

The Blood of Angels
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El kept her eyes shut tight. Even through her eyelids she could sense the bright light that surrounded her. She did not want to open her eyes. If she opened them it would all be real and she did not want to face reality. El heard a buzzing by her ear. She reached up to swat it away. Some bothersome insect she thought. The buzzing moved a little further away. The buzz slowed. El could hear the individual flap of wings now: Bzzzzzsssstttthhfpfpfpthfpthfpthwpthwp thwap thwap thawp.

El opened her eyes and was blinded in the whiteness of the light that surrounded her. It was like walking through a blizzard. The light stung her eyes and sent searing bolts of pain into her brain. The sound of wings was still there. Now it was a rhythmic beating. The sound of the heart in her mother's chest, the sound of a train starting its long journey, the sound of an angel descending to the earth. Then the sound stopped.

"How are you doing?"

El squinted her eyes, desperately trying to see past the brightness. She thought she saw a shape; but she was not sure. The image was washed out and spears of light crept around the sides of the form.

"How are you?"

El said nothing.

"Do you trust me?" El dropped to the ground and wrapped her arms around her knees. Slowly she began to rock back and forth.

"Where's my mom?" She asked in a whisper.

"Safe," the voice said. "Do you trust me?"

El looked up at the shifting shape. Her heart was filled with a sense of loss and bewilderment. There was no fear.

She nodded, "I do."

"Then stand up."

El saw parts of the shape approach and before she could react she was in the dark. She felt the warmth of flesh pressed against her head, covering her eyes. She felt something reaching between her eyelids. El threw her head back but the shape held her unflinchingly. She tried to struggle, tried to break free, but she could not move. Her eye went dark. She blinked and her other eye was forced open.

"He's blinding me," El thought. "The pain will start in a minute."

For a moment both eyes were open, one blinded by darkness the other blinded by light. Then her second eye went dark. There was no pain; only relief to no longer be subjected to the piercing brightness of the light. El felt fingers pressing against her head, gently rubbing. A hand covered her face and El felt two points of painless pressure where her eyes had been. The hand left her face and she gasped as the world around her was revealed.

"Do you trust me?" The angel patiently asked.

"Yes," El whispered.

El saw a prairie stretching out before her. It was a gently rolling grassland like she had seen so many times on the long drive to her grandmother's house. She saw butterflies dancing across the tops of the grass and an eagle circling in the distance. The grassland went far past the horizon and out of her view. A bison bellowed to his mate

and she watched the herd standing off to her right slowly chew their mid-day cud.

El heard a creek trickling behind her and turned to see that she was standing on the border of a forest. But this forest was different. The lighting was all wrong. There were no dark places or frightening edges. The trees themselves seemed to be illuminated so that a light from below bounced off of the underside of the canopy. Entering that would be like entering a lighted garden at night.

El examined the grass more closely and realized that it also seemed to be glowing from within. What she had first taken to be daylight was the light produced by a trillion blades of grass. El looked up into the dazzling blue sky. She whirled around two then three times. Searching.

"Where am I?" She asked as she spun.

"Where you are."

"Where's the sun?" She asked.

"There is no sun here."

"They why is there light?"

"You can see for yourself that everything here is reflecting light; everything but you."

El looked down at her hands which looked oddly dull and muted. Her red dress was a dark gray. The specks of brown dirt on her hands were pitch black.

"Where am I?" she asked again.

"In heaven."

"So, I'm dead then. Is my family alright?"

"They are still alive."

"What happened?"

"There was a gas explosion in the kitchen of the restaurant. You were thrown across the room and against a wall."

"Was anyone else hurt?"

"Yes," the angel motioned down to the creek. For the first time El saw that there was another young girl speaking to an angel. The girl and El looked at one another for an instant and then looked past each other. Beyond the young girl was another angel holding a small infant and speaking to it.

"Why is that baby here?"

"A baby can die."

El now spun around again; this time seeing all of the other conversations going on around her in this place. The angels all looked similar; but the people all looked different. Different colors, different clothes, different languages. But one thing was the same.

"There are only children here."

"Adults go elsewhere to wait. You and those like you are brought here to be blessed and to be a blessing."

"What do you mean?"

"You will see."

"When?"

"Soon; let's go."

The angel led El across the stream which seemed to sparkle and release light at every splash and gurgle. They entered the forest.

"What happened earlier? Why couldn't I see?" El asked as they

walked.

