

BNA 08 – Degrees of Freedom

Description

SCENE 0: INTRO

ENOCH: Be not afraid. Do brace yourself though, because you are about to receive another important message. A prophet once asked me, why do I need to listen attentively if there are thousands of other prophets just like me? Can't I just listen for a couple of minutes? Or have it on while I'm herding sheep? The other prophets will surely be able to spread the message without me.

That's a very good question, dear prophets. But I'm sorry to say that you will probably not like the answer. Because it takes a lot of energy to broadcast this message, we have selected a perfect amount of prophets to relay this message even though all of you statistically will only be paying attention for 75% of the time. Apparently humans need 25% "space out" time. It's a built in flaw of the human brain that we never got around to correcting, it's not your fault. So please, do pay attention between the space outs. You are part of a selected group, and I expect you to listen like your life depends on it.

So what's new on the heavenly front? God is on vacation... again. I never got word they were back in the first place, actually. But everything is under control. They don't call me Little God for no reason.

Oh! Hold that thought. The Vortex of Events is all fired up. Today's event begins with a disguised angel about to have his life take a very strange turn.

FX: INTRO JINGLE

SCENE 1: SHADY BAR, NINEVEH, ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, 710 BCE

BG NOISE: lute playing, patrons talking, drink pouring

ENOCH: Ah. It's clearer now. It begins in a tavern in the outskirts of a large city in... The Neo-Assyrian empire. Hm. We are in the year 710 before the common era, in a shady establishment, serving unfiltered beer and good company. The bartender is just about to pour another round for the rowdy company in the back room when something stops him in his tracks. Where there had previously been nobody, three women are now standing in front of him. Unusually tall, and with long white locks, not a hair out of place. They do not make a sound. All three of them look the same. They are looking around the bar, unblinking.

BARTENDER: Can I help you?

ENOCH: They are looking at the bartender, unblinking.

FX: paper rustling and being slammed onto counter

SENOY: Have you seen this man?

BARTENDER: What kinda parchment is that?

SANSENOY: Paper!

SEMANGELOF: Sssshhh!

SENOY: He goes by the name of Asmodeus. He could also be calling himself Ashma, or Ashur.

BARTENDER: Do ya know where ya are? Everyone and their grandpa's name is Ashur!

SANSENOY: Look at the picture again, are you sure you do not recognize him?

BARTENDER: What's it to ya?

SENOY: He is in trouble.

BARTENDER: Never seen him in my life. Get out of here if you're not buying anything.

SEMANGELOF: If you should happen upon him. Call on us.

FX: amulet drops on counter

BARTENDER: An amulet? The hell am I supposed to do with this?

SENOY: Hold it in your hand, and call our names...

ALL 3 ANGELS: (whispering simultaneously) Senoy, Sansenoy, Semangelof. (repeated 3 times)

SEMANGELOF: And we will find you.

ALL 3 ANGELS: (*pleasant smiles*) Good bye.

ENOCH: And before the bartender can reply, the mysterious women are gone. He picks up the amulet and walks over to the rowdy company in the back room. Just a moment, prophets.

Ben? Since this is... Asmodeus, could you help me censor any potential... Ah, sensitive content, that he might say. Will say. Most definitely will say.

BEN: (glitch)

ENOCH: Thank you. An assembly of over-refreshed patrons are in the middle of a drinking contest with fuzzy rules and high stakes.

BARTENDER: Ay! Ashur!

ASMODEUS: Yeah?

BARTENDER: Some spooks are asking around about you.

ASMODEUS: Aren't they all. Were they hot?

BARTENDER: Ah, I don't know. Three ladies, all lookalikes. Never blinked once. Gave me this.

FX: amulet drops on table

ASMODEUS: The S-unit. Fuck. Are they still here?

BARTENDER: No, what do you take me for? You're my biggest customer. Told them to hit the road. Just tellin ya to be careful.

ASMODEUS: Thanks, you're the best. Here you go. Treat yourself.

FX: jingling coins

BARTENDER: Alright, I gotta get back to the bar. I'm coming back here in an hour making sure you're all alive!

BAR PATRON 1-4: Wooo!

FX: clinking glasses

BAR PATRON 2: What was that about? You on the run or something?

ASMODEUS: Ah, that. Uh. Naaaahhh. Just, my family. They want me to become a scholar. I've skipped too many classes, so now they're sending people after me.

