

The Lost Sky

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Inspired by the **Battle for Nethervein** board game from Jan Vaněček and
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Act I

Return of the Fallen One

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When he walked away from this world, he did not think that he will ever return. He thought of nothing but revenge. Of his brother's killer. He was tortured by the idea that the monster who killed him is alive. Now, the old feelings had to step aside.

Thaddeus passed through the gate from the other dimensions and stepped forward. Dry soil cracked even more and the wind threw the omnipresent dust to his face. Although the angel was back to Nethervein, he did not feel like it. He did not recognize the places he helped to create eons ago. It did not occur to him that his absence can change his home so much.

He was walking through valleys and riverbeds, which did not see the water for a long time. He climbed the mountain tops and looked down. It couldn't be true. He remembered greenery, tall trees, the smell of grass and the singing of birds. He always found it so common, mean, as the human race. But now he's missing it. The world was shrouded in grey and gloomy mist.

Thaddeus began to wonder where they went wrong. The answer is hidden in his past. He looked up to the heaven with a little hope, but that didn't bring salvation. There were fiery red flashes of lightning. The clouds were soaked in blood and filled with despair.

If there was a hell, it bore the name Nethervein.



Acid rain was falling to the ground. Finally, he discovered a place with at least some moisture, but still the soil has received hardly any. Drops just hissed when they hit the ground and immediately evaporated.

Thaddeus wondered how the humanity could survive in such conditions. And has it survived at all? He has not met anyone for such a long time. But there is still a survivor - the murderer of his brother. He followed him up to here from other spheres. Finally he picked up his trail. Blind with revenge, he did not notice he was led to the place where he arrived at full of despair a long time ago...

He passed through the portal as many times before. He was alone. The brother, who was on his side all the time, left him. He died! Killed by the monster they called Wanderer. Wanderer in yellow. He was just as treacherous and egotistical as the color of narcissus, which has become characteristic for him.

Thaddeus screamed in pain. He had to release his anger. To send it into the world. Even so, more than is healthy remained in his body.

He fell crushed to the ground. His wings turned black and his skin turned pale. The very nature of his angelic strength was leaving him. As if he never stood over people, as if he were as common as they were. Pride, which pushed him to the bottom, was leaving his veins. He breathed it out with his mouth half open. He was on his knees for days, until he completely lost his superiority. Only then he was able to rise again.

He went to an unknown destination. His legs carried him without any help. He did not control his own body, although even as a fallen angel he had far more ability than most mortals. He stopped at the foot of the mountain and looked up.

High in the mountains there was a monastery. In the past he would fly up to it, but he was still not able to control his black wings. He began to climb like a man. The stairs were narrow and slippery. Any mistake however small it may be and he would helplessly roll down.

When he climbed up, his eyes met a man. The man dotted with scars seemed to be waiting for him.

"You are Thaddeus, aren't you?" said the reverend of the monastic enclave. His voice did not show any sign of emotion.

The angel wanted to ask him how he knew, but instead of this he nodded silently. He lost the last member of his family, but he suddenly felt like at home. He could not explain it.

Faith could be powerful. It could heal wounds and provide shelter for an aching soul. But even so, there was something above it and the reverend knew it very well.

Even the fallen angel still represented unspeakable power. Only if he could be tamed.

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At that time Thaddeus did not see many things. He did not want to see them. Pretending that they do not exist was a lot easier. The problem was that they remained hidden even now, when so much has changed. But he recollected something.

Almost ten years passed since the death of Thaddeus' brother, and he found his lost power again. He still had black wings. In spite of this fact he had his strenght back.

The reverend invited the fallen angel to his place. The final test in training, with which Thaddeus began after coming here, awaited him. The soul can grow only in the following way. In loneliness. Only that builds a strong personality. That was the philosophy of monastic enclave. The former cocreator of the world now had to prove the truth of this statement.

He appeared before the reverend. Everyone worshipped the highest official of the monastery, but the former angel, though he left pride somewhere in the dust, never did so. He just politely greeted his master, ready to hear the task entrusted to him.

"I have been watching you for a long time," the reverend said and broke the silence. "You are standing on your feet again, but still I can see that the past will not let you sleep peacefully."

Thaddeus was surprised to hear such words. It isn't as if they were not true. He just did not know the reverend would care about something like that. He himself had to deal with inner demons. He did not expect anybody to do it for him.

The master ignored his disciple's astonishment and continued: "The murderer of your brother is still on the move in other spheres. Go and find him. Take your revenge, so you can finally move on. I know that you underwent the training just to kill him someday."

Thaddeus expected such words even less. But he had no objections. Only one question. "What kind of man will replace me in training?"

The reverend got up from the table and walked to the window. A new disciple was trying first combat positions in the courtyard. "Not a man. A girl. She has already started her training. Her name is Iona"

"Since when do you train girls?" The angel raised his eyebrows.

"Since they are gifted," the reverend replied, though it did not sound like him. Even then it should occur to Thaddeus that something is wrong, but it did not happen. He accepted the answer and left. He was lost in thought. He called for revenge.

