

Rebound volume 2

B.I.B.L.E. Comics script

By Gitte Tang Jensen & Maia Fjordmand

1.

After visiting Lana on Netoka, Balthazar returns to his paradise. Duncan is waiting outside Balthazar's ornate looking house. The paradise resembles a desert, but is broken up by greenery here and there, especially around the house.

As soon as he sees Balthazar, Duncan throws out his arms in a questioning gesture.

Duncan: "Where in the seven heavens have you been?"

Balthazar: "I've been attending to some personal business, if you must know. I hear you were looking for me? Sorry to keep you waiting."

He opens the door to his house and Duncan follows him inside.

Duncan: "There are reasons you have to report where you are at all times, with a position like yours."

Balthazar: "Yes, it slipped my mind. I have a lot to take care of."

Balthazar looks indifferent about the slip-up as he walks into the foyer and adds the envelopes he picked up from Pam to a stack of papers already lying on a low cabinet standing against the wall.

While the walls and decorations inside are colorful, the hall looks quite pristine, with little other than the stack of papers to indicate that anyone lives there.

Duncan: Seems a bit sceptical. "I'm sorry to add to your load, but you're needed to lead a mission on Tibra."

Balthazar: "What, with you?"

Duncan: "No, with Opal. I'm simply the messenger. It's about a rupture in the barrier. A small one so far."

Balthazar: "But big enough to have demons spewing out of it, since they send the army. Opal is on a break."

Duncan: "Not anymore." He shrugs apologetically.

Balthazar leans on the cabinet behind him, seemingly annoyed.

Balthazar: "What's holding you up? You can't be very busy if they send you out as message boy."

Duncan: “I’m going back to Kimera to clean up the sacrificial site. The Council wants it destroyed and removed completely. Not a big mission now that we’ve already cleaned out most of the sin eaters.”

Balthazar: “This is on the Council's orders?”

Duncan: “Heh. Yeah, it’s nice to get an easy job once in awhile. Actually, I offered to brief you so I had a chance to say that, if you feel you’re in need of more soldiers, just say so. Mine will probably be deadly bored with the demolition work.”

Balthazar: “Well... A big part of Opal’s team was killed. I’m not updated on who has been added to her platoon, but they're probably new recruits.” He smiles. “That’s nice of you.”

Duncan: “Oh it was Thera's suggestion. You know, my platoon sergeant. We're working on having her promoted to lieutenant, so I put her in charge of assignments when I can.”

He gives Balthazar a friendly pat on the shoulder before walking away.

Duncan: “I’ll see you later, buddy. I’ll tell her to join up with Opal.”

Balthazar: “Yeah, I need to get going too.”

2.

Balthazar walks down a long hallway in the large, old building where the Council usually has its base.¹

Down the hall, Xifeng, one of the high councillors, exits one of the adjacent rooms through a tall door. She is a human woman - Chinese, elderly looking and not very tall. She has an air of authority about her and the scars across her face is a reminder of her time as a renowned general.²

She appears to have to make an effort not to slam the door behind her. She looks very irritable as she walks in Balthazar's direction.

Balthazar: "Councillor Xifeng!"

Xifeng: "If it isn't the lizard." She looks at Balthazar with no expression.

Balthazar: "I'm... not a lizard, ma'am."

Xifeng walks straight past him and Balthazar turns around to follow her.

Balthazar: "I was looking for Amadihn, ma'am, but I could just as well talk to you. I'm concerned--"

Xifeng: "If you wish to speak with me, make an appointment."

Balthazar: "Councillor, with all due respect, I'm in a bit of a hurry."

Xifeng: Snaps around and glares at him sternly. "We are not here to take care of whatever menial issues you may have. I am needed elsewhere and the head councillor is occupied as well. I suggest you leave and take your inquiries somewhere more appropriate, general."

Xifeng walks away and Balthazar looks at her with a mix of irritation and self-consciousness, which is the effect she usually has on people. Despite this, he approaches the door Xifeng came out of and considers it for a moment before he decides to go inside.

In the hall on the other side of the door, the head councillor Amadihn is in the middle of talking to Mikael, the archangel.

Balthazar: "Oh. Saint Mikael."

Balthazar does a slight bow and appears completely dumbfounded to see Mikael there.

¹ [The council building from the outside](#)

² [Badass war veteran and councillor, Xifeng](#)

Amadihn: “Are you completely devoid of all sense of manners? Who let you in here?”

Mikael: “It is no concern, Councillor.”

Mikael looks mostly human, but his head is constantly changing shape as he speaks and his silhouette flickers strangely. He moves towards Balthazar and is stretched into the shape of a long, peacock colored dragon in the process.³

Mikael continues to flicker and change shape and grow longer while he walks a circle around Balthazar appraisingly.

Mikael: “General Balthazar ser-Imad. Obstinate even as he treads before us. Perhaps a necessary trait in such a worn soul.” He stares at Balthazar with an unblinking, mask like human face. “Why do you fear us so? We wish you no harm, child.”

Balthazar really does look to be extremely uncomfortable. The archangel’s presence is overwhelming, like he emits way too much sensory input for a regular person to make sense of. Balthazar stubbornly returns Mikael’s gaze regardless.

Balthazar: “I think I’m a bit old to be addressed as a child.”

Mikael: “You are all our children. Impatient and imperfect as you are. Why do you seek the Councillor?”

Balthazar: “I came to speak to Amad-- I mean, the high councillor. Eh... About a mission.. I have to attend shortly.”

Mikael: “This matter is of greater importance than our questions. You may continue, guardian of Heaven.”

Amadihn glances at Mikael with a slightly puzzled look on his face.

Amadihn: “As you will, Archangel.”

³ [Some Mikael concept sketches](#)

2.1

Balthazar follows Amadihn out into the hallway. He glances over his shoulder before shutting the door behind him. Mikael is still staring straight at him.

Amadihn: “What is the problem this time, Balthazar?”⁴

Balthazar: “I’m sorry, I didn’t—”

Amadihn: “Your problem?”

Balthazar: “Well I just spoke to you about this, and now I have to find I’m being thrown on a mission without proper soldiers again?”

Amadihn: “Walk with me; I have other things to attend than laying ear to your complaints.”

He starts walking in the opposite direction from where Balthazar came in.

Amadihn: “I assume you have been assigned to the recent development on Tibra? The troops are not your concern. You are a general. You lead the operation, you do not pamper the recruits.”

Balthazar: “Of course they are my concern! It’s my concern when I’m not properly equipped to see a mission through without having to drag everyone back mauled and dead!”

Amadihn: “That vile Skull corporation seems to battle Hell itself over who can make rifts in more worlds faster. We simply cannot afford to move our focus to small worlds such as Tibra.” He pauses. “And Kimera, well. Kimera was lost long ago. If you aren’t competent enough to solve this issue with what troops we can spare, then—”

Balthazar: “Oh please! I talked to Duncan - Duncan Rosewood - and he tells me his platoon is going on a clean-up job on Kimera? I know he’s been stationed there for a while, but those soldiers could be out where they’re actually needed! Meanwhile you can’t team anyone not straight out of boot camp up with my lieutenants when they’re short of people? We’re draining the entire military of any competent soldiers, letting people die over paperwork and formalities!”

Amadihn: “I believe Saint Mikael was very right in calling you obstinate. Have you suddenly become an expert on the military’s logistics?”

Balthazar: “No, but I’m the one who’s out there trying to keep the pieces together! As far as I know, the only councillor I share that experience with is Xifeng! The Council has given a lot of direct orders lately, Amadihn.

⁴ [The head high councillor. Amadihn](#)

Take this thing with Rex. We know he's capable of being a serious threat, he has obviously had support on Kimera, but you refuse to send a few people to investigate it? Cleaning up a thousand year old relic that we already effectively broke is somehow more important?"

Amadihn: "And cleaning up this relic does not count as investigation? It's certainly more enlightening than chasing after Rex. We have discussed this, he has no one to turn to. The clans in Hell would like to see him strung up as much as I suppose you would. Everyone knows his face, he is as much of a wanted man as he has been for the last hundred years. I am quite unimpressed he spent a century rallying a few mutant cultists on his dying home world. Put it out of your mind."

Balthazar: "If rallying the vampires was the point, why would he stand by and let them be killed? I'm telling you, you're making a mistake. And you're making a mistake again now, dismissing the fact that I'm sent to deal with a rift unprepared."

Amadihn: "I am not dismissing anything. I know you find this very difficult to believe, but we are doing our best to make ends meet. Do what you can with what you've been given. Our resources are not endless, and that aside, it is Saint Mikael who shows us the path to follow. Ultimately, the military is his weapon and he will wield it with skill and fairness as he has always done."

Balthazar: "Maybe that's the problem."

Amadihn: Looks at Balthazar for a long moment. "I advise you to choose your words carefully."

Balthazar: "You almost make that sound like a threat."

Amadihn: "Remember, you were only made general because your father convinced me to give you the benefit of doubt."

His expression is stern until he turns his head away and sighs tiredly.

Amadihn: "I hold you in no contempt, Balthazar. It's not that I doubt your skill, I know you were practically raised to do this, but you are too noncompliant and we do not need that in our commanders."

He looks Balthazar up and down judgmentally.

Amadihn: "He was a man who knew his place, Irfan."

Balthazar looks outright resentful at that.

Balthazar: "My father was an exemplary commander. He's also long gone, so now I guess you're stuck with me. And you know what, Amadihn? I'm not going to shut up before you get

that stick out of your ass and start listening to your people instead of some deity who's treating us like an ant farm!"

He pauses for a moment, then clears his throat awkwardly.

Balthazar: "... Excuse my language."

Amadihn: "Goodbye, Balthazar. I think we are done here."

Amadihn disappears through a door at the end of the hallway and leaves Balthazar behind.

3.

