

Redeemers Issue #2

Readings for the Day
St. George's Cathedral
Sunday, June 6, 2004

Matthew 18:2-6

And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Revelation 18:21

Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again."

Top Local News Items This Week

Prison Overcrowding Reaching Worst Level Ever
Mastermind May Have Originated Market Crash, claims AEGIS
Hyena Memorial Day Massacre Victim Laid To Rest
Search Slows For Missing Child in Southside
Murder Victim Found by Public Works Employee In Downtown Sewer
Johnny Rocket and Captain Thunder Appear at Charity Bike Rally

Session Summary

Intermission

Several days have passed since the Memorial Day attack where our heroes all met each other. Archangel told them that he had been sent to Earth because a great menace was coming, and that the three of them, being the nature spirits of which he was told, were to aid him in his task. This was met with a range of responses from curiosity to dubiousness. The Sylvan Sentinel retired to Liberty Park, where his mystical hidden grotto lies. He slowly changed his countenance to something less obviously inhuman, and now resembles a wood-skinned elf. Darren Stone went back to his apartment in Lincoln and worked construction jobs. Archangel stayed with Stingray in his apartment, and discovered the glories of TV news and junk food delivery.

The four gather for the funeral of Marcus White, Darren's friend who was killed by a giant hyena that Memorial Day. It is being held at the Sangaree Funeral Home, right off of Route 6 in Southside.

An old black minister intones the graveside service in a gravelly voice as Stone, Archangel, Stingray, and the Sylvan Sentinel, all in civilian garb, look on.

"Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant, Marcus White. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light."

"Would anyone like to share their remembrances of Marcus?"

Several family members and friends, including Darren, move to the podium in turn and share their experiences of the departed.

As the minister concludes the ceremony, Darren sees a familiar figure hanging around by the edge of the graveyard – his younger brother, Jimmy. He is extremely unhappy to see that his brother is wearing gang colors, the colors of the Southside C's.

“In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to almighty God our brother, Marcus, and we commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless him and keep him, the Lord make his face shine on him and be gracious to him. The Lord look upon him with favor and give him peace.”

As soon as the service concludes, Darren heads to the street to talk to Jimmy. The other three heroes stand uncomfortably among the weeping family members, they're the only white(ish) people there besides the funeral home staff. A distinguished looking man in his mid-50's approaches them and introduces himself as Wilson Jeffers. He runs the Lincoln Youth Center, and helps youths get off the street. He asks if they were friends of Marcus'; they say that they're friends of Darren's. Jeffers talks with them a bit about helping Darren get out of the gang life, and he tells them about some bad new drugs that have been hitting the street lately, leading to an increase in gang activity and funerals both, and the hyena incident in the park has meant even less police presence than usual down in Lincoln. Oddly enough, the fairy and the angel acquit themselves better in the conversation than Ray, whose upper class whitebread existence has apparently rendered him incapable of saying things that don't sound just a bit elitist and/or racist.

Darren confronts Jimmy outside the cemetery, and the two brothers argue. Darren tells his brother that the gangs are no good, that he'll help him get an honest job, etc. Jimmy retorts that the only real way to make money and be protected around here is to join the C's, and that their new boss Darrell has it all figured out, and that Darren should go back to hang out with his uptown sugar daddies (indicating the other heroes). Darren controls the urge to smack Jimmy. The conversation doesn't last much longer and ends in bitterness.

When Darren returns to the group, he and Jeffers talk a moment about Jimmy. Jeffers has tried to dissuade him from the gang path but notes he can “only help people that want helpin'”. He says the gangs have been on a recruiting drive lately and that Jimmy just joined; the recruiting drive seems to be fueled by the new drugs they're pushing. Jeffers excuses himself and goes to comfort some of the family members.

The heroes discuss recent events among themselves, especially how the Hyena was able to mutate all the dogs like that. They don't notice one of the funeral home staff, a young, gangly man named Jesse Sangaree, observing them, especially the Sentinel, whose inhuman features can't be entirely hidden. The Sylvan Sentinel pulls out something he found in the park, a small, hyena-shaped fetish of some kind. The group regards it quizzically. At this, Jesse introduces himself and says he may be able to help. Stingray tells him that he's unused to “the help” talking to patrons, but they show him the fetish. He says that it appears to be created by the Nama cult of Mali, a vicious sect of hyena worshippers. He doesn't know about this piece in particular, but it looks old. He refers them to a Jamaican named Ezekiel, who runs an occult shop in Lincoln. Darren is familiar with the place; in fact, he went by to get advice when he was granted his elemental stone powers by the spirits of the unknown temple he fell into on a construction project. The heroes head out to walk to the shop.

