

# Prelude to Impurity

The Corrupted Cycle  
Extract 0

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“Speak each word carefully, Naria.” Anđa gently prompted the young girl, though she didn’t really need to. Her daughter was gifted with words but had never woven them into magic. A soft wind blew around the pillars and under the canopy of the courtyard’s edge, whistling as the girl arranged the syllables in her mouth.

“I call the flames of Michael and the dark power of Aleksashdra!” Narianel called with her tiny hands stretched out. The five-year-old braced herself and a tiny green flame appeared in her hands briefly before winking out. Narianel closed her fists, trying to catch the fading warmth.

“Oh!” shouted Anđa. She applauded Narianel as her own personal curse pushed joy to her extremities.

“I did it!” shouted the girl. It wasn’t so much a smile as a conqueror’s grin that blossomed on her face.

“Well done, Naria.”

“Don’t encourage her too much,” said Sorley, patting Narianel’s head as he walked into the courtyard. “We’ll end up needing to budget for new curtains every other week.”

Sorley was a handsome man, though he didn’t like to show it. His hair was always a mess and in need of a style or a cut, his eyes always dark from a lack of sleep. He wore his Eye of Chassuille uniform, just having arrived back from a mission earlier in the day. The scar across his left eye only made him better looking, in her mind, and his glowing blue eyes were perfection.

They were a family of Hosts of the Heavenly Soul. They descended from angels, so their skin was a silky white, their ears pointed in three places, their hair platinum blonde, and their eyes glowing with the colour of their souls. Anđa and Narianel’s eyes were red, though the child’s eyes only glowed dim, showing their natural deep grey. Anđa’s heritage was more mixed, however, and some of that blood showed in her daughter, especially in the droop of the point on her ears and

the sharpness of her teeth, not to mention their shared pupils, crescent as the moons of the old worlds when waning.

“Don't worry so much, dear,” said Anđa. “She was born with the voice flowing from her mouth. She can control it.”

“I have no doubt about her ability,” said Sorley. “I *am* worried about the house though. We've only seen a little of how that scar has manifested in her.” He knelt down and hugged his daughter, gently playing with her hair as she pulled into his chest.

“I'm reluctant to put her through any stress,” said Anđa. “It wouldn't make me the best mother. We'll probably see it when she goes to school next week.”

“That's right,” said Sorley with a horrible realisation. “So, let me ask... Why are you teaching her to summon darkfire before her first day at school?”

“My mother taught me to control darkness when I was her age,” said Anđa with an innocent smile. “And Vala taught me the more destructive aspects of healing when I was only twice that.”

“Sometimes I forget how insane your culture is.” He let Narianel go and the girl bounced around eagerly, ready for more. She would be talented, and Anđa looked forward to seeing how powerful she would be.

“We're born able to speak the words of creation,” said Anđa. “We hear the voice of reality around us and bind it to our will. Now. Narianel. Next lesson!”

“Yes!” called the girl, rocking on the balls of her feet with her arms in the air.

“It's no good just shouting out the words you want to use,” said Anđa. “You need to keep the words inside and use them as your intent.”

“I... don't get it.”

“You need to think the words really hard,” said Anđa. “You need to want things so hard that the world has no choice but to give it to you.”

“Don't you think that's a bit much for her?” Sorley

could only wonder if she'd be able to do it at her age. "She only just created her first flame."

"Nonsense," said Anđa. "She has the gift."



A few hours into the night Anđa found herself getting dressed and heading out into the city, led by a sense of impending horror. The faint glow of her red eyes and white hair being the only light around.

Her crescent pupils let her see in monochrome even in the deepest darkness, and she could sense the aether in the world around her, allowing her to feel out the area to her sides and behind her. If she could be bothered it was a simple matter to view the world as it truly was with a little more magic passing through her eyes, but in her tired haze it was too much effort.

She found herself standing in the Court of Temples, a large, paved area surrounded by temples to the various Gods. The fountain at its centre ran with holy water and the trickling echoed in her ears.

And that was when she caught his scent and her vision expanded to detail the city. The effort was suddenly worth it.

"What are you doing here?" she asked. Memories of their battles stirred within her.

"I was visiting Haziël, but it's good to see you too," he said, appearing before her. He was tall and beautiful, his white hair reaching the ground and his neck choked by a dead, black halo. "It has been a while, little angel."

"You've been told before, Lucifer," said Anđa. "You need to stay away from my territory."

"Oh, you and your territory, just like the dog you came from." Lucifer circled Anđa slowly and carefully, stretching his black wings and smiling. "How is the pup doing? I heard from your father she's called Narianel, correct?"

"Leave." Anđa's voice was level. She didn't let out her

usual growl. She wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"Why don't you want me here, angel?" asked Lucifer. Anđa tried her best to be a positive force in the universe, her curse helping in that endeavour, but that smirk of his deserved a hammer to the teeth. "To protect the pup?"

"Because you're a vile traitor." Her voice was steady, but it was a charade.