FX: slamming glass on table

BAR PATRON 1: (*pants*) Alright! I did it. New rule! The next player has to sing while standing on one leg!

ASMODEUS: That's too easy!

BAR PATRON 1: -and singing the song in... in the... backwards.

BAR PATRON 4 & 3: Backwards!

BAR PATRON 1: Loser buys the next round!

ASMODEUS: Ohohohoho! Good one!

BAR PATRON 2: You're next, you know.

ASMODEUS: F(*Bleep*). Okay I gotta... I gotta think.

BAR PATRON 3: Don't overheat that little head of yours.

BAR PATRON 4: Oooo! You gonna let that slide, Ashur?

ASMODEUS: Yeah yeah yeah, come on then.

FX: Sounds of chairs as they stand up.

BAR PATRONS: (hush each other and giggle in anticipation)

ENOCH: The man called Ashur begins to sing, but he cuts himself off. He jerks his head to the side as if listening intently.

ASMODEUS: Wawawait guys. I think some f(*bleep*) is summoning me.

BAR PATRON 2: Stop saying weird shit and sing the song.

BAR PATRON 3: You nervous? You look a bit pale-

ASMODEUS: (*breathless, fainting*) I have to gooo...

FX: THUD, Rowdy laughter

BAR PATRON 4: Ha! Told you pretty boys can't hold their drink!

BAR PATRON 2: Hey guys... I think he's dead.

BAR PATRONS: (gasps and screams)

FX: Commotion, door opens, heavy footsteps

BARTENDER: What's all the yelling about– Ay! Get him out of here, no dead people in my house. It's bad luck.

(Fade out BG)

ENOCH: It is a known fact that Angels can freely move wherever, and whenever they like, and they are very fond of that freedom. They commonly disapprove of being summoned directly out of their current meat suit. That is even more true in this case, since Asmodeus has made a couple of loyal friends in this city. Or at least drinking buddies. But it's as close to loyal friends he's ever had. Coming back from the dead to explain himself is now going to be out of the question.

SCENE 2: CAVE, OUTSKIRTS OF JERUSALEM, JUDEA, 960 BCE

(BG: echo ambience, fire flickering, coal drawing on rock)

ENOCH: And now, a different time. A different place, in the year... around 960 Before the Common Era. So we are now about 200 years before the empty meatsuit incident in Assyria that we just witnessed. Here we have the summoner, calling from a cave miles outside of Jerusalem, Judea

SOLOMON: Can I get some light here, please? It is of utmost importance that I draw this symbol

correctly if we are to see the break of dawn again.

SCRIBE: Of course! Say, um. Wise King. How many more spirits do you need?

SOLOMON: There is no workforce large enough when you work for the Lord, the highest power in the universe. My task is to rebuild this world more beautiful and rich than it's ever been. Only then will God and his host even consider living with us again.

SCRIBE: Hah. Quite many, then. Looking rather pointy, this symbol. Do you know what it means?

SOLOMON: Excellent question, we shall soon find out. All these symbols (FX RUSTLING PAPER) are in the language of our lord God. Our minds can't comprehend the meaning of them. However, I do know that each of these corresponds to a spirit. We'll see what this one calls itself. Are the singers ready?

SCRIBE: (*Audibly turns around*) Yep, they're in position.

ENOCH: On the summoner's signal, seven different voices begin to hum in an enchanting harmony, reaching a frequency that bounces off the walls just so. The summoner says The Words, and a bright flash flows out of the circle, only to implode in on itself. An angel appears with a thunderous clap, and it's angry. They usually are. The angel's black wings are silhouetted against its glowing body, and as it turns, the light reflects onto the summoning party. It wobbles slightly, and blinks drunkenly with all its eyes, one at a time.

(*FX note: In his 7-dimensional angelic form, Asmodeus has three voices (two being lower and out of sync), a background rumble, as well as a soft echo*)

ASMODEUS: (*SluRriNg*) What in the (*bleep bleep bleep bleep*) is this!? Do you have any idea how traumatized those people are going to be? Even I know that this is way off protocol, and you-... Wait a minute. (*Audible squint*)

You're not... you're *human*. Pfff. Allright. First time a mortal summons me, so. Not sure how this goes. (*Dark scary voice*) Who dares!?

SCRIBE: I think we've gone too far. This is... hmm, I feel sick.

