

# MENTAL DAMNATION PURITY



VOL. III

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# CHAPTER I



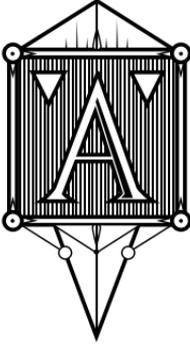
## Paradise

Endless light leaving no shadow,  
no darker half.

Each side mirrored, and applied to all.  
Only the good and the worthy is what we see.  
Because we chose to deny thee.  
Even as they hiss and plea, we do not break to their sorrow.  
For we are an endless light leaving no shadow.

Up high we are defined as pure.  
Down below they are nowhere near.  
This is the gift that has been given,  
when both halves are one.  
Where darkness is none.  
Praise be to thy Father who watches over all.  
The Creator,  
Our merciful lord granting us the will.

That in hopes good is what they fulfill.  
One day your children will return to you,  
Father.



men,” came the voice of a male who kept his head low, his broad jawline pressed against his bare chest, his eyes closed as the soft wind blew past his long eyelashes. He brushed his blond hair from his face and opened his piercing sky-blue eyes, staring out into the endless sky of white above him. It was an empty white where the light did not project from any given focal point, leaving no sharp shadows over the scene. The space below blended into rich blues, oranges, and yellows forming stars, gases, and clouds. Hundreds of spiralling, glowing objects could be seen in the distance. The elements directly below were larger spheres filled with bright colours, orbiting a large, bright yellow star.

“The Creator’s work is infinite,” the male remarked while releasing his hands from their prayer formation. He stood straight from his leaned pose against a marble railing that looked out onto the contrasting scene of white and colour. “Perhaps that is what causes such confusion to mortals who stray from the light and walk the path of sin. Up here in the clear space, we are not confused by so much distraction.”

It was not a concept he fully understood. How could one not follow the obvious path defined by the Creator, even in the darkest of times? But that is what made him differ from the countless mortals down below: he was created by the gods—with purity.

“Crasoe,” came a soft womanly voice that echoed faintly.

The male, identified as Crasoe, turned back to face the long, narrow, winding marble path whence the sound originated. The path had ribbed marble columns on each side, supporting the ceiling above.

Railings were constructed between the columns with nothing but empty space under the path. At the end of the hall was an ascending staircase where a thin, pale-skinned female stood straight. Her stiff posture made her body's toned form clearly visible; every ounce of flesh was hardened muscle. A rugged scar ran from the top of her neck down to her hip.

"Yes, Rahiie?" replied Crasoe, who began to walk down the path leading to the female. His long, white, silky kilt brushed his legs as his sandals quietly slapped the ground with each step.

"Why do you gaze down upon the mortal realm? Their imperfect world is nothing like up here, in the Heavenly Kingdoms."

"Because, sister, I was praying to the Creator, strengthening my faith that he will continue to bless us with endless light. That is what these prayer pods and the Temple of Solitude are for."

Rahiie looked down to the ground with her electric blue eyes and pressed her black lips together. "That, I do understand."

Crasoe reached the end of the hall, stopping mere inches away from the female. "How are you?" he asked.

She raised her head so they were at eye level and shook her head. "I came down here to pray."

Crasoe placed his hand on her bare shoulder, carefully avoiding the black, bony spikes that pierced out of the end of her clavicles. "We may be angels, but we aren't free of temptation."

Rahiie placed her right hand on his own while raising her other, mutated hand. It was enlarged, bumpy, and consisted of a thumb and two fingers. "No, we're not."

Crasoe held his gaze on his sister's face. Her cheekbones had small black spikes projected outward and two large, twisted black horns erected from her forehead. He wasn't interested in those details; no, he was focused on her eyes.

"You never seem to judge me for what I have become, my dear brother," Rahiie said.

"Our physical forms are mere temporary vessels." He continued to stare into her pupils, not blinking. "The eyes are the window to the soul. I see you for who you are."

Rahiie smiled. "I wish the gods could see me as you do." She turned, stepped closer to the railing, and looked to the cosmos below. "We

were created with smokeless flame—purer than the mortals below, who are made of mere mud.”

“Yes. I am familiar with our history.”

“Then why are you and I so different? Or any of us who fought in the War in Heaven, for that matter?”

