Davius?" The Guard finally spoke after another pause. "He was the second angel of the Choir to be killed by Raphael. He and I were created together, as a pair. When we were fighting in the Darkness I protected him and he protected me.

"He and I spent every moment together since the beginning. When the Silver City was built and we were no longer needed to fight, Michael assigned us to guard this prison and its sole occupant. For a long, long time we did this together. Then Lucifer came to speak to him."

The Guard stopped speaking for a moment and just watched Kiraman who in turn was watching him.

"They began to spend more and more time together and Davius he... he changed. Like me, like all of the Choir, he was fully dedicated to his function and wanted nothing more.

Then he began asking strange questions about purpose. About intent. About the meaning behind our functions.

“And then one day Lucifer stopped visiting and Davius left his post. He went into the City and sat down, refusing to move. Raphael visited him then, and told him to return and Davius refused. He said that there was no purpose in anything we did so he would do nothing. So Raphael killed him. Burned him into less than ash. When he died, I also lost a part of me.”

Raktil drew his sword from the sheath on his side and used it to scratch at the door, digging the tip in to score it.

“Lucifer was the reason Davius changed and was killed. I know that. I hated him for it. And you... you choose to defend Lucifer and call him a friend and spread his message. You disgust me. Know this, Scribe: if I ever get the chance, I will kill you too.” Without waiting for a response, Raktil turned and left.

Kiraman felt a heavy weight in his chest as he cleaned up the ink, uncrumpled the papers, dipped his half of the quill into the inkwell and started writing.

—Story—

No idea what goes here

—Story End—

“Why do you think they built this place?” Abaddon asked the Scribe.

“This prison? To hold malcontents like us, I suppose.” Kiraman guessed.

Abaddon laid on its back, twirling one long, skinny finger in the air.

“I mean, I’m a monster interested in destruction and cannibalism that would destroy the City, devour everything that moves in addition to large parts of the sidewalks if given half the chance, and the Archangels think that *you* are just as dangerous. If not more so as I’m not going to trial soon.” Abaddon said.

“So they lock us up here. But when we were created, none of the Choir were made to need imprisonment. Except, arguably if you were to ask me my opinion, me. The

dangerous monster needed to be locked up. But this prison has two rooms. One. Two. Who was the second room meant for?"

Kiraman thought it over for a few moments. "Well, as the occupant of the second room, the only answer could be me." He replied.

"Yeah, yeah." Abaddon sighed. "Obviously. I know all our brothers think I'm some idiotic monster but do me a favor and give me a little credit. Yes, it was built for you. But this building is *older* than you. It was created at the same time as the rest of the Silver City. Which means that you were fated to occupy that cell before you had even come into existence, no?"

"But what if it was created as an extra space to have just in case there was a need? Like Ioriel?" Kiraman asked.

"Nah, no way." Abaddon answered as it stretched its arms, legs and wings out, trying to see if *this* time it could touch all corners of the room at the same time. "There isn't a second Abaddon laying in wait somewhere, just like there's no other Kiraman hanging out waiting to write a bunch of boring stories. We're angels. We don't *do* back up plans or 'just in case'."

"So... you're saying that I was fated to be imprisoned here? That I only ever had the illusion of choice leading up to this moment and everything I've ever thought or felt has been preordained?" Kiraman's head felt like it was spinning.

Nothing he did actually mattered. All of his attempts at making a meaningful choice for himself were still just him being manipulated. Lucifer's death, Kiraman's imprisonment. It never meant anything. He was still just a puppet with his strings being pulled.

"That's right. Your life is pointless and meaningless. So why don't you come over here and let me eat you so you don't have to worry about it anymore?" The angel of the void asked with a child-like innocence.

After a few moments of contemplation, the Scribe said "Oh. You're, to borrow a human expression, 'messing with me,' aren't you?"

Abaddon shrugged. "Can't blame a hungry monster for trying. How about the idea that everything that's going to be created will eventually be unable to sustain life? Does that depress you enough to let me eat you?"