"You needed new eyes. The eyes from your world are not right for this world. They were not able to see the reflection of God in everything that exists here."

"Cool, so you upgraded my eyes."

"No, these eyes are just different. They're new."

"Are there any other parts of me that need to be made new?" El asked with trepidation.

"Yes."

"Which ones?"

"All of you, eventually." They continued on in silence, then the angel said, "You were made for your world. In a little while you will be made anew for this world. Then, at the end of creation, you will be made anew for eternity."

"That seems like a lot of work," El mused.

"It is."

El and the angel continued to walk through the woods. As the trees grew more densely together the light grew brighter. El pulled a leaf off of one of the branches. It glowed in her hand. She twirled the stem of the leaf between her fingers and then let it go. The leaf floated for a second in the air and then played on a nonexistent breeze before it settled back onto the ground.

"How long until the end of creation?"

"That is different for everyone."

"How can it be different? God creates; when God is done creating

he's done."

"You are outside of time now. In this place God does not allow himself to be constrained by the laws of time. Each child who comes here experiences the fullness of creation and only when God is done creating is creation finished."

"That didn't answer my question."

"It is an unanswerable question."

"Okay."

They traveled on a little way in silence. El studied the angel. He wore a white shroud around him that seemed to shimmer. As she looked closer it gave off the illusion of being all colors flashing among its threads. Beyond the strange robe the angel seemed quite human. El realized that she had no real reason at all to presuppose that this man was an angel other than the instinct she felt within her heart.

"What are you?" El asked.

"An angel. Why do you ask?"

"I assumed you were but I wanted to be sure." The continued on.

"What's your name?"

"I do not really have a name. I am one of God's highest orders and we do not need names."

"How does God call you, or tell you what to do?"

"He doesn't call us or instruct us or tell us what to do. We know his will and do it. We are with him always and understand his desires."

"Oh."

"If it is easier you can call me Ophanim. That is not our name but

it does describe us. We are the Oupil of God's eye."

"What do you do...I mean when you're not leading me through these woods?"

"We do two things. We take people to God and we worship in God's presence."

"That sounds awfully boring."

"It would be for you. But it is what I was created for. Doing that for which God made you is the most satisfying thing you can do."

"What did God create me for?"

"For a time such as this. Do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"Then let me carry you."

The Ophanim took off his robe and El gasped. All over the Ophanim's white body were eyes constantly moving and searching. Not only did the eyes seem to be searching but they moved slowly across his body. His skin seemed to be alive with roving eyes. Each was a different color and each seemed to be looking in a different direction. El tried to look back to where the Ophanim's head had been but it seemed to have dissolved into his circular body. Great white wings like the wings of a bat emerged from the Ophanim. The wings were also covered with eyes.

"Hold onto me," the Ophanim said from somewhere. El grabbed hold, being careful not to crush any of the eyes. Wherever she put her hands the eyes would retreat into the body and come back out somewhere else.

El felt the rhythmic pulsing of air as the Ophanim beat its wings and slowly rose off of the ground.

"Where are we going?" El asked with mounting trepidation.

"I told you," the Ophanim said. "I take people to God."

The further they flew the more comfortable El became. At first, she clung tightly to the feathery skin of the Ophanim. the first time she had looked down she had seen the ground swiftly departing beneath them. She shut her eyes tight hoping to put out of mind the height at which they now flew. But overtime she was able to overcome her anxiety and open her eyes and gaze in wonder at the world that passed beneath her.

the further they flew the brighter the light became. El again tried to find the sun in the sky so that she could at least determine which direction they were going. But she could not find the sun anywhere. There was the occasional cloud but nothing else in the sky. At home El had always loved laying on the grass and staring up in the sky and watching the contrails of the airplanes appear and then vanish. She was always struck at how similar it was to the wake of a boat on the water. Either transport left a brief fleeting evidence of where it had been but then it was gone.

Thinking about home the realization finally struck El. "I am dead. This Ophanim is taking me to God. I'm going to see God. I wonder what he's like?"

El had gone to church all of her life. She had seen pictures of God in Sunday school since before she could remember. Even now she could bring to mind images of a man with flowing white hair sitting on

a throne set before various choirs of angels singing and playing their harps. She could also see pictures of Jesus that had always hung on the wall at home. It had started to fade into dull shades of brown and yellow but it was still Jesus, a handsome man with brown flowing hair and a short beard. she had grown up singing love songs to Jesus. *Jesus Loves Me, Jesus loves the little children, and I'll be a sunbeam for him.* And she had tried to obey Jesus in everything she did. She obeyed because more than anything else in the world. She trusted that Jesus would be there for her. The angel had told her that it was taking her to God and more than anything she hoped that meant it was taking her to Jesus.