“Because the gods designed us to execute our given tasks; we’re harbingers of justice and followers of their word. Now that the war is over, we struggle for a purpose.”

“We shouldn’t be designed with flaws. That should be left for the mortals.” Rahiie clutched her mutated fist.

“We’re remnants of a time that has come and gone, my dear sister. The time for soldiers to fight the demons of Dega’Mostikas’s Triangle is over. Our function lacks a niche in this new era.”

“I almost envy the thousands we lost in those years.”

“Don’t. Envy is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. You know what will happen if you start to envy.” Crasoe leaned against the railing, his bare shoulder pressing against his sister’s. “I do have difficulty accepting the gods’ decision to sign the Truce of Passing, but we must remain faithful. The Creator wills it so.”

She slammed her left hand on the railing. “Blasphemy, and you know it, Crasoe! The gods made our kind to cleanse evil.” Her lips trembled while she took a deep breath. “Do they even care what this Truce of Passing has done to us? We’re voided. Our allies who perished at least will experience eternal bliss in Death’s Vortex.”

“You’re quick to desire a place we know nothing about.”

“The ghouls describe it as a resting bed for all souls.”

“Those are the words of ghouls—creatures who spawn there. We know nothing of the nature of that place.” Crasoe gently placed his hands on his sister’s arms, turning her to face him. “This isn’t you talking; this is Dega’Mostikas’s scar.”

Rahiie’s eyes moved back and forth, scanning her brother. She breathed heavily through her slim nostrils. Crasoe knew that his sister was only suffering from the infectious wound she sustained from bullheadedly assaulting the Devil himself.

Crasoe stroked her black hair so it rested behind her horns. “This is why veterans like you and I come to the prayer pods to reconnect with the Creator: to cleanse ourselves from all the bloodshed we have

caused.”

“Unlike you, brother, I am haunted by Dega’Mostikas daily. This mutation . . .” Rahiie turned to look back into the open space below. “You’re also the finest soldier the Heavenly Kingdoms have to offer. I cannot help but feel envy. I am not aiming to buff your ego; it is just a fact.”

Crasoe nodded. He knew she was right: he had slain thousands of demons before the Truce of Passing. His combat skills were matched by none.

“The gods value your battle tactics. That’s why they still use you to hunt rogue demons and angels. Me? I offer nothing.”

“Untrue. They’ve made you a key member of the Ring of Judgment. You’ve been to hell and back.”

“It’s a political position. I am a warrior.”

Crasoe ran his hand along the polished marble railing. “It’s temporary until we can purge the infection.”

Rahiie frowned. “I don’t know how you do it, brother—how you hunt down our former comrades from the War in Heaven.”

“Their lust for blood has strayed them far from the light, making them vampyric in nature. They are obsessed with the sin of wrath. A fallen angel is not of our kind. We do not need to commit a sin to sustain our life force.”

Rahiie shook her head. “Is that what you have to tell yourself to complete a bounty?”

“I didn’t ask to be assigned to hunt down vampyres, but it is my function in this new era. As yours is within the Ring of Judgment, deciding among the gods which of the three hells a soul will be sent to.”

“I guess our roles are reliant on each other: you bring fallen angels for us to judge, and I judge them.”

“Remember sister, this is only temporary. It is why we must pray to the Creator so we are brought closer to the light.” He paused. “I’ve come to terms with my wrathful craving of bloodshed.”

“Brother?” Rahiie said. “But denial of evil is one of the foundational practices.”

Crasoe swallowed heavily. “I haven’t confessed this to anyone but the Creator in my prayers. Desire is a mortal emotion; it can lead to

temptation, and temptation leads to evil and ultimately a dependency on sin.”

“Then why do you confess to me? I am not a god and cannot forgive your sin.”

“I know you struggle with the sin of envy. As you said, we are flawed by design—created to cleanse evil in a former era. We are unique among angel kind.”

Rahiie leaned her head against Crasoe’s shoulder. “Brother, I don’t know what I would do without you.”

“Pray to the Creator, Rahiie.” Crasoe nodded toward the staircase. “I must go. My praying session is complete and I must meet with God Ha about some dogmatic issues with Dega’Mostikas’s Triangle.”

“Oh? Anything I should be aware of?”