Jesse hurries about his duties at the funeral home and asks his siblings to cover for him as he slips out to follow the heroes.

They reach the shop, which is downstairs in front of a brownstone, with no sign to announce its contents to visitors. They enter the windowed wooden door of the shop, where many musky odors await. The shop is littered with trinkets, everything from little carved wooden skeletons to “Hand of Glory” paperweights to dusty bookshelves. A broad-faced Jamaican man is behind the counter, who greets Darren by name. They show the fetish to Ezekiel, and he confirms its pedigree, adding that the item is “truly dread” and notes that

he recalls a piece like this being sold at auction recently, and was bought by something that sounded respectable, a museum or something, but he doesn't remember who exactly. Darren asks him if he could check into it and he agrees. Ezekiel shows interest in Stingray and the Sylvan Sentinel, correctly identifying the Shards of Kulkulmectul embedded in Ray and even pulls out an old book with an early Colonial illustration of the Sentinel, which embarrasses him unaccountably. Strangely, he recognizes nothing unusual about Archangel. He tells the Sentinel, "Welcome to Babylon!"

Jesse pulls up outside, across the street, in his beat up car. At the same time, a black Mercedes limo pulls up in front of the shop. Two beefy guys in suits get out, and one goes to the back door to let out a woman with long, dark hair, wearing odd, almost Gypsy-looking clothes. One goon leans on the car, the other stays at the top of the stairs as the lady descends into the shop.

As the lady enters, the heroes look at her in interest. She regards them coolly and turns to Ezekiel, who says "Yes, Lady, how can I be of service to you today?" "The usual," she says in an Italian accent. Ezekiel brings a deck of cards wrapped in paper and sealed with wax from under the counter and hands it to her. She thanks him and departs. The heroes inquire about the lady. "They call her Lady Tarot," he says. "She works for the Italians," he adds meaningfully.

Jesse Sangaree has been observing from over by his car, reluctant to go over to the shop with the goons out front. As the lady ascends the steps and the man at the top moves to escort her, Jesse sees a car approaching from down the street – it appears to be six deep with gang members, and he sees the silhouettes of guns being readied. "Look out! Get down!" he yells at the trio across the street as he takes cover under his car. The guard with the lady sees the threat and crouches, hustling her towards the back seat. The other man, however, is still looking quizzically over in Jesse's direction when a MAC-10 burst from the car rips up him, throwing him back against the limo, where he slumps into a heap.

The heroes in the shop hear the shots and exit rapidly via all doors. As Archangel runs up the steps, wings of cosmic power form behind him and he shoots into the air over the scene. A cloud of darkness seeps from under Jesse's car, and a gaunt form dressed like a scarecrow is revealed as the darkness dissipates.

Archangel sends a beam of holy light down, blinding the car's driver. As the car begins to list towards the Scarecrow, he gestures and a stream of darkness in the shape of crows flows down into the grill of the car, tearing up the hood and engine, which begins to lose power.

The other guard and the lady pile in through the back door of the limo as the gang members continue to spray bullets in their direction. Darren runs up the steps and the concrete of the sidewalk rips up to enfold him, none to soon as bullets ricochet off of him.

The Sylvan Sentinel marches forward and slams into the side of the car, lifting it off the street! Panicked gang members shoot at him but their bullets don't penetrate his wooden skin. Stingray emerges from the back of the shop where he hastily changes out of his normal clothes; electricity crackles around him. The limo's tires squeal as it shoots off down the street.

The Scarecrow, Archangel, and Stingray all unload on the car full of gang members. The doors open and they try to bail out and flee, but bolts of energy cut them down. Darren realizes that one of the gang members in the back seat is none other than his brother Jimmy! As Jimmy flees, Stingray arcs a bolt of lightning over towards him, knocking him out. Archangel breaks off and takes to the air, tracking the fleeing limo.

The Sentinel grabs one last standing gangbanger, twisting the car doors around him. He tries to make it clear to him that crime doesn't pay, and asks why they were attacking those people. The gangbanger tells him defiantly that this is Southside C's turf, and "not the Italians or nobody can come here without our say-so."

