

Paladins and Angels

*a collection of short
stories and poems*

by

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Table of Contents

Power Ballad	3
The Stag Man	8
The Raid on Rockshale	10
The Choice of the Warrior	12
Henri L'Foy	14
The Knight of the Stag	16
Chooser of the Slain	18
Mariana's Destiny.....	20
The Mirror of Three.....	22
The Apothecary's Son.....	23
The City Called Eternity	25
Song of the King's Mariner	26
Sir Vaelen and the Angel.....	28
Gefellanernacht.....	30
Sharpening the Blade	32

Power Ballad

Michelle awoke to a familiar high-pitched beeping. She looked at the clock. 6 AM. She groaned. Both she and Gabrielle had taken up the human habit of sleeping, much to the chagrin of their boss, who was code-named Big Daddy.

In their natural form, Michelle and Gabrielle looked human, though human eyes were not designed to look upon beings of their kind. They were extraterrestrials, of a sort. Big Daddy had given them bodies resembling attractive human young women in their early twenties. They sometimes wished to see their home in sector Caelum 3, but they knew their missions across the galaxies were of high importance.

Michelle knew well the sound that had awakened her. It was Big Daddy's mission camera, which he used to communicate with the agents of the Lux across the galaxies. "Wh-what did I miss?" a slightly groggy, singsong voice asked.

Michelle turned to see Gabrielle walking slowly toward the communication monitor, rubbing sleep from her eyes. Both Gabrielle and Michelle were about the same height in their human form. Michelle had very dark straight hair, a light complexion and blue eyes. Gabrielle had wavy dirty blond hair and coffee brown eyes.

"Good morning, sleepy head. You haven't missed anything. I haven't answered the call yet."

Michelle walked over to the communication monitor and pushed the Accept button. The screen buzzed and soon showed Big Daddy in his human form. "Good morning, agents!" He said jovially. "Sleeping late again?"

"When you have human bodies, you have to eat and sleep like a human." Gabrielle laughed.

"I have a new mission for you, a very important mission. The dark force is trying to take over another planet. This planet, Tirian, is very much like the original planet. Same atmosphere, flora, fauna and human population. The dark master arrived a few years ago under the guise of mega-businessmen Alistair Roth of the Asteroth Corporation, a company that promises utopia in exchange for leadership. They have already set up a metropolitan, almost completely totalitarian state. Our enemy's technology developers are working on a mind control system that will completely enslave the planet. It will be launched in a few hours. Through some of Special Agent Mike's string pulling under my orders, the savant special-education school in the capital city is in need of new team music teachers.

"That's where you come in. I'm sending you to pose as special ed music teachers. Many of these students already have a special connection with me and will sing from example. You must teach

them some of these songs from the original planet. I will give you glasses to see what I am doing while they're singing.”

He pressed a button and two old leather-bound books appeared in front of them. He pressed another button and two female business suits replaced their bath robes. Picking up the books, they used their special, Caelum 3 hypervision to memorize the power ballads.

“Now I'm going to transport you from the station to Tirian. It will be very dangerous, but the power ballads will help protect you. I will be with you, as always. After this mission, you can return to Caelum 3 for sabbatical. Go with my blessing.”

There was a beam of light from the space station as the two agents of the Lux shot towards their destination.

Alistair Roth sat at his mahogany desk in his office on the highest floor of Asteroth's metropolitan office building. Everything was going according to plan. Soon the planet would be entirely in his grip, and there was nothing that pesky Big Daddy could do about it. He grinned wickedly. His assistant, Mr. Jann, entered the room.

“Is everything ready?”

“Yes, sir. All the mind boxes, which they foolishly think are radios and other news devices, are hooked up to your main computer. All you have to do is send your brain waves through the network, and everyone on this planet will be slaves to your will.”

“Excellent,” Mr. Roth laughed. “It's only a matter of time, Big Daddy. Only a matter of time.”

Michelle and Gabrielle materialized around the corner from the special ed music school. Like every building in the capital city of Tirian, it was guarded by a police squad armed with flamethrowers. They wore their communication devices on their helmets.