This was going to be a long imprisonment.

—Interlude—

[TODO: Rewrite this section to be more in line with Raktil's speech earlier]

The number of angels that comprised the Choir was too high to count. Most of them belonged to the Army which had been commanded by Lucifer and Michael, now just Michael. The second largest group were those who lived in the buildings of the Silver City preparing for Creation and the third group were the Guards.

The Guards were the ones responsible for protecting the City from invaders from the Darkness, rather than actively going into the void and fighting there. Since the Gates were created, the Guards hadn't had to do much but stand vigilant, making sure nothing happened.

Of course, everything that had been Created was perfect so nothing ever happened. Being a Guard meant a lot of waiting. Raktil was one such Guard who had been tasked with overseeing the prison which, until recently, only ever had one "guest," Abaddon.

Raktil was there when Ioriel was possessed by the Darkness and slain by Raphael. In fact, he had fought side by side with Ioriel for their entire existence up to that point. Sometimes Raktil thought about how it could have been him that was taken over and killed. How close he was to being devoured, non-existent heart and soul, by the Darkness.

When the Gates were Created and the Guards were given new assignments, Raktil was actually excited to be guarding the prison. He saw it as a way that he could still protect the City from the Darkness, as the Angel of the Void was the only piece of Darkness that still existed within.

There was a time when he and the other Guard, Joriel, assigned to the prison would patrol the area frequently, speak to Abaddon and try to keep him from hurting himself by running into the doors and walls, but over time they became less and less frequent.

It wasn't that they didn't care, they did, it was that it didn't matter. They were powerless to make any changes, Abaddon couldn't be reasoned with and in the perfect City nothing ever happened.

That is, until Lucifer's trial.

When Raktil understood that the traitor's underling, for that's what Kiraman was in his eyes, would eventually be coming to the prison, the building that he guarded, he had started to form a plan. Being a Guard, he wasn't blessed with the intelligence or strength of one of the 108 Archangels, but he still prided himself on his wit.

With the Morningstar dead he could not have his revenge for the death of Davius. Yet, he would have his revenge. Thinking about his plan, one boring night, he questioned if revenge was something that Angels did. Was it part of his function? His reason for existing?

Would killing Lucifer's underling make him just as bad as Lucifer himself, who used lives like pawns for his sick games? Yes. At least, probably. Raktil was fine with that, deciding that everything would be worth it in the end.

[TODO: Finish Section]

Across the City, the angel Azrael stood for the third time in his long life and started his way to the prison.

—End—

Eventually, Kiraman decided that it didn't matter if he was being controlled or not. As far as he was concerned, this was the path he had chosen for himself and he would not back down now. He would find his own purpose and he would convince the rest of the Choir that they could do the same. If he was, in fact, fated to be devoured by Abaddon like Lucifer, then he would face it with a fraction of the conviction that his friend, the Morningstar, had done and would be proud.

Kiraman came to understand that Abaddon's hunger came in waves. At times it was manageable for the Angel of the Void, where it was lucid and could hold a conversation. Other times the hunger was so intense that it was just a snarling beast, raging at its confinement.

Judging by the screaming and the frequency it threw itself at the door to the cell, the hunger was much worse than Kiraman had been present for. The Scribe tried to talk to

Abaddon, but no words were getting through, if he could even be heard over those soul rending howls.

Eventually the screams became less and less frequent until the prison was completely silent again. It hurt Kiraman to know one of his brothers was in this state. That Abaddon was hurting so badly and there was nothing anyone could do to fix it. Lucifer, Michael, Raphael. The rest of 108 Archangels. They could do nothing except cage the monster, despite their incredible powers.

He also felt deep shame. He always knew about Abaddon from the day that he was created. But it never occurred to him that his brother was in so much pain.

With nothing that could be said and nothing that could be done, Kiraman and Abaddon just sat in silence.

“I am so tired.” Abaddon’s voice broke the silence. “I never asked to be like this. I don’t want to hurt anyone. I would do anything... anything... to just not be hungry any more.”

