

# Void

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*Another exercise, this one about angels*

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# 1 - void

High above a barren tundra, a speck of darkness appeared against the bright blue sky. Deeply black, it lustered so bright it seemed it'll envelope the sky if left to its own devices. Hardly more than a pin prick in the sky at first, it pulsed and dilated until it became a monstrosity in its own right. When it finally stabilized, a head with a mop of brown hair poked out. Like a baby being born, he was slowly expelled by an inner force while the surface tension of the orb tried to pull him back in. Then, like a slingshot he was shot towards the ground at a unbelievable velocity. Hurling towards the frozen desert, he was a missile wearing a red striped black jumpsuit and a pair of cowboy boots. Gyrating down, his disarming brown eyes opened then went wide in fear as he looked down upon stalagmites like spears of ice coming closer every second. Flinging his wings open to slow his fall, he tumbled into a haphazard uncontrollable descent. Losing his vision, everything started going black. Panicking, he lost control and set his cross wings on fire, which sent him on an even faster uncontrollable path. Nearing the spears, he lost all vision before he hit, the stalagmites going thru his face, chest and legs holding him in their icy grip. Regaining his sight, an agony raced thru his body he only felt once before. Fire ran thru his veins while a chain of explosions raced thru his head. Losing consciousness, Zakk slipped into his memories as his elemental body began to heal itself.

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"Captain...Captain... Captain wake up." a nagging voice interrupted Captain Zakk of the Royal Guard, protector of Emperor Vasagi, leader of the majestic Fire Nation. Opening his eyes, he saw Private Nathan standing in front of his cot in full armor. Red chest plate with only one arm armored all the way down outfitted with a red shoulder plate above, the typical armor of the royal guard, the same he was wearing now, except Zakk's left arm is wrapped in a bandage from fingertip to shoulder.

"sorry to wake you captain, but its your..."

"Private Nathan, you're lucky I don't reprimand you," started Captain Zakk as he slid out of his cot onto the cold stone floor.

"What do you think you are doin' private? No respect for your superiors, that's obvious.....STAND AT ATTENTION AND SALUTE!!!...that's your first mistake, second go shine your armor and look presentable. We're supposed to be the best of the best.....dismissed." ended Captain Zakk. Private Nathan sharply turned and started to march out the door, ashamed of his performance...

"And private..." the Captain stopped him, he turned and saluted careful not to anger the Captain again. "I know you're one of the best I got, you got a bright future, but one more misstep and I wont settle for less than personally handing you over to the Ice Nation..." explained Zakk with a smirk as he watched a wave of fear run over the private's face as he just stood there at attention, knees shaking so bad he thought they were going to give out.

"That's a good start private.....dismissed" Zakk said evilly with a glare, then gave a demonic laugh as Private Nathan stumbled out and ran down the corridor.

"First rule to controlling your army, have them more scared of you than the enemy." thought Zakk as he strapped his sword belt on. Putting on his cowboy boots, his only token from his father before Emperor Vasagi drafted him into the army...

"Against the will of my whole family" he thought bitterly. Standing up he walked over to the wall, took his helmet off the wall hook and thought "Why must we wear these? I'm more comfortable fighting in my cowboy hat." before he looked down at his hat, the one his mother hand-stitched. A wave of anger set over him, so he buried deep inside and walked down the corridor, helmet under his un-armored arm.

Strolling down the hall, he felt proud as every soldier saluted and stood at attention until he was out of sight. He's heard the rumors of him being a demon, but it doesn't bother him, he's even honored at such a compliment.

"Fear breeds respect, respect breeds loyalty and loyalty keeps him alive in battle. Especially lately, it seems like there is a battle everyday since we went to war with the Ice Nation..." he thought aloud as he neared the royal chamber of the Emperor. Taking in a deep breath, he put on his helm and relieved the guard on watch. Looking over to the other side of the monstrous door, he saw the other guard on watch.....sitting on the floor??? Calmly walking over, he stood over the inept guard while he just keep sitting there dozing off. Not known for his patience, he quickly grabbed the guard by his face, lifted him up and inverted him. Startled, the guard started thrashing until he saw his assailant, then he locked up as a wave of fear overcame his body...