The Ophanim spoke for the first time in a long while startling El.

"Look over there." The Ophanim pointed ahead and to the left.

"When we cross over these mountains you will see the city of God." The Ophanim flew over the last peak of what had been an enormous mountain range. they flew mere feet above pure virgin snow that seemed to glow from within. El looked up from the snow and gasped. Her new eyes were nearly blinded with the radiance of the light emanating from the city

El had never before seen a city with walls and gates around it and she marveled at their height and thickness. The city within those walls went off as far as she could see. She could just barely make out the walls of the city on the far horizon. Within those walls there was a slope up to the center of the city. Houses lined the streets of the city while each house was fully distinguishable all the houses seemed to be interconnected. four rivers ran through the city each sparkling

and clean. The rivers met and formed a moat around the castle which sat in the center of the city which was the highest point.

El could see people walking about the city. She saw cafes and restraints and bookstores and baseball diamonds and football fields. el saw dogs and cats and other animals roaming playfully into the streets. Above the city she saw a great number of birds but then realized that most of them were not birds but were angels of various shape and size.

"Can we stop and explore the city?"

"Not right now. this is not a place for people."

"But what about those people?"

"those are angels."

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"Then where are the other people."

"I told you they are waiting."

"Then where are we going?"

The angel gave no reply as it flew over house and fields and streets and rivers.

The Ophanim flew straight toward an upper wall of the castle. There was a large window. The ophanim flew through the window then quickly spread its wings to come to a stop. The Ophanim stepped out of the air and helped El down onto the floor. Where she collected her legs under her. Her hand looked so dark and ugly compared to the brilliance of everything around her.

"El, this is God."

El spun around expecting the old man but saw no one. She saw only a spinning cloud above a statue of two angels. El looked around for Jesus but could not find him either. El turned back to the throne.

"Daddy," she screamed with joy and raced to the throne. She threw her arms around the man who had materialized on the throne. This man looked like her father but she knew that he was so much more.

"I love you El."

"I love you Daddy."

God hugged El.

"I want you to meet an old friend of yours."

El who was now sitting in God's lap turned her head.

"Jesus!"

"Do you love me El?" God asked as El sat on the floor studying God's house.

God no longer looked like El's father instead God appeared as a glowing cloud with multicolored sparks shooting out at seemingly random intervals. Some of the sparks only went a few feet and then disappeared, some of the sparks shot out of the room even through walls and would return minutes or hours later. El noticed that the radiance of the light of God was having an effect on her body. El's skin no longer appeared as dark or as dull as it had. Slowly it was becoming lighter and more luminous. It also was starting to appear somewhat transparent and from time to time El thought she could almost see through her hands.

"Do you love me El?"

El startled, "of course I love you, you know that God."

"Then there is something I would like you to do."

"I'll do anything."

"Don't agree until you know what it is. It is going to be dark and dangerous. you could lose everything."

"I'm already dead, what more is there to lose."

"Life is most important to the living, but there are things greater than life."

"What do you want?"

"I want you to be a witness to my creation."

"Haven't you already created?"

"El, there is no time, there is nothing other than my will."

"Then why do you need me."

"I don't, but I want you to have the opportunity to grow and mature. I want you to be ready for the time after my judgement."

"I thought there was no time."

"You are in a place now that has not been judged. There will be a judgement and while your name is written in my book of life you have not yet earned the reward you could receive after the judgement. This is your opportunity to serve me."

"Why am I special.":

"You died as a child. Adults have had the opportunity to earn their reward by serving me in life."

At this the seat under God lifted up and El saw hundreds, or maybe thousands, maybe millions of people dressed in white. They all looked at God with joy and shouted out exclamations in their own language.

The cacophony was so loud that El covered her ears and stepped back.

God spoke a word and all were still for a moment. Then one voice could be heard.

"?Quando es su judgemente?"

"Una piquetto tiemp."

The voices resumed their worship and God's seat was lowered.

"You can take your place alongside them today or you can serve me as a Dominion."

"What is a Dominion?"