“I do not know yet. For now, focus on your prayers.” Crasoe leaned forward and kissed his sister on the forehead. “Be well.”

“You too.” Rahiie displayed a weak smile as Crasoe stepped away.

It pained him to leave his sister while she was experiencing such grief, but he had his duty to attend to. She was at the safest place she could be, praying to the Creator.

The angel reached the staircase and gradually made his way up to the main floor of the Temple of Solitude where dozens of similar staircases descended to the prayer pods below.

*If the gods or the other angels knew of our struggles, they would not take kindly to us. I must hide it from them and pray for guidance. It is why the Creator is here: to help us. I only fear my sister’s willpower is not strong enough.* He knew his sister suffered the greatest from the War in Heaven. Her mutation and the scar Dega’Mostikas left her was a constant reminder of the violence during that time.

After the war, Rahiie and Crasoe had to forcefully adapt to their new roles. Crasoe was assigned missions to ensure the Truce of Passing was kept intact. On this day, he was to meet with God Ha—one of the younger gods—who was responsible for security of the Heavenly Kingdoms. He often consulted with Crasoe on tactical ideas for how to handle the demons, angels, or other beings that could prove to be a threat to the heavens or the Truce of Passing.

Their meetings often burdened Crasoe with tracking another rebellious being—angel or demon—who refused to heed the truce.

Crasoe reached the top of the stairway where the marble flooring was almost as reflective as a mirror. The room was large and circular with a domed ceiling and numerous balconies overlooking the main floor. Similar balconies extended from the upper levels. Crasoe had made countless visits to the temple before and always admired the architecture. This temple was where he preferred to connect with the Creator through prayer.

*If I continue to focus on my prayers, the Creator will bring me to the light. I mustn't forget that.*

At the gold-trimmed wide-open entrance of the temple, Crasoe sprung from the ground and into the air, away from the white staircase leading to the main road. He extended his broad grey-and-white wings to their full length, gliding over the circular-bricked streets of the Heavenly Kingdoms. Beyond each edge of the road was the same colourful cosmos below: the mortal realm.

The main street branched off into various side roads leading into other marble buildings, mostly meditation temples or study chambers. Just because one made it to the heavens didn't mean their journey had come to an end. The Heavenly Kingdoms—for mortals—only brought them to the realm of the godly where they were closer to reconnecting with the Creator.

*There are too many distractions in the mortal realm for them to think clearly. Their thoughts are too influenced by the physical world around them and they struggle to see beyond it. Here, there is less noise and more like-minded beings who too seek unification with the Creator. This gives us an advantage in becoming closer to him.*

Crasoe flapped his wings several times, soaring lower to the ground. He was in the second tier, the Tier of Diligence in the Heavenly Kingdoms. God Ha's chamber was kept in the first tier, closer to the heavenly gates.

Each of the seven tiers found within the Heavenly Kingdoms was dedicated to one of the Seven Heavenly Virtues. God Ha's chamber, being in the Tier of Temperance, was focused on justice.

Crasoe soared down past the road, toward the vast coloured space and the Tier of Temperance. At first the tier couldn't be seen, but the further he flew, the more it became visible. This level was made of marble and an impenetrable metal only found within the

Heavenly Kingdoms. He was directly above God Ha's round chamber in the centre of the tier, with roads spiralling outward around it and branching into smaller dome-shaped buildings.

Other angels could be seen flying in the distance—some in pairs and others alone—carrying on with their daily tasks. Heaven was a busy place, highly involved with the affairs of the mortal realm. All prayers were answered by the gods and the Creator, then tasked to the angels.

Crasoe tilted his wings back as he got closer to God Ha's chamber. His arched wings made it easier to slow down for a gentle landing. He guided himself toward the wide, curved balcony located at the top of the smooth metal building. The balcony had a direct path into the top floor, and waterfalls poured into pools on both sides of the white metal walkway. At the far end of the room was another circular extension; this one had a throne in the centre made of solid gold. God Ha was always known for his lavish taste.

Crasoe landed on one knee, hands extended to the ground as his wings folded inward against his back.

He stood up and his ears picked up on an enchanting melody echoing from within the chamber—the most soothing voice he had ever heard. The gods often used angelic music to strengthen the spirit of the Heavenly Kingdoms, as they had found a direct correlation between one's spiritual strength and their exposure to music. The vocalization was often nondescript rather than discernable language; this left the sounds more open to one's interpretation.