"If I can get this close and you didn't wake up, what would've happened if someone wasn't trying to wake you?" asked Captain Zakk as he drew his dagger and held it to the guard's convulsing throat.

Setting him on his feet, the guard dropped to his knees, staring at the ground.

"Get up, you insignificant maggot. Identify and salute now!" demanded Zakk.

"ppp...Private Cade of the 5th regiment sir..." stuttered the guard after he hastily got up and saluted sloppily.

"well, you used to be a private...take off your armor, Emperor Vasagi doesn't need a useless fool like you defending him." said Captain Zakk coldly. The once guard just stood there, dumbfounded. Angry, the captain drew his bronze broadsword, cut the straps to the guard's armor and cut off his head before slicing him in half on the down stroke.

"Lieutenant, get this piece of crap out of here, feed him to the flame creatures and throw his armor in the melting pot to be remade." Zakk called to the guard on watch in the corridor as he walked back to his post, but halfway there...

"Captain Zakk, report to Emperor Vasagi's ceremonial chambers for debriefing."

"Gets me off post" he shrugged and straightened his arm armor as he stood before the giant door of his master's chamber gathering his thoughts.

"Alright lets get this over with." he growled then shot a stream of fire at the door, unlocking it so it slowly swung open, creaking. Once inside he realized its been forever since he's been in here, he usually gets his missions in the war room. Wondering why this room this time, Zakk looked across the 300ft circular room.....and seen the enemy. Seeing an Ice warrior, Zakk quickly drew his sword and ran to protect his emperor...who's eyes were staring him down, challenging him to attack the emissary. Confused, he stopped halfway across the floor and dropped his sword. For once in his life he was speechless, was his emperor.....surrendering? No, never, he wouldn't...would he? Why would he, the revered leader of the great warriors of the flame nation, give up? As he sword clattered to the ground, his world fell apart and he wondered if its all a lie?

"get up soldier! On your feet now!" demanded Emperor Vasagi sternly, raising Zakk with his gaze.

Scared, he stood up at attention as he felt all sense of pride leaving his body. Cowed, he remembered his vow to always fight even when he knows there is no chance, Zakk couldn't help but feel angry and betrayed.....

"permission to speak, your highness?" asked Zakk as stoic as possible

"permission granted"

"my lord, I'd rather die fighting then to submit to those dogs." Zakk remarked, spitting venom in every word as he glared at the good for nothing ice warrior.....until the ice warrior smirked and the Emperor's booming laugh filled the room.

"me? Back down from the ice nation? And here was thinking you were incapable of humor." blurted out the Emperor and the warrior took offense, Zakk could see it in his sapphire eyes.

“time for introductions, Captain Zakk of the 1st regiment of the royal guard, my highest ranked and honored soldier meet Captain Korath, honored emissary of the Ice Nation...and your next mission.” said Emperor Vasagi, frowning as he was forced to spit out the distasteful words Ice Nation.

“mission?” asked Captain Zakk, starting to go for his sword again, raring to get his hands on this Captain Korath.

“Not that kind of mission! Back to attention soldier. Now for your mission, your are to escort Captain Korath back to the borders of the Ice Nation safely. We both know this is very hostile territory for an ice elemental, so I’m sending our three best guards to accompany you.” explained the Emperor.

“three best guards? That isn’t saying much...you’ll need six of them to best just one of me. So I’m basically on this mission alone huh? So who are these three?” questioned Zakk.

“lieutenants Gabriel, Thyre and Vavara...” started the Flame Emperor before Zakk blurted

“Wait my lord, with the four of us gone, there isn’t a line of defense here! That leaves you with only blundering privates here to protect the nation. Are you sure this isn’t a trap? I beg you to reconsider...”