“If we don't do everything just right, it could be curtains for our human bodies.” Gabrielle said telepathically.

“Just follow my lead,” Michelle responded, likewise inaudibly.

The lead officer pointed his flamethrower at Michelle. “What are you doing here?” he demanded. “These are business and school hours. Regulation does not permit civilians to be on the streets at this time.”

“We are the new music teachers for this school.”

“Oh, yeah,” he snarled, “prove it. Sing us a little ditty.”

“Very well,” she said, mentally selecting a simple song from the book and praying that they did not have their communication devices on.

“As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown,
Good Lord, show me the way.
Oh sinners, let's go down.
Let's go down, don't you wanna come down?
Oh sinners, let's go down,
Down in the river to pray.”

The officer lowered his flamethrower. “I'm sorry, ma'am,” he said, a tear coming to his eye. “Please, go on in.”

Gabrielle and Michelle walked past the troop of policemen into the school. They were greeted by a proper looking man in a business suit. “Hello, ladies. I've been expecting you. I am Mr. Naumann, the interim teacher. I will go introduce you to your class.”

They entered a brightly painted room with about twenty kids seated in wheelchairs and standing in walkers. There was a piano, as well as a table with a violin and a xylophone.

“These kids,” Naumann whispered, “may not be able to say much, but they have the voices of angels.”

“I'm sure,” said Gabrielle, winking.

As she walked by the table, Gabrielle bumped it, sending the ever-present mind box crashing to the floor. Mr. Naumann was speechless.

“Oh don't worry about that. We'll get it cleaned up later. For now, let's start.”

“Here is the list of recommended songs.” Naumann stammered, still quite flustered.

The two women scanned the titles. “A-S-T-Asteroth”, “Mr. Alistair's Good City”, “Hooray for Mr. Roth”. Yep. All enemy propaganda.

“Hi everyone!” Gabrielle said in a loud cheerful voice. “I think we’ll start with something different today. Ms. Michelle is going to help me on the violin.”

Michelle picked up the violin and started to play a tune originally conceived by a human on the original planet named Bach.

At the proper time, Gabrielle started to sing:

“Jesu, joy of man’s desiring,
Holy wisdom, love most bright;
Drawn by Thee, our souls aspiring
Soar to uncreated light.
Word of God, our flesh that fashioned,
With the fire of life impassioned,
Striving still to truth unknown,
Soaring, dying round Thy throne.

“Through the way where hope is guiding,
Hark, what peaceful music rings;
Where the flock, in Thee confiding,
Drink of joy from deathless springs.
Theirs is beauty’s fairest pleasure;
Theirs is wisdom’s holiest treasure.
Thou dost ever lead Thine own
In the love of joys unknown.”

Gabrielle motioned for the kids to join in, and their singing was almost as beautiful as the singing on Caelum 3.

Alastair Roth was in his office with Mr. Jann. His computer was hooked up for the takeover. His fingers tingled with excitement. All he had to do was press the enter key and he would send his brain waves through the mind boxes across the planet. They would be slaves to his will. Just as his finger was about to touch the key the computer shorted out, and began to glow. Quickly becoming very frustrated, he growled, “Jann, why is this happening? You said everything would work perfectly.”

Mr. Jann hurriedly pressed some buttons on his GPS. “The interference is coming from the special ed school. Wavelengths are coming out from there that are so strong that they are destroying the communication capability of the mind boxes. This could take years to repair. The people will get angry and Asteroth Inc. will be finished.”

“There could only be one explanation,” Alistair huffed. “Agents of the Lux.”

While the kids were singing, the two special agents put on their glasses and saw that the singing voices of the children were becoming currents of powerful Light that were destroying Asteroth’s deceitful grip on the planet. They had accomplished their mission.

When the children were finished singing the hymn, Michelle and Gabrielle looked back to see that Mr. Naumann was crying. “That was beautiful. Please teach them more of those songs.”

“I think you are more cut out for this work than we are,” Gabrielle said smiling. She gave him the hymnal, and another book, saying, “Read to them from this book. It’s called the Word.”

