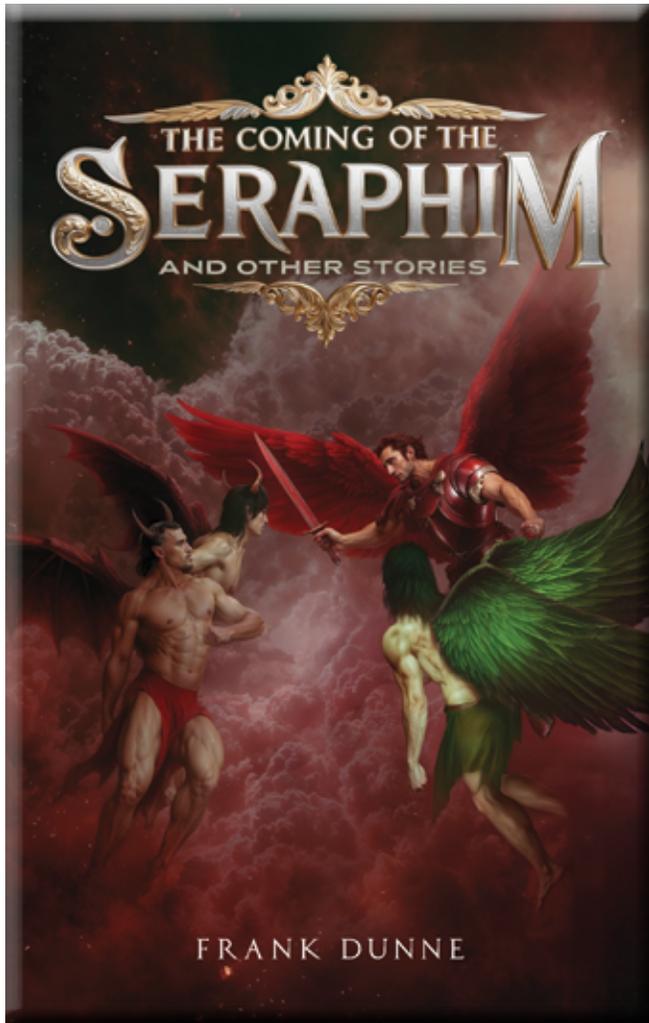


The Angels of Discontent: Part One

by Frank Dunne, FSPE

Editor's Note: The following story excerpt, adapted for *Telicom*, is from Frank Dunne's book, *The Coming of the Seraphim and Other Stories*, which is available at Amazon.com.



An earthbound observer may look to the clear night sky and catch sight of an abiding friend—a star of unusual color. It always appears as a speck of shimmering violet light, unique among any other twinkling points shining down, and yet, no manufactured telescope has ever captured its image.

Before long, the stargazer may witness this pastel dot fade and vanish, only to rekindle in another atmospheric place on a random future night. Some might say it's an optical illusion, while others hold fast that it's a stellar mystery. Regardless of any

notions, however, no one will ever know for sure, even if faith reasons that this rich sparkle is really a sapient being watching over us. Thus, to those billions who wonder in the predawn darkness, let it be known that this light is Zadkiel, and may we shout it from the rooftops: Zadkiel is an angel!

This wondrous soul blazes like a fireball of amethyst, yet not a single photon or subatomic quark composes the workings of this spirit, or any other divinity. Zadkiel's existence comes from God's will, and there shall never be science to explain it; it is a verity shared by every angel between Heaven and Hell. The choirs analogously serve as the antibodies produced by our Lord to combat the plagues and maladies manifesting within Him. In this aspect, God created the disease-prone humans in His own image, but not the angels.

Angels are not greater or lesser because of their immunities. Nor does their nature of dwelling in the cosmos as entities of both substance and spirit hint at any superiority to their corporeal advisees—at least, not in the eyes of God. And despite how driven these supposed paragons of virtue are to fulfill their most elemental obligations, each has his own personality and his own mind. In many of these minds are the turbulent seeds of desire, and not all aspirations spawn from altruism. God's image pervades both humans and choirs in this characteristic.

Of the nine choirs of angels, the Dominions occupy the topmost rung of the Second Sphere, and Zadkiel is their lord. The Holy Father's petitions reach Zadkiel before any other angel may hear them. This director then gathers insights and maps out the strategies that these requests require. God counters the flaws of the universe by gifting each race of eternal sentinels with the deftness to

spearhead an exclusive problem. When the Creator of the universe calls for a campaign, this grand administrator disseminates the order to those who can best complete the undertaking.