On the planet Tibra, a port town has been left completely deserted. The only life is a small number of insect like demons inspecting the many narrow streets where the local citizens had gone about their everyday lives just a couple of days earlier. The town is built on a hillside where the short, many-colored houses overlook the ocean. At the foot of the hill is a small port and a long stretch of beach.

A cross-dimensional gate has been opened in the middle of town, allowing Opal and her platoon to travel to the planet. They are now assessing the situation while waiting for a guardian angel who is supposed to tell them about what happened.

Said guardian angel flies towards the soldiers as fast as he can. He lands among the other angels and takes a moment to catch his breath before addressing the group in a loud voice.

Guardian angel: "Excuse me, where's the general in charge?"

A couple of the soldiers point him towards Balthazar who's in the middle of talking to Opal.

Warrior angel: "General! That guardian who reported the rift is here."

Guardian angel: Looks a bit uneasy as he shuffles over to them. "General, sir, I bring bad news."

Balthazar: "Worse news than the fact there's a rift here? Where are the citizens? it doesn't seem like there has been a fight?"

Guardian angel: "No, luckily not. The mortals were quick to evacuate as soon as they could see the rift forming. Sadly this is the third one in this area within the last two years. At least that means the mortals know to get the hell outta the way."

Balthazar: "I was hoping you could fill us in, we were sent here on very short notice."

Guardian angel: "And luckily so! The rift has started to evolve to a class three! It's no longer stray demons slipping through like the last two times. Some really big ones have crossed and they seem organized. May even have opened the rift themselves."

Balthazar: "Do you have track of how far they've gotten? Have they spread into the city yet?"

Guardian angel: "The small ones that went through first have. They just seem like monster types, though, no bigger than my head. Nothing bad. The ones who worry me appear to gather around the rift."

Opal: “How about the mortals? You say there have been rifts here before, how did they react then? Can we expect them back here?”

Guardian angel: “The first one leaked a single dwarf herapod. It didn’t do much damage. The second rift, though, leaked five gargoyle types - One of which was a mage class. The mortals responded by going into high military alert. They’ll most likely respond fast and with big force.”

The guardian nervously shifts his weight from one foot to the other and looks up at Balthazar.

Guardian angel: “Sir, if that was all, I would really like to get out of the way.”

Balthazar: “Of course, thanks.”

Guardian angel: “Good luck!”

He disappears in a flash of light.

Next to Balthazar and Opal, Mei, one of Duncan’s veteran soldiers, walks to the edge of the roof and looks out at the town below.

Mei: “Another nice field trip.” She takes a deep breath and looks generally pleased with the situation.

Opal: Smiles at her. “Well it’s good to have you with us, Mei.”

Balthazar: To Opal: “Who else did Duncan send with you?”

Opal: “Thera is--”

Thera has followed close after Mei and interrupts Opal.

Thera: “Me as the sergeant in charge, and seven of the experienced regulars.”

She and the rest of Duncan’s soldiers emerge from the crowd of warrior angels. Thera walks up to Balthazar and shakes his hand firmly.

Thera: “Thera. I don’t think we’ve been formally introduced.”

She is a short and compactly built woman with blue feathers, a slightly vulture like appearance and a serious air about her.⁵

Opal: “I think it would be best if we split up right away.”

⁵ [Thera’s here](#)

Balthazar: “Yes. We need a squad to watch out for the locals so we don't end up in an ambush situation.”

Opal: “I can take Saman with me, and the interpreter, if you and Ennet and Thera watch the rift.”⁶

Balthazar: “I would be careful trying to negotiate with them. If they bring the big artillery, I don't think they're likely to stop and chat.”

Opal: “Well it's not them we're here to put down. Let's try to keep this as peaceful as possible, shall we.” She looks at Balthazar with a hint of annoyance.

Balthazar: “Fine. You do what you gotta do. We better move out. Thera, you and your squad are coming with me.”

Balthazar finds Ennet who is standing nearby and puts a hand on his shoulder.

Balthazar: “Ennet, you too. We're watching the rift.” He turns his head towards Opal. “Catch me on the radio if something happens.”

Opal: “Got it.”

She and Saman's squad leave to move further into town. Thera, Ennet and their part of the platoon follow Balthazar to the beach.

⁶ [Opal's platoon sergeants Saman and Ennet](#)

3.1

The rift, which is only visible as a faint, rippling glow in the air, is about as wide as a bus. Four big beetle demons, heavy and armor plated like tanks, stand on the beach close to it. With them is a humanoid demon with moth like features, a few monstrous looking centipedes, and hundreds of football-sized spiders that are skittering around the rift and towards the edge of the town.⁷

The group of angels that followed Balthazar land on the roofs of a block of houses close to the beach. With them are some gryphons carrying a load of portable harpoon cannons, grenades and other ammunition. Most of the angels are already equipped with rifles or smaller firearms, along with their customary swords.⁸

Angel1: “Ihrk, why bug demons? And spiders no less. They must have crawled straight out of Gluttony.” He looks quite uncomfortable.

Ennet peers back at the streets that stretch down towards the beach. Plenty of spiders and a couple of the centipedes have reached them already.

Ennet: “We should block them off from getting further into the city. It's a labyrinth of alleyways in there. It'll be hard to keep an overview.”

Balthazar: “Right. Take a few soldiers and try to get rid of the stray demons or push them back to the beach.” He looks at Thera next. “That leaves us to go straight for the core of the problem, Thera.”

Thera nods and addresses her small squad.⁹

Thera: “Saci, you try and sweep the small ones, but your main objective is to keep track of the big beetle demons. Warn or intervene when they try to ram someone unaware. Erdem, Notrom and Mei take those on the left side. Be cautious of the skull head moths, those things are ridiculously swift on their feet. Jacob, Grey; take care of the ones on the right. Mohid, you and I are going to slaughter anything else coming through that rift!”

Mohid: “Okay, yes Ma'am!” He draws his sword.

Grey and Notrom both take a harpoon cannon from one of the gryphons.

Balthazar: Turns towards the rest of the soldiers. “As for the rest of you, we need a group of harpooners at a distance. Take the gryphons with you and shoot at the bigger demons if

⁷ [Some example insect demon designs](#)

⁸ [Various sketches of the angels and their weaponry during this mission](#)

⁹ [Most of Thera's squad](#)

they move from the group. Those not going at a distance help keep the smaller ones contained.”

Balthazar walks over to the seraph that has been assigned to the mission along with them.

Balthazar: “And most importantly, our seraph. Hannu, right?”¹⁰

Hannu: “Yes indeed.”

Balthazar: “Hannu takes care of closing the rift. Keep the demons off him so he can do his job.”

The angels take off to go to their respective posts.

¹⁰ [Here's Hannu](#)

3.2

Nicholas stands on the roof of a building with a pair of binoculars and looks out on the upper part of the town.

Nicholas: “I don't see any mortals at all...” He spots a quadrupedal creature through the binoculars. “Unless they walk on all fours and look kinda like a cat with three eyes.”

Angel1: “Good. If we can avoid contact with the inhabitants all together, that's for the best.”

Nicholas: “Doesn't look like they've spotted any on Saman's side either.” He glances towards another building where a few other angels are acting as scouts.

Angel2: “At least the demon sweeping crew is doing well.”

Angel1: “Well what do you know, we might not end up in a big mess this ti-me--”

Angel1 looks down, horrified by the bullet wound that has gone clean through his chest. Nicholas stands as if paralyzed while Angel1 collapses.

Angel2: “SNIPERS! THE MORTALS ARE ATTACKING, WATCH OUT!” He pulls Nicholas down on the ground with him.

The angels on both buildings go into various states of panic. Most of them manage to throw themselves on the ground while another two are shot down.

Opal has stayed on the uppermost floor of the same building as Nicholas. She drives the soldiers that had been on the roof down the stairs as soon as they have a chance to flee.

Opal: Grabs the walkie-talkie she's been carrying. “Saman! We have snipers over here! We have to regroup!”

Saman: “They spotted us too. We'll move in your direction.”

Opal and Saman's squads find each other on a side street halfway between the two buildings they came out of.

Opal: Looks harrowed and out of breath. “We have to come back later. We had to leave two dead on the roof.”

Saman: “We lost one as well.”

Opal looks at her soldiers. Three more of them have been shot, but not fatally so. Still, bleeding from bullet wounds, they aren't in any condition to continue.

Opal: Seems to gather her thoughts. “Okay, so they are definitely ready to shoot at anything that looks foreign.”

The interpreter that has followed Opal and her handful of soldiers pipes up. He is of the same species as the native mortals - a somewhat reptilian looking creature with rooster like green and blue feathers down his back and tail.¹¹

Interpreter: “Wouldn’t anyone?! For all they know we’ve come out of the rift just the same as those demons!”

Opal: “We have to keep them away from the beach or we won’t be able to close the rift. And if they get into a fight with the demons I don’t think--”

Saman: “Lieutenant, you don’t understand - Before they shot at us we could see them roll in tanks! How could we possibly approach them?”

Opal: “I don’t know, but if we don’t do something we’re both compromising the mission and putting them in danger.” She looks at the interpreter. “What do you think? We can’t do anything about their artillery, so is there a way we can get their attention?”

Interpreter: “I guess... I guess if we could get one of them alone I could try and talk to them?”

Saman: “They have tanks! The mortals aren’t exactly under armed for the task--”

Saman is interrupted when a loud noise suddenly comes from the rift:

SCRREECCHHHHHH!

Everyone looks in the direction of the noise. The rift triples in size when a gigantic spider demon tears through it and emerges on the beach. A myriad of small spiders, similar to the ones that were already crawling around on the beach, sit on her hind-body. Some of them fall off when she walks across the sand on her long, spindly legs. The angels on the beach have to flee in every direction, but the spider barely seems to notice them and certainly doesn’t care about their presence.¹²

One of Opal’s soldiers flies up to see what caused the noise and comes back down looking visibly shaken.