They left for the place where they would port home to Caelum 3. As they were just about to port, they heard a gruff voice shouting at them. It was Alastair Roth. “You may have won this time, Angelorum, but it’s not the end. I will be back.”

“But soon it will be the end, Hassatan,” the cherubim said together. “In the end, fire and sulfur is reserved for you and yours.”

The Enemy cried out in rage and was gone. Gabrielle looked at her companion and said, “Come on, Michal, let’s go home.”

There was a flash of light in the sky above Tirian as two cherubim traveled home to the Third Heaven.

The Stag Man

Past the Isles of True Gramarye
On the shores of the Evergreying Sea
The keeper, the Stag Man waits for the ships of you and me.

His figure is tall, his hair is white.
So are his eyes like the full moon night
Yet his skull is not that of a hag,
For protruding from it are the horns of a stag.

They are white like bone or ivory
His eyes are blind, and yet they see,
The white ships rolling in from the sea.

He is waiting for you and me
With the message of the King hanging on the tree.
Beyond him are the windswept doors of the great hall called Eternity.

Before you walk its timeless halls
In the presence of both kings and thralls
Before in there you come to be
In the Hall called Eternity
The great stag man makes his plea,
To touch the King upon the tree.

For if come to bound you do not be,

With Crown, Cloth, and Wool Robe three,

You shall pass to Eternity

Held by the Dark Gramarye.

I, for one, shall answer the plea,

That the stag man makes of me

Before the day I come to be

In the hall called Eternity.

The Raid on Rockshale

Norwald of Skraelinen sat in the middle of his great hall, surrounded by his many mail-clad warriors, his fiery blue eyes staring intently into the fire. He had built a small empire of fire and gore during his reign as lord of Skraelinen. What he truly desired was to carve a name for himself on the monolith of time. In his view, it was far better, to be remembered carrying a merciless sword than a philosophic pen or codex of just laws. He had gained more land and wealth than any previous lord of Skraelinen. Yet still, an insatiable hunger for more: more power, more wealth, more blood, drove him onwards with a vengeance. His blade had drawn the blood of many valiant warriors, most of whom were more honorable than he. Today, he had called his thanes to the hall, for a mad, blasphemous scheme was burning in his brain.

“My lord?” ventured his undercommander, a bald bearded man named Broridar, “why have you called us here? You only conscript us when you are thinking of raiding. The stone veil is fast approaching, and the dark stones shall rain down from the sky crushing our crops. Why raid now?”

“Because, fool, our target shall be the Abbey of the Stag at Rockshale. Therein is kept the greatest treasure of all: The Golden Book of the Stag. The jewel-encrusted golden pages of that tome could provide a feast every night for the rest of our lives. He stood, raising his hands as a sign of exuberance. “And I shall be able to look up into the heavens in defiance of Fate and say that I, Norwald, warlord of Skraelinen, wrested it from the hands of the superstitious ones.”

“But, my lord,” Broridar cautioned, “the religion of the Sisters of the Abbey is powerful with magic. If we kill any of them, and most assuredly if we kill Matriarch Svanleina, we may be cursed by their God.”

“Bah!” The warlord spat. “I do not fear any of the gods. I have lived my entire life in defiance of them.” He struck the arm of his chair, causing the links of his blackened mail to rattle. “We go for the book, or, I swear, I will kill you all where you stand.” All the assembled warriors doubted not what their capricious master said, for they had seen him do far worse than that of which he spoke.

And so, within the hour, the huge raiding party departed for the Abbey of the Stag. Unbeknownst to Norwald, Lord Wendenel, a follower of the true faith, had come with his army on pilgrimage to the Abbey. When Norwald and his raiders arrived at the Abbey they were met head-on by the massive army of Lord Wendenel. Miraculously, Norwald fought with the tenacity of a caged beast, littering the granite-strewn ground with bloody corpses. He broke through to where Matriarch Svanleina stood.

He pointed his broadsword at her neck. “Give...me...the book!”

She shook her head. “Though you die here a lost man, you shall serve the true God, for the Stag Man shall come for you.”

Norwald never saw Lord Wendenel drive his massive blade into his back. Seeing their leader fall, the raiding party fled, leaving Norwald, warlord of Skraelinen to bleed to death on this, his granite tomb.