Kiraman felt like he should say something but nothing came to mind, so he just waited.

“I remember your speech from Lucifer’s trial.” It continued in a quiet, defeated voice. “Do you truly believe that? That we can choose our own path? Make our own decisions? I know what choice I would make, if I could. I’d go into the Darkness and eat everything in there. Feast until my stomach bulged and I knew what not being hungry felt like. Then I’d let the Darkness consume me in turn.”

Something about this confession reminded Kiraman of what Lucifer said after their confrontation in the Library.

“Yes, I do believe that. More than that, I know it to be a fact. I have made decisions that went against my function, Lucifer did the same. You are no different, brother Abaddon. You have the same ability to choose as I do.” Kiraman told the ravenous monster.

“Except that I don’t.” The Angel of the Void sighed. “I’m stuck in this room. All I can think about is eating but there’s nothing I can eat. I’ve even tried to eat my arms and my legs, but I can’t. For whatever reason.

“

Blah blah blah

It took a long time, with many failures, but eventually Kiraman was able to change his form like he had seen Lucifer do so many times before. The Scribe tried to think of what would allow him to pass through that small window in the door, deciding that it needed to be long and thin.

He felt himself shrink down as his head and neck lengthened, his arms and legs disappearing and his skin being replaced with thick, vibrant green scales. Immediately he was bombarded by sensations he had never felt before. He could taste the walls and floor with his forked tongue. He could hear his tiny heart beating. He felt the blood in his body moving. It was almost too much to process all at once.

Kiraman steeled his resolve and forced himself to focus on the task at hand. Through trial and much error, he figured out how to move his body to travel. It took hours of practice, but eventually he was able to reach up the door and slither through the hole to the otherside. As quickly as he could, he changed back to his original form, reveling in the silence and peace that came with it.

Moving to Abaddon's door, one single crazed eye looked out at him. "You did it! That is amazing. Now please," pleaded the Angel of the Void, "Let me out."

The Scribe put his hand on the lock and slid the deadbolt holding it opened halfway before stopping himself. "Abaddon... you're heading out into the Darkness, right?"

"Yes! I promise! I promise! I will go into the Darkness, I just want this imprisonment to be over. I want this existence to be over. To never feel hungry again. Please." Hidden behind the door, Abaddon started drooling uncontrollably in anticipation.

Something was wrong. Kiraman had that same sensation deep in his chest that he had when Lucifer lied to him. He kept his hand on the deadbolt as he thought and became more and more sure that Abaddon would not keep its word.

Without warning, Kiraman was tackled from the side by Raktil, who had been on patrol. The Scribe had still been holding onto the lock and it became completely unlocked with a *click* as Kiraman and the Guard hit the floor.

The Guard Raktil landed on top of Kiraman and quickly mounted the prone angel. "I knew my opportunity to avenge Davius' death would come if I was just patient enough. And here you are trying to escape. Perfect." Raktil struck Kiraman in the head twice, each blow coming faster than Kiraman could see. Through his daze, Kiraman heard the sound of a sword being drawn.

The tip of the sword was pressed into Kiraman's chest, cutting through his robes and letting his silvery blood spill across the floor. The Scribe screamed at the explosion of pain, like nothing he had ever felt before. He just wanted to run but couldn't overpower the Guard. He tried to fight back, impotently flailing his arms and hands against the armored Angel, to no effect.

The Guard placed two hands on the hilt of his sword and interlaced the fingers, aiming for the Scribe's throat as he plunged down with all his might.

A hand grabbed Raktil by the hair and yanked his head back, exposing his throat. Abaddon bit deeply into him, tearing out a huge chunk of flesh. In quick succession three more bites removed the angel's head completely and its body fell to the floor, spraying silvery blood over the walls, ceiling and Kiraman.

Kiraman was about to thank the Angel of the Void for saving him, when the pure black maw that was Abaddon's mouth stopped chewing and turned in his direction. Realization dawned on him then, that Abaddon hadn't wanted or tried to save him. The Guard had simply been the closer of the two and Kiraman was next.