"One who watches over the angels giving them council, blessing them, and protecting them. You would be given the responsibility to care for one of my creation. One of my Archangels in fact.

"Don't angels care for people?"

"In a roundabout way. The spirit of a dead angel becomes a virtue, a power, a principality...they go by different names. I ask them to watch over people much like you will be watching over an angel. An angel is a being of substance, much like a human. But the angels were created to be able to transcend the planes of existence in their physical form. Humans were not created to do that."

What were humans and angels created for?" At its most basic level angels were created to serve me. Humans were created to have fellowship with me. Humans will never know the fullness of service to God that angels experience and the angels will never know the closeness to God that you humans can experience.

"So why are you asking me to serve you?"

"So, you can have a closer fellowship with me."

"I don't understand."

"That's okay, you understand better than you think. Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Will you witness creation and serve as a Dominion?"

"Yes."

Suddenly everything was black.

A pulsing blue light throbbed in the center of nothing. It beat like a heart. El watched the rhythmic pulsing for a while. It gradually occurred to her that with each beat the light would grow a little more and then contract into a tighter ball. As the pulse was drawn into a tighter and tighter sphere El began to feel herself being ripped toward the blue light. With each contraction, she felt a growing discomfort that was released as the light expanded. El felt herself stretched and released, stretched and released. The sensation moved from discomfort to real pain. El tried to scream but no sound was produced. Her vocal chords moved but there was no air to reverberate. El tried to turn away but was unable. She tried to cover her eyes but her hands would not move. The light continued to pulse and ebb. Now, when it pulsed it expanded further than El could see; it took up all of existence. When it contracted, it became a dense point in nothingness. The light collapsed into itself and paused. It did not expand but sat there for half a second. The ripping crushing pressure made El feel that she was about to be aborted from the fabric of existence. In that moment, a faint whisper played across El's ear.

"Be."

The light exploded.

El felt waves of ecstasy wash across her as the light expanded around her in a concussion wave.

She looked down and was startled by her body. It was similar to the body she had always had, but this body was translucent. Light seemed to emanating from it yet at the same time she could see through herself.

A wind swirled around her. This wind reflected the blue light that was still sparking around her. From within the vortex came the voice of God.

"This is the beginning of my first creation: heaven. It is a place for my servants to live and a place from which eventually I will interact with your kind. Watch as I create its landscape."

El watched as the blue light began to converge into rivers and lakes and land. Forests burst up out of the ground, mountains erupted but the land was complete wilderness. There were no cities anywhere.

"El I want you to help me create."

"How?"

"I am about to create my angels who will build my resting place in this land. I want you to imagine what the angels should be and I will use those thoughts as my template."

El thought about the four Seraphim in God's thrown room but she did not want those monstrous angels. Then she thought of the Ophalim who had transported her to God and she did not want God to create that angel. The she thought of her mother and father and in her head she

combined all of their best qualities and imagined that angel. El reimagined the angel to be very strong and hold great beauty and to be able to make the most wondrous music with which to worship God.

"Your choice is good."

El saw the hands of God reach into the light and begin to form a shape. God slowly formed the shape out of the light so that it appeared just as El had imagined. When the angel was fully formed, God took the body and plunged it into a flowing stream. As the body was lifted out of the waterish eyes opened and it slowly expanded its wings. Its wings pulsed for a moment as new blood coursed through its veins. Then the angel bowed before God.

"You are my only Lord," the angel said. "I will serve you and do as you command. I will bow before no other."

"You are good.," God said. With those words the angel took off and began to fly. As it flew it sang a song of praise. The song was more beautiful than any El had ever heard. El watched as God began creating thousands of angels with many hands. Each one different and special. Each bowed before God and affirmed God's lordship. Then each flew off and joined in the song of praise.

As God worked he turned to El.

"Look at that angel," God pointed with one of his multitude of hands. "That is the angel you will watch over and bless. Its name is Ibliss." At the sound of its name Ibliss fell out of the sky and landed before God.

"Ibliss, this is your Dominion. Listen to her."

Ibliss knelt before God. "I will do as you command my creator. I

dedicate my existence to you."

"I will make you a great leader if you will worship me."

"I will serve you and I will worship you." A deep rumbling began. It took El several seconds to realize that the sound was coming from Ibliss. The pitch and volume began to crescendo. Until all at once Ibliss opened his mouth and a piercing wail erupted. The wail morphed into a rapidly shifting wordless melody. El was fascinated by the notes tripping past her ear. The song Ibliss sang ran the gamut of her emotions. She laughed with joy, wept with sorrow, felt the great emptiness of loneliness, smirked with humor, and was struck dumb with awe. This was all in worship of God.