The Choice of the Warrior

As I lay among the rocks
Bleeding from many wounds.
I lay among those I had slain
Upon this granite tomb.
I saw a figure robed in white
Shining like the moon.
He looked like someone I did know.
His eyes and beard were white as snow.
His hair was long like a wool rag
And from his head grew the horns of a stag.
Upon his staff was a jeweled crown
And a linen cloth as white as down.
In his other hand was a robe of wool.
Above the stars shone pale and dull.
He spoke a little verse in rhyme,
And it echoed through the doors of time.
He said, "Norwald, I have come for thee,
Across the Evergreying Sea
For your time has come to be
In the hall called Eternity.
Much glory have you sought,
But it was a prize dearly bought
Many men have you slain

And brought the King on the Tree pain.

But that King has paid the price

For you to dwell in paradise,

Freed from the Dark Gramarye.

Now wouldst thou bind unto thee

The crown, the cloth, and wool robe three,

And touch the King upon the Tree?

Would you now accompany me

Across the Evergreying Sea

To the hall called eternity?"

The answer welled up in my breast,

And I answered with a resounding "Yes!"

I reached out with my fingertips

And pressed the items to my lips

Then the stag man spoke a word

And I received new mail and sword

The true Norwald was revealed

And all my many wounds were healed.

I set sail on that magic sea

With the stag man beside me

With my new Master soon to be

In the hall called eternity.

Henri L'Foy

Poor little Henri L'Foy!
Yes, he was a sickly boy.
He had no chums or schoolmates,
The illegal son of Charles the Great.
The saddest boy on Frankish earth,
He had been crippled from birth.
In a dark convent room he lay.
Death would soon take him away.
When the novice held his hand,
It was hot as a firebrand.
Then his feverish eyes saw
A sight that made him stare in awe.
A mounted man before him stood
His shining mail was bright and good.
He was therefore a paladin,
But not one of Frankish ken.
His short mane was of the night's hue.
And his eyes were a sea spray blue.
"I am Norwald, not of this land,
Champion of the stag man.
And now you must come with me.
To the hall called eternity.
For you have already

Touched the King upon the Tree.
Now, lad, will you come with me?"
The boy gave the knight his hand,
No longer a flaming brand.
They galloped upon the white steed
Until time was of no heed
They rode on through the air.
Little Henri did not know where.
They came to a misty shore
With an old man standing tall before
A great mighty wooden hall,
Where there dwelt the faithful all.
The stag horns from the old man's head
Did not fill Henri with dread.
When with him he began to talk.
Henri found that he could walk.
He had been blessed eternally
By the King Upon the Tree.

The Knight of the Stag

When the Spanish friar at Henry's court was to be burned for a witch,

The knight of the stag bore him off on his horse

As silent as a lich.

The Knight of the Stag came riding, riding, riding.

The Knight of the Stag came riding

Throughout the halls of time.

When the chosen of God were driven out for fear of the racks of Spain

One moment there, and then not

They felt a horse's mane.

The Knight of the Stag came riding, riding, riding.

The Knight of the Stag came riding

Throughout the halls of time.

When a bloodbath came on the Eastern Church in Jerusalem.

The Knight of the Stag rode by on his horse.

His mail-clad arm saved them.

The Knight of the Stag came riding, riding, riding.

The brave Norwald came riding.

He rides in this dark time.

The Knight of the Stag came riding, riding, riding.

The Knight of the Stag came riding

Throughout the halls of time.

Chooser of the Slain

The April breeze rustled through the quiet Gaelic camp.
Before the tent of Brian Boru, the ground was cold and damp.
One moment the ancient High king was bowing his head in prayer.

Another moment he saw a strange warrior standing there.

His first thought was to call for his Goll-aglach

But the man raised a gloved hand

And so the king held back.

The man was tall and clad in mail of a silvery sheen
And unlike Brian his face was beardless and shaved clean.

His mane was short

And was black as raven's down

His eyes were sea blue as the waters before Dublin town.

"Peace, High King," he said at length.