With the issue of one directive, Chamuel heard his summons. A warrior by design, he stands as the enduring commander of the Powers, the third choir of the Second Sphere. Although the lower choirs mediate the finite conflicts raging throughout the worlds of the *Primum Mobile*, the Powers act after the considerations foreshadow eternal scopes. Still, in the nearly infinite cosmos, battles are never-ending for the Powers. Their past quests have kept marauding dictators from gaining footholds in His realm.

Chamuel soon appeared before the baroque fortress, where the righteous Dominion conducts meetings in perpetuum. The angelic freedom fighter cringed as he stared at the superb amethyst castle—a monument to flaunting semblance. Only an egotist wielding an amenable chisel could have chased this stone—a jagged, precipitous, unfinished nugget, subconsciously inspiring the music of the spheres. This spectacular crystal citadel only partially surfaced from the rousing jewel island that birthed it. Zadkiel, the angel of divine justice, never rose above drama. At the time of Chamuel’s audience, this enclave, steeped in a mauve haze, drifted in the eddies near Earth’s north star, Polaris. However solid, none of this space harbor’s construction would ever form in nature.

Chamuel passed through fiery doors of shifting eminence and approached the shadow-shrouded dais upon which the regal Zadkiel sat. The courteous visitor’s eyes drew to the sculpted, violet gemstone throne—another bauble of unnatural material.

“There rages a war in Heaven, resourceful protector,” Zadkiel rumbled. “God’s enemies have grown strong, perhaps too strong for those who oppose the enormity.” Zadkiel, Ruler of Jupiter, exuded might. Strength seemed personified as he



Zadkiel’s Fortress

dominated the stage. The Dominion’s thick, sturdy hands gripped the arm supports. A loose-fitting toga draped his muscular body, and his enormous lavender wings were folded and slung back. The wings angels display are useless, except perhaps to express emotion.

The subordinate role Chamuel adopted before the Lord of the Dominions satisfied the celestial hierarchy, but the lower-ranked Power kept more hidden than he superficially purported. In the greater arrangement of Heaven, Chamuel lives as a stronger being than Zadkiel. This general’s position demands, as the elite military’s principal,

that he hold vast bodily strength. Except for the archangels, the Seraphim, and the Cherubim, no other angels can match his prowess. Clad in scarlet armor, his garnet wings cocked, Chamuel tolerantly listened to his haughty superior.

“I do not understand, my lord,” the fighter questioned, masking his annoyance toward the Dominion’s histrionic statement. “The war for the Kingdom of Heaven ended ages ago, in which my blessed army had partaken in many battles. What do I not see now?”

“The war for our holy realm is no more, and we are at peace, albeit an uneasy peace,” Zadkiel replied, his eyes downcast. “But I speak of another universe, one where the heat of battle is at its peak and where the hand of its just god may not prevail.”

It annoyed Chamuel that the assuming Zadkiel held status as the angel privy above every other. The Dominion excelled at shocking audiences with sensational disclosures.

Regardless of Chamuel’s antipathy, he needed intelligence. No soldiery in the known universe could match the skill, strength, or boldness of the choirs of angels. A single angel from the lowest circle could devastate a planet through sheer might if sorely motivated. Though nearly omniscient, some information never seemed to reach them... until the need to know—an untenable exclusion for many holy caretakers.

The violet regent continued, “Places beyond our reach bustle with life brought forth by their own benevolent creators. These stupendous fields, these reflecting universes, extend virtually without end but persist curtained off from us. All the souls of each of these totalities are unaware of the others’ toilings, except their almighty gods. The paramount ministers of this multiverse are in spiritual communication with one another. Until this predicament, there was no need to share this realization with the choirs.”

“Then, lo, from a cosmos known as Alchil,” Zadkiel amplified, “its god beseeched all who exist, and our Lord hearkened, for our Lord stands peerless even among the supreme. Alchil may lose control of its Heaven and thus its entire authority through an angelic revolt.”

“Another Lucifer,” Chamuel whispered to himself. The administrator still heard.

“Yes,” the robed angel agreed, “the coils of the Serpent squeeze the life from that sovereignty, and you must take flight to Alchil to lend advice.”

“Of course, it remains my privilege to aid where you prescribe, my lord,” the lesser-statured divinity acknowledged. He contemplated the revelation.

“You honor us, Chamuel,” replied the choir head. “We will afford you one of your capable legions, but only one. If you meet defeat in Alchil, your obliteration from existence follows; you are not immortal so far from your provenance. The consideration of death now weighs on your soul—and by your extra-local hand, your antagonists’. Our magnificent Lord needs your surviving theater of Powers if you do not return.”