Indeed, they were right. Crasoe could not place the singer of the melody he heard within the chamber, but the sound made all the hairs on his back stand on end. It was something that sounds had never done to him before. He listened more intently, feeling his muscles unwind from his flight while the singer's pitch gently meandered. No voice had given him such an experience of sudden harmony. Normally, he would block the singers out and focus on his discussion with God Ha. Today was different. Why was a voice causing him such a stir? He had to know who the voice belonged to.

*It is possible my sister's suffering is affecting my psyche.*

Crasoe kept his calm, alert, and dominating presence as he marched into the chamber, observing God Ha sitting in his golden throne at

the far end. The god was cross-legged and barefoot, exposing his coal-black legs against his gold-trimmed, cream-coloured kilt. From the waist up, his skin was ivory. His broad torso was exposed and his wide, muscular arms rested against his knees, palms facing upward.

It was always difficult to tell if the god was staring at you or in meditation due to the deep orange and black wooden mask of a smiling human face he wore over his own.

The closer Crasoe approached the god, the louder the melodic singing grew, flooding his eardrums and numbing his mind, drowning any thoughts he had of his wrathful nature or his sister's sorrow. His eyes scanned the chambers, the waterfalls, the pools, and God Ha's throne; where was it coming from?

*There.* Crasoe's eyes swept to the far right of God Ha's throne. Beyond the circular platform was another angel, who balanced herself on a thin pole that rose from the pool of water. Her one bare foot kept her upright from the pole, with her second leg perched on her thigh. Her pale skin seemed to bloom from the light reflecting off the water. Her light-blue, semi-transparent dress draped over her one shoulder leaving her back exposed; the fabric rode down just above her knee.

Crasoe was awestruck momentarily, watching the angel. Her eyes were closed while she hummed the wonderful melodies with ease. Her hands and head moved up and down in motion with the pitch of her voice, her wavy blonde hair moving with her.

"Entrancing," he murmured to himself. *Keep your gaze on Ha. He might be watching.*

Crasoe brought his eyes back to the god and straightened his posture, realizing he had briefly slouched at the sight of the singer. *Not even the deepest battle wound has caused me to slouch over, but the sound of singing does?* Unlike Crasoe and Rahiie, some angels' functions were not to engage in battle, but to express creativity like the angel who sung before him.

Crasoe exhaled heavily through his nose, trying to regain his mental focus. He continued onward to the end of the walkway that joined the circular extension where God Ha was seated on his throne.

"God Ha." Crasoe kneeled, putting both of his hands on his raised knee.

The god's head swayed steadily. "Crasoe. What an honor it is to see

you,” came his excessively deep voice. The god raised a hand at the singing angel. “Thank you, Glamorous.”

The female angel acknowledged Ha and softened her singing, adjusting the speed of her melody to fade into ambience.

Crasoe regarded God Ha. “I would not miss our meetings; we are key to maintaining the Truce of Passing.”

“Indeed.” The god extended his legs and stood from his throne, standing at least a third taller than Crasoe. “I rely on your skills.”

Crasoe rose. Without turning, he glanced over to the singing angel whose eyes were now open. She stared directly at him with her bright green eyes.

He felt a surge of fire rush through his face and down his body. Quickly he returned his gaze to God Ha, who was looking off to the opposite direction at the window, viewing the horizon of white sky and the colourful space below.

*Focus.*

God Ha kept his back turned. “It is what we were assigned, and it is what we will do. I believe we’ve made quite a partnership, with your expertise in the field and my divine knowledge of justice.”

Crasoe moved to the god’s side and joined him in gazing out the window. He felt his back tingle now that he had turned away from the angel. *She must still be staring at me.*

“What is it that you wish to discuss, God Ha?”

“Dega’Mostikas’s Triangle.” The god turned to look down at Crasoe. The emptiness of his mask always brought a cold feeling to Crasoe’s being. “Specifically, I wanted your input on Dreadweave Pass. Your sister was one of the angels who took part in the Ring of Judgment’s banishment of the Weaver, correct?”

“Yes. That is correct.”