"I am Norwald, a man of strength.

Not Gael, nor Norse, nor Norman Lord.

I was in my home a great warlord.

I'm worth far more in the attack

Than even twenty Goll-aglach.

I'll fight without pay, I am thine.

Only let those that I kill be mine."

The Boru agreed out of awe.

He understood not what he saw.

The next day as battle engaged

The elderly Gaelic king sage
Saw the strange man fight beyond ken.
For no weapon swung could touch him.
His broadsword sang a silvery song
And cut a swath through the Viking throng.
For every foe that he did smite
He performed strange last rites
That were melodious to hear.
Then the slain would disappear.
A Viking mercenary said,
“My King, that man with the dark mane
Is a Chooser of the Slain.”
“No,” said Brian with shaking nod.
“A servant of Almighty God.”
When the Norse began to flee,
The strange man they did not see.
He had gone back to where the king soon would be
In the hall called Eternity.

Mariana's Destiny

The Novice of the Stag,
A girl called Mariana by name,
Stood before the matriarch,
Excitement shaking her small frame.
Underneath her gray veiled hood,
Above the top of her blue-gray dress
Her raven curls fell to her shoulders
A softness was in every tress.
Her eyes were as light blue as the misty veil
That encircled all Rockshale.
Said Svanleina, "You've come to be
Bound to the circle of three.
And a master have you found
In the King upon the Tree.
"Now we must open the Golden Book
And have the tenacity
To upon its leaves have a look.
You'll serve in that capacity."
When she opened up the book
She found she could not ignore.
When she took a closer look,
She saw something not seen before:
A mail-clad warrior on a steed.

His sea blue eyes she could not read.
His hair was somewhat long and as black
As that of the novice standing back
To speak Svanleina could not begin
For it was Norwald,
Felled Lord of Skraelinen.

The Mirror of Three

“Your companion is a ghost,”

Old Svanleina said.

“You must pass through the Mirror of Three

To become like the dead.

You have already come to be

Bound by the Circle of Three

Who is the King Upon the Tree.

By Him you will be led.”

Mariana stepped through the glass

And from the flesh of this life passed.

She walked through the land of the dead

Upon the gray, misty tread

Until she came through the veil

And saw a mounted knight in mail.

His hair and eyes were the hue of hers.

The sign of the stag was upon his spurs.

Before she started her life anew

She mouthed the words “I forgive you!”

The Apothecary's Son

The apothecary's son
Had drunk hemlock, poor little one.
Now his face did show alarm
As he hung limp in his mother's arms.
He saw a mist-enshrouded door
With two figures standing before:
A mail clad knight upon a steed,
Mighty in both word and deed.
The other was a priestess, of a kind
In a blue-gray dress, soothing to mind,
With blue eyes, dark tresses, and a comely face.
In her hand she held a wooden mace.
The handsome dark-haired knight spoke,
The one tall and strong like oak:
"Do you wish to come with me
To the hall called Eternity?
For you have already
Touched the King Upon the Tree."
The beautiful priestess spoke
Raising high her mace of oak:
"Or do you wish to stay here,
Dwelling with your mother dear?"
Immediately the boy chose the other,
For he intoned the word "Mother."
Mariana gave a laugh

And tapped him on the head with her staff.

He flew back to the land of sin

Into his mother's arms again.

The City Called Eternity

Said the Stag Man to Norwald,
“The time shall soon come to be
 For the triumphal return
 Of the King upon the Tree.
Then our hall will be no more,
And we shall dwell forevermore
 In the city of Golden ore,
 The city called Eternity.”

Song of the King's Mariner

On a strand, 'neath a sky of thunderous crowds
Of black, ominous, foreboding clouds
The King's Mariner did there remain,
The rain lashing his silvery mane.

"I am too old and frail," thought he
"To set my course on the foreboding sea."
But then the Voice of his King spoke,
As steadfast as a stalwart oak.

"Do not fear to set thy prow,
Even though the winds of doubt howl.
I'll send a Dove to comfort Thee,
And guide thee o'er this stormy sea.

A Dove down from the sky did float,
And led him to his battered boat.
And so the sailor took his heading
Though the journey he was dreading.