Abaddon leapt at the Scribe who scrambled away on all fours, trying to get back on his feet. The monster jumped from the ground to the ceiling and back to the floor as it approached its prey that had just gotten back to his feet and started running.

Turning a corner, Kiraman ran straight into the other Guard, Joriel, who had come running after hearing the commotion. The Guard's eyes went wide with terror when it saw the abomination galloping on all fours down the hallway, its pitch black mouth open and drool flowing in a never ending stream.

Joriel drew his sword and pushed Kiraman to the side in one motion, as though he had practiced it a hundred times. Abaddon leapt onto the Guard and was impaled through his stomach on the silver blade. Ravenously, as if it couldn't feel the holy metal piercing through its body, the Angel of the Void bit through the Guard's armor like it wasn't even there.

[TODO: Finish chapter where Kiraman is imprisoned next to Abaddon]

[TODO: Write a secondary trial for Kiraman where the angels he's met talk about him and his actions]

"Kiraman, Brother of Books. You are hereby charged with sedition of the Word.

[TODO: Write chapter where the Creation happens and Kiraman is brought in for his punishment: being banished to the newly created Earth forever]

—The Garden—

Kiraman stood at the Gates of the Silver City, his non-existent heart pounding in his chest. He could feel it through his entire body, hammering like it was trying to escape. Was he sure that he didn't have a heart? Before he definitely hadn't, why did he now?

Behind him, the entire Choir stood with Metatron, Raphael and Michael standing in the forefront. Every single being that occupied the Silver City was there, watching his sentencing being carried out. For the first time since they were created, the Gates were going to be opened and one of their Brothers was going to leave. Forever.

Metatron spoke from behind Kiraman, not really speaking to anyone in particular. Just saying the words because they needed to be said. "Today we carry out the punishment of the Scribe Kiraman. He has been found guilty of sedition against the Word and has been sentenced to exile upon the newly formed Earth. Never again will he gaze or walk upon the splendor of the Silver City. Never again will he share in the company of his brethren or of our Creator."

Everything and everyone was silent, waiting to see what was said next, what would happen next. From where Uriel and Camael flew, they could only barely see Kiraman

but it was so quiet they could hear everything being said. Camael whispered to Uriel, "They won't seriously exile him, will they?"

Uriel whispered back, "I think they just want him to publicly renounce whatever teachings Lucifer gave him. If he does that, then they'll let him stay."

Camael nodded, but said nothing. He hoped Uriel was right. He liked Kiraman and the stories he told. Now that the Creation of Man had happened and all of their functions were fulfilled, what was the point of carrying out this punishment? What was left to "corrupt"?

Metatron spoke again, "Scribe Kiraman, you are permitted to address the Choir, if you wish. However, this is on the condition that you do not try and use this as an opportunity to try and spread more of the heresy of which you had been tried for. Do you have anything to say?"

Kiraman continued staring up at the enormous gates, so tall he couldn't see the top from where he stood. For several long, painful moments, he said nothing.

Finally, when he spoke all he said was, "Open the Gates."

Metatron nodded. "As you wish." Raising his voice he called to the Guards that had stood sentry since the Beginning. "Open the Gates!"

After a few seconds of nothing happening, there was a loud groaning sound as the Gates began their slow journey of opening for the first, and last, time ever. The sound grew as the doors of the Gates began moving, ever so slowly, faster and faster. Eventually the sound of the doors was deafening and more than one of the Angels gathered had to cover their ears.

Kiraman was unphased, however. He couldn't hear anything over the sound of his heart beating in his chest. There was a small part of him that was excited, much to his surprise. He had never seen beyond the Gates and now that the Darkness was gone, what was there?

The Gates finally finished opening and Kiraman got his answer. Light. Everywhere he looked into the infinite void was light. Tiny specks of light the size of the head of a pin puncturing through the blackness. Tens of billions of lights all working together to keep the Darkness away forever. Each one illuminated just like the Silver City itself.