"You're angry because I'm Fallen? I didn't think you had so close a tie to the Grand Lord."

"I'm angry because you attacked us in the Ruination! You broke Almut and injured my father! You then went on to lock away someone you called a brother and we've yet to be able to free him! You are a traitor to the family!"

"Ah, so that's it..." said Lucifer, satisfied that he had brought her anger to the surface.

"Of course that's it! Now leave here before I end you!"

"You think you could? To me it seems you've stagnated for the last six centuries. I've been regaining the power taken from me for my actions. I am far more powerful than I ever was, back when I walked in the light."

"You never walked in the light," said Anđa. She touched the centre of her chest, where the core of her soul was, and pulled a white-tipped spear with a nightwood handle from the aether that made up her being. She wished she had brought Iarann, but a soulblade would work just as well. "I'm very serious. You need to leave."

"You're right, of course," said Lucifer, unimpressed by the spear. "I never walked in the light. We're both creatures of twilight, aren't we? Walking between the light and the dark."

"I'm going to cut you off there," said Anđa. "I'm not so stupid that you can use that on me. I'm not some child unaware that there's a real difference between our stances despite some superficial similarities. Now leave."

"You hesitate to fight, though. You tell me to leave but you have yet to prov--"

The spear stuck in his shoulder and Anđa pushed

aether through it. With a clap of thunder and a burst of red Lucifer's left arm vanished into the night.

"Shut up or I'll keep going," said Anđa. Lucifer stood in shock for a moment but then began to laugh. "Go! Leave!"

"I'll leave," he said, licking his lips, flashing that black tongue. "I won't forget this." A blue light so dark it was almost black crept out from his wound as he turned and started to walk away. By the time he spread his wings, his arm had regrown.

"Good," whispered Anđa to herself. "Never come back."



"It's almost dawn, where have you been?" asked Sorley. "I heard the thunder, so you couldn't have been far." He was going over some journals for the Eyes on the living room table and looked up as she came in.

"My prescience took me on a wander and I had to deal with a pest. Nothing to worry about, dear."

"Mum! Mum!" shouted Narianel jumping down several stairs at a time. "Did you go on an adventure?"

"No, Naria, I just went on a walk. I'm a creature of night, so that's what I do. It's also why you're still awake. What have we said about getting up before dawn?"

"Not unless you're both awake?" She smirked in a way that reminded Anđa of Liara. There was no stopping Anđa's forgiveness then.

"You did say that," said Sorley, stifling a laugh.

"Well, yes, I suppose. Did you get any sleep, Naria?"

"No," said Narianel. "Creaky wouldn't leave me alone so I went to the library and looked at some books."

"Which books?" asked Anđa. There were a lot of things that Narianel could do, even at such a young age, but there were certain books that Anđa didn't want her seeing. The top shelf didn't stop the girl when she was determined though.

"The one with the pictures of the swords from the shelf

with the Zoraken symbols. And the one with the really long spell that takes up a million pages. And the one with the squid coming out of the man..."

"Squid coming out of the man?" asked Sorley. He put his book down at that. He unconsciously touched his scar.

"Yeah! The one where the man gets stabbed and then he's a squid with loads of hands!"

"She means the book about Legion," said Anđa. Sorley nodded and sighed. "Naria, that shelf is off-limits for a reason. You're not ready for it. You'll be allowed to read those books when you're older."

"I didn't read them, though!" said Narianel quickly. "I only looked at them! At the pictures!"

"That's still not good," said Anđa. "You can't just touch the books you're not supposed to." She looked around. "Where is Creaky anyway?"

"Probably upstairs on my bed," said Narianel, clearly grumpy about losing to the cat.

"On you go get ready. Your first day starts in an hour and a half. Your uniform is in the top drawer."

"Alright," said Narianel, turning on her heel and then charging upstairs.

"I'm worried about her future," said Anđa. "There are a lot of bad people out there that we've made enemies of."

"If she's anything like us then she can handle it," said Sorley. "And if she's anything like my father or your mother then I feel bad for her enemies."

"She's so pure now," said Anđa. "I can't handle the thought of her becoming corrupt, but there's a part of me knows that it's inevitable. She'll fold her soul in taint before the end."

"Your prescience?" asked Sorley, hugging her from behind to try and comfort her.

"Maybe. I ran into Lucifer. He's as mad as ever. He stays composed but I can feel it in his aura. What if she ends up like him? Or Egil? Or my mother?"

“Then teach her Sarkal,” said Sorley. “Help her to control her corruption the way you and your family do. It's not the end of the world if she becomes a being of darkness. It just means that waking your mother becomes a priority, and maybe your cousins too. She just needs teaching and a firm hand.”

“I worry about her joining *him*,” said Anđa, leaning back into Sorley's chest.

“She won't. We've always talked about letting her find her own path, but we'll make sure that his path is blocked. In the end she'll be on the right side.”

“I hope so, but... I'm afraid, Sorley. I get the feeling that a war is coming. That she'll be on the front lines, and I'll lose that innocent child to a monster lurking inside.”