For countless days he sailed in the squall
In troughs and crests of foaming waves.
When he was sure this him death would bring

The Dove on the tiller began to sing.

Courage to him it did impart,
And gave a peace unto his heart.
He listened closely and heard more:
The songs of those that went before.

Then suddenly the squall abated.
Its foaming breath he had outwaited.
On the horizon, his eyes sore
Beheld his destination shore.

Sir Vaelen and the Angel

Sir Vaelen donned his hauberk and great helm
And his yellow surcoat with a green tree of elm.
He took up his lance, and his yellow shield,
And rode forth for honor over the green fields.
He rode till he came to a darkening wood,
Where the trees like bastions before him stood.
He steeled himself and rode ever on,
Till he could not tell the night from the dawn.
He rose through the mist coming up from the ground
Until he heard a high and shrill sound.
Coming to a clearing like unto a glade
He saw to one side a beautiful maid.
She was clad in white, in a gown of lace.
Fear was written plainly on her face.
On the other side, trying to burn
Was a terrible fire-breathing wyvern.
Uttering a cry of "For the right!"
Sir Vaelen charged forth, the wyvern to fight.
Swinging down his sword, which was named Darkbane,
Sir Vaelen split the beast's head in twain.
He raised his shield up emblazoned with the tree.
The woman said, "What do you ask of me?"
Sir Vaelen fought for the King of Light.

He replied, "Naught do I ask for this fight."

The lady smiled. "You have spoken true.

Therefore I have a gift meant for you.

I am an angel of the King of Light.

I bestow upon you holy gifts for the fight."

She touched his hand and gave him power

To give him strength in his darkest hour.

He found that then nothing he feared.

Then the fair angel, she disappeared.

Vaelen rode forth, seeking more wrongs to right.

He had received the Baptism of Light.

Gefellanernacht

This poem is for my sister, Greta, who held my hand while my mind sojourned in darkness. I can think of no better way to tell of my very real adventures while separated from the rest of the world than in verse. On June 1, 1918, while fighting on the Western Front, I sustained a severe shrapnel injury to the head. I awoke a week ago at the Army Hospital in Salzburg. Greta told me that she and mother had been praying and praying for my recovery, and at times it didn't seem that I would last. I know why I held out.

And this is why I write.

Siegfried Baumer, November 11, 1918

I woke up in front of a cave

In a mist-enshrouded land.

Before me on a horse was an old man

Holding a shining brand.

He was clad in bright plate mail

Shining like bits of white shale.

And his beard was long and white,

Shining like the moon at night.

He bowed and said,

“I am Gotz von Engel.

Paladin of Konig-Engel.

The deed you must do now, though you are shocked

Is slay the dragon Gefellanernacht.

You must do this thing, then

For you to see Greta again.

Take my equipment, I'll go with you.

The armor will give you strength anew.”
I couldn’t slay a wurm or even a calf
And yet what choice did I have!
I took the battle gear.
‘Twas amazingly light!
We went into the cave to the fight
We pressed on for an eternity, the sword gave us light.
It pierced the darkness throughout the whole
Even the dark night of my soul.
We came upon the serpent of fire
Who opened his maw in anger and ire
And yet I did not know fear,
For Gotz sang hymns in my ear.
I felt caught in a stormy sea
And the belly of hell belched fire at me.
Just as I thought I’d soon be dead,
I hewed off the fell wurm’s head.
I looked at the knight of muscled girth
Who laughed aloud with much mirth.
“Very well, faithful young hind.
You’ve passed through the dark night of your mind.”
Faded from view the holy brother,
And I saw my sister and mother.

For Elya Snow

Sharpening the Blade

In the halls of heaven,
Where await the Seven
For the word of the Lord,
The Commander Michael whets
The blade no holy smith regrets,
Redeemer of unholy debts,
The holy seraph sword
To be delivered to the Son,
The only holy righteous One,
The day of battle to be won
Wielding blade of His Word.
The Lamb, mighty in word and deed,
Fire coming from his steed,
Shall cause the Enemy to bleed.
All shall be restored.