Angel: “It’s the biggest demon I’ve ever seen. And it’s coming this way.”

Opal: Takes her walkie-talkie. “Balthazar, are you there?”

It takes a little while for Balthazar to respond.

¹¹ [Tibra’s native people](#)

¹² [Design ideas for the spider queen](#)

Balthazar: “*kkkZHH* what?! I'm kind of-- *kkkzzhh*”

Opal: “Are you okay over there? We have a situation. The locals are bringing in tanks and they're on their way to the beach. I'll stay here and try to contact them; I'm just telling you to watch your backs. Do you need backup?”

Balthazar: “There's a giant*kkzzkkhhh* Spider thing over here! *KkkKzzhh* What do you mean contact them? They have tanks, what do you plan to do? Wave a white flag at them?”

Opal: “We can't let them get through town. It'll just be another Kimera incident where we end up with a giant breach!”

Balthazar: “That's not— Opal, that's a terrible plan! I'm telling you*KKKZZhhhhzZzzh*”

The radio signal dies.

Opal: “Hello? Balthazar!” She looks at the walkie-talkie. “God damnit...”

It hasn't taken the giant spider very many strides to make it into the town. She has gotten far enough to be able to see the mortals with their tanks and vice versa.

One of the tanks aims at the spider and shoots. Although it doesn't seem to do much damage, the spider howls and looks absolutely furious. She conjures up a fireball with one hand and throws it at the tank. The mortal soldiers inside have to flee. The situation is chaotic.

3.3

One of the big beetle demons and a more humanoid mage demon have made it to a small side street where Balthazar and two other angels currently are. The beetle demon has just rushed past Balthazar and collided with a wall.

Balthazar, who was just talking to Opal, looks at his walkie-talkie that is now lying on the ground in pieces after the demon knocked it out of his hand and ran over it.

Balthazar: To the other two angels: "Move it! Up!"

They all spread their wings and take off, but one of them is stopped by the humanoid, moth like demon. When it grabs one of his wings, it's stretched out, and in the same moment the beetle demon thrashes towards the angel and gores him with the horn on its snout, leaving the moth with half a ripped off wing in its hands.

The poor, screaming angel is stuck on the beetle's horn. The beetle slows down, but still thrashes wildly in an effort to shake the angel off.

Balthazar and the other angel land on the roof of one of the buildings surrounding the street.

Balthazar: "A grenade! Do you have a grenade?"

Angel: Fumbles panically. "Here!"

Balthazar: "What are you doing, man?! Throw it!"

He grabs the grenade out of the soldier's hands and throws it down next to the beetle himself.

Balthazar takes his subordinate by the arm and flies away from the explosion. The beetle topples over with a big, charred hole in its side and its legs still writhing and twitching. The moth on the other hand has already caught up to the two angels.

Balthazar lands on the nearest roof and draws his flame enchanted sword. The moth sends a cascade of fire magic in his direction, but it only results in the sword absorbing most of the flames.

The other angel empties an entire clip into the moth, which makes it stop for a moment. The angel looks hopeful right until the moth slowly turns towards him and then, with uncanny speed, rushes the angel and twists his arm around to his back so he drops his gun and is forced to his knees.

Angel: "Arhg!"

3.4

After taking a little while to get his bearings, Balthazar flies towards the rift and the edge of town to find Ennet.

He lands on a roof next to a street where a couple of the other angels are standing.

Balthazar: “Have any of you seen Ennet or Thera?”

Angel: “They are all at the rift, sir. Thera thought it better to secure it for the seraph than fight that... THING!”

Balthazar: “Yeah, you best stay away from it too. Thanks.” He takes off again.

As Balthazar gets closer to the rift the air is thick with smoke from the fires the giant spider and moth demons have started. He notices one of Duncan’s soldiers through the haze. She has been separated from the other angels and is now fighting a lonesome battle against a fat, venomous, centipede like demon.

Balthazar flies down and lands behind the centipede to stab it in the back of the neck with his sword. The centipede that had lifted its head like a cobra, ready to attack, collapses and falls forward. In the process it drags the sword and Balthazar down with it and lands with its head just half a meter from the other angel. When it hits the ground, the weight of the massive creature blows away most of the smoke surrounding them.

Saci: Sits on the ground and looks a bit flustered by the situation. “Th- Thank you, sir.”

Balthazar lost his balance when he was dragged down by the centipede, but manages to stay on his feet. He just nods and, with a bit of difficulty, pulls his sword free of the demon’s tough exoskeleton.

Rex: Stands and looks at the centipede for a bit... then up at Balthazar. “What do you know.”

Balthazar’s head snaps towards Rex who has appeared in the smoke just a few meters away.¹³

Balthazar looks utterly baffled. Rex looks equally confused, but then breaks into a broad smile.

Balthazar: Just stands there and gapes for a couple of seconds. “Are you kidding-- Get up!”

He pulls Saci to her feet, but doesn’t take his eyes off Rex.

¹³ [Rex has dressed down now that he isn’t pretending to be a vampire cultist anymore](#)

Balthazar: “Is this your work? The rift?!”

Rex: “Why yes, of course. I just came riding in here on the back of my giant spider steed, making it rain fire from the skies while drinking the blood of my enemies.” He looks at Balthazar like his question was the stupidest thing he ever heard.

Balthazar: Puts a hand to his head and looks incredibly frustrated. “Well excuse me, but what the hell else are you doing here?”

Rex: “If you must know, I wanted to close the rift from the Hell side. Not that you will believe that of course. But I didn't manage to, when three of those nasty bulldozer beetles came charging at me. So I ran the only way that didn't lead to a horrible death. Straight through the portal.”

Balthazar: Tilts his head slightly to the side. “You're surrounded by angels.”

Rex: “Who are all busy doing their job. And if they stop doing that to chase after meee... The rift might be lost to you for good. With that the fate of this whole planet could be at stake.”

Saci: Raises her sword in a combative pose. “But there's only one of you, and two of us. Should be enough.”

Balthazar stares at Rex expressionlessly before he suddenly kicks off the ground and flies towards him to attack him from the air.

In a fluent motion, Rex moves one hand from a point on the ground between his legs and up until it points at Balthazar. A sizable, three meter long snake like dragon rises from his shadow and follows the hand motion towards Balthazar. He dodges and still manages to reach Rex, but from an odd angle where he can only kick him in the shoulder instead of the chest as planned.

Rex topples backwards and lands on his back. The dragon almost turns itself inside out in a massive u-turn that sends it right back at Balthazar. It hits him, teeth first, and knocks him to the ground.

Saci attempt to attack Rex, but he summons another dragon, this one only half as big, and sends it right in her face. Meanwhile Balthazar scrambles to get away from the larger shadow dragon. While still lying on the ground, he manages to turn around and chuck his sword through the dragon's head.

Rex gets back on his feet, but loses control of the smaller dragon for a second so it ends up thrashing about on the ground like it was having a seizure. Saci takes the opportunity to jump Rex again. She swings her sword at him and Rex retaliates with his own.

With great effort, Balthazar shoves the big dragon off him and hammers his sword, still skewering its head, into the ground.

Saci strikes Rex on his left arm, well enough to draw blood. Rex sweeps her legs out from under her and kicks her in the head after she drops to the ground.

Balthazar draws the pistol he has been carrying under his coat and shoots at Rex. The bullet hits him in the right shoulder. Rex makes an uneasy noise as his whole body jolts forward and he falls over.

The mini-dragon charges at Balthazar. It opens its big mouth and bites over both the pistol and a good part of Balthazar's lower arm before chomping down on it.

Balthazar: "Aargh!" He desperately tries to pry the dragon's teeth out of his arm.

Rex has landed halfway on top of Saci who has passed out, bleeding from her nostrils and mouth after Rex kicked her.

Rex: "Urhg..."

He slowly sits up on his knees and then gets back on his feet.

Rex: "Shooting me in the back... Not nice, Balthazar." He waves an accusing pointer finger.

Rex wobbles a little, but lifts his shaking right hand towards the big dragon.

Balthazar rips the small dragon free of his arm, but it just chomps down on the pistol instead so that it's janked out of Balthazar's hand.

The big dragon raises its head and pulls it free of Balthazar's sword. Its face is more or less ruined with a big gash down the middle. It moves to hit Balthazar in the back again, but this time with its mouth closed - just like the smaller dragon that still has its jaws clamped around the pistol.

Balthazar lands on his side, right on his mauled arm.

Click!

Rex: Is now holding the pistol. He points it at the general's head. "WOULD YOU STOP ALREADY?!"

Balthazar rolls over onto his back and clenches his arm with a pained grimace.

Balthazar: Snarls at Rex: "What is it you Want?"

Rex: "To get out of here ALIVE!"

Annoyed, Rex wipes his face with his left arm and ends up smearing a bit of blood onto it. He angrily spits on the ground.

Rex: “Curse it!”

Balthazar looks up at the sky with a sigh.

Rex: “Just stop fighting already. Then we both walk. I would really like to avoid killing you if possible.”

Balthazar sits up with one hand held in front of him in a placating gesture. Rex is still pointing the pistol at him, but his hand is shaking more and more. He lets his hand drop to his side, but keeps his finger on the pistol’s trigger.

The shadow dragons lie down on the ground between Rex and Balthazar.

Rex: “Look, I’m not here for trouble. I only came out of my hiding spot to help that poor lass.”

He glances at Saci who looks about as afflicted as the other two, still passed out on the ground.

Rex: “You beat me to it, though.”

Balthazar: Closes his eyes and mostly looks completely apathetic. “I can’t just let you go again.”

Rex: “Why not? Afraid the boss gets mad?”

Balthazar: Looks livid. “Because you are an Enemy of Heaven and everything I fight for every day!”

