

SHADOWED EARTH



CORE SETTING GUIDE



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SHADOWED EARTH

BY

Aaron T. Huss

EDITING

Creighton Broadhurst, Sarah Lyon

COVER ART

Andrew DeFelice

INTERIOR ART

Jim Scanlin, Antonio Abrignani, Danilo Sanino, Danomyte, Fotokostic, iurii, Lukyanov Mikhail, Luther, lynea, Morphart Creation, Nicku, nikolaich, Tonis Pan, Patalakha Serg, Slava Gerj, Stocksnapper, styia

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Shadowed Earth is a work of fiction. It depicts an alternate history of Earth by taking mythology, folklore, and legends and making them real, then mixing in elements of horror. All of this is wrapped around historical events and places, creating the Shadowed Earth setting, and should be approached as such. No content may be reproduced other than small pieces for review or journalistic criticism.

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PREFACE

What you see before you is a bible. Not *the* Bible, just *a* bible. Titled *Shadowed Earth*, this core setting guide defines the canon of the fantasy horror alternate history known as Shadowed Earth, just like a bible.

Shadowed Earth takes Earth's history and mixes it with fantasy, horror, and various other elements depending on the era (such as mythology during the Dark Ages). This complete alternate history details a slightly modified Earth from its infancy to the near future (near future as of the publication of this book). This creates an amalgamation of history folklore, mythology, gothic horror, and the weird.

What is the purpose of this *Shadowed Earth* core setting guide? Much like *The World of Darkness*, Shadowed Earth is a complete modification of Earth's history across multiple ages. To create synergy between those ages, and keep the overall canon consistent, *Shadowed Earth* connects everything within and between those ages. This book gives this new history meaning along with presenting reasons how one event has influenced another.

Going forward, this *Shadowed Earth* canon will be used as the backdrop for all games and fiction placed within one or more eras of Shadowed Earth, such as *Faith & Demons: The Rising* and *Judgment Day*. Additionally, it will be used in conjunction with Mystical Throne Entertainment's *Entropic Gaming System* to provide a historical fantasy horror gaming experience.

How do I use this *Shadowed Earth* core setting guide? If playing within one of Mystical Throne Entertainment's Shadowed Earth settings, this setting guide can be used to further a campaign's background, extend it across different ages, or simply provide additional fluff for the players to incorporate into their characters.

Additionally, new settings can be created using the Shadowed Earth canon, such as creating a campaign placed within the Roman Empire during the Iron Age. This setting guide provides numerous storylines that can easily be translated into lengthy campaigns, either furthering the standard Shadowed Earth storyline or creating a new one!

What's inside this *Shadowed Earth* core setting guide? *Shadowed Earth* is presented in narrative format, similar to a teacher lecturing to her students. It features Grand Inquisitor Black Steel and how he came to learn about the Shadowed Earth alternate history, covering prehistory through the near-future. It begins with the storyline introduction of Grand Inquisitor Steel in **Awakening**, establishing his credentials and acting as a lead-in to the rest of the book. From there, the content moves straight into establishing the Shadowed Earth canon,

PREFACE

starting with **Prehistory** and moving through the **Bronze Age**, **Iron Age**, and **Dark Ages**. Learn of the struggles of humanity during the **Crusades** and how they recovered during the **Middle Ages** and into the **Early Modern Age**. This core setting guide finishes with a look at the **Modern Age** and the **New Age**, which is just beginning with the end of the book's timeline. To finish the story of Grand Inquisitor Steel, his final days are spoken of in **Final Good-bye**.

Shadowed Earth is more than just this core setting guide; it's a collection of settings, fiction, and adventuring opportunities abroad. Besides the Shadowed Earth fiction and tabletop role-playing game settings, there are a number of ways to stay connected with this new alternate history.

Mystical Throne Entertainment Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/MysticalThroneEntertainment>

Mystical Throne Google+ Community:

<https://plus.google.com/communities/100531251509390615666>

Mystical Throne Entertainment Twitter Feed:

<https://twitter.com/MysticalThrone>

For those who want a quicker way to stay connected, follow the Twitter feed to see what's new and what other tidbits are thrown into the Shadowed Earth universe.

Shadowed Earth Online:

<http://mysticalthrone-ent.com/category/shadowed-earth-online/>

Shadowed Earth Online is the premier location for all free Shadowed Earth content. This website features the **Encyclopedia Chaotica**, describing some of the most prominent features of the Shadowed Earth alternate history. All free-to-download content will be posted to Shadowed Earth Online, along with some low-cost premium content.

