“40 seconds guaranteed!”

What was Charlie talking about, now? The singing had stopped, replaced by a few screams, here and there.

“We have to do it, quick!”

A large Police van had just pulled up, and was starting to load the women in, shoving most of them none too gently up and through the door. One had fallen over, and she lay half in, half out of the van. A burly officer had drawn his arm into a curl, ready to backhand her. The woman appeared to be cringing in fetal position where she’d fallen in the doorway.

This looked sub-optimal. If the shit hit the fan, nobody would believe them without proof. Adagio pulled out that new Android he’d gotten for his name day. *Time to figure out how to film on this thing.* Another officer was talking on a radio, which seemed a bit old fashioned in the smart phone age. He could just make out the word “ambulance” from where he stood. Had he heard that right? Why would they need an ambulance? Nobody was hurt.

“I’m telling you, we can protect them! Just help me with this ritual, quick, before they close the doors!”

Now he was getting to be too much. And he was jostling Adagio’s phone arm.

“Charlie, I’m trying to film this. Shut up before they spot us!”

“Oh, *Thomas*, but if those women get hurt, it will be on your head!”

“Charlie, just what in the name of Franklin Delano Roosevelt are you talking about? I am trying to film this to help these women. Even your Bible-adled mind must surely be able to see that! And stop calling me Thomas!”

“Then stop taking the name of that good man in vain, Ad! Listen to me, there is a faster and surer way to help them. And it’s from the Good Book, which you also should not be taking in vain.”

Adagio wondered, for the fortieth time, if he should try explaining that one could not exactly take the Bible in vain, it not being a name. Instead, he tried to keep filming while humoring his friend at the same time.
“Ok, Charlie, tell me about this ritual of yours. Does it involve bells and holy water?”

“No, just the right words, and a sincere heart. Two or more witnesses can call down a set of archangels to protect someone from harm.”

“Archangels! Are you out of your mind, Charlie?! Why was Charlie looking at him as if he were the nutcase? “Charlie, the archangels are the most dangerous powers in existence. And even if we could do this, why bother them: nobody has been hurt.”

“Have you noticed those cops, Ad? Somebody will be injured by the time they get out of that van, or they wouldn’t have called for an ambulance.”

Ok, so he hadn’t been the only one to hear that. Definitely sub-optimal. And one was looking at them.

“Ok, Charlie, let’s think about this rationally.” Click. Adagio looked to see that the video was uploaded, since the van doors were now closed, and the police were clearing out. “First, we have just sent a timestamped video with GPS location and full facial, license plate, and badge visuals, to the police, state AG, and the ACLU.”

“We have?”

“Yes, I tagged you, for it to post on your Wall, too. So this will not go unnoticed.”

“Oh, Ok.” He pulled out his iPhone, a tone indicating that he’d tagged several friends as well. Just as he raised a finger, Adagio cut off Charlie’s next words.

“Second, do you know how hard it is to get even one archangel down here, with the important things they have to do?”

“Yes, just imagine four of them! Those women are definitely going to be safe!”

Charlie didn’t seem to be getting the point.

“Four archangels, Charlie? Master angels, Charlie. Commanding angels, Charlie. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to summon even one master angel, and you want to summon all four of them, at the same time? Have you got any clue, even the slightest hint, exactly how unimportant our greatest emergency could possibly be to an archangel, Charlie?”

Judging by the slack in Charlie’s jaw, he did not.

“People die every day, Charlie -lots of people. So what possible life or death situation could even slightly worry a being standing in the presence of the … the Great Whatever?”
“Well, but…”

Crickets.

“Right, Charlie. Nothing. On the other hand, I'm pretty sure that tearing these four powerful beings away from their business will probably not make them very happy with us. We're most likely, in fact, to get our heads used as angelic footballs.”

“They won't do that, Ad. They exist to serve. They're supposed to protect us.”

“That's not what everyone thinks, Charlie. Apparently, while some angels dance on pinheads, every other angel is created for one specific mission or purpose.”

“So, Doubting Thomas?

“So, when that mission is accomplished there is no more purpose, so the angel goes away -poof, disappears.”

“Look, Ad, those women are having the shit beaten out of them as we speak! We need to be helping them, not standing around talking!”

Adagio pulled up the video, pausing on the van to enlarge the license plate, which clearly showed the number.

“State Attorney General and ACLU, Charlie. They saw people filming. They know they’ve been reported. Why do you think Burly didn’t backhand that woman?”

“Oh, good point. But an archangel would still put the fear of God into them!”

Some days, Adagio wondered: couldn’t he just duct tape Charlie’s mouth shut? He sighed.

“Ok, Charlie, think about Balaam.”

“Who?”

Adagio wondered how someone who claimed to believe in the Bible could possibly be so ignorant of Biblical content. He sighed again.

“The curse dude, Balaam.” Blank look. “The guy whose donkey saw the angel way before he did.”

Another blank look.
“Yeah, and?”

“An angel was sent to kill him.” Shocked look. Yeah, Charlie... “Can you imagine what that particular angel must have looked like, to scare poor Balaam’s donkey more than a tyrant like Balaam could scare her? I’m betting that this one, an executioner angel created specifically to kill a powerful mage, probably did not look pleasant.”

Charlie blinked.

“No.”

Adagio hoped that Charlie was starting to get a clue. Maybe.

“No. Now consider those archangels you believe we can summon. Did you really want to piss off four extra powerful, permanently existing, commanding angels who have better things to do with their time than attend to foolish, self-centered, temporarily conscious blobs of dirt that already get more than our fair share of time and attention from the Creator?”

“But we need to -”

“To do what we have already done to take care of the ladies right now, and to also see that such things do not happen again?”

Was Adagio imagining it, or was there a glimmer of light finally starting to show in Charlie’s eyes?

“We did?”

Adagio ticked off one of his fingers as he explained:

“That video, since they saw lots of people filming, should prevent any bad beatings from happening, because they know that there will be an investigation now.”

Ticking off a second finger, he added, “It will also launch a law suit, which will call into question the larger laws around the issues these arrests are founded on.” Charlie gave him a quizzical look. “That is what the ACLU does, Charlie. So we’ve already handled the problem both short term and longer term. Why risk bothering the archangels?”

“Oh.” Charlie looked like he’d been hit with a water balloon at his birthday party. “Well, ok, in that case, but still, it seems a little disappointing not to get back at those big guys for hurting people.”

Adagio sighed again.
“Well, Charlie, it seems a little better not to meddle with archangels, because most days, disappointed is better than dead.”