Rex: Laughs tiredly. “And this Heaven of yours, that you have fought for so admirably. How do you like it? I mean, with the endless, pointless battles. Good people dying for what is right and just. Reduced to nothing but a bunch of numbers in the Council’s notes as they continue to follow orders from beings who do not understand the concept of being alive, or dying.”

Balthazar: Looks at Rex with skepticism. “Some of us are pushing to change that.”

Rex: “Ohh, and of course they’ll change. Just like they have done during all the hundreds of years that both you and I have wasted on the military.

You’re older than I, Balthazar, aren’t you? You should have noticed a long time ago that nothing has ever changed, and never will... even if it means the end of everything.

The Council is deaf to reason, and the archangels, in all their greatness, don’t comprehend that things are wrong.”

He lets go of the trigger to put pressure on the cut on his left arm instead.

Balthazar: “So, what, your solution is terrorism? I've only seen you cause death and misfortune, what kind of answer is that?”

Rex laughs again, but a cold, hard laughter. He looks at Balthazar with a grim expression.

Rex: “I'm MAKING things change! One step at the time, nudging things into position for a final blow, that will make the change happen. You don't understand now, nor should you. What kind of Villain,” the word comes over his lips with a tone of disgust, “would reveal his entire plan to the people trying to stop him?”

With a bit of trouble Balthazar slowly stands up.

Balthazar: “Okay. What am I supposed to say to that?”

Rex: “You don't have to say anything.”

Rex is momentarily distracted by a flash of light followed by a gust of wind just a few houses away from them.

Rex: “But I wish that you for once in your life stopped and opened your eyes. Because then you would see that change cannot come from well-meaning sentiments and peaceful discussion. Not in that place.”

The small shadow dragon merges with the larger one and heals it due to the extra supply of energy. It rises from the ground and flies in front of Rex when he starts walking in the direction of the flash.

Rex: “No complaint or outburst against the Council will help if you keep trotting along as a good little soldier boy at the end of their marionette strings.” He steps over Saci. “Anyway, it would appear my lift is here.”

Rex leaves with the dragon. A fox like demon has appeared in the spot where the light flashed before. His five tails whisk back and forth impatiently and he scowls at Rex as he comes towards him.¹⁴

Dexter: “You weren't supposed to be here!”

He fumbles with an abundance of stopwatches that hang from the inside of his slightly oversized coat.

Dexter: “I'm late for four jobs because I had to jump around looking for you! I'm a busy guy you know! Lots of people need teleporting!”

¹⁴ [There he is. Dexter](#)

He latches onto Rex's arm and smiles wide, but a little menacingly.

Dexter: "You're lucky I like you, or I'd probably dump you back in Hell. I hear you really appreciate Sloth's circle."

Rex: "Don't touch me."

Dexter: "Oh Rex, you're no fun."

He just leans further into Rex and smiles even broader before he teleports them away with another flash and a strong surge of wind.

Balthazar has been watching them in the distance, puzzled by the strange, teleporting demon. When they disappear he walks over to Saci. She is still unconscious, so he picks her up and continues his search for Ennet.

3.5

Balthazar teleports himself to the beach, still carrying Saci.

The angels who went with Balthazar at first have returned to the task of clearing the area around the rift. They have split into two groups - One that cuts down every insect demon that comes through the rift, and another that stops the demons that already made it into town from retaking their only route back to Hell. At this point, not many demons are left and the seraph has finally been able to start closing the rift.

Balthazar hands Saci over to the first healer angel he comes across and dismisses her offer to heal his arm before she even has a chance to ask. He spots Ennet among the soldiers at the beach and hurries over to him instead.

Balthazar: "Ennet!" He pulls Ennet away from the others. "You won't believe this, but I just ran into Rex."

Ennet: Looks perplexed for a moment. "But... What?"

Balthazar: "I know. He was with some demon who seemed like he could teleport? Keep this quiet right now, but I need you to go see if there's any trace of where they went. I've never seen a demon who could do that before. I have no idea how it works, but maybe it leaves a rift?"

Ennet: Still seems confused. "What are the odds of him showing up again..."

Balthazar: "It can't be a coincidence. Just... Take care of it, will you? I need to find Opal, have you heard from her?"

Ennet: "I will. And Opal..."

Ennet turns his head towards Saman who is vigorously trying to free another angel who is halfway covered in spiderwebs. A number of small, dead spider demons are strewn around them.

Ennet: "Saman came to see what happened when you disappeared on the radio."

Balthazar flies the short distance over to Saman.

Balthazar: "Saman, what's going on over there?" He gestures towards the town. "Where's your squad?"

One of Saman's hands has gotten stuck to the spiderwebs too, but he has managed to free one of the rookie soldier's arms so he can help cut himself free with his sword.

Saman: “I left them with Opal, sir. I only came to check what was going on over here. She's trying to communicate with the mortals.”

He manages to get his hand free and looks up at the town worriedly.

Saman: “Doesn't seem like she's had much luck. She hasn't answered her walkie since I got down here...”

Balthazar: “What is she thinking? You don't negotiate with enemy heavy artillery! I have to go over there. Saman, you're coming with me, I'm not in any condition to use a weapon right now.” He lifts his wounded arm a little to emphasize his point.

Saman: Looks at the rookie angel who is now more or less able to move again. “Run over to the healers and get that bite looked at. Half these things are venomous.”

The angel nods and hurries off towards one of the healers.

Saman: “Right, let's go then.”

3.6

After the initial chaos when the giant spider came through the rift, more of the fire mage moths have made their way into town as well. One of them has reached the mortals and is doing a fine job of picking off one soldier after another.

Opal has sent her small group of warrior angels to keep watch for any lone soldiers they can attempt to communicate with. One of the angels spots two soldiers that have ended up in an alley, cornered by the moth demon. She reports this to Opal and Opal gathers her soldiers and the interpreter to size up the situation.

The two mortals seem at a loss for what to do when their firearms do little to stop the demon. Even when their bullets pierce through it, they never seem to hit anything vital enough to cause real harm.

The demon rushes one of the mortal soldiers. Before he can react, the moth has grabbed him by the throat and set his whole upper body on fire of such a high temperature that he more or less instantly falls over dead.

Opal: Looks down at the scene. "Okay we can't just watch this." She turns her head towards her soldiers. "Watch my back."

Opal jumps to the ground below and runs towards the moth demon, drawing her sword on the way. She reaches it before it notices her. In a swift motion, she cuts off the arm it just used to fry the mortal soldier, right at the elbow joint. The demon stumbles backwards, hissing at Opal who circles it at a good distance.

Meanwhile the remaining mortal soldier has pressed himself against the wall at the dead end of the alley, looking deeply confused and horrified.

The moth is turning in a circle too, trying to follow Opal. Its arm stump is burning with shallow flames. It makes an odd, rattling sound and wavers slightly as if its many wounds are finally beginning to tire it out. With a sudden lurch of its remaining hand, it sends a cascade of fire at Opal. She quickly jumps out of the way and runs another circle around the demon. It loses track of her for a second and Opal takes the opportunity to close in on it again, jump, and take its head off with a clean cut.

The demon doesn't fall, but rather hunches over while still making the strange, rattling noise. It stands like that for a while before the headless body staggers towards Opal. The flames from its arm stump flare up violently and then spread to its entire body. At last its legs give out from under it and it drops into a burning heap.

Now feeling pretty sure the demon is dead, Opal looks at the mortal soldier and raises her hands.

Opal: Says 'Don't shoot' in the mortal's language - brokenly, but still understandable: "Dao vashiri!"

If possible, the mortal looks even more confused than before. He's holding the rifle he's been carrying in his shaking hands.

Since he doesn't seem about to attack, Opal signals for her interpreter to join her. He walks over to Opal flanked by another angel, looking uneasy, but concerned for the mortal.

Mortal soldier: "N-Nai esi an?"

Interpreter: "He asks who we are."

Opal: "We've come to help you fight these monsters." She points a hand in the direction of the burnt corpse of the moth demon.

Interpreter: "Ese ai fetti ashiri dothi an."

Mortal soldier: "Ada... Naho? Esi wa esheet an hanneth ai feti an!"

Interpreter: "How? You must have come from the light in the sky."

Opal: "We come from a different place. I know all of this is frightening, but It's our job to help people like you."

Interpreter: "Ese an hesseth naha eshee. Ese ne passa oj esi dothi an."

The mortal soldier doesn't look as afraid anymore, but he still stands like he's glued to the wall behind him and seems at a complete loss for what to say or do.

Opal: "You are in serious danger! As you could see, you can't kill these creatures with simple bullets. You must tell your superiors to retreat. The big monster that's on its way here will destroy even your tanks easily."

When the interpreter speaks, the soldier actually appears to listen. After all, he just witnessed firsthand how hardy the insect demons typically are.

Mortal soldier: "Nah ei es ada..?"

Interpreter: "Esi baho hessethi ne--"

While they have been talking, one of the mortals' tanks has made its way down the street the alley is attached to. A handful of foot soldiers walk in front of it. When they pass the alley, several of them do a double take at the sight of Opal and the other angels, seemingly cornering one of their own.

The angel that has been guarding the interpreter notices one of his comrades trying wordlessly, but very intently, to signal to them from the rooftops.

Angel: “Uh, lieutenant--”

Mortal soldier2: “Fetti na pathi!” He yells to his fellow soldiers to watch out for more enemies.

The mortals run into the alley with their firearms raised and aimed at the angels. The tank comes to a halt right in front of the alley. Someone who appears to be a commander comes up from it to demand an explanation for what the hell is going on.

As soon as they hear the new group of mortal soldiers, Opal spins around to look at them, then shoves the two other angels to get them moving. They fly towards the nearest roof to escape.

The angels flee over the rooftops and down onto the streets on the other side where they are better hidden from view. However, another group of the mortal soldiers must have been alerted to their presence, because they block the angels off at an intersection and start shooting at them. The angels scramble to get out of the way. One is shot dead and another is shot in the leg.

Overhead, Saman suddenly flies in at high speed.