On Shadowed Earth Online you will find free game content, adventure hooks, one-sheet adventures, and headline interpretations taking real-life media content and giving it a Shadowed Earth spin. This is your main source for Shadowed Earth gaming inspiration.

Watch for installments of *Veiled*, providing new game content for one or more Shadowed Earth settings. Also watch for core setting guides detailing the various game settings for Shadowed Earth, presenting adventure and campaign content for specific eras and locations.

AWAKENING

FEBRUARY 27, 2053

History is a lie. Many men have said that history is written by those who achieve victory. The truth is that history is written by those who want to hide the truth from the fragile minds of humanity. Why, you may ask? If mankind knew the truth about the world around them, it would truly drive them insane. The mind of the average human cannot fathom the powers that lie just beyond their reach; nor do they possess the willpower to steel their minds from the horrors that surround us every day.

For many years I have sat on the roof of this lonely building, looking down on the masses of Chicago. For many years I have served to protect these people from beings that lurk within the shadows. And throughout those years I have kept many secrets, knowing the rest of the world could not comprehend them. Yet, I am but one man who cannot possibly save the world from that which they should not know.

My name is Steel, Black Steel, and I am an inquisitor, a hunter, a judge. Although my name was once Bishop, it is no longer of consequence. I have devoted my life to the service of this planet we call Earth through the trials and tribulations of the Inquisition. Today is my eightieth birthday and I celebrate it proudly. I am the only man throughout the almost eight-hundred and fifty years of this organization to gain the title of Grand Inquisitor and retire with it. But as my days with the Inquisition are finished, my value to them has waned and indeed I am no longer an asset, but a threat. No, I have not turned to a life of heresy, nor have I turned my back on those I have mentored. Instead, my mind is a veritable melting pot of heretical information that could easily destroy the minds of those whom I have protected for the past fifty-five years. Should they find out what I know, it could spell certain doom for us all.

As such, I have decided to purge my mind of what I know; a retelling of history as it unfolded rather than how it has been taught throughout the ages. Of course this will not eliminate the knowledge from my memory, but at least I can move on without letting it linger heavily on my mind. So I dictate my stories from memory and my journals into this digital recorder, and once completed, I will burn it and my journals until even the ashes no longer remain. I have seen and heard too much to live as a freeman amongst my people. Every Grand Inquisitor has met their doom before reaching an age of retirement, but with my luck, or possibly a lack thereof, I am faced with the daunting task of leaving the Inquisition with the knowledge I have gained. If the knowledge I have were to reach the ears of the populace, society may implode from the fear of what lurks within the shadows. The Inquisition has learned much through their research, and what they've found is sufficient for all inquisitors to do their job. It takes a mind of steel

and an unshakable will, both rooted in the knowledge that you must act as the ultimate defense to the people you protect.

I am a wall and what I know can never pass to another generation. Society must continue as normal and all must learn of history the way it has been told for centuries in the books dictated by the religions of our world; religions who aim to protect their people by keeping them in blissful ignorance.

IN THE BEGINNING

I was born with what the shamans refer to as a form of clairvoyance. I possess the ability to see into the spiritual realm as if I were part of it. I could not enter the spiritual realm and interact with its denizens, but I could always see people or creatures walking around that weren't there. For years I kept this ability hidden deep inside, convincing myself that my mind was playing tricks on me.

I was one of the lucky few whose sixth sense didn't drive them insane. Most children born with this "gift," although many of us refer to it as a curse, do not live a healthy life and instead spend their adult years in an asylum. Instead of doom-laden proclamations or medium-like discussions, I took to simply observing these beings that my friends and family could not see. I did not attempt to speak with them, not that they could have heard me anyway, but I always listened. However, it was difficult to listen to the spirits of the dead as most of them did not speak my language. If I was to learn more from these spirits, I had to understand them.

From an early age, around twelve or thirteen, I took a deep interest in paleolinguistics, the study of ancient history through language. I became wholly absorbed in ancient history as so much of it was barely known through the little evidence humanity had uncovered and the stories that were told down through the millennia. Though my studies were strong, albeit peculiar in the eyes of my peers, I never fully understood what the spirits were saying, although I did learned to identify when they might have come from. While not the most accurate means of studying ancient spirits, there was no shortage of them and my mind was continuously bombarded with interesting things. Even if I couldn't fully understand what these spirits were saying, the meaning wasn't completely lost and it was as if a story played out in front of my eyes every day.

I continued my years studying these spirits, not only with their verbal language, but also their body language. I watched them recreate bodily movements they must have performed thousands of times while alive and millions of times after passing into the spiritual realm. I learned many different combat and martial techniques by mimicking their moves and perfecting them through study, and the teachings of an excellent sensei. While children around me were playing sports and partying, I was studying ancient history through the use of my sixth sense. I stuck with my studies throughout high school and was accepted to Indiana University, Bloomington into their Ancient History program.