Without another word, Michael walked up behind the former Scribe and threw him into the sea of stars. Kiraman cried out as he passed the Gates, unable to slow himself down or stop. The momentum from being thrown kept him going, until he could no longer feel the pull of the City.

Turning around, he saw all of his Brothers watching him get further and further away. None of the Choir moved. Not one of those he even thought of as friends, said a word or waved goodbye. They just watched.

Then the Gates began closing and when they had settled back into place for the first and last time, that was when Kiraman knew what it truly felt like to be alone.

He thought of Lucifer then. That little voice in his head that had started all of this. He wanted to be angry at the dead Archangel, but he wasn't. He just felt... sad. He was sure, down deep in his soul, that there was another way all of this could have ended. They could have listened. They could have chosen to better themselves or just understand. Instead, they chose to throw him away, sweep him under the rug.

Yet, there was no malice in his heart for any of his brethren. It wasn't their fault that they didn't understand. That they were scared to think of things outside of the box they built for themselves. Kiraman did not regret choosing his path, yet he still wept.

Eventually the Silver City disappeared from sight, turning into just another pinprick of light amongst the billions of others. He didn't know how long he floated like that, with only the specks of light to keep him company, unable to do anything or change his course. Trapped with his thoughts and regrets.

One point of light seemed to shine just a little bit more than the others. After a long time, he noticed that it also had a slightly different hue than the others which gave off pure, white light. More time passed and he realized that it was blue light.

As time went on, the pinprick of light grew slowly. Over time, Kiraman realized what it really was: a blue planet. *Earth*, he thought to himself. That's where he had been exiled to, the newly formed planet of Man.

It felt like it took forever, but eventually the blue planet encompassed everything he could see and he felt the pull of it bringing him down to the surface. He felt heat rivaling

that of Michael's sword all around him, burning his flesh and clothes and causing such pain that he screamed in agony, even though no sound could be heard.

Kiraman impacted the earth with tremendous force, cracking the ground all around him. Angels were nothing if not resilient, and in just a few moments he was standing on his feet again, gazing around him at his new home.

It was a beautiful, pristine woodland that stretched on for miles in all directions. On one side, a massive body of water so large even the angel couldn't see where it ended. Waves lapped lazily along a white sand beach. Looking up, Kiraman could not see the Silver City. He felt his heart, if he had one, tear in two at the realization that he'd never see his home again. That he'd never be with his Brothers, never be a member of the Choir again.

Using the trick he'd learned from Lucifer, he grew a pair of brilliant wings that shone gold in the sunlight. *Sunlight*, he thought to himself. *So this is what all those books were talking about.* He took to the air and, picking a direction at random, started to explore this brand new world.

As he flew along in this strange new world, as different from the Silver City as was possible, he wondered what Lucifer would think of this place. In his mind, he pictured the Archangel flying alone beside him, guiding him as he flew out over the water.

"Welcome to our new home, Brother," The Angel would have said. "You know all of the strange and wonderful things that are going to happen here in the future. You know all about the lives that they are going to lead. You know the horrors they are going to create, and the pain and suffering they will inflict on each other. But also you know all the good things that are to come."

Another part of Kiraman's mind idly wondered why his Brother would give him a speech like that, but it felt right. The angel that he was mostly sure he was imagining continued.

"Your path is going to be a long one, filled with hate and fear. There will be many that curse you for all the problems that they bring on themselves. It will be worth it in the end. I swear it on my Oath." A small pause.. "This is not the direction you are meant to go."

Not fully sure if it was his decision, Kiraman turned and headed back towards the land. While it was beautiful, most of the land looked the same from the air - just treetops with

the occasional clearing - and he quickly got bored with the view. He decided to land and try walking through the forest.

A short walk later, the trees grew thin and opened up to a large space filled with vibrant green grass spotted with clusters of wild flowers, each a different color. Some were as small as the nail on the little finger of Kiraman's hand, some towered over him, pollen spraying in the cool breeze.

