Stygian Mode

In his unyielding battle to quench a thirst for vengeance, Ivan Isaac must now do a twisted tango with his most tantalizing opponent yet: Armando, Temozarela’s right-hand angel. As the battle intensifies between the two, Ivan takes a vicious beating and becomes impaled on Armando’s sword. But the blow only seems to fuel Ivan’s burning desire for revenge—he is looking for little payback, and will kill anybody who crosses his path!

"Not many books have succeeded in fusing such unabashed and exhilarating action with such spiky intellectual matters. Let’s face it, not many books have tried."
— Mike Carey, writer for Lucifer and Hellblazer

"Part Spaghetti Western, part Resident Evil... Action junkies will not be disappointed."
— Scott Green, Ain’t-It-Cool-News
THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

During the war against Lucifer, the archangel Temozarela led the agents of light. In the years that followed, Temozarela watched as God's attention shifted from his seraphim to his new creation—man. Jealousy caused Temozarela and his disciples to abandon their heavenly post and attempt to corrupt humanity, proving the superiority of the seraphim to God. During the Crusades he attempted to begin his plan, but Belial sealed him in the Domas Porada for 500 years. Now, released by Ivan Isaacs, Temozarela is free again, but too weak to carry out his dark designs. His disciples have been sanctifying the ground in the American West, spreading plague and death in preparation for the Unholy Sabbath.

Temozarela

FATHER IVAN ISAACS

Ivan Isaacs was a young priest with a passion for ancient cultures when he was recruited to study the Domas Porada. Little did he know that this mission would be his last—at least his last in life. After helping to save an ancient battle for Heaven and Earth, Ivan and his beloved friends were slain. In order to get revenge and avenge the world, Ivan made a pact with the devil Belial; his soul in exchange for a second chance at life... and supernatural strength. Now Ivan wanders the Old West, hunting down Temozarela's disciples and keeping a journal of his true tale.

BELIAL

The devil Belial makes Ivan his agent in the mortal world so that he may battle the agents of the fallen archangel Temozarela, who is planning an upheaval of Heaven and Hell. Belial used to be Beltheal, a Catholic priest in the Middle Ages where he was a prosecutor in trials of heresy. After Temozarela shattered his faith, Beltheal turned himself into the demon Belial in order to get his revenge.

The Grand Priest in Temozarela's baptism of blood. His loyalties are to his dark lord alone, and he will destroy anyone who dares interfere with his master's plans—even his own comrades.

The Guardian Saint of Woundale. This gypsy dancer takes care of a troupe of minstrels who have recently taken up residence just outside of town. Ivan Isaacs's arrival in town endangers the delicate peace she's managed to keep. Her faithful companion is the spirit wolf Bandit, summoned by her will. And what of her relationship with Temozarela?
I know that I'm not supposed to write in Nera's book, but she said it was okay this time. She must be happy because we're finally getting a chance to put on a show, because usually she wouldn't let me, but this time she said it was okay, so you'd better not yell at me, because if you yell too loud the evil priest with the cross on his head that old Baba keeps warning us about might hear you and come shoot you.

I know the people in Windtale don't like us very much. I'm not sure why because we're not bad people. Sure, sometimes Mosh gets a little cranky and people get hurt and Bobo likes to chase after horses, but they don't mean any harm. They just don't know any better. When we first came to Windtale, Nera told us that we'd be able to stay here awhile, but Sam says we'll be moving again before spring. The people here have been getting agitated. Usually Nera calms them down when they get agitated, but this time Mr. Dudley's involved, and even though she never says it, I can tell that Mr. Dudley scares Nera. Mr. Dudley scares everyone.

Too bad he can't be more like his son, Ashley. Ashley's real nice. In fact, don't tell her that I told you, but I think Nera's a little sweet on him. Otherwise, why'd she ask us to put on our show for him?
Back in the old world, far to the east, beyond where the sun rises, gypsies tell this tale to comfort their weary hearts in times of hardship.