God Ha returned to his throne and sat, resting his elbow on his thigh and his head in his hand. “Rahiiie must have seen the Weaver then—known the look in his eye just before he descended to his prison in hell.”

“I suppose she would have. Why?” Crasoe brought his hands behind his back, slowly turning to face the god. He didn’t want to turn around, knowing that the singing angel would be in his line of sight again; she sent an unfamiliar feeling throughout his body and

mind that held the disorienting power of a poison but the wonderful sensation of enjoyment. *It is like being stunned by a brutal blow, but it isn't pain I feel: it is ecstasy.*

"I just wanted to confirm that she was there during his banishment. I'll speak with Rahiie separately." The god stood upright and placed both hands on the throne's arms. "What I find disturbing is what we've learned of the Weaver."

"What might that be?"

"The Weaver has learned to funnel his will beyond his prison, within Dreadweave Pass."

Crasoe raised an eyebrow. "How is that possible?"

"I do not know. There must have been an immoral angel among those who banished him. The prison would be impure from the beginning and would allow him to channel his will through it."

Crasoe exhaled through his nose, knowing that God Ha was suggesting his sister. "Could it not have been a god who was immoral?"

Ha chuckled. "You of all should know that the gods are infallible—incapable of corruption."

"So why was the Weaver sent to hell?"

"Temporary punishment for straying from the truth."

*That's not exactly convincing,* Crasoe thought.

God Ha continued. "We all know his dark arts were found within the Book of Consulo and he refuses to share this book with us. If we had it, we could truly be rid of Dega'Mostikas with one ritual."

"Indeed we would, except that the Weaver refuses to tell anyone how he found it. Before that, everyone assumed it was a myth."

"Perhaps with another few thousand years of imprisonment, he will give up his pride and tell us." God Ha leaned forward. "But this is why we've met. We want the Weaver to stay in his prison and repent, but he is now able to use his necromantic arts once more. He is experimenting with the mortals of Dreadweave Pass, building his own personal army."

Crasoe shook his head. "Are you sure?"

"Yes. We know because the Weaver has sent a squad of his army—deformed mortals—into the lower tiers of the Heavenly Kingdoms as a message. We slaughtered them immediately."

"What's the message?"

“He is coming for us.”

“Why can’t we intervene with his rituals? It is clearly a deliberate disobedience to the sacred law of mortals having free will. Dreadweave Pass is supposed to allow mortals to repent for their sins, not be tortured and mutated into minions of a fallen god.”

God Ha shrugged. “We must abide by the Truce of Passing. If we do not honor it, nor will Dega’Mostikas and we will return to all-out war.”

“Is that not what you and I want?”

God Ha let out a low laugh. “I appreciate your desire for a forceful approach to handling Dega’Mostikas, but it is not about what you want; it is about the betterment of the Heavenly Kingdoms and the safe passing of mortals into the afterlife.”

Crasoe bit his lip and took a quick glance over to the angel, who was still looking directly at him. She continued singing but smiled slightly, causing Crasoe to swallow heavily.

*Stay on track.* “What is it you require of me?”

“I would like you to investigate. If we can build a stronger case against the Weaver’s practices, we might be able to bring it to the Ring of Judgment and Dega’Mostikas himself. Then we can explain to them that the Weaver is breaking the Truce of Passing.”

Crasoe exhaled heavily. He hated politics and finding evidence of the obvious. “What troubles me is that we are bound by the Truce of Passing, yet the Weaver can send his minions to attack the heavens.”

“He denies these minions as recent creations—claims they were failed experiments prior to his banishment. He tells us he cannot perform his arts within his prison. An unlikely story, but neither the Ring of Judgment nor Dega’Mostikas have investigated further. I, for one, know he is practicing his necromantic arts again.”

Crasoe smirked. “True instinct never lies.”

“So please, Crasoe, go now and see what you can discover for us to use against the Weaver. If you need to bend the law, do it sparingly—and inform me if you do so I can protect you from doubt.”

“Of course.” Crasoe bowed and turned to exit the chamber, taking one last look at the singing angel. His eyes ran up her thin legs, curved hips, and lean torso to her large eyes—which were once again closed as she chanted. He felt another rush of fire run through his

CHAPTER I: PARADISE

body, this one coming from his chest. Whatever the sensation was, it was new to him.