Saman: “FLASHBANG!” He throws a flash grenade right in front of the mortals.

The angels all cover their eyes. The mortals, not knowing what was said, don’t realize what was dropped in front of them fast enough and end up blinded when the grenade explodes.

Saman lands among the angels, closely followed by Balthazar. Saman points them in the opposite direction from the mortals.

Saman: “Come on, the streets are clear if we go this way around!”

Balthazar: To Opal, in passing: “Boy do I need to have a word with you.”

After running a good distance, dodging a few more mortal soldiers and making it around the giant spider, Opal and the others finally find it safe enough to slow down. The spider is now very close to the mortals’ tanks and is getting more and more agitated by them shooting at her. Like her smaller minions, she won’t be easy to kill.

The spider has set so many fires on her way through town that it effectively blocks the mortals from getting any closer to the beach. Still, watching the smoke and the fires, Opal looks devastated that the mortals are probably all going to be killed despite her and her squad’s efforts to prevent it.

Balthazar pulls Opal aside and signals for Saman to join them as well.

Opal: “Are you going to tell me off for attempting to do my job?”

Balthazar: “I’ll tell you off for completely disregarding my orders!”

Opal: “You didn’t give any orders! What should I have done, order my platoon to shoot down the locals on sight?”

Balthazar: “You know perfectly well I would have told you to stay away if I hadn’t been cut off on the radio.

And no, I haven’t told you to shoot anyone. I advised you to keep your distance and not get involved! Especially not while sending off the only person here with an ounce of common sense!” He points at Saman.

Saman just stands there and looks awkward.

Opal: “Yes, and the outcome would be the same! The demons would tear them apart instead! Just like...” She glances back at the spider demon. “Just like they’re doing now.”

Balthazar: “Exactly! But with your brilliant decision, the difference is that you now have multiple dead and wounded angels on your hands!”

Opal: “Seriously?! There would be dead and wounded angels either way! They were on the their way to the beach, you wouldn’t even be able to close the rift!”

Balthazar: “So what you’re saying is you would rather jeopardize your own soldiers than let these mortals make a stupid decision? Because that’s what I hear you saying and I know that’s not what you want. We could have retreated if it came to that!”

Saman: “Okay. Before this get’s unprofessional, I suggest we move back to the rift. We can’t have the casualty rate rise even further.”

Opal glares at Balthazar for a while before she answers.

Opal: “Thanks, Saman...”

3.7

Back at the rift, things are back under control. The rift has been closed and all the demons near it have been killed. A few healer angels are tending to the wounded, while most of the platoon is busy loading up the gryphons with whatever equipment they need to take back with them.

Balthazar, Opal, and her squad land close by. For some reason a lot of the angels don't look very happy to see them.

Balthazar: Walks over to the seraph who is inspecting the now closed rift. "You closed the rift! Good job!"

Hannu: "It's still unstable. We might have to come back."

Thera has been crouching next to Saci who has regained consciousness. She looks a bit better now that one of the healers has done their magic on her. As soon as Thera hears Balthazar's voice she swirls around to face him, eyes wide and furious.

Thera: "IS IT TRUE?!"

Balthazar: Stops and looks at her, completely confused. "...What?"

Thera: "IS IT TRUE? Was that scum, Rex, here, and you let the fleabag RUN, AGAIN?!"

She stomps right into Balthazar's personal space.

Thera: "Well, IS IT?"

Balthazar: Glances over at Saci. "I wasn't given much of a choice but to let him go, Thera. We should talk about this when everything has been wrapped up here."

The other angels mutter quietly to each other.

Opal: "Wait a minute--" She points at Thera. "What is she talking about?"

Thera: "WHAT IS THERE TO TALK ABOUT?!"

She grabs Balthazar's coat with one hand and pulls him closer.

Thera: "Rex was HERE!" She points at the ground with her free hand. "Right Fucking here, on this planet, in this town, with YOU! And MAGICALLY you had no choice, but to let him go AGAIN!"

Balthazar: Pries Thera's claws out of his coat. "Believe me, it was against my will that he was allowed to skip out of here, but your subordinate over there was knocked unconscious and he had me at gun point, so that settled that." As an afterthought he adds: "With my own gun no less..."

Thera: Looks at him with mock concern. "Your own gun, ey?"

Saci: Hesitantly speaks up. "I'm sorry, but we only have your word on that. You must admit, twice in a row sounds really fishy..."

Thera: "Even more so taking into account you somehow ended up alone with the sleazy pest both times!"

She has managed to work herself up again and gestures dramatically while she speaks.

Thera: "One would start to think the two of you are on friendly terms!"

Balthazar: "What a ridiculous accusation. What in the world would make you think that?"

Opal: "... Why didn't you get backup and try and catch up to him?"

Ennet: "Uh, actually--"

Ironically, Ennet's attempt to defend Balthazar is drowned out by Balthazar himself.

Balthazar: "Because I was busy doing damage control on Your squad!"

Opal: "We had it under control! God, would you stop?"

Balthazar: "How was I supposed to know that?!" He holds out a hand in Saci's direction. "Any help here?"

Thera: "DON'T you antagonize the poor woman, you Traitor!" She sneers the last word. "She's been through enough today!"

Saman nudges Ennet with his elbow and shakes his head at the scene like he's asking for his help. He walks over to Thera and pulls her out of Balthazar's face in a gentle, but firm manner.

Saman: "Okay, enough of this. We have to move out."

Ennet: Follows Saman's example and walks over to Balthazar. "He's right. We should get out of here in case the mortals advance any further."

For a moment Thera looks like she's going to explode again, but then she calms herself.

Thera: “Ah, yes...”

Saman lets go of her.

Thera: “I apologize... I lost my cool there.”

Balthazar: Is still looking at Thera. “I can understand if we're all upset about this, but I don't know any more than you about Rex's intent, or why he has shown up twice in such a short time. Right now it's not our job to take care of it, it's the Council's.”

Thera scowls at Balthazar with narrowed eyes.

Balthazar: “You have wounded comrades that need medical attention. There is nothing more for us to do here.” He glances at Ennet who nods in confirmation. “We should get back to Heaven.”

4.

Lance's paradise is no longer the white, empty space it was when he first woke up there. Instead, it has turned into a green valley surrounded by forest and small mountains. In the middle of the valley is a small, wooden house and a few fruit trees. However, the trees don't look as idyllic as the rest of the scenery. Their leaves have fallen off and they look weirdly deformed, just like the grass around them that looks like it has been scorched.

Nicole pops up in front of the house. She seems to be in a good mood, but then notices the odd trees. Puzzled, she walks over to the house and knocks on the front door.

When there is no answer, she tears her eyes from the trees and looks at the door instead. She knocks again, a bit harder.

Nicole: "Lance?"

It takes a while before Lance cracks the door open.

Lance: "Hello."

He doesn't really look at Nicole. He looks like he has been crying, or hasn't slept for days, or both.

Nicole: "Are you okay?"

Lance: "Um..."

Lance aimlessly disappears into the house and lets the door stay open. Nicole walks in after him and closes the door behind her.

Nicole: Watches Lance with concern. "I just thought I'd check up on you."

Lance: "Oh..." He stands in the middle of the room, absentminded and distant.

Nicole: "Seriously, are you okay?" She puts a hand on Lance's shoulder and bends down a little to look at him. "When was the last time you talked to your guardian? Isn't he keeping an eye on you?"

Lance: "It isn't his fault!"

The words come out more aggressive than what was probably the intention.

Lance: "I just don't... I don't feel very well." He hides his face in his hands.

Nicole: “No, I can see that.” She turns her head in the direction of the front yard. “What happened to your front yard? It looks all charred.”

Lance’s demeanor turns tense and agitated.

Lance: “What do you mean?” He lowers his eyes to the floor. “Can’t you leave? I don’t want to talk to you. Please go away...”

Nicole: “Well you’re gonna have to talk to somebody! You look like a mess. Shutting yourself in here isn’t going to help.”

Lance: “Leave me ALONE!” He practically shouts at her. “You keep nagging on me, what does it even matter to you?!”

Nicole: “I’m worried about you! Why do you have to snap at me all the time? Some really awful things happened to you, I get it. If that was me, I’d probably be sitting at home crying my eyes out too, but you can’t go and bottle it up forever!”

Lance suddenly doubles over and clenches his shirt. He looks like he’s having a panic attack and ends up crouched down on the floor. Nicole tries to put a hand on his back to calm him down.

Lance: Rips Nicole’s hand away and snarls at her: “Don’t fucking TOUCH ME!”

Nicole backs away, a little startled. She looks up and realizes that the walls and furniture around them are melting. Melting in a weird, distorted way that doesn’t entirely seem to adhere to the normal laws of physics.

Lance remains crouched down on the floor, shielding his head with his arms. He screams angrily and the surroundings no longer melt so much as plain fall apart.

Frightened, Nicole teleports away.

5.

The day after the mission on Tibra, Balthazar sits in his backyard, carving a little wooden figurine that resembles a bird. His wounded right arm is still not in the best condition and is wrapped in bandages.

He stops and looks at the figurine with a contemplative look on his face, then sighs and throws it on the ground.

Balthazar: “To Hell with this...”

He stands up and leaves.

5.1

Balthazar appears in front of Opal’s house. He follows the path cutting through Opal’s front yard garden and knocks on the door. It doesn’t take very long before Opal opens.

Balthazar: Looks down at Opal earnestly. “Can I speak with you?”

Opal: Glowers at him for a while without saying anything. “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Opal is about to close the door, but Balthazar grabs the outer handle so she can’t pull it shut.

Balthazar: “Wait! I more or less came over to apologize.”

Opal: “More or less? That’s nice, Balthazar.” She looks like she’s very tired of him.

Omar appears in the hallway behind his wife.

Omar: “You just can’t take a hint, can you? The lady says leave, so I suggest you do as she says.”