Throughout the song, God did not change, but as Ibliss continued to sing El realized that another song was being sung by God. God sang a tune that was not a compliment to Ibliss son but rather served as its own unique presence. Ibliss song seemed to wrap itself around God's son; it weaved in and out. At the moments when the two songs met, El was lifted to a place of ecstasy in worship.

After a long time Ibliss' song ended. Now God continued singing alone. God's song became louder and stronger. God began to add lyrics to his melody.

First, he sang of Ibliss who would be the Prince of the Princes of Angels. Ibliss the leader of the archangel. Ibliss who would be able to discern that which is righteous from that which is sinful. Ibliss who would be very wise yet pious.

Ibliss sang back a melody. "I shall kneel before no one but you oh

Lord. Ibliss will be the first to rise in the morning and the last to sleep at night. Ibliss who would be like lightening. The second brightest light in heaven after God. Ibliss who is blessed over all other creation. Ibliss worship leader of heaven."

The God sang the name Michael and another angel came into existence before God. Michael who is as God. Michael the weigher of souls. Michael the just judge. Michael of the white armor and flaming sword who will crush the evil ones under his feet. Michael, you are my warrior.

Then God sang of Gabriel, beautiful Gabriel. Princess of heaven with 140 wings. You will care for the weak and needing. You will be the revealer of salvation. You will be my witness of the goodness to come to all those who will listen. You are my beautiful messenger.

God sang the name Raphael and an angel with six wings appeared. From his back rose the heads of a number of serpents. Raphael, you will be a physician and healer. You will bring comfort to the sick and dying you will bring joy and cheer to all you meet along life's journey. You are my healer.

God sang of Sariel who follows God's commands. Sariel who is responsible for the fate of those angels who transgress the laws. Sariel the dark silent and menacing, but with the eyes of a lover to all. You are my angel of death.

God sang the name Uriel and a great fire erupted before God. At the center of the fire knelt an angel. Even as the fire extinguished flames crackled and popped from the body of this angel. Uriel seemed to have feathers of fire. You are the most pitiless of all my

creations. You are my fire; the fire of God which will be made visible to all. You will wrestle with many and be feared by all. You are my angel of repentance.

God called the name Raguel. You will watch over the good behavior of my angels. You shall congratulate and reward. You will look out for all that is good and bring attention to it. You are the friend of God.

God sang the name Remiel. You are the governor of those souls awaiting the resurrection. You will watch over the kingdom below my throne until the time that has been appointed.

Once again God sang out their names: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Sariel, Uriel, Raguel, Remiel. You are my Archangels. You are my lieutenants. You will watch over all the angels who will be my servants. You are the princes of my kingdom. You will have dominions to watch over you and guide you as you serve me. Ibliss shall instruct you in your service. He shall be the Prince of Princess and the mouthpiece of God.

Now I will call my watchers to me.

Sandalphon you will be a spiritual guide. An angel in a long black robe appeared kneeling before God. Dark sparks of energy emitted from him.

Israfael you are my angel song. You will have the sweetest voice of all God's creature.

At this El noticed Ibliss flinch.

Camael you who see God. You will hold back the great chaos and save many souls from judgement.

My watchers shall be Shemazai, Armaros, Araquiel, Azazel,

Baraqijal, Ezequeel, Gadreel, Kokabel, Penemue, Sariel and Shamsiel. As each was named a newly formed angel appeared kneeling about God. You shall watch and never sleep. You shall look over my future creation and offer a supportive hand but you are not to interfere with their development. They must follow their own path and learn to worship me. You will teach them only of me and my wisdom and you shall not pervert their ways.

God sang out the name of angel after angel. Soon there was a great congregation kneeling before God. God's song became fuller and richer and deeper. Angels began to appear everywhere. On the ground, in the air, on the distant hilltops and at the very feet of God. Each of the angels knelt in subjugation to God their creator.

The musical tones of God's creation crescendo into a roar and all at once the angels leapt to their feet and began a chorus of praise to the Lord at the center of the ever-shifting pantheon of angels was Ibliss, leading the song and teaching all the angels how to praise.

El sat back and watched the millions of angels that now surrounded the throne. and she wept in awe at the glory of God.