They know the sad song of heaven hidden by the clouds. Counting the stars at night, warming themselves by the campfire, they tell these stories of angels in love.
THE THING ABOUT BEING A PRIEST IS

NO ONE EVER THINKS TO INVITE YOU TO THEIR PARTIES

I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE ME

FOR INVITING MYSELF TO YOURS

TO YOU, OUR UNINVITED GUEST.

FLOWERS OF CONSOLATION!!

OUR UNINVITED GUEST...
My Lord has charged me with keeping the riffraff from this holy place. And I'm afraid your name was not on the guest list.

I warn you one last time, Pilgrim of the Sanctuary—turn back!!
...Perhaps you will at last accept your place in the circle.

If your pitiful host dies here...

No need for that look of concern, Belial!

Stand back, you half-soul!!

Your fury cannot break his sword yet!!
Hey,
SHUT UP AND HEN FO\$ SHOW.
SHE'S BUMP-folep;
THANK you FOR WAITING/
NEXT, we HAVE THE PRIDE OF OUR SHOW!!
NEw AND HAND O DEATH.
DON'T WORRY, ASHLEY.
I'VE DONE THIS A HUNDRED TIMES; IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER I CAN SEE OR NOT.
I'VE DONE THIS A HUNDRED TIMES; IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER I CAN SEE OR NOT.
I'VE DONE THIS A HUNDRED TIMES; IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER I CAN SEE OR NOT.
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I'VE DONE THIS A HUNDRE
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, FONDO.

NEBRA...

WITH THIS INJURY, I CAN'T PROMISE YOU THAT I'LL BE MY USUAL.

THAT DOESN'T MATTER, OLD FRIEND.

IF FATE THROWS US A SURPRISE, WE ROLL WITH IT THAT'S THE WAY OF THE DANCE.
I am forbidden to use my holy powers against you at present.
FATE HAS TURNED ITS EYES AWAY FROM YOU FOR A MOMENT, IVAN.

I'M ONLY HUMAN NOW. WILL YOU KILL ME AND ATTEMPT TO CHANGE YOUR FATE?
CLICK!

KA-CHING!!
You're going to have to sleep for a while.

You have no role to play...

...on this accursed stage.

SNAP!!
THWACK!

I GUESS I'M REALLY OUT OF PRACTICE!

NERA!!

THAT IDIOT!!

NE... NERA!

OOPS!

I GUESS I'M REALLY OUT OF PRACTICE!
HA HA HA!

LIGHT!

DO YOU FEEL PAIN?
BUT I CANNOT SEE HOW SOMEONE AS WEAK AS YOU CAN PLAY SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE.

I DON'T DOUBT MY LORD'S WORD...

...but are they great enough to shape the destiny of the sanctuary?

YOUR HEART IS BOUND, IVAN.

A NEW KIND OF PAIN, NO?

...but I cannot see how someone as weak as you can play such an important role.

I DON'T DOUBT MY LORD'S WORD...

YOUR ANGER AND OBSESSION ARE GREAT, BEYOND ANY A MERE MAN MIGHT HOLD...

...but are they great enough to shape the destiny of the sanctuary?

...but I cannot see how someone as weak as you can play such an important role.

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU HAVE REALIZED?

HOW DOES IT REMAIN HIDDEN FROM MY LORD?

DON'T WASTE YOUR ENERGY. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO REMOVE IT.

ARE YOU REALLY THE ONE STANDING AT THE PINNACLE OF OUR FATE?
Tell me, pecial, if I disobey his command
and kill this man here and now, will he still be the one who determines our fate?
GET

GET OUT

DON'T MEDDLE IN MY BUSINESS!!!

SHING!!

SHING!

PANT

PANT

PANT
IT SEEMS LIKE FATE IS CONSPIRING TO KEEP YOU ALIVE.