Chamuel exulted in his understanding of what mounted against him.

“He, Most Holy, will convey you and your assemblage to the keep of Hessediel, my Alchilian counterpart,” Zadkiel explained. “Once there, you will learn of your task.”

Chamuel nodded. A moment later, he appeared at the amethyst stronghold of Hessediel, along with the incomparable division of Powers.

Purpureal flames danced across massive doors that opened to receive Chamuel. A contingent of Dominions welcomed him. The stalwart Power could feel that this order of angels in this realm did not manifest the emissions of its counterpart back home. He took notice that it was not a



Hesediel's Castle

complete mirror-image universe in every respect. The warrior leader wondered if other macrocosms existed, surpassing the strength of his own—exotic stratocracies that someday would breach the borders of Yahweh's domain. That startling thought lingered as the group crossed into the great hall. Chamuel's legion of angels swarmed around the mauve estate with the patience of enraged hornets—hungry for battle, seething, and pulsating with the power to blast galaxies into atoms.

Hesediel stood waiting, concern and exhaustion etched on his rigid mien. This age of angelic discontent had stripped him of some of the invincibility ingrained in the choirs' races.

“Many thanks to your Creator's succor, imposing adjutant of the Lord,” Hesediel respectfully acknowledged. “A favor we will one day return.”

There may have been a hint of relief on his face, but the sullen tone of the divine bureaucrat's voice carried the weight of lead. Whatever the administrator's mood, no words mentioned Chamuel's own sacrifice.

“Our realm has fallen victim to evil,” the Alchilian elaborated. “It behaves like the mischief once tormenting your magnanimous Lord. We remain convinced, however, that our disease is more virulent, as the distress is evidently greater.”

Hesediel did not like urgent rescue by outsiders and clearly tried to downplay his god's inferior nature. The capital vices obviously lived and flourished in this expanse, as pride and envy took center stage the moment Chamuel entered the gemstone castle.

“In this heavenly chess match, a game even our choirs play, the opposing side has gained the advantage of one pawn,” Hesediel delicately explained. “That could accumulate into an eventual misfortune.”

Chamuel then waited for what seemed like a temporal lifetime for the promulgator to finish an uncomfortably familiar speech about the history of the conflict. Knowledge of the multiverse may have been new, but the misery created by pride and greed endures as one of the oldest stories ever written.

At length, the Dominion concluded, “Adriel, Gabriel's general, has turned against the Light. She commands her vast forces in the south and east.”

Chamuel scowled. *The angel of honesty and truth aligned with the Prince of Lies ... But why?* he wondered to himself.

Hesediel seemed to read the expression on the warrior's face and remarked, "Why, indeed?"

"That is the difference in our war as opposed to your skirmish," the functionary defended. "Adriel has multiple roles. She is the angel of self-confidence, not only of death. She has brought hope and cause to God's enemies while leaving the virtuous defenders in despair. It may be too much to overcome. If the dark forces gain victory, then Adriel plans to corrupt the extant corporeal organisms in our universe or destroy them."

"She is, furthermore, the angel of the Apocalypse," the official expanded, "charged with liberating souls at the end of days—until recently, only on a planetary scale, one Rapture at a time. She now plans total extermination without everlasting paradise, forever isolated from God's love—even more sinister, to create a universe festering with twisted, perverted abominations that once reveled as God's creatures. To what end is it in the mind of Satan? To humiliate our Father? Words are useless when Lucifer is behind the trouble, so nothing else needs discussion but strategy."

"My legion awaits your command, my lord," said Chamuel.

"Adriel holds court in her impenetrable fortress," Hesediel explained. "A direct assault would be in vain, but her artfulness requires removal from the hostilities. You are a great general, Chamuel. I trust your acumen and judgment."

The military advocate had already settled on an approach. "My devoted soldiers shall make for the fortress and provide an audacious assault from the south, drawing the opposition to that sector. If our realms are truly like reflections, then I shall enter her region from the north, concealed as I glide along the Markarian quasar, so lethal that nary an angel will go near. Her north quadrant is unguarded, except for the life-ending quasar that God has devised as a barrier that even the immortals cannot breach. I will come from there. With the Lord's blessing, I shall then engage her



Quasar

in singular combat and emerge victorious. When Adriel meets destruction, her minions may flutter in disarray. At that moment, my battalions will shatter them."