Opal: “Omar, stay out of this.”

Omar seems a little taken aback by her dismissive tone.

Omar: “Okay, fine.” He throws his hands up and walks back into the house.

Opal sighs and runs a hand down her face tiredly.

Opal: “Let me hear that apology, then.”

Balthazar: “Uh... Listen, I shouldn’t put your authority into question. Especially in front of a subordinate sergeant, or... the whole platoon for that matter. That was wrong of me.”

Opal still just scowls at him.

Balthazar: “I respect that you genuinely want to help people – it’s part of what makes you a good lieutenant in the first place. But it’s my job to make the decisions, and when I give an order, you follow that order. I don’t do these things out of cruelty, I do them because I’ve made all those mistakes before and I know better.”

Opal looks out at her garden for what seems like a long time before she replies.

Opal: “I guess... Those mortals... At least they’re mortals. They get a second chance.” She pauses. “You know, sometimes it’s hard for me to stop thinking like a healer and just rush to the aid of whoever’s in the worst condition. I made a stupid decision and no one’s responsible for that but me.”

Balthazar: “It happens to the best of us.”

Opal stands there with a sad, distant look in her eyes for a bit longer before she snaps back to reality and looks up at Balthazar.

Opal: “Why don’t you come in.”

She opens the door fully so Balthazar can walk inside.

Opal: “I was just making some tea, if you want some.”

She enters her kitchen which is quite cluttered with all sorts of things. Potted plants, drying plants hanging from the ceiling, jars and flasks with powders and extracts, odd tools and average kitchenware placed in and on the colorful cabinets in the room.

Opal: Searches the kitchen table before shouting to Omar: “Omar, where is my teapot? It was right here!”

Omar: Yells from one of the other rooms: “Take a new one!”

A new teapot has appeared on the kitchen table as if it had always been there.

Opal: “Urgh.” She scowls at it. “Conjuring up all these fake things, I don’t like it. If it were up to me, we’d be out of this paradise and somewhere with real ground under our feet.”

Annoyed, she puts some tea and hot water from a kettle in the pot and then glances over her shoulder at Balthazar.

Opal: "How's your arm?"

Balthazar: "Better, I suppose." He distractedly touches his bandaged arm.

Opal rummages through the kitchen cabinets until she finds a small glass with a mixture of various plants that have been ground into powder.

Opal: "Here, you should take this. It helps with the scarring."

Balthazar: Laughs at her. "Opal, I don't need your witch brews, it's fine."

Opal: Looks offended. "Witch brews. It's called medicine! Here."

She tosses the glass to Balthazar. He catches it and puts it in his pocket, then takes the cup of tea Opal hands him next.

Opal: "Honestly I've just been busy feeling sorry for myself..."

Opal walks into the living room with her own cup of tea. Balthazar follows behind her.

Opal: "I don't know how you brush off all this death and loss so easily."

She sits down on the window seat that lines the room's outer wall and looks out at the forest area behind the house.

Opal: "I've watched people die my whole life. You'd think I had gotten used to it. But it's different when you're not just picking up the pieces afterwards..."

Balthazar sits down on a chair on the other side of the room and looks into his tea with a distant expression.

Balthazar: "Yesterday, I and one of your soldiers fought this really persistent mage demon. It managed to pull the poor guy right in front of me so I hit him in the head with my own sword. Dead on the spot... You have to let these things go. Otherwise the job will kill you."

Opal: Looks completely crushed. "Yeah, I saw him..."

Balthazar: "People die. That's the way it is."

Opal: "But these are my subordinates. I'm responsible for them. Is that really how you think every time we lose someone?"

Balthazar: "I-- Yes? That's the plain reality of the situation."

Opal: “It just seems so... cold.

I remember when I first met you, you had just lost an entire platoon, and an eye, and almost an arm. And you didn't even care about yourself. You got back up because every one of those soldiers mattered to you. You refused to act like they died pointlessly, because whatever you did, you were in it together, trying to help people. And I just found that really admirable. That sense of unity, and how perseverant you were, you know? But... Sometimes terrible things happen and it's okay to take some time to mull it over. You treat it like it's just another day at the job, I don't think it's very healthy.” She pauses. “I wonder if you even care anymore.”

Balthazar thinks for a little while.

Balthazar: “Do you really think I'm being cold? It's... different when you're a general, but I do care. I'm just not sure if I should.”

He sighs wistfully.

Balthazar: “I have spent so many years trying to change things within the military. But the thing is, it has never been about the people. Not us and not the mortals. Nothing takes greater priority than border control. I'm really sorry if it doesn't seem that way, but I have always tried to protect the soldiers under my charge from that mindset. I guess I can keep doing that for all eternity, and I'll still have nothing to show for it.”

Opal glances worriedly at Balthazar. He looks really worn out.

Opal: “Don't say that. You've won your fair share of respect.”

Balthazar: Snorts humorlessly. “And what good is respect? If it doesn't lead to action then it's worth nothing.”

He shakes his head and lowers his eye to the floor thoughtfully.

Balthazar: “Isn't it funny. When Rex showed up on Tibra he decided to give me a little speech about this exact topic.” He doesn't look like it's funny at all.

Opal: “Yeahh, you still have to tell me about that.”

Balthazar: “There isn't much to tell. He was there, claimed it was only coincidence. We fought and he bested us.”

He shrugs and takes a few seconds before he continues.

Balthazar: “I don't understand what he's trying to accomplish. He keeps getting in our way but doesn't seem to have any interest in fighting us. I mean, he has had two perfect opportunities to kill me, and for good reason even.”

Anyway, he talked at me, just... Saying that we're wasting our time risking our lives for the archangels' warped idea of what's important. I can't disagree with that. Maybe he's right that there's no sense in reasoning with them."

Opal, who has only been listening so far, gives Balthazar a very skeptical look.

Opal: "... What?"

Balthazar: "Come on, Opal, you know what I think of the archangels. It's just... It seems so meaningless. Maybe it's true that, unless something really drastic happens, things will never change. All along, I've just been some loudmouthed idiot for thinking I could talk the Council into seeing they're wrong."

He distractedly puts his teacup down on one of the shelves of a bookcase behind him.

Balthazar: "Amadihn, I know he wants to listen, but he's just a face. When it comes to the big picture, he doesn't have any real power. The Council's main function is as a mouthpiece for the archangels, and-- Have you seen them? Have you ever seen one of the archangels? They're not like us. At all. So maybe we need to stop treating them like they're reasonable beings you can simply talk to. Maybe Rex just realized that before the rest of us."

Opal: "Balthazar, what are you even saying?"

Balthazar: "That he's right."

Balthazar stares blankly ahead as if the greatest truth in the world has just been revealed to him.

Balthazar: "I honestly think he's right."

Opal: "This is why he's talking to you, isn't it? Why he keeps singling you out? He's trying to win you over! And it's actually working?!"

Balthazar: Looks slightly offended. "I think you would have noticed if I was so easily swayed."

Opal: "I know you! You get so obsessed with fixing things, you just carelessly pursue whatever solution you think you have and completely ignore how it affects everyone, least of all yourself!"

Balthazar: "Even if I agree with someone like Rex's viewpoint, that does not mean I agree with his methods. I have no sympathy for terrorism. God, do you really think I'm that uncompromising?"

Opal: “I don't care about your realizations! What he's working towards-- Attacking Heaven and starting an all out war isn't the way to make things better and you can NOT tell me differently!”

She shakes her head warningly.

Opal: “This whole thing is getting to your head. You know how I keep telling you to take a break? I mean it!”

Balthazar: Stands up. “Maybe I should go. I shouldn't have brought this up in the first place. I thought it was a valid point of discussion, but I see you too have been conditioned to hear the slightest critique of the archangels as treason and infidelity.”

Opal: “I have not-- What you're saying doesn't exactly count as a small critique!”

Balthazar: “Okay, well. It's great that you find me that untrustworthy, then. I'll see myself out.”

Balthazar leaves the house and Opal gets up to walk after him.

Opal: “Balthazar, wait...”

He's gone before she can say anything more.

Opal looks sad and defeated as she stands there in the hallway. When she turns back towards the kitchen, Omar is there. Everything about his expression radiates “I told you so.”

6.

Duncan is sitting at a desk in a neat, old fashioned study in his home, in the middle of signing some documents. Thera sits in an armchair across from the table.

Duncan: “Honestly, some day these girls will be the end of me.” He looks exhausted. “Especially that rabbit.”

Thera: “If you weren’t so nice to them, maybe they wouldn’t be so clingy.”

Duncan: “Well I don’t want to be mean either. I’m a public person, I have to think of my image.”

Thera: “Is it a better image to be a pushover who lets little girls harass him?”

Duncan glares at Thera and pushes away the now signed documents.

Duncan: “How did the mission with Balthazar and Opal go?”

Thera: “Eeeh, quite terribly. The lieutenant ended up disregarding the general’s orders and had some of her soldiers die because of it.”

Duncan: “Really?”

Thera: “Oh but that’s not the worst part.” Her expression turns angry. “Rex was there. Again. Rex, chit-chatting with the general, who then lets him run off. Again. That’s an incredible coincidence, isn’t it.”

Duncan: Looks a little concerned. “An absurd coincidence... If Rex isn’t purposefully seeking him out that is.”

Thera: “I know. One would start to think that is what’s happening. I don’t know about you, but I don’t trust Balthazar. The way I see it, the Council should have relegated him already. He isn’t fit as a general.”

Duncan: “That’s a little harsh, Thera. Hm... It’s not that I dislike Balthazar, but... He’s a bit of a character, I agree.”

Duncan stares straight ahead with a thoughtful expression.

Duncan: “It’s odd... Yesterday, before you went to Tibra, he was gone for hours. I was looking for him to brief him on the mission. Then later when I asked where he had been, he dodged the question. He’s a general, he can’t just leave as he pleases and not tell about it.”

