

Forbidden Book:

Oraculum Manus Occultus (Cum Sermo Novalinae)

It is known that Archangels receive three gifts of prophecy. The first occurs prior to their ascension, and often goes unnoticed until hindsight gives better discernment. The second occurs when they *become* Archangels, when the link with the Higher Heavens and the Divine is most potent. The third occurs when they suffer True Death. There is some debate among the Host about which is the *purest* example of prophecy: Raphael's and Oannes' pronouncements are carefully guarded secrets, so it is hard to balance the force of their final prophecies against their other ones. Regardless, apotheosis prophecies are considered to be the most well-known (besides Gabriel's, of course).

The most notorious one comes from the second group, as well. When Marc became an Archangel, his prophecy was unexpected (his was the first raising of an Archangel since the end of the First Rebellion, after all; this phenomenon had not happened previously). Judging from subsequent reaction, it had not been *welcome*, either. Speculation over what was actually said has only been fueled by the fact that every member of the Seraphim Council below the rank of Archangel present at Marc's Prophecy voluntarily

submitted to having their memories of the event utterly wiped away.

All save one. Novalis, Angel of Flowers, was closest to Marc during his moment of terrible glory. It is widely agreed that she must have heard every word, and it is certainly True that she declined to have her memories removed. As she was about to be elevated in her turn, it apparently was not considered to be an issue. Her own divinatory utterances were interesting in their own right (it is widely agreed that Blandine attempted the first Redemption attempt as a result of Novalis' prophecy), but not especially *relevant* towards the oddities surrounding Marc's foretelling.

Or perhaps not. Several thousand years later, a very interesting set of scrolls (permeated with so much ineffability that it was practically crystallizing along the sides) showed up. The text was written in Old Angelic, in a hand that was clearly Novalis'; it appeared to be a copy of Marc's prophecy, heavily annotated (in green ink) by the Archangel of Flowers. The word 'appeared' is used because while the language was clearly Old Angelic, the text was neither comprehensible nor gibberish, simply... not understandable. All enquiries to the Archangel of Flowers were met with a smiling, murmured comment about having a unique perspective on the matter and an offer of tea.

It is uncertain just how many copies of the *Oraculum Manus Occultus* exist, but the numbers seem small. New versions seemed to get penned at the whim of Novalis; while Marc's prophecy (if that is what it is) is always presented in the same language and format, the language and text of the annotations are never quite the same twice, and the medium in which the 'book' can be found has ranged from everything from scrolls to books to a read-only CD-ROM. One thing that remains fairly constant is that all versions of the *Oraculum Manus Occultus* seem remarkably resilient and tough: one reliable report indicated that a particular copy has survived a house fire, being shot with a Maxim gun, the sinking of the *Titanic*, sixteen uses of the Calabite resonance and the attentions of a two year old (although it is unclear whether that last was also incorrectly noted as the use of the Calabite resonance).

Interestingly enough, while no angelic researcher has ever been able to decipher the main text, Servitors of Revelations have determined to their satisfaction that the status and mystery that is the *Oraculum Manus Occultus* has absolutely no effect on their dissonance conditions... or, for that matter, the inability of the entities who *have* deciphered the text to give any meaningful answers about its meaning. Oh, yes, there are quite a few individuals who know what Marc's putative prophecy apparently was, even

if they cannot hope to explain it. They are noted for their titles that they formerly held (like "Baron" or "Duke" or "Demon of"), for their noted serenity... and for their unwillingness to fight the War in a violent capacity. They show up in Heaven, hand off their book to the bemused Revelations team set up to document the phenomenon, go through their debriefings in a remarkably cheerful and helpful manner, get easily Redeemed, and go on with their new lives. The Revelations team plays with the book for a while, then quietly sends it back to Novalis. Eventually another demon shows up carrying either that copy, or another one. Sometimes an existing copy shows up at the foot of Jacob's Ladder, which also gets forwarded to the Archangel of Flowers.

...Well, nobody ever said that the *Heavenly Host* calls this a Forbidden Book.

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