SOLOMON: Yes,(*trying to regain his composure and clears throat*) truly terrifying.

ASMODEUS: I'm right here.

SCRIBE: This has to be a great leader, sir, I can feel my bones shaking.

SOLOMON: Ignore it. Evil spirit, what is your name?

ASMODEUS: Rude. Whoooo... are you?

SOLOMON: How dare you be so arrogant? Maybe you are not aware of your circumstances. I am your lord and you are in my power. Tell me your name!

ASMODEUS: Ashmedai. (*confused pause, then*) I mean Asmodeus. How did you-

SOLOMON: I am King Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba. From now on you will do my bidding until I release you.

FX: Whooshy magical bass noise

ASMODEUS: Oh, this tickles. Don't you want to know my safeword?

SOLOMON: Scribe! Write down everything!

SCRIBE: Ready!

SOLOMON: Evil spirit Asmodeus! State your rank, what you are, and what powers you possess.

ASMODEUS: How can I put it in words you'll understand, mortal? Fine. Prince of Hell. Below. Sheol. I exist across the entire spectrum of timespace. I am born of earth and spirit, life and death, and I specialize in pleasures of the flesh.

FX: Scribbling on paper continues

SOLOMON: Please elaborate on the last part.

ASMODEUS: Oh my, dirty mind! That part means exactly what you think. I am the god of lust, of ecstasy, of reckless abandon. I'm the one you call when you want to-

ENOCH: And he gives some very explicit and detailed examples of his skills and specialties. The scribe glances over at king Solomon, not sure if any of this is fit for the magical papyri.

ASMODEUS: Go ahead, write that down.

SOLOMON: Yes, write it down. For posterity. Now I will complete the binding ritual. (*Straining*) I invoke the Name, and recite the Words given to me. Creature of the seven spaces, you shall now inhabit but three, as I will lock you away from your domain. You will feel the stretch of time, the pain of impact, and the pull of the earth as mortals do. I hereby bind you, Asmodeus, to my command until the day I release you.

FX: brrrrp, synthy noise of a multidimensional god being flattened and suddenly affected by gravity

ASMODEUS: (*Collapses to the floor*) What did you do!?

SOLOMON: I am grateful for your service. Get out of the circle and follow my men.

ASMODEUS: (*Moving against his will*) Hnng. You little shit! You'll be dead in the blink of an eye!

SOLOMON: We have time for two more if we hurry. Bring the water! Neutralize the circle!

FX: Water splashing, hissing noise as if putting out fire

ASMODEUS: Two more what? What's— hey, don't ignore me when I'm walking away! I have rights! This is so disrespectful!

GUARD 1: Easy, devil, that's the king you're shouting at. Enjoy the fresh air.

FX: crickets, wind

ENOCH: Escorted by two guards, Asmodeus is led out of the cave. He feels heavy, flattened and constricted, all at the same time. Imagine that you were squashed flat like a pancake. That's what this is like, but worse. Asmodeus can no longer see in all directions of time, no longer step between the folds of space, and worst of all... no longer able to call on any other angels. He is completely alone.

Outside of the cave, he sees a small group of entities gathered around a fire, presumably captured as well. One of them is a two headed demon.

ASMODEUS: It's cold. I shouldn't feel cold. Wait, who are they over there? Are they—

GUARD 2: Friends of yours.

ZIK: (*fade in*) I'm just saying, sooner or later he'll summon something smarter than us and then, and then... it'll be the end for all of you!

ZAK: Oi, look at that. We've got a royal visit.

ZIK: Fuckin hell! That son of a bitch caught an angel!

ZAK: See, this is what I'm talking about, no safety thinking whatsoever.

ASMODEUS: Sup.

ZIK: Hullo young prince.

ZAK: We don't want any trouble.

ASMODEUS: Aren't you Zik and Zak? You run a salon in the third circle, right?

ZIK: The very same!

ZAK: You got an appendage?

ZIK: We can modify it,

ZAK: Be it carving, piercing or bejeweling!

ASMODEUS: Thought so. Heard the commercials. (*Talking lower*) Listen. No human can hold this many spirits without consequence. This will be very temporary. Play along with their games and we'll be out of here in no time.

GUARD 2: Silence, all of you demons.

ZAK: Demons? That's a bit ignorant, that is.