"When once accomplished, Chamuel," Hesediel stressed, "you and your fighting force will go back to your Lord's realm. We will finish our own fight." Fear and resentment resounded from the Alchilian organizer, who did not want so great an army idling longer than it needed.

The legion of Powers entered Markarian 231, a coalescing Seyfert galaxy given life by two massive black holes. The churning, devouring monsters moved in a binary dance. From the combined twins erupted the opposing polar jets of a quasar. Each cylindrical firestorm possessed enough energy to vaporize the most excellent angel. Traveling at speeds exceeding mortal thought, God's instruments of justice advanced to the south of the great flame of death, to where Adriel's host waited.

Chamuel never led his fighters to the burgeoning, yet lifeless, galaxy. The honor of leader fell to



Chamuel

Katriel, second in command. Still light-years from the enemy's stronghold, the division of Powers readied for battle as Adriel's green-eyed demons ascended to confront them. It would be the last battle for many.

Chamuel appeared in the constellation Ursa Major and entered the Markarian galaxy. There, he stayed concealed within a stellar nursery. He did not want his emissions detected before the diversionary fighting began. His mere presence in the hydrogen cloud flared a star to life. Though stars and angels radiate different energies, they interact. He prayed he could wade undiscovered within the immersing nuclear radiation.

At last, the solitary enforcer sensed that the fight had begun. Many times faster than a beam of light, he streamed toward the quasar. Once close enough, the sanguine entity skimmed opposite, parallel to the screaming, terrible eruption, and toward the black holes awaiting at the bottom. Adriel held court near that abyss. Angels are impervious to the effects and laws of gravity, and the substance of Adriel's stronghold proved immune to gravity as well. Only the proximity of the blaring quasar threatened any angel, which made her location strategically impeccable.

Soon, the silvery-blue walls of Adriel's palace came into focus, and Chamuel paused. Cobalt light from the myriad of newborn galactic stars saturated space—an endless field of sparkling sapphires that seemed to stretch to infinity. The lumbering waltz of the black holes distorted the northern vista and rumbled and thundered like an approaching storm. Still, the palace exterior glowed azure against a backdrop of the same midnight blue that sometimes colors Earth's winter skies.

Chamuel's presence displaced space, and he risked detection, yet nothing or no one stood between him and the massive stone fortress. Far off in the distance, he could sense the heat of an angelic battle. Katriel would never relent, but that clash would not decide fate. The direction this universe



Adriel and Muriel

would take hinged on the coming confrontation between the tenacious, scarlet angel and an inexorable demon princess—in a private chamber behind this castle’s walls.

The Power approached cautiously, anticipating an attack. Though among the most formidable of beings in the now-realized multiverse, Chamuel knew death dealt immutably in this realm. The treacherous secondary devil waiting inside garnered sagacity from the bottom of Hell. The valiant angel may fall into a trap, and Adriel, together with a hostile archangel, could overpower

him. So far, this celestine ranger felt no other presence and silently entered the glorious castle. Adriel may have been the angel who exuded love and warmth, but a downcast mood darkened the palace with cold, godless thoughts. Melancholy and despair hung like corpses within the fortress. Chamuel moved into the great hall and there appeared Adriel before him. Next to her stood Muriel, the Dominion who extolled peace and harmony.

“Welcome to the Seventeenth Mansion of the Moon!” Adriel heralded, cackling to mock the ridiculous humans who named it.

They presented themselves as angels of yore. From breast to foot, Adriel adorned herself with ornately molded gunmetal armor. A blue atmospheric cast gave the pseudo-metal a faint glow, and a gladius dangled from her waist. Adriel was stunning. Her green feline eyes pierced Chamuel and her face exceeded mortal beauty. Long black hair flowed over her shoulders, while her majestic, feathered wings stretched out in full glory. Angels truly are the most exquisite living beings in any universe.

Muriel basked as Adriel’s sensual rival. Golden blonde hair surrounded the harmonious angel’s dark, soulful eyes, and the tresses fell to her waist. This angel, bathed in the fragrance of myrrh, wore bronze armor. She held her straw-colored wings erect and taut.

Chamuel remained stoic. He braced himself and waited for Adriel’s next move. The angel of the Presence would fight to his death. His ruby-red hair fell upon armor that now fluctuated in tones of crimson; fire-red wings poised for an explosive attack. Chamuel had one purpose: to rent the depravity before him.