The master was right. Thaddeus never began the training in order to serve the enclave, although he pledged loyalty to the order at the entrance ritual and vowed to use his new abilities to protect the world. He always intended to serve only himself.

The reverend misjudged him. The angel, though fallen, could not be re-educated. He was regaining his power and intended to go his own way.

It was time to get rid of Thaddeus once and for all.



He knew his opponent's manners. His name was unknown to him and he did not really want to know it, but he was familiar with his practices. The traces headed for only one direction. Thaddeus knew that his tentacular enemy is able to take advantage of doubles. The man with a mask over his face was just trying to confuse him. But the fallen angel hold his ground.

He went to the opposite side and after a while he found traces of the true tentacle man. He walked faster. He felt he was close. And he was right.

He rashly shot a fire from his palm at him. He missed. He had within reach what he craved for. It was easy to act rashly. He drew attention to himself, but it did not matter. The enemy knows anyway that he is close on his heels. At least it will be a straight fight. Either he dies or the tentacle man. There was no other way.

A masked man drew his Sword of dusk that seemed to absorb ambient light in its midst. Not even Thaddeus didn't fall behind. On the contrary his weapon blazed and spread a warm glow to the wide surroundings. They were like two opposites.

Thaddeus switched from defence to attack and the tentacle man let him be. He was permanently scarred by the years of persecution and escaping just like the angel. But he still found pleasure in his life. He was not going to give up.

The man with the mask over his face called insects for help. People were afraid of them because they could cause diseases. But the angel did not mind. He swung a flaming sword and the wings of moths flared in fire. They burned to ashes within a moment and again there was just him and the killer of his brother.

The tentacle man's movements lost their power and he quickly ran himself out. He knocked the enemy to the ground and pressed him against it. He held the sword at his throat and was about to deliver a final blow, but the man in yellow was still resisting. The hand of Thaddeus was under his control. He could not move it.

"Do you want to end it?" said the tentacle man in a rasping voice. "Not so fast. You're just a puppet in others hands. You are heading for disaster."

"Nonsense!" Thaddeus shouted and pressed the sword even closer despite the enemy's defenses. It was just a matter of time before his opponent loosen his grip.

The man with the mask groaned in pain as his skin burned. But it did not stop him talking. The words were his last chance for life.

"He manipulated you. The reverend manipulated you. He joined the Syndicate, which is ruining our world and exploiting people who have survived. They wanted to take control of the entire planet and they knew that as long as you're here, they can't. Why do you think the reverend sent you away? To the realm where I was stronger than you. He wanted to wipe you out of this world forever!"

Thaddeus released his grip for a moment. It could not be true. But it made surprisingly good sense. He had it before his eyes all the time.

His head began to spin.

The tentacle man did not wait a minute and knocked the angel down using his last strength. He teleported. It was his only chance.

Thaddeus remained kneeling on the ground. On the ground, he created and swore to protect. Revenge waited for many years. Now more important task was ahead of him - to fulfil a promise and regain his honor of an angel.



Black wings grew stronger. In the color of darkness, he found something that flowed power into his veins. Maybe it was pride - an ulcer that torments mankind. But he was not a human. The pride was a part of him. To lay it down in the dust, in the arid desert, was a mistake.

Angels won't be dictated to by anybody. No one has the right.

He flew up the mountain with the monastery. He spent ten years there. Ten years. What does it mean in comparison with the memory of the world? Only an insignificant dot.

The reverend did not expect him this time. He thought the angel was dead. Again, a fundamental mistake.

Monks guards ran to him. They wanted to stop him, they had it in their eyes. Brave to the very end. His sword did not hesitate even for a second. He seared them and kept fighting. Further, until the last monk remained - the reverend.

Only now they stood face to face. The reverend knew his power is not enough against the angel. All he could do was to persuade him of his truth. But Thaddeus did not let him give any touching speech. He had just one question.

"Do you know what the word solitude means? The loneliness you have in the philosophy of your order?"

"The truth is quite otherwise. I had no choice. If I did not make an agreement with the Syndicate and joined them with our forces, the monastery

would be closed down. All our efforts would be a waste of time. We cannot win the fight about the future of our world alone and we cannot ignore it!"

Thaddeus looked around at the remains of burning corpses and smiled wryly. "The monastery had already disappeared." With these words, even at the price of harming himself, he threw a firestorm against the reverend. It was not so merciful as his sword.

He looked into the eyes of his master as he was burning and screaming. As his skin was melting. It made him feel good. He felt satisfaction. And he was not alone, who enjoyed the sight.

When he finally looked away from the reverend, he saw a girl. Even though she was not a child anymore he recognized her. She was his successor, another disciple of the monastic enclave.

He looked at her carefully. He has never seen anyone like her before. Instead of half of her body she had spare organs. The arm, leg, torso... everything was made from metal. Her eyes showed, that he was not the only person to be harmed by the order.

"Do you also serve someone?" he asked. There was no anger in his voice. He did not want to hurt her like the others. He had even some understanding for her.

Iona said nothing, she just looked down. Her answer was clear to Thaddeus as well as the future.

The weight of the whole world fell upon him.

Killing the reverend did not help anything. His master was still right.

Not even an angel could win this fight alone.