ZIK: We don't go round calling you "mortal" or "carbon based".

ZAK: Well. Some of us do.

GUARD 1: You will hold your tongue in the presence of the king. Here he comes now.

GUARD 2: Are you satisfied with tonight's harvest, sir?

SOLOMON: Yes, very. We can leave.

ENOCH: Solomon utters a command, soft as a whisper. It leaves a static lingering in the air. And Asmodeus realizes it's the unmistakable sound of The Words. The very ground below them begins to undulate. And lift them up. A flying carpet. How quaint.

The Words are tools by which everything was created. Including you! Well, humanity. This is manifested through songs and words, sometimes accompanied by the drawing of symbols, and on the rare occasion amplified through blessed objects—

BEN: (Static)

ENOCH: I know, Ben. I'm keeping it vague, calm down.

Despite our best efforts, THE WORDS tend to find humanity. Some of the songs go back to the very beginning. You remember Samyaza and the Watchers, I presume. Giving heavenly knowledge away out of misguided infatuations. Aside from that unfortunate affair, various well meaning individuals from us and from the rival office have shared THE WORDS throughout time. Some humans have even discovered a few formulas entirely on their own and completely by accident, much to their initial distress.

All this to say that there are many ways to use THE WORDS to manipulate reality. Solomon chooses to use them to tame the winds so he can fly – but in style.

I know two things about Solomon. The first is that he was a very powerful sorcerer, having learned much of how to harness the energies of the universe and uncovered many secret writings. The second is that his inspiration was greater than what human hands could manage.

SCENE: PALACE GARDEN

ENOCH: The spacious carpet carefully lowers itself outside the walls of a great city. As Asmodeus enters the palace garden, he is met by a crowd of glowing colors, and of wings and horns. The guards dismiss him in the middle of the courtyard, but it's a small comfort. The agony in the air is stifling. The human sorcerer has been busier than he could have ever imagined. In the luscious palace garden, are hundreds of trapped spirits. Creatures of the supernatural kind. In one corner, there's even a jinn. Powerful spirits known for their strength, temperament and the fact that their bodies are literally fusion

reactors. This particular specimen is curled up and rocking back and forth. Shakily smoking a cigar. Not a regular cigar, mind you, this looks more like it's made of wood.

(FX: NAAR has an ambient noise of fire crackling)

NAAR: It never ends, never ends...

ASMODEUS: Hey, hey. Buddy.

NAAR: (Asmodeus is the first angel she's ever seen. For all she knows, angels cannot be governed by Words, and likely must be on Solomon's side) No, no, no. Don't smite me! Please!

ZAK: Easy now! He's alright.

ZIK: Oi! You're scaring her!

ASMODEUS: Sssshhh. I'm not gonna smite you. I'm a prisoner too.

NAAR: Oh. But that's worse. He caught an ANGEL.

ASMODEUS: Yeah, not my best moment. I'm Asmodeus. And you?

NAAR: I am Naar.

ASMODEUS: Can you tell me what's going on?

NAAR: Where do I even begin... He makes us do all manner of things. Depending on our talents. Um. Everything from teaching him magic, to showing where gemstones are hidden in the earth. I'm between jobs at the moment – tried to boil him alive while I was heating his bathwater. His latest project is building a mansion for some god I've never heard of.

ASMODEUS: But how? Since when can a human do this? Someone has messed with the rules. And where did he get all this power from? The sorcerer? Salami.

NAAR: Solomon. I don't know, but more of us keep coming.

ZIK: We've got to find a way to get word to the kings.

ASMODEUS: Okay, okay. Someone must be coming for us. They have to have noticed a big number missing by now, Below.

NAAR: It's going to take a lot more, I think. We're never home at the same time.

ASMODEUS: So this won't register as out of the ordinary. (Sigh) Wait, I know that guy. Yo, Ornias!

ORNIAS: Fuck off, Asmodeus! You total slut, I told you this would happen if you kept giving away your sigil left and right.

ASMODEUS: Naar, ZikZak, meet Ornias. One of my pals from the first circle.

NAAR: Peace.

ORNIAS: Hi. We are not pals. His kind colonized our home. We were doing perfectly fine before an army of fallen angels took over the Pit. Right, ZikZak?

ZIK: I dunno, they're alright.

ZAK: We've got loads of angel friends.

ZIK: Bit dramatic and they cry a lot but...

