

Shadows of the Past

ein englisches Intime, editiert von Kim Schneider;

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Teil 1

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19.th March 2639 in the year of the Lord

Prologue

So, this is it, the First Flight the monks were talking about. The very first and probably longest flight to Roma Æterna.

Dozens, if not hundreds of other Engel surround the protagonists, grouped loosely by Orders. Six of them.

*Gabrielites, Michaelites - they wouldn't stay behind to accompany their brethren on this first flight, so some of them met you halfway toward Roma Æterna - Ramielites, Raphaelites, Raguelites and Urielites
They can be seen in the air. Everywhere.*

With strongly beating wings they all aim South. Towards the Eternal City.

They all remember the preparations to this day. The excitement. New garments to be sewed. How proud they were to accept them in an official ritual. No longer would you be a novice Engel, but a full-fledged member of your Order!

And the questions. How would the new Host be - your first Host, the one thing that you were always becoming excited when thinking about it. How would the other five Engel be?

The group is crossing the Alpes. It is cold, but the Signum takes care of that. The Engel don't feel the icy wind, but they can see the majestic mountains. Long, banner-like structures, torn and nebulous like cotton surround the highest peaks. Long banners of drifting white tears - snow, as they called it in the Old Time. It is rare to see, and they take it as a good omen.

The air is clear, and above the clouds, the brilliant, cobalt blue sky is everything to be seen. And the other Engel.

Like so many drifting snowflakes. Save the dark cluster of Gabrielites to the right.

Another group arrives and flies closer. Green and white hems flutter in the wind. Another group or Urielites and Raphaelites. Some Engel strain to keep the steady pace of the big group. There is constant motion around you all. Dropping behind, closing up. Some older Urielites take lead and break wind for the younger ones.

Soon they'll reach the lowlands. Roma Æterna is close, just a few more hours of constant flight...

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A flock of Engel...

Thommariel, a Michaelite, flies with a group of other Michaelites. Even though this is the First Flight, he shows no signs of nervousity. He watches the other Engel because five of them will form a Host with him. He will lead them against the enemies of the Angelic Church, without any doubt or hesitation...

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A small, thin Raphaelite with reddish hair leaves a loose clutch of her ordermates and glides for a few seconds beside Thommariel. Turning her head, she smiles a radiant smile at him, waves and dips her wings to drop a few dozen meters. Some Ramielites will, no doubt, have the honour to meet her. She didn't leave the loose formation for the first time, some of you might now notice. The Raphaelite often closes up to the front clutch of Urielites. She doesn't seem to talk, though...

No one chides her for her manoeuvres. With such a big group a-wing, it is common occurrence to shift patterns this way. Besides, this is no mission. Engel are starting to get tired, though. The leading group slowly starts to circle down after you left the highest mountains of the range behind you.

The Raphaelite gracefully sails down as well, guiding some younger Engel downwards, encouraging them with hand gestures and smiles.

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As with any expected Ramielite, Egriel flies alongside the back tier of the group. He doesn't mind, considering the less-crowded area to be ideal for occasional contemplation. Unfortunately, such reveries are suddenly interrupted whenever he encounters a thermal, in which case he flaps his wings in mad succession to regain his balance. ("Whoah!").

It's been a long flight, and exciting as this experience shall be, he's ready for some rest. He notices with anticipation that the head of the group is spiralling down toward their destination.

I hope there's a sizeable library. He thinks off-handedly.

Egriel passes the small Raphaelite who waves to him cheerfully. As the other Engel start to glide downwards, she keeps a careful eye upon the exhausted members of the big group, assisting where she is needed.

Three Michaelites spread out over the crowd, wingtip to wingtip, keeping a watchful eye on the others. The Raphaelite makes a face, suddenly swoops down and avoids mid-air collision with a few deft wingstrokes which draw acclamations from two Gabrielites far too close to her for everyone's sake. Nearly on her back, robes fluttering, she regains balance, shaking a furious fist at the retreating pair. "And would the two of you look where you're flying, bullies!" she shouts in Latin. Her voice, though thin and not very loud, can be heard by Egriel.

