

1412

"The three angel runes are gifts from God. They allow the rapholem, mikalim, and gabriem to engage innate aspects of themselves quickly. They shape themselves to who we are, which is why it's different for the three types of angels." He gestured to her with the same wing. "The rune is shaping itself to who you are."

"Which is an evil wizard that can't use magic?"

"Well, let's consider what we know. While the archangels had powers beyond understanding, us angels and demons are quite limited. Angels can create auras of peace, and auras of contentment."

"Not exactly useful in a battle."

"True. Demons can emit auras of hunger. The opposite of contentment."

"That's... Oh, that makes sense. A hunger for sex and a hunger for destruction?"

"In a sense. I'd say the auras are a little harder to describe than simply sexual and destructive, but close enough." He nodded, pacing again. "Angels can use grace to empower abilities humans might consider magical. Mikalim can unleash deadly rays of holy destruction. Rapholem can emit colossal, holy barriers. You've seen both in action."

She shivered. "Yeah."

"And we gabriem can heal wounds."

"Wait, what? Really? That's amazing. Can you... cure the common cold?"

He laughed. "There's no such thing as bacteria, viruses, or fungi in the afterlife."

"Semantics!" But, true. His healing powers were probably specifically of the 'close an open bleeding wound' kind.

"The most truly powerful demons can create hellfire, though that seems to be... different, than angel abilities. Related, but similar. We don't know exactly how it works, except that while an angel turns grace into essence to fuel their abilities, a demon creates a strange... reaction in themselves to unleash hellfire. It is chaotic, unpredictable, and, as you can imagine, quite destructive."

"I don't have to imagine. Vin didn't just use hellfire trying to kill that angel, uh, Azreal. He used it when the rider came at me. He incinerated a giant room."^(w)[www.nOvelfwORm.com](#)

Galon winced. "Vinicius is a dangerous demon, for a host of reasons. Be careful with him."

Mia clutched her necklace. "You think he'll betray me?"

"Honestly? No. I think Vinicius's desires are pretty much in line with yours, at least your greater ones. You want to save the world. He wants to rule Hell, and he can't do that if it's destroyed."

"Enemy of my enemy, I guess." Sighing, she tossed her staff from hand to hand in front of her, keeping its bottom close to the ground. "What other powers are there?"

"For us angels and demons, that's it. But for the archangels, the stories speak of ripping apart entire mountains, summoning oceans of lava, tornadoes of hellfire, holy rays that scorched the land, and..." He shrugged. "Powers on an apocalyptic scale. Armageddon."

She gulped. He gulped, too.

"You think I can do that stuff?"

"I hope not!" The nervousness in his eyes disappeared, and he laughed. It was such a great laugh, and she was sure he molded it that way on purpose. An expert at his craft. "But you can read the ancient language, know the ancient runes, and can craft auras that behave more like auras of the world. I'm guessing you can do more than you realize."

Mia stared at the staff in her hand, and the amber glowing inside the ruby.

"A state of mind," she said. "Like, how you think about yourself and stuff, does that affect the batlam rune?"

"It can make it more difficult to summon, as we saw with you. But that's all. What it summons is always the same."

If batlam was a rune designed to give angels a quick way to create armor and weapons that fit who and what they were, but not what their state of mind was, then the batlam rune knew the angel better than the angel knew themselves. Then it definitely knew Mia better than herself, or at least what she was, and how she'd fight. Magical powers?

She pointed the staff at the wall and poured her will into it. A fireball. She wanted to summon a fireball.

She thrust it forward toward the stone, and winced, waiting for an explosion.

Nothing happened.

"I don't think this is going to work," she said.

"I'd like to say that it will if you practice, but no one has the slightest idea what's going to happen. Heaven doesn't even know the unmarked can use the angel runes, and as far as I know, they only know about your ability to craft auras."

"Maybe you should tell them?" She tapped her fingernails -- oh wow she had black fingernails -- against the giant ruby. "If there are unmarked out there, doing bad things, I wouldn't want angels running into them, not knowing what they were dealing with."

Galon looked at her, and paused as he searched for the words to say.

"Telling them... wouldn't be very tactical," he said. "Your goal is important, more important than angel lives."

"Fuck, don't say that. Aren't angels the good guys?"

"Angels exist to protect and heal the souls of Heaven. They are not always so gentle with how they do that. The angels of Azoryev can be quite fanatical and visceral in how they deal with demons and damned souls."^(w)[www.NoVELwOrms.com](#)

"Double fuck. I--" Exhaustion hit her, and she teetered a few times before catching her weight with her staff. But the staff betrayed her, vanished from existence, and she squeaked as she fell to her palms and knees. No clink. The armor was gone, too, a tiny flash of red light announcing its departure.^(w)[www.©velfWOrms.\(c\)om](#)

Groaning, she looked at herself. Potram was on, something her subconscious seemed to handle for her now, as easy and automatic as breathing. But the staff and armor were gone, and when she went looking for batlam in her mind. The rune sat there, waiting to be lifted, but just considering it hit her with exhaustion. She needed rest, and food.

"Damn," she said, and she whined as she crawled over to her egg and sat beside it. "I lost it."

"You'll be able to wield it again much more easily, I'm sure, just like potram." He squatted down beside her, wings out, and he flapped them, creating a cooling breeze for her. "Feeling hungry?"

"I am. Definitely. Putting that rune on drained the shit outta me." She pulled her knees up to her chest and hugged them snug. "But... I don't like eating."

"Why?"

"Yosepha didn't tell you?"^(w)[www.N\(c\)v\(®\)ℓ©ðrM.\(c\)ðM](#)

"We only spoke for a few moments."