WE HAVE COMPANY.

HOW ABOUT A SHOW OF GRATITUDE...

...FOR THE PERVERSION FATE HAS GRANTED TO YOUR DEATH!

BEFORE I DO

MEN MEN

I'LL SEE YOU GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR YOUR FATE!
TAKE HIM TO HER AS SHE HAS COMMANDED YOU.

LET HIM KNOW THAT HE HAS NO ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS DRAMA.

SHEATHE YOUR FANGS, DEAD BEAST!

I KNOW YOUR MISTRESS WILL.

I WILL NOT KILL HIM MY MASTER HAS NOT PERMITTED ME TO.

HE HAS NO CHOICE NOW THAT...

I'VE BOUND HIS HEART.

NETRAPAM.

IS THIS THE COMPASSION THE DAMNED SHOW EACH OTHER?

THE UTTER FOOLISHNESS OF IT ALL PELS ME WITH SORROW.
DON'T FORGET THE FEELING YOU HAD AS YOU PIERCED MY HEART.

PERHAPS, IVAN. PERHAPS...

...THAT WILL BE THE DAY OF THE FEAST FOR OUR SOULS.
IVAN! OPEN YOUR EYES AND SEE THE MISERY AND IMPOTENCE...

...OF THOSE WHO RESIST THEIR FATE!
LETTUB TOWNPEOPLE KNOW, WILL YOU?

I'M SURE OF IT.

DO YOU THINK THEY'LL LIKE OUR SHOW, ASHLEY?

YES, DANA.

I'M SURE OF IT.

THANK YOU, NERA.

EVERYONE, THANKS SO MUCH. IT WAS A FANTASTIC SHOW.

HA HA

I PROMISE YOU...
HA HA HA... DID YOU SEE THAT, CLIFFORD?

LOOKS TO ME THAT THE "PRINCE OF WIND-TALE"... IS IN LOVE.
THAT'S NO ORDINARY BLADE.

HIS SWORD SIGNIFIES THE BINDING OF YOUR SOUL.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN CHALLENGE TEMOZARELIA?

YOU WERE POWERLESS BEFORE AMANDIEL IN HIS HUMAN FORM.

WHAT POWER I HAVE COMES FROM HAVING NOTHING TO LOSE.

YOU SHOULD KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT FUTILITY, METAMORPH.

I'LL KILL YOU THE MOMENT I HAVE A CHANCE.

MY STUBBORNNESS IS THE ONLY WEAPON I HAVE COUGH...

I WANT TO START THE PARTY EVEN BEFORE THE FEAST BEGAN COUGH!

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH BLOOD I'VE LOST THE SHAD OF HIS SWORD WOULDN'T COME OUT.

OH HEN HEN DON'T HIT ME, BITCH!
YOU'RE WRONG, IVAN.

YOU DO HAVE SOMETHING TO LOSE.

RAGE...

AND... THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE!

UGH!

UGH!

UGH... MAHHH!!

GUEHHH!!!
THOSE WITH NOTHING TO LOSE...

DON'T HAVE BLOOD AS RED AS YOURS.
AAARGH!!
HUH?

AN I

NO! AN

GUESS

1 MIT

My MSAP

PRETTY k

UARP.
I must have occurred three or four days ago.

I found them at the mouth of the valley.

The fight must have occurred three or four days ago.

Tup Tup

PWIT!
"But your brothers were no match..."

"Asuun and Unchuk seem to have defeated..."

"For the second..."

"The first group..."
«CAIRO»

«ALL SOUS OF THE GREAT SHAMOYAN...»

«KASHAN... UNCHU...»

«WHO INHERITED HIS BLOOD.»

«SO I AM THE LAST ONE...»

«THEIR FIGHT...»

«I AM THE LAST ONE...»
GET IN THERE, BOY! PADDY'S WAITIN' FOR YOU.

OH...

I'LL PAY BACK WHAT I OWES YOU...