Finally, she circles down to land.

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Carniel, the Gabrielite, slowly glides in to land on the side of some other Gabrielites he came to know in his Himmel. As soon as he lands, he takes some time to study the state of health of the other young Engels who have landed. After he controls his equipment Carniel looks towards the Michaelites for orders.

*

Calahel, the Raguelite, feels the vibrations of the cool air turrents swirling through his gleaming white feathers. In order to enjoy the stimulating breeze he closes his eyes and drifts on through the fluffy charming clouds, next to his brothers and sisters of the order of Raguelites. He holds the long vibro-lance safely in his small hands, pointing its reflecting blade in the flight-direction of the enormous group of Engel. They are aiming for Roma Æterna, the eternal city of the angelic church.

Finally there comes the day... The next morning I will be with my host. He opens his deep black eyes and lets his gaze wander over the dozens and dozens of Engel surrounding him. Somewhere there in this big crowd are the members of his host-to-be. He is excited, and his eyes glisten with delight.

Finally he lands with the rest of the Engel, stands with his bare feet on the cold stone with his raguelitic brothers and sisters and holds his lance with pride in front of him. Their tips reach high up into the air and glisten in the last rays of the sun, like the holy phalanx they are.

*

"At least we're close," a voice says loudly besides Calahel's left ear. A Michaelite surveys the exhausted group, the fluttering, constantly moving mass of wings, bodies and skirts. "Now, just three more hours to go and that'll be it." The other Engel shows her perfect, white teeth in a radiant grin. A friendly clout on the shoulder startles Calahel. The other Engel must be nearly double as old as himself. An experienced Engel, literally plastered with ribbons. Somehow, the fellow managed to land without making a spectacle of himself.

Now, they all see, already on the ground, or still landing, a small escort of older Michaelites. They must have flown all the way up to this little resting place in the lower chain of the Appennins.

"Take a rest," the Michaelites advices all Engel in reach. "Eat." She starts distributing small packages which she produces from someplace on her person.

It is raining gently down here. The lush forest with the rocky terrain makes a nice contrast. The Michaelites move between the Engel which stand and crouch everywhere. "Looks like a resting place of cormorants, eh?" The old Michaelite grins again, this time adresssing another Raguelite beside Calahel. "Hope you don't do the same sort of thing the birds do with their nesting places." She chuckles and moves on.

Everyone gets something to eat and something to drink. The pause will take for the rest of the day and the following night. They'll have one more day to rest and prepare before

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the Consecration of Engel in Roma itself.

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Now after all Engel are flying together towards Roma Æterna they all can see in the group of Urielites that one of them seems to be a bit older than the usual novice Engel here. He always flies in formation but keeps an eye on the younger ones to break wind to make their flight easier on the last few hours. As the Himmel of the Michaelites comes into sight he breaks out of formation, climbing up a few meters and drifts back so that he can watch the others. About 5 minutes befor the arrival at the resting place he joins his formation and stays there until they are all landing

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Birds are the exact metaphor in which Egriel uses to define the scene of the numerous flapping wings landing in unison at the resting spot. Being the last of the group to arrive, he glides around, searching for an ideal spot to rest. He notices the red-haired Engel waving as he flies past, to which he gives a quick nod with his head.

This is certainly larger than I thought, he observes. At that moment, he catches the remnants of an exclamation, "....bullies!". Glancing quickly back, he notices the same red-haired Engel wheeling away from two other Engels, as if to avoid a collision.

Turning back, he inwardly sighs, A great contrast to the tranquil libraries of my Himmel.

Finally, he discovers a small uprising secluded from the main body of the group. A small sigh of relief escapes from his lips as he lands, and he wearily sits down on a nearby rock. His wings, two heavy weights on his shoulder, fold and ease themselves nearly parallel to the ground.

Looking over the vast flock of Engel, Egriel chuckles softly, greatly amused at the scene. A split decision later, he opens the small satchel he carries with him and pulls out some paper and writing utensils, and, positioning the tip of his wing to shelter the paper from the slight rain, commences to draw.