As distant sirens become audible, the Scarecrow says to the three heroes, "Meet me at Fifth and Trinity in an hour!" He exits the scene posthaste, as do Stingray and the Sylvan Sentinel. Stone picks up his brother tenderly and carries him home. Their mother is at work so no one is home. Stone puts his brother into bed and waits for him to wake up. They have a less attitude-drenched discussion about the gang life, but Jimmy is very taken by Darrell, who is promising all the new recruits more than ample money, turf, and respect. The new drugs they've been selling are mentioned. Darren gets his brother to tell him where this Darrell character hangs out. Then he leaves for the meet-up.

Archangel follows the limo from high in the sky. It eventually drives up into a mansion, where armed guards open a gate for it and run to escort its charge inside the house. The angel notes the address and wings back off to Stingray's penthouse to order Chinese.

Fifth and Trinity turns out to be a club called Eclipse, near the University, which looks like a Gothic church. As the heroes enter, they realize they are among the least garish of the club's inhabitants, as it's a Goth/Industrial kind of place. They wander through the smoke and thumping music and find a table where Jesse Sangaree from the funeral home awaits – aka the Scarecrow. They discuss business as a pierced, corseted young waitress takes their order. Stone wants to spend a couple days gathering info on the street about Darrell and the recent activity of the C's. They all agree that hitting one of their drug houses sounds like a lot of fun.

On Sunday, Archangel goes to St. George's Cathedral. The readings of the day are from Matthew 18 and Revelation 18. The verse from Matthew reminds him of something he saw in the news about a missing child in Southside. He muses over that as the group prepares to go out that night and bust some drug dealers.

As the five heroes approach their target, they see Darrell and other gang members getting into an H2 with a duffel bag and plenty of weapons. They decide to follow along and see what they can find out. The Scarecrow lings to the undercarriage of the Hummer as the rest of the heroes follow in the air (Archangel carrying the Sentinel) and by ground (Darren's motorcycle with Stingray on the back). They track them to a warehouse in an industrial part of Southside; the Hummer drives right in through an open loading bay door. As the angel and the Sentinel look through a skylight, they see a man standing near a motorcycle waiting to meet the gangsters. As Stone and Stingray approach the loading bay door, and the gang members begin to get out of the H2, a cloud of darkness spills out from beneath the vehicle, filling the area.

The Scarecrow, who can see just fine in the darkness, disables gang member after gang member as they fire uselessly into the dark. One screaming gangster runs and smacks against the wall, making enough noise for the Sylvan Sentinel to accurately sling a vine around him. Another manages to make it out the back door, where Stone and Stingray take him out in seconds. Darrell leaps back into the H2 and slams it into reverse, shooting out the bay door, but the car is stopped cold by earth elementals summoned by Stone. He fires an AK madly out the window at all and sundry until Stingray tasers him into submission.

Scarecrow dissipates the darkness, and four fallen gang members surround him. The biker, however, is just finishing shooting up some kind of drug into his arm. He kicks his bike to life and tears out through the door; the Scarecrow and Sylvan Sentinel try to impede him but his reflexes are superb. The hog roars out into the parking lot, avoiding Stone, Stingray, and the elementals as he heads for the gate. Archangel soars after him.

As the biker zooms out onto the street, Archangel hits his bike with a spear of cosmic energy and he busts, sliding across the pavement. He gets back up and the biker and Archangel trade blows. The biker is way stronger, tougher, and faster than a normal human, and they bludgeon each other as the rest of the group runs toward them.

As they struggle, suddenly the biker has some kind of attack. He falls to the ground, spasming and twitching. He froths at the mouth and dies; Archangel's healing powers can't cleanse the poison from his system.

The heroes investigate the scene, and discover many packets of white powder in the bike's saddlebags. Whatever the biker injected into himself was different. As they open up his leathers to look for evidence, they see that he is covered in tattoos. There is a huge iron eagle, swastika in its claws, on his chest, with the letters "G.F.B.D." on one shoulder and a wolf's head on the other. Darren, no stranger to gangland tattoos, tells the others that the biker, besides obviously being neo-Nazi scum, is affiliated with the Aryan Brotherhood (the letters stand for "God Forgives, Brotherhood Doesn't") and that the wolf head is definitely a specific gang affiliation but he isn't familiar with it. The heroes fade off into the night...