WHEN THE TIME COMES

KNOCK KNOCK

"WHO ARE YOU?"
JUST BECAUSE WE'RE IN WindTale, Father, they won't do any harm to you or to the town.

I think you and O'Neil... know perfectly well where I've been, Father.

I know who you've been with. Any other men been in your room?

Okay...

Thanks to you the accounts are a mess.

I've been doing all day... when there's a pile of work to do?

Not Son!

Your mother said the same thing when Niggers started to settle here 20 years ago.

They started a camp by the river looking for gold...

Sure enough WindTale was soon swarming with those good-for-nothing drifters.

But I left them alone for your mother.

Okay...

GLAM!
THE MISTAKE OF MY LIFE WAS TO LEAVE THEM ALONE, ASHLEY.

THE ROBBER WHO KILLED YOUR MOTHER... WAS ONE OF THEM GOLD-DIGGING NIGGERS!
AS YOU WERE WITH HER IN THE BEGINNING LORD.

...BE WITH HER IN THE END.

My condolences, Mr. Dudley.

She was a good woman.

My wife Jane is dead.

You're going to sit there and let the trash continue to gather in Windtail.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SHERIFF?

AMEN.
MR. BUSBY, I THINK YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.

BUT THERE'S NO PROOF THAT THE KILLERS WERE AMONG THE MINERS.

IF A RESPECTABLE MAN LIKE YOU...

...STARTS SUSPECTING FOLKS JUST BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN...

...YOU'LL ONLY RISE UP THE TOWNSPEOPLE AGAINST THEM.

GREAT TOWN IS BECOMING A GARBAGE PUMP FOR OUTSIDERS.

THAT THE KILLERS AMONG THE MINERS.

KAGEOUS JOHNSON IS INTERESTED IN MAKING WINDTALE A BETTER PLACE. ALL THEY WANT IS GOLD!

IF YOU TELL ME ONE MORE TIME THAT YOU "UNDERSTAND" WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH...

...YOU'LL BE HANGING FROM THE TREE RIGHT NEXT TO THOSE NIGGERS YOU LOVE SO MUCH, REYNOLDS!

I THINK YOU'RE FORGETTING WHO PUT THAT BARGE ON YOUR CHEST.

THE REASON YOU'RE SITTING IN THAT CHAIR ISN'T BECAUSE THE TOWNSPEOPLE LIKE YOU, BUT BECAUSE I DON'T OPPOSE YOU.

IF YOU DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY, YOU BEST TAKE THAT BADGE OFF AND LEAVE TOWN!

WHO'S NEXT? OUR CHILDREN?

THIS TIME THEY TOOK MY WIFE, JANE. BUT WHO'S NEXT, US OR OUR TOWN?

IN LONG, WILL YOU LET THOSE MIGRANTS RUN ALL OVER OUR TOWN?


IF WE DON'T ACT NOW, THOSE NIGGERS WILL BE WINDTALE'S MASTERS IN A BLINK OF AN EYE.

I'M NOT QUITING. I'M HANGING FROM THE TREE RIGHT NEXT TO THOSE NIGGERS YOU LOVE SO MUCH, REYNOLDS!
OVER THERE!

LOOK OVER THERE!

THERE ARE YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER AND GO HOME.

LET THE OTHERS KNOW, HURRY!

TAKE YOUR MOTHER AND SISTERS AND GO HOME!

DAD!

DAD!!
HURRY ABRAHAM!!

DUDLEY...

YOU'LL GO TO HELL FOR THIS.

CLINK!
I couldn't save Jane.

But I was honored to protect our values and serve justice Windtale-style. I know your mother is smiling up in heaven.

Our determination to protect what we've built... hasn't changed in twenty years.

Father, don't justify your crime in mother's name.

The idea of Windtale-style justice has been meaningless... ever since you murdered that black family twenty years ago.
AHEM... EXCUSE ME...