“They sent you to stop us, Power,” Adriel stated. Her voice flowed from her mouth like sweet nectar. “Take care; Hesediel sent you on a hopeless quest. Do you know where your counterpart in this universe is? Just look inside the quasar, where he met his finality. Hesediel did not weep. The

administrator's heart is as cold as intergalactic space. He routinely sent for a replacement. So much for God's embrace and compassion."

"Join us, Chamuel," Adriel baited. "We are trying to make Heaven a paradise, especially for angels—a realm of meaning and fulfillment. Why should we coddle the imperfect flesh-and-blood children in our universes? Because of our Lords' orders? Amino acid life will never be perfect; it will never be at peace. The unhappiness they endure, the wars, the suffering, and the cruelty will never end because those molecular morons will never grow away from it. See them as they truly are. We must end it; we must take the reins and take control—especially show our Fathers that the angels have their own destinies, which are not to prevent a multiverse full of carbon-based nothings from hurting each other. Join us, capable leader, please."

Since creation, Chamuel has fought without end, using his profound intellect as temperance. He knew Adriel's words rang true for many frustrated angels. Even in his own universe, every regarded slight brought more discontent and more angry shouts for another rebellion. It gnawed at Chamuel that many protesters adhered to rational and moderate lives. It explained the continuity of the angelic disaffection. Pockets of ranting malcontents belonged in another place. For those in the growing majority, though, neutral arbitrators would judge their unwavering grievances as lucid. Beings of limited form, such as Earthlings, had free will; but the choirs pressed on, forbidden to think differently. God's bridle upon His messengers pulled in excess, to where the disinterested might hear their gagging throats. Remarkable things could come from angels if they were just given a chance.

"We eradicate evil and minister to the spiritually innocent. There is no higher calling," Chamuel, the angel known for tolerance and understanding, replied. "We have immortality; we have no suffering; and we have no unhappiness. There will be no contentment for those who fight against their

innate dispositions. The gracious Lord has given curiosity to all living beings, including angels. Wonderment beguiles the weak and unfocused, even among the choirs, to where the tendrils of jealousy and envy invade the mind and strangle reason. You are covetous, Adriel, and want the perceived freedoms you think others possess, despite having so many blessings from our Master. You have abandoned your higher calling. Come home to where you belong, and you will feel the joy of purpose again."

"Wrong, indoctrinated organism!" Adriel bellowed. "We have our own evolving to do. Our own warden stunts us. We will not kneel to animated clay, to the residue covering our sparkle!"

All the while, Muriel moved to Chamuel's right flank, getting ready for her attack. Adriel continued to distract the Power as her hand found the hilt of her sword.

"Our side is getting stronger," Adriel now cajoled. "Lucifer, Muriel, Azazel, and the list grows. You, commander, would be the ultimate piece to change the direction of our plight. When the ending battle brings victory in this realm, we will then return to your expanse and liberate our freedom fighters there."

"The aminos will eventually know peace and contentment, and then our omnipotent Lord will reveal to them their purpose," the eternal knight insisted. "They are newborns. They are too young in the universe to hold responsibilities."

In a blinding microsecond, Muriel launched herself. With her blade extended, she hurled like the stalking arrow of prosaic death.

Time moved like thick honey for the warrior angel. Muriel's unnatural speed and strength were no match for the Ruler of Mars. He took a small step forward to avoid the glowing weapon and then grasped the rushing traitor's throat. He lifted her, suspending the saffron demon like an animal

trophy, but he never took his eyes off Adriel. The raven-maned defector flinched, planning to attack the outrageous trespasser in a double assault, but he reacted too fast. She stopped and watched helplessly.

Chamuel then burst into a flash of red brilliance. When it abated, the diffused twilight returned. Muriel reunited with the ether of her origin. “The void from which she arose has reclaimed the fallen Dominion,” the Lord’s defender stated, “the price of her betrayal. Now comes your sad conclusion, faithless wretch.”

“You keep your strength and your identity well concealed, Prince of the Seraphim,” Adriel remarked in astonishment, almost admiration. “Until this very moment, I thought only empty rumors encircled who you are. The choir of the Seraphim stays to itself, and I have not seen your like until now.”

“True, only the Seraphim know my real nature,” he replied. “To all others, I am first among the Powers.”

“And now I, too, know your real nature.” Chamuel turned to the mocking voice and saw Kerubiel, a Cherub of such ferocity that the stars quake in her presence.