ZAK: We have a good laugh now and then.

NAAR: No offense, I haven't been Below much. I'm just curious... What are you?

ORNIAS: I'm a (GLITCH).

NAAR: Come again?

ORNIAS: (Glitch, slightly more drawn out)

ASMODEUS: That's the language barrier in action – the respectful term would be “native”.

NAAR: Oooo.

ASMODEUS: Yeah! The demon word is a bit problematic-

ORNIAS: I can speak for myself, angelbreed. Our tongue is impossible for you to mimic.

ASMODEUS: You'd be surprised at what my tongue can do.

ZIK & ZAK: Nice.

ORNIAS: No. This guy? Stay away from him, Naar. Impossible to talk to. I'm leaving.

FX: ORNIAS leaves, beat of silence filled by owl hooting

NAAR: What I'm wondering is who the hell leaked all our contact info to a... human!? When I get my hands on them, I'm going to kill them. Eat their guts and ground them into powder and feed them to –

ZIK: Sssshhh! Whoever it is, it's someone powerful.

ZAK: You never know if they're listening.

NAAR: Yeah. Okay. I'm cool.

ASMODEUS: Wait. You don't think it's... Him? Him with a capital L?

NAAR: From what I've heard, he is unstable enough to do something like this.

ASMODEUS: Hmm, but he wouldn't go as far as actually helping humans.

NAAR: Wait. You angels know quite a lot, don't you? In Heaven, all knowledge can be found. You can get us out of here!

ASMODEUS: Yes, all knowledge can be found in Heaven. Unfortunately for you, I didn't like school very much.

NAAR: But you must know something useful. Does any of this seem familiar? The language, the symbols.

ASMODEUS: I guess, but I never stayed for a full lecture in any of the classes... I prefer to learn in the field. He definitely uses THE WORDS very deliberately, that's for sure. I did recognize some of the symbols they used in the cave, but I can't remember their meanings.

NAAR: So you're saying you could have avoided getting bound if you'd just paid attention in school!?

ASMODEUS: Something like that.

NAAR: Oh man. Why would you- uggghh! Some of us wish we had your privilege. I tried to sneak into a seminar in heaven one time, but a whirling flame struck me down.

ASMODEUS: Yeah, that'd be the flaming swords.

NAAR: Hold on a minute. You uh... you don't seem fallen.

ASMODEUS: Because I'm not. Why?

NAAR: I'm just noticing we're all from hell one way or another. But if you're an angel, and not fallen... What are you doing with this crowd?

ASMODEUS: Both of my parents are kings of hell. One of them has dual alignments. Sort of. I get on the wrong list sometimes.

NAAR: Oh cool, I didn't know angels had children! My mother taught me that God made you all. But wait, you guys are kinda androgynous, how does that-, you don't have any-

ASMODEUS: Junk?

NAAR: I was going to say little angel kids running around, but sure. But this is good news! The kings will look for you. We can still be saved.

ASMODEUS: I wouldn't hold my breath if I were you. I'm doing my own thing and they have a lot going on. They don't notice until I make a huge splash and they have to clean up my mess. Like what happened with the roman empire.

NAAR: The what empire?

ASMODEUS: Ummmm. Nothing. But hey! I just remembered. There actually is a heavenly search unit

looking for me.

NAAR: Awesome, we're saved! Heaven doesn't pull any punches when it comes to retaliation. Right?

ASMODEUS: Potentially. It might be a while. They're three dum dum angels that share a single brain cell. They always barely catch up with me. But now I can't do anything but stay put... We'll just wait for them to find me. And when they do...

NAAR: Solomon is toast.

INTERLUDE: REC ROOM 1

We interrupt this transmission with some news from up top. So, the angel hangout was... I'm not sure what to say. My manuscript did not help one bit. It didn't cover any of what was to come! I'd prepared a whole battery of answers that I never got to use. One of the angels asked me how I was, and it all went downhill from there. I completely froze. And then more questions came; "how do you like it here?"

"Do you miss earth?"

"Hey! Remember when you puked in front of the archangels at the gates of heaven?"

"I heard you sing this melody. Could you sing it again and harmonize with me?"

"Are you okay?"

I did the only sensible thing, and retreated to my office.

This transmission will recommence once I've uncurled from my ball of shame. Be not afraid.

END OF EPISODE 8

Category

1. Transcripts

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