“don’t ever interrupt me again soldier, or it’ll be the tundra for you. Now I trust this isn’t a trap so you’re leaving now!!!” finished Emperor Vasagi as the lieutenants entered the room, already debriefed and ready for flight. Standing at attention they awaited Captain Zakk’s instruction as he sharply turned, resolved to make his nation proud and barked orders.

“ok boys, this is a covert operation. So stay low to the ground away from the peaks and the villages. We’re going to fly a diamond formation and hug the barrier mountains until we hit the tundra where we’ll meet the ice warriors at the drop-off point. Vavara, you’ll be pulling up the rear so bring your bow. Thyre, you have right flank, so fly a bit higher with your lance. Gabriel, you got left flank low with your scimitars, and ill cover the front.” ordered Zakk and was answered by the nods of his men. Setting up position around Korath, they spread their bat wings and flew out the hole in the roof. Meanwhile the only lieutenant left, sitting in his room high up in the west tower, watched them leave and gave a sardonic smile before calling in his personal soldiers for a meeting.....

Emerging from the peak of the volcanic ceremonial chambers, Zakk and the escorts started spiraling around the perimeter, always going downward and staying in the shadows. Flitting under the rope bridges spanning the rivers of magma, they never broke formation as they sped between the earthen brown mountains rising high above on both sides. Having ran this route many times on patrol, they were surprised this Korath was able to keep pace...until Zakk looked back and saw him scared, sweating like a rented mule. Laughing, he guided the diamond closer to the flowing magma below, and saw a glint of sunlight off of a helmet high above. Gliding right, he stopped the group on in alcove in the mountains.

“what’s the problem sir?” thyre asked as he landed in the cave adjusting his armor.

“yea what’s wrong? We were making good time captain.” added Gabriel while he fixed his scimitars in their sheaths. Zakk just ignored them and sat there thinking. Truth is he was scared to death. What was a royal guard doing this far out? No, a captain shows no weakness.

“soldiers, shadow southbound” Zakk barked as he jumped up and strolled towards the opening of the cave.

“after that, we fly full speed over the barrier, our covers been busted but we still got a mission, understood?” Korath just stood there lost and dumbfounded as the air suddenly became strict and serious. The soldiers all strode towards the opening.....or rather something walked away. Now there was two of them, but they were somewhat transparent. Going forward to follow them, thyre grabbed him and drug him into the shadows. When the doppelgangers spread their wings and flew full speed south, they were pursued by four bursts of flame.....

“now soldiers, that’s what was wrong. Somebody has been following us. Now lets get out of here.” Zakk said calmly as he opened his wings and flew out of the cave, raising, determined to complete his mission. The others hurried to keep pace, dragging Korath along.

Like a flaming arrow-head, the escorts flew northward away from the sun, anxious to get rid of the trouble they were guarding.

[captain, six o'clock, five cloaked closing in]

[Gabriel what did I tell you bout this? No telepathy]

[im sorry captain, but they're coming fast]

[then lets have some fun, soldiers break formation]

At the releasing thought, the apotheosizes of warriors broke rank and spread into battle formations. Stopping short, the captain spun a quick roundhouse and sent Korath hurtling to the ground, unconscious. Corkscrewing, he avoided the oncoming missiles of flame and flew straight towards them drawing his bronze broadsword. To his left, he saw a hooded flame assassin slit Vavara's throat and sent her tumbling to the tundra below, squirting blood. On his right, he seen a flame assassin cut Thyre's lance in half on the upstroke then grab the flipping head of the lance and put it through Thyre's chin into his brain leaving him spinning to the icy plains below. Preparing to strike the distracted adversary, Zakk looked over the enemy's shoulder and seen another assassin disarm Gabriel, catch his gyrating scimitars mid-air, cut off his head and sheath the blades through the corpse's shoulders into his body. In shock, Zakk faltered and gave the assassin all the opening he needed.