Thera: “For all we know he was out plotting things with that devil.”

Duncan: “Thera, don’t condemn a man before he’s proven guilty. Even if all this is no coincidence, there’s nothing to say that Balthazar had a hand in it.”

He gets up from his chair.

Duncan: “Maybe I should ask Opal for her thoughts on this.”

7.

Nicole walks down a hallway in a hospital in Heaven where she works when she isn't sent on missions with the warrior angels. She hasn't come in for a shift, though, and is wearing her everyday clothes. She reaches a break room where a few other nurses sit and chat.

Nicole: Pokes her head around the door. "Daisy, can I talk to you real quick?"

A lemur woman stands up, looking a bit confused.¹⁵

Daisy: "Yes of course."

Nicole grabs Daisy by the wrist as soon as she has made it out the door and drags her to an empty ward close by.

Nicole: "Uh, sorry, I'm kind of freaking out right now, um... Have you ever seen anyone just sort of... Melt their paradise?"

Daisy: "No... I've never seen anything like it, dear." She looks concerned. "Is something wrong with your paradise?"

Nicole: "No no, it's Lance! Something is seriously wrong with him, and I don't know if he just snapped or..."

Daisy: "The sacrifice boy? Oh my... That sounds bad."

Nicole: "Urghh!"

She drops onto one of the beds in the room and covers her face with her hands.

Nicole: "I don't know what to do! What if that... sin thing did something to him, you know? He's acting really weird."

Brooke has appeared in the doorway without either of the other two noticing.

Brooke: "Sounds like you need to take that to his guardian and not to Daisy."

Daisy: "Long eared as always, hmm Brooke? It's not polite to listen in on other's conversations."

Nicole: "Stop spying on me, you stupid bitch!"

¹⁵ [Daisy \(and Brooke and Nicole\)](#)

Brooke: “Who are you calling a bitch, you flea bitten mutt!” She continues into the room.

Nicole: “You, floppy! Get out, I'm trying to figure out what to do and you're not helping!”

Brooke: “Well, if you don't report it yourself, I'll turn you both in for endangering us all. I hope you get thrown out then!” She smiles cruelly. “I wonder if your retarded brother would manage on his own.”

Nicole: Looks at Brooke with disgust. “What? You keep your slut hands off my brother!”

Brooke: Laughs loudly. “I wouldn't touch him if he was the last man in existence! I'd probably just get fleas.”

Nicole: “Seriously, get out! I don't know if you can comprehend this with your tiny brain, but this kid needs help, not someone threatening to kick him out!”

Brooke: “No, you're the one who can't comprehend the danger you might be putting us all in, just so you can keep your pretty lil' boyfriend.”

Nicole: “Augh, what's wrong with you?! He's like sixteen! Daisy say something!”

Daisy: “Okay, you two...”

She holds a hand up to her forehead, clearly uncomfortable with the ugly language flying back and forth through the room.

Daisy: “Brooke, would you please get out of here?”

Brooke: Sticks her nose in the air. “Okay, but if she won't turn him in, I will!” She saunters out of the room. “In fact, I'll go as soon as my shift is over.”

With a hopeless expression on her face, Nicole watches Brooke disappear down the hallway.

Daisy: Sighs. “I really don't like that girl. She might be right, though.”

Nicole: “But what if... What if...”

Daisy: “What if what?”

Nicole: “Nothing... You're right. I should tell his guardian.”

She stands up without looking at Daisy and walks to the door.

Nicole: “You can tell Brooke I'm going, alright?”

Daisy: "I will, dear."

7.1

Nicole finds Lance's guardian, Paolo, and tell him about what happened. They go to Lance's paradise along with a couple of police angels. Lance has calmed down, but his paradise looks even more distorted than when Nicole left it.

In the background, Paolo questions Lance about the incident. Nicole clearly looks like she is already regretting having said anything.

8.

Thera strolls into one of Heaven's administrative offices where the police keeps their records and such. She stops in a hall that leads up to an old archive - The same archive Balthazar visited earlier to learn of Lana's whereabouts.

Max is standing behind a counter, looking through some papers.

Thera: "Max."

Max: Looks up at her without raising his head. "Thera."

Thera: Gives him a friendly smile. "I thought I'd drop by, it's been such a long time since I've seen any of you here."

Max: "The army bores you already?"

Thera: "Eeeh, no. The army doesn't bore me at all. Nowhere near as much paperwork as with the police."

She stares at Max appraisingly for a few seconds.

Thera: "I'm wondering if you can do me a favor. In return, I have some info I think you'd like to hear."

Max straightens up and focuses his attention fully on Thera, but seems a little suspicious.

Max: "Well, I'm listening."

Thera: Rests her arms on the counter. "You see, I have some public safety concerns. I've heard a certain general has been sneaking out in secret, to places where he's not supposed to be. The same general who just happened to run into a very wanted criminal and then let him get away. Twice.

It doesn't look so good. And, Max, since you're you and I know you happen to know this particular general very well, I thought you could help me clear up whether I should be worried."

Max simply narrows his eyes at her.

Thera: "Sorry, I'm being rude. I promised you some info in return. I know where your favorite human is. Jeremiah?"

Max generally isn't very expressive, but he actually looks a bit taken aback by this.

Max: "... Where?"

Thera: "Remember that open world where there was a big fuss over some demons that wanted to build a railroad? Well, there's a town by that railroad that's doing pretty good. He looked alive and well as far as I could see. Man, it's been a while since he was thrown out, hasn't it. You don't pick the best friends."

Max frowns at Thera, then down at the papers in front of him.

Thera: "Max." She looks at him with mock sympathy. "You know I'm only telling you this so we can pretend we have a fair deal. You don't want me to look into you instead."

Max stands there for a while before he turns around and walks into the archive behind him. He comes back a few minutes later with a folder in his hands and puts it on the counter for Thera to look at.

She opens the folder and finds the same documents on Lana as Max showed Balthazar earlier.

Thera: "Ah, just as I thought."

She looks at Max with a serious, humorless expression.

Thera: "Write me an anonymous testimony, then I'll leave you alone."

9.

Omar is sitting by his and Opal's kitchen table while Opal paces back and forth in front of him.

Opal: "You're right about a lot of things, Omar, but this is not one of them. I know you two hate each other, but can't you at least look at this objectively for my sake?"

Omar: "Half an hour ago you agreed with me, I heard you."

Opal: "Oohh!" She points at him accusingly. "I still can't believe you're eavesdropping! What are you, five?"

Omar: "For the last time, I was not eavesdropping. This isn't a big house, I'm not deaf."

Opal: "Yeah right. Excuse me, but I was kind of upset at the time. I say a lot of things."

Omar: "Oh speak of being objective, for God's sake! Balthazar is in way over his head, and he has been for a long time. And you call him a friend? What has he ever done for you?"

Opal: "Yes I do! And I call you my husband too! What do you think people say about you, huh? If anyone you sure know how to be an asshole on occasion, Omar, so don't tell me who I should care about!"

Omar: Shakes his head. "Can we put down the defences for a minute? If you want to be objective, honestly, do you trust he's not on his way to do something really stupid?"

Opal: "I... I don't know what to think about anything anymore."

Someone knocks on their front door. Opal turns her head towards the sound.

Opal: "I really don't need visitors right now... Can't you get it?"

Omar: "Of course."

Omar gets up and goes to open the door. Duncan is standing outside.

Duncan: "Good day, Omar. I was wondering if I could get to talk with your lovely wife?"

Omar: "Now isn't really a good time, but I figure it's important?"

Duncan: "It's kind of important, yes."

Omar: "Isn't it always with you army types?"

He moves to the side to make room and impassively hold out his arm in a half hearted welcoming gesture.

Omar: “Opal, Duncan wants to speak with you.”

Duncan: Steps into the small house and walks to the kitchen. “Good day, Opal. I'm sorry to disturb you like this.”

Opal: “Uh, yeah... Hi... You sure are making a habit of it.” She tiredly raises a hand to her head.

Duncan: Looks as if he's genuinely sorry to disturb them. “I have just been thinking and... I was wondering if you could tell me where Balthazar went yesterday? I would really like to know.”

Opal: Glances at Duncan, apprehensive. “Didn't I tell you last time I saw you, that I don't know?”

Omar walks past them, back to his spot next to the table.

Omar: “A-hrm.”

Opal sends him an irritable look.

Duncan: “I just thought he might have told you after that. But if you really don't know, I guess there's nothing to do. I'll have to listen to Thera's conspiracy theories for days. Sometimes she can be so paranoid...”

Omar: “Conspiracy theories you say? What in the world would those be about?” He looks at Opal, deadpan.

Duncan: “That he secretly started operating with Rex.”

Opal: Looks down at the floor. “This is ridiculous.”

Duncan: “I know, a bit silly isn't it, but he has been acting strange.”

Opal: “No, not that. It's just... I don't know what to think about any of this...” She puts out her arms in a slightly aggressive way. “Yes, I do know where he went! He went to talk with Lana of all people because he's a stubborn idiot and won't let this thing with Rex go!”

Duncan: “He what?”

Omar: “See, now you agree with me again that he's up to something.”

Opal: “No, that's not what I'm saying, would you shut up?! He only spoke with her to see if she knew anything about Rex's whereabouts!”

Omar: Looks at Duncan. “Please agree with me this sound more than a little questionable.”

Duncan: “I was worried I'd find something like this. It almost sounds like Thera was right in being paranoid.”

Opal: “But--”

Omar: “But what? I'm sorry, but unless you've been stalking Balthazar lately, how do you know what he's been doing, really?”

Opal: “Oh come on! Why would he be plotting great evil plots with that outcast? All he's done is report to the Council, but you know they won't do anything! He just wanted to take things into his own hands.

You know what he's like. He's... He's a dissenter. Not a traitor! I know what I said, but it wouldn't make any sense!”