BUT I CAN'T WAIT ALL NIGHT FOR YOUR ARGUMENT TO FINISH

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE ON A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

I'D LIKE TO TALK TO MR. EVAN DUDLEY IF YOU DON'T MIND.
4MAU.
OJ5ACK.
...5T.
BAL-0LA5.
...ANP
ONTUSR
TOWNS
BIG
ANP
5MAU-
Itracgp
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MINPTAL6
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Next
TARGET.
THAT'S
QUITE
A
5TORV.
SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT...

TAP TAP

INVOLVING THE WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY AND A SECRET ORDER OF PRIESTS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH YOU WANT FROM ME...

BUT I WILL MAKE A HANDSOME CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR LITTLE "CHARITY ORGANIZATION"... ON THE CONDITION THAT YOU STOP THIS FANCIFUL SERMON AND LET ME GET BACK TO MY BOOKS.

MR. FURLEY, I KNOW THE NATURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

I ASSURE YOU, WE'RE NOT HERE TO EXTORT FROM YOU THE GOVERNMENT'S SHARE OF WINDTALIE'S... THAT WHOLE TOWNS ARE BEING SLAUGHTERED, AND WHAT'S MORE, THE DEAD ARE RISING FROM THEIR GRAVES?

AND NOW THIS MESS IS ON ITS WAY TO MY LITTLE TOWN OF WINDTALIE?

AND YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT IS A PROBLEM. HA HA HA...
I know it sounds crazy, but in the name of God...

...everything I've said is true.

Don't you have Windtale in the palm of your hand?

We're here to warn you.

That the lives of Windtale's residents hang in the balance.

Since when did you start caring about other people's opinions?

My hat's off to you, Mr. Dupley.

What makes you think Windtale residents will go along with what you say?

Let's just say that "believe" all that business about the holy blood thing.

But even you can't weasel out of what lies ahead.

Look here, Father.

You've greased the local militia and even the federal government to maintain your sole control over Windtale.

I'm afraid we're here to warn you.

Aspect/our powers of manipulation...

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My hat's off to you, Mr. Dupley.
HELL'S COMIN' TO WINDTLE, MR. DUDLEY.

AND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES.

PIONEER BAR
I don't care what you thugs are after...

But I'd advise you against threatening me in my own office...

Mr. Dudley all we're trying to do...

It's no use, Father.

Let's call it a day.

It's a good thing, too...

His bad attitude was making my trigger finger itch.

What's a man like you doing slaving away for the federal government?

What a terrible waste.
THANKS TO THE IDIOT OFFICERS YOU'VE BOUGHT LOUT...

...WHO WISHES TO PROTECT THIS TOWN HE LOVES

...WHO WISHES TO PROTECT THIS TOWN HE LOVES

...AND NOT THOSE OF A MAN...

IT'S BETTER TO BE FORGOTTEN THAN TO BE VIOLATED.

DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT THAT.

BOTH WAY, THIS TOWN IS FUCKED.

THE MUTILATION OF FORCES I REQUEST WILL BE SEVERELY VIOLATED.

FORGOTTEN OR VIOLATED.

WHO WILL HAVE HIS HOMETOWN BE FORGOTTEN BY THE NOBLES...

WHO WOULD HAVE HIS HOMETOWN BE FORGOTTEN BY THE NOBLES...
OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT YOURSELF, IVAN.

YOUR UGLY DEFEAT WON'T EVEN HEAL YOUR ENEMIES.

THE SHADOWS OF FORGIVEFULNESS THAT YOUR LONG JOURNEY CASHED OVER YOU...

...HAVE WEAKENED YOUR RAGE AND DEPLETED THE POWER OF YOUR IMMORTALITY.

OPENS YOUR EYES, IVAN. THE FLESH FOR MY SOUL.