Kerubiel stood as the embodiment of hate. Her balefire wings spread wide, like a blazing canopy. The rocky, molten texture of her fluidic and smoldering torso glowed red. Flames flickered from her mouth when she spoke. Her eyes glared, unsettling, like whirling hot cinders and as wild as the tornadoes of Neptune. Chamuel snarled at her. Fury did not fill him, but intense grief instead.

“Behold me; I am the greatest of angels; I am might!” Kerubiel proclaimed. “I have grown beyond the limitations of the Cherubim, and I now lead this rebellion. Lucifer will bow to me before this day has set. After I destroy you, Seraph, all will gather at my beckon. I will be the Presence,



Kerubiel

and every living thing will cower in fear of my wrath. I am my alpha and my omega.”

She was insane. The combined power of all the volcanoes that ever erupted on Earth did not have the explosive energy now standing against Chamuel. The angel of forgiveness stood between two immense forces, both resolutely committed to his demise.

“This is your last opportunity, Chamuel,” pleaded Adriel, instinctively fearing the Cherub more than the Seraph. “Join us or die an everlasting death.”

“The drone has no choice,” hissed Kerubiel. “He would never be one with us, so loyal to his King.”

The fiery demon burst at Chamuel like a cataclysm from Hell. Their blunt collision exploded beyond a supernova, fracturing all the surrounding matter. Adriel’s palace fragmented. The shock pushed Chamuel back; never had he absorbed so much

raw energy at once. Kerubiel tumbled like an insect in a blast of air, underestimating the fearsome Seraph's resistance.

The armored noble recovered and faced his opponent, who was just realizing the naked power of her adversary. This angel of the second choir had gained strength beyond the constraints of the Cherubim, but from where it came remained a mystery.

Kerubiel pounced again, but her massive first strike had drained her. Despite the rage and berserk ferocity, fatigue sapped her stamina. Still, a blind frenzy prevented her from thinking instead of mindlessly thrashing. She struck and struck, like a threatened wasp.

Chamuel questioned his reserves, but the battle-wrought soldier of Heaven withstood the blitz and fought back savagely. Adriel watched until the thunderous Cherub sensed defeat and called out.

The nightmarish vixens streaked toward the lone warrior, their speed beyond light, but to Chamuel they moved as if in a slow, languid dream. The prince of the highest choir extended his palms toward his enemies, and the blackness of space turned white. His antagonists disintegrated as if they had never lived. For the time being, this assured that no living witnesses could attest to the abilities of God's purest order.

The victor floated alone among the stars, weakened from the struggle but feeling the generous Lord's gift of strength rapidly returning to his body. He readied to join the battle with his command, but a greater determinant intervened, and he found himself inside the imperial amethyst castle. There, Chamuel stood at the foot of the crystal dais upon which the Dominion leader rested. Hesediel no longer appeared weary or tired. He sat augustly, fully composed, beaming with confidence.

"The war for Heaven has decisively turned in our favor," Hesediel announced, suppressing his elation. The corners of his mouth tilted

optimistically, and the violet light of the hall cast a warm glow. "You have defeated Kerubiel and Adriel, and your subordinate has routed Adriel's evil horde. Two of the vilest of God's enemies are gone, and Lucifer, who chooses his battles prudently, has fled. The realm of Alchil thanks you, adept warrior, and is obliged to your Lord. Now you must leave us so we may heal our sublime expanse."

Chamuel's full identity remained unrevealed, even to the Dominion. A moment later, the Seraph, admired for his inner peace, stood before the pompous Zadkiel.

"You have done a great service for both universes, Chamuel," Zadkiel tediously praised. The administrator's uninspiring vapidness draped this hall in a dreary tone. "Although from an inferior realm, Kerubiel discovered a way to inflate her strength. She had imbibed the ether of Heaven from a source unknown at present. Left alone, she could have gained the means to challenge our own ambit. You and your angels have our permission to return to your prior duties until once again requested."

The commanding Power responded with a tight-lipped grimace and then vanished, along with his unflinching army.

The change in Kerubiel repudiated the parameters of Heaven. Zadkiel seemed satisfied that the threat had passed, but the Seraphim could not be so heedless of her uncharted potential—her long-awaited evolution. The conclave of the Burning Ones would now assemble to discuss the crisis that may unfold in an uncertain future. And yet, so close to God, Chamuel wondered about Kerubiel's metamorphosis. It confirmed the first constituent tampering with the choirs since their creation. Chamuel's thoughts turned to Michael. The invincible Seraph prince shuddered. Heaven could fall before the answers revealed themselves, and the time came for Chamuel to enter the interdimensional sanctuary of Makon to meet with his Seraphim order. Ω