Duncan: “That's what everyone thought about Rex, and then...”

Opal gapes at him, dismayed. Duncan's expression has turned somber.

Duncan: “I'm truly sorry, Opal, but speaking with a fallen angel now too? I have to report this to the Council. You shouldn't cover for something like this. Think of how it will make you look, as someone close to him.”

Opal: “No.”

Duncan: “It's only telling them the truth. I don't mean to be rude, but I think your judgement on this matter is a little clouded.”

Opal: “Would you give the man a chance?! You don't have any proof against him, you-- You know what the Council will think if you take this to them and your little bird lackey has already been spreading rumours everywhere! No. No, I won't let you do this!”

Duncan: “I'm sorry.” He appears deeply saddened by the situation. “I really am.”

Opal: “Sorry-- Don't tell me you're sorry! What the hell do you care about anything? You know what your are? I think you'd double-cross anyone for a few pats on the back!”

Omar: “Honey, don't be unreasonable.” He still sounds deadpan, like he finds Opal berating the other lieutenant slightly amusing.

Duncan: “I think it's time for me to leave.” He seems offended by Opal's outburst.

Opal: Grabs Duncan's arm, hard. "I'm serious, Duncan! I hope you can live with yourself when you get someone who's only ever been working in Heaven's best interest thrown out of here! Now get the hell out of my house!"

Duncan: "Goodbye."

Duncan leaves. Opal turns around to face Omar. He looks at her with his eyebrows raised.

Omar: "You sure are on the war path today. It's not like you to make enemies."

Opal: "I just don't believe you're right about this..."

Omar: "Well, I'm proud of you regardless."

He walks over to wrap his arms around Opal. She smiles weakly.

Opal: "I did tell that pretentious oaf, didn't I."

Omar: "Sure did."

Opal's smile fades and she looks completely crestfallen.

Opal: "Please don't be proud of me..."

10.

Three mangi are having a lively conversation in the living room of an ornamental looking house. A fourth, Sufyan, comes into the room. His wife who is one the others sitting around a table, bends over backwards to hand him a glass.¹⁶

Zenana: “Please give Balthazar this and tell him to stop moping.”

Sufyan takes the glass and walks out onto the terrace right outside the living room. Balthazar is standing there with his back turned, leaning on a railing that separates the terrace from a garden placed on a slightly lower level than the house.

Sufyan: Gives Balthazar the glass. “Sorry to tell you what you probably already know, but you look really tired.”

Balthazar: “Oh yeah?”

Sufyan: “Heh, it's a good thing we can drag you over here once in awhile. What've you been up to anyway? I've hardly seen you lately.”

Balthazar: “No I know. It's just the usual. Whenever there's a problem you can be sure I get dragged into it. Me and whoever's unfortunate enough to be my team. That usually means Opal.”

Sufyan: “You could just quit, you wouldn't have to complain so much.”

Balthazar: “We can't all be lazy slackers, Sufyan.” He smiles.

Sufyan: “Isn't that what Heaven's for, though? I know you can't get enough of the whole army ordeal, but I had enough back before I died the first time. Hey, that reminds me, I talked to Eli the other day. I feel like I haven't seen him in an eternity. He's doing really well for himself.”

Balthazar: “That would be more than I know.”

Sufyan: “How come you're not talking anymore? That's just sad.”

Balthazar: “I don't know, why is it sad? We're all a bit old for the whole father son thing, don't you think? The boys always took after Alma more, and... I guess we never did have much in common. What's there to hold on to?”

Sufyan: “You're a cynical old hag. Family's family.”

¹⁶ [Balthazar's mangi friends](#)

Balthazar: “Nah. If he wants to talk he’s welcome to, but this is fine too.”

Zenana steps out onto the terrace.

Zenana: “Balthazar, there's some angels here who want to see you. You know, from the police? They don't look too happy.” She looks at Balthazar questioningly.

Balthazar: “What do they want from me?”

Balthazar walks around the house where two angels from Heaven’s internal police force are waiting.

Police officer: “General Balthazar?”

Balthazar: “Yes. What do you want? It's pretty late.”

Police officer: “We have an order to arrest you. You've been called in for a trial.”

Balthazar: “What? I'm sorry, what is this even about?”

Police officer: “I can’t tell you anything more, this is ordered directly by The Council. Please hand over your halo and follow us.”

Sufyan: Has walked around the house too. “Hey, what're you in trouble for now?”

Balthazar: “They're arresting me! I don't even know what for.”

Sufyan: “What? You sure you got the right guy?”

Police officer: “General Balthazar ser-Imad. I believe I'm pretty sure, thank you.” He begins to look impatient. “Your halo, please. You won't get any answers from standing here.”

Balthazar: “Yes, you're not really leaving me a choice, are you.”

Balthazar hands the officer his halo and the officer puts a hand on his shoulder to teleport him away with them.

11.

Opal is standing in front of a door to a small room in the Council building. A guard with a blue hashmal halo is blocking her way in.

Opal: “Oh come on, I'm not going to try and beam him out of here or anything.”

Guard: “Safety regulations, Opal.” He holds out his hand expectantly.

Opal: “Fine, okay.”

Annoyed, she gives the guard her halo and walks in the door.

Balthazar is sitting on a bench in the room, waiting to be called in front of the Council to find out what they'll do with him. He hasn't gotten his halo back since the police officer took it. He looks up when Opal comes in.

Opal: Stares at Balthazar. “This is all my fault.”

Balthazar: “Looks like they're getting rid of me.”

Opal: “It's all my fault.”

Balthazar: “How is it your fault? They finally found something to frame me for and now they're getting rid of me. Should have seen it coming from a mile away.”

Opal: “No, you don't understand. I was so worried after I talked to you and then I talked to Omar and then Duncan came all of a sudden and I told him about Lana. I told him...”

Balthazar: Looks at her with an unreadable expression. “Well. Honestly, that's... good. There's no reason for you to get mixed up in this too.”

Opal: “Do you know anything yet?”

Balthazar: “Nothing very concrete. I'm pretty sure I'm all out, though.”

Opal: “Oh my god, how can they do this without any proof? They even had me in as a witness. I tried talking to them, I did. I'm so sorry.”

Balthazar: Keeps his eye pointed at the floor. “It's fine, Opal.”

Opal looks like she mostly wants to give Balthazar a hug, but ends up putting her hands on his shoulders instead.

Opal: “You're gonna get back. They can't keep you out long like this. You're gonna get back and you're gonna show them.”

Balthazar: “I'm done, Opal. Even if I walk in there and they tell me I can stay, this is... the last straw, you know?”

Opal: “But...” She finds that she doesn't really know what to say. “If they banish you, will you be okay?”

Balthazar: “I'll figure something out. Don't worry about that.”

Opal sits down next to the bench.

Opal: “I'm going to miss having you around... Who am I going to bicker with now?”

Balthazar: “I don't know, Omar?”

Opal snorts and laughs, a little sadly. Balthazar smiles faintly.

The police officer from earlier steps into the room.

Police officer: “The Council will see you now if you'd follow me.”

Balthazar nods and follows the officer out of the room.

11.1

Balthazar has been sat down at a small desk in a big hall with great, colorful mosaic windows depicting the three archangels - The same hall where Rex was stripped of his seraph title a century earlier.¹⁷

With a somewhat confrontational composure, Balthazar looks at the twelve council members sitting in front of him at a long, crescent shaped table. The police officer closes the door to the hall in the background.

Amadihn: “Yes, Balthazar, I would rather we keep this straight forward. At this time you have probably already heard what we have discussed.”

Balthazar: “Yes. You're throwing me out as far as I can understand.”

Amadihn: “With recent events in mind, we must put Heaven's safety first. You have let a dire enemy of Heaven go on not one, but two occasions. You have been interacting with other fallen angels and not informed us of your actions...”

We all know your history with the Council, I believe I don't have to go further into that. I hope you can at least understand our reasoning.”

Balthazar: “Yeah, it makes... perfect sense, actually. But, putting heaven's safety first, Amadihn, really?” He smiles a forced smile. “Where was that resolution when I asked you to send a search party for Rex in the first place? Not to belittle the enormous importance I have all of a sudden, but isn't he a greater threat to Heaven than I am?”

One of the other councillors, a small, green skinned woman, speaks up.

Marna: “Of course he is. Except you are in here and he is not.”

Balthazar: “And you really believe we're working together or however the rumor goes?”

Amadihn: “We can't afford to take that chance.”

Balthazar: “Hm. Well, how convenient, now you finally have a reason to get rid of me. You wanted to be straightforward, Amadihn. Can't we just agree that's what this is about?”

Xifeng, who usually doesn't say much at meetings like this, slams her fist on the table in front of her and gives Balthazar a stern look.

Xifeng: “Don't act like a child or assume that we do likewise, general!”

¹⁷ [An old doodle of the council hall](#)

You claim you understand our reasoning? There is no more to this decision than that. If you really have betrayed us, we need to be rid of you. If not, you can rest easy and bide your time.

I have personally argued that you should be allowed to walk freely outside Heaven's borders rather than whither away in a prison cell.

I assumed you would agree that this is the better arrangement, but if I am wrong, it can easily be changed."

Balthazar looks at Xifeng for a few seconds before giving her a small nod.

Amadihn: "Thank you, Xifeng. Well, since this decision is made as a precaution and not based on adequate evidence, it is of course only temporary. But, for now you are to be treated as any fallen angel.

You will be escorted to whichever world you wish and be given a halo of the fallen. You cannot abandon your halo, or you will not be allowed to return. You cannot interact with any of Heaven's angels. I could go on, but I believe you already know the law."

Balthazar: "Of course." He shakes his head impassively.

Amadihn: "The officer who led you here will be your attendant. You have a few hours to... say goodbyes and whatnot. Our condolences, Balthazar."

The council members stand up and leave the hall while Balthazar remains sitting, staring into space.