OPENS YOUR EYES TO YOUR OWN WEAKNESS AND FEEL THE WRETCHEDNESS OF SHAME.

OPEN YOUR EARS AND FEED YOUR ANGER ON THE MOCKING LAUGHTER OF YOUR ENEMIES. OPEN YOUR LIPS AND RENEW YOUR YOB OF ETERNAL STRUGGLE.
ISN'T your WOUND TELLING you...

...THAT THIS IS NOT your BATTLEGROUND?

FOOLISH, HALF-SOUL KNIGHT...

I DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THAT OPEN WOUND ON YOUR IMMORTAL BODY?

DON'T YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF THAT OPEN WOUND ON YOUR IMMORTAL BODY?

I DON'T KNOW

WHY DON'T YOU ENLIGHTEN THIS FOOLISH ONE ABOUT ITS MEANING?

YOUR HEART IS WARPED

JUST LIKE YOUR DESTINY

I GUESS THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME TO DO

IN THIS GOD FORSAKEN PLACE

WELL THEN
I'll sit back and watch until the stage is set for me.

So...

You've sold half of your soul...

To seek your revenge against the one who's torn your destiny apart.

Yet you're like a marionette that moves according to his wishes. You can't be unaware of that.

It might be interesting to be a spectator for a change.

Why?

Why do you let shift your destiny like a mindless fool?
SO THAT I CAN STAND

...IN FRONT OF HIM!

IF I CAN STAND IN FRONT OF HIM

IF I CAN STAND IN FRONT OF HIM

EVEN IF THE OTHER HALF OF MY SOUL IS TORN TO SHREDS IN THE PROCESS

AND MY BODY FESTERS IN ITS OWN CURSE

AND SH OW HIM THE EXTENT OF MY HATE I WILL BE CONTENT

IF I CAN STAND IN FRONT OF HIM SOME DAY

MATTERS
IN THE END...

...YOU'RE JUST LIKE...
...HER.

...MAY BEGIN AT DIFFERENT PLACES, BUT THEY BOTH REACH THE SAME DESTINATION.

LOVE AND HATE.

THEY LEAD TO ATTACHMENT?

AND FOOLISHNESS
You give everything you have and stare at one fixed spot...

...only to throw away your life without a thought.
IN my! STOP IT!

BENDO STOP IT!

TURN BACK.

THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU.
Perhaps we should have learned... to resign ourselves to fate from the start.
I think something's happened...

...to the First Contingent.

Not only did they not meet us at the appointed spot.

We can't find a trace of them anywhere!

Pierre and the rest of his party...

...is strange...

Pierre has never... failed us before.

TAP TAP

Father!

The chain... pull the chain!!

Martyrs!

Clop Clop
ENOUGH, BATON!
CALM DOWN!

CLANK!

IVOO.

MCA... M/MEFTY.

BUT IN HIS CURRENT STATE...
SMELLED SOMETHING.

HE'S SMELLED SOMETHING.
HURRY! HIS MEDICINE!

NEIGH!!

CLANK!!

WAA... WAA... AAAARRGGH...
FATHER JOSHUA. BASTON IS HAVING A FIT!

FATHER JOSHUA!

HURRY HELP ME!

PERHAPS IT IS TOO EARLY FOR HIM TO UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION AFTER ALL?

ON THE CONTRARY

CAN'T YOU SEE?

IT'S THE SMELL OF HERESY THAT EXCITES HIM.

CLANK!!
IN THIS LAND OF THE UNHOLY...

WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH HE CAN DO FOR GOD...

HOW CAN HE CONTAIN THE EXCITEMENT...

IN THIS LAND OF THE UNHOLY!
HOW GREAT HIS GIFT—HIS STRENGTH, HIS PASSION, HIS SHARPENED SENSES...

IF ANYONE CAN BEING AN END TO THIS HERESY, IT IS OUR DEAR BROTHER BASTON

TO BE CONTINUED IN PRIEST 15