This space was also full of life. Everywhere the Scribe looked, there were animals grazing, drinking from the nearby stream or just sleeping lazily in the warm afternoon sun. Some had horns and four legs, some had two legs and wings and sang beautiful songs. Some had claws and teeth that made Kiraman think of the things that lived in the Darkness. Yet, none looked skittish or scared, none had a care in the entire world. They were at peace and could want for nothing.

After a short time, he found a small hill with what appeared to be an apple tree, boughs heavy with fruit. Seeing an opportunity to 'taste' something for the first time, he landed in front of the tree and plucked one of the fruits. It felt heavy in his hand.

Immediately, Kiraman understood that this wasn't an apple. It looked like one, it felt like one, but was something so much more. This fruit contained an immense power.

There was a rustle in the bushes behind Kiraman. Turning around he saw a young human woman, naked, with long curly hair and eyes bright and innocent like a deer.

"Oh, hello." She said, smiling. "My name is Eve. Who are you?"

"I am Ki..." he trailed off as everything suddenly clicked into place. This had been Lucifer's plan all along. He knew he would never leave the Silver City alive. Everything that happened had been about Kiraman. Making him see the truth, and leading him to this moment. His Brother had wanted, not only him, but the entire Choir to choose their own reasons for existing, especially now that the Universe had been created and the Age of Man had begun.

The humans, too, would be free to choose. Lucifer had made sure that when he died someone would be sent to Earth in his stead. And Lucifer had chosen *him* to make sure that the humans would be given the chance to choose their own purpose for existing.

Kiraman would continue the work that The Lightbringer had begun.

Lucifer's goal had always been to give free choice to both the Angels of the Choir and to the Race of Man. He knew that he would need to gather all the Angels in one place to give them the idea of choosing their own purpose, but there was nothing that would call them all away from their tasks, gather them all into one place. Nothing, that is, except for a trial of the greatest of the Archangels for an unthinkable crime.

That crime, of course, being the attempted destruction of the Silver City. Anything less would just have had him executed on the spot, or locked away like Abaddon. No lies could be told in the presence of Michael's sword, so he had to truly plan to allow the Darkness in. Yet he would not be allowed a platform to convince the Angels to choose their own purpose for themselves - he would need a speaker in his stead.

He needed someone that would believe as fiercely as he did, someone that could speak as convincingly as the Morningstar himself, but who wouldn't be seen as a threat. The connection to another Angel would convince Michael and Raphael that they did not have the complete story and would have to allow his compatriot to speak, giving that opportunity to speak to the Choir as a whole. He found it in Kiraman.

From the first moment Lucifer had suggested that Kiraman read the books, this had been his plan. Lucifer knew he would be killed for the crime that he had to plan, but a cohort that did not know would be given leniency, allowed to live but banished to the new world, never to see the sights of the Silver City again. A punishment that would be a horrifying thought to any Angel.

The Scribe had done his job as he always had, and planted the seeds of freedom of choice into the minds of the Choir. Now, all that remained of Kiraman's task was to go to the newly formed Earth and make sure the infant Race of Man was given the same choice. To do that, they would need knowledge, and in Kiraman's hand lay the key.

In that moment, he realized that even though this was not a purpose he had chosen for himself, it was what he wanted to do. He also knew that he would be blamed for everything that happened after this. Every evil choice, every horrific act, every crime against that which was good and holy, all these would be Kiraman's fault.

In the millions of books he had written, humans had been forced to carry out their lives exactly as described. But if he followed through with this, then all those people would be able to make their own decisions, to act in ways that went contrary to what was written in his books.

The Scribe of Humans, Kiraman of the Books, Curator of the Endless Shelves, did not hesitate. He knew what he needed to do, and he would do it in the name of his Brother.

Reaching out, he grabbed the hand of Eve and pressed the fruit of knowledge into her palm. "My name is Lucifer Morningstar," he said, "and I am the Devil."

End