*

They all eat their tiny dinner to rest later. The older Michaelites take care of the group, while some Raphaelites wander around to ease stiff and hurting wing muscles. The red-haired Raphaelite - she introduces herself as Phinael - uses an aromatic salve to soothe the pained muscles and smiles quietly when listening to the soft groans and moans.

Later on, as the sun sets, the Engel assume resting position: kneeling or sitting on the ground, legs tucked under or feet poised slightly up, with elbows resting on the knees and the hands pressed against each other in a prayer position, fingertips pointing downward. One by one, the Engel sink into quiet, peaceful meditation. Feathers rustle softly. Some of the more dexterous Engel manage to pull their folded wings over themselves to shelter their body from the soft, dribbling rain.

The Michaelites take turn in guarding the meditating group.

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As the sun rises, even at predawn, they rise from meditation one by one. Soon the place is filled with talk, laughter, the rustling of wings and the sight of Engel preening their feathers or slowly and carefully exercising their wings like young fledglings. Soon enough, the whole group rises again. Like snowflakes dropping, envisioned backwards.

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Phinael quickly stuffs her small satchel and is one of the last to take off. She manages to get off the ground with one powerful leap, assisted by strong strokes of her wings. Soon, all Engel are aloft, the hindmost circling up on thermal currents to catch up with the newly dispersing group. The Urielites orient themselves, and the last part of this journey begins.

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The night spent was a restful one for Egriel, if a bit damp (he made sure to properly shelter his gear from the wetness). With the helpful guidance of the Michaelites and the administrations from the Raphaelites, he brings himself up to the task of completing the final journey to Roma Æterna.

Checking his gear in proper order, he awaits patiently for the majority of the party to take flight. Once almost every Engel has departed, he himself lifts off in several unsteady flaps of his wings and trails along.

*

Calahel stretches his aching muscles and peeks through half-closed eyelids as the early sun climbs over the horizon. The day would be great, the ceremony tomorrow will be overwhelming. Pride is a sin, but the Raguelite couldn't change it, it is in his mind as he lifts from the ground, the flashing steel of the lance guiding his way. It is overwhelming!

And it is fascinating to see how all the other Engel are like: He had not seen so many Engel of other orders up to that day, and his curiosity is nearly as big as his excitement for what was to come.

There are the ones that where like the One Himself, the leaders of the hosts, the Michaelites. The big crowd of them glisten golden in the cool air in front of the formation and guide them towards the eternal city.

Then there are the Gabrielites, black clad angels of death and celestial rage. Their flameswords shimmer in the light of the rising sun and their weaponry that they carry without exhaustion glitter in the enormous jetblack cloud.

The Urielites, guardians of the ways are also an unbelievable view: Their acrobatic flights seem so easy and lightwinged, they slide through the fresh air like they had done it all their life. And perhaps that was true...

The group at the end of the 'flying caravan' is mainly put together of Ramielites - the warders of wisdom. Their long traditional hairs billow in the wind like beautiful banners

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and although they are not that skilled like the other orders, there stoic flight is impressive.

The Raphaelites, the warders of the creation, are the complete opposite of the deathangels. They are bright white and their whole appearance glows in divine light, an aura of innocence seem to envelope them. They spread themselves over the complete troop and support the less strong Engel as good as they can.

*

There is one small redhaired Raphaelite, also one of the younger ones, that flies near him from behind. She seems to be in a hurry to reach the rest of her main group that was still some meters in front. Calahel smirks amused and catches her eyes. He winks at her and the smirking wouldn't disappear

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Phinael closes up to the group, overtaking some Ramielites and lifts herself over the winking Raguelite.

Arms outstretched to balance herself, she easily overtakes him to settle in the group of Raguelites. Surprised, she looks around. Some Raphaelites of a group beside them wave, gesture her to come over. She waves back, seemingly willing them to understand, that she will stay here - for the next few minutes.

Eyeing the shimmering vibro-lances curiously, she centers herself in a small cluster of those Engel, peering intently at Calahel's weapon. After a few minutes, she seems satisfied, folds her wings and drops - laughing with delight, out of the bottom of the group. Some small manoeuvres, and she catches up to her ordermates.