At the age of eighteen I entered college with the intention of becoming a scholar in the world of ancient history and languages. I focused my efforts on ancient Greek and Latin and consumed as much as I could regarding every other language. I was called dedicated by my professors and crazy by my classmates, but ancient languages were a part of my life, dating back to when I was a child. My interests were so piqued that I even learned the ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, and Egyptian languages.

My peers had a hard time understanding how an obvious language scholar could exhibit such prowess in martial arts. Without knowing the hidden lessons I learned from the spirits I observed, I often explained their statements away as years of dedicated martial arts training to protect myself when venturing into the urban jungle of Chicago. Little did they know how much of a lie this was and how I had fashioned my techniques on those from ancient times. Even though they didn't know, or at least didn't understand, someone else did.

On the eve of my twenty-fifth birthday, I spent the night in Chicago, celebrating with my friends. We had all finished college and were preparing to enter the real world with full-time careers. I, however, did not have a career lined up as the demand for historians with a knack for linguistics were not in high demand. Instead, I was preparing to leave the state for a few months to see what opportunities lay elsewhere. After an evening of antics, I got into my car and drove back to my apartment. As I walked through the door, I was taken aback by a suited man sitting in my chair.

In front of me sat a bald black man wearing a flawless black suit. Although I was caught off guard, my years of practicing the martial arts allowed me to stay calm. The man did not hold a weapon of any kind and was not threatening me in any way. "I've been waiting for you," he stated calmly. Without knowing who he was, or why he was in my house, I proceeded with caution and asked him what he was doing there. "You are Bishop Steel, correct?" he asked. With an affirmative response, his next question came in fluent Latin. "Do you understand me?" With another affirmative response, he showed some approval and stood up.

"Please be aware that I am familiar with your abilities. I know that you could possibly kill me in seconds without a weapon in hand. Knowing this, and seeing as how I am not armed, you should feel calm that I am here with the best of intentions." As he spoke, I remained in front of my door, although I'd closed it to not disturb my neighbors. Without knowing what might happen, I wanted to remain close to the exit.

"We have been observing you for a few years now, Mr. Steel, and my employers are convinced that you are the perfect candidate to join our organization." The man stood, unflinching and unwavering, holding my attention while he spoke. He carried a definite air of authority and confidence in his mannerisms. I had the suspicion that a sniper of some sort lay nearby, training his scope on me should I make a wrong move. With that in mind, I relaxed a bit and listened to him speak.

"Who I work for is of no concern to you right now. Should you accept my offer, you will accompany me to our facility to discuss affairs with my employers. Now,

before you speak, and I'm sure you have many questions, let me tell you what we know. Your name is Bishop Steel. You were born in Chicago on February, 27 in 1973. Your father, Gregory, is a lawyer in Chicago and your mother, Maggie, is a nurse in a suburban clinic. You attended college at Indiana University in Bloomington, where we first caught wind of your talents. You majored in ancient history and languages and seem to have a knack for what is known as paleolinguistics. You returned to Chicago after graduation and have yet to choose your career path." As I listened to the man speak, I was not frightened by what he knew. Much of this information was public knowledge and could have been discovered anywhere. At that time, I was not familiar with the term paleolinguistics, even though that's what I had been essentially studying for years.

"You may be thinking to yourself, Mr. Steel," the man continued, "that none of this seems like a big deal. I did a little research, right? Big deal? What if I told you that I know of your secret? You and I are completely aware that you possess what is referred to as a sixth sense. You possess the ability to see into the spiritual realm and are able to study ancient spirits without interacting with them; a type of clairvoyance." Upon hearing this, I was truly dumbfounded. The man paused to test my reaction; I decided to sit on my couch to hear what else he had to say.

"I see I have piqued your curiosity," he continued. "Would it be right to assume that much of the ancient languages you are familiar with have been first learned from these spirits?" I nodded my agreement, but held up a hand to stop his questioning.

"Who are you?" I asked. The black man was around fifty years of age and never took his eyes off me. His age and apparent years of discipline have done him well as his demeanor never wavered; not even a little bit. If I were speaking to someone in these tones, I probably would have become angry at the thought of being told to be quiet by someone I deemed inferior. But this man's demeanor seemed unchanged. Before he could answer the question, I added, "And who is your employer?"

"My name is Marcus Jones," he said without a smile. "My employer will become known to you upon your acceptance of our offer, after we transport you to a secure facility." He paused and seemed to compose his next thought. "Mr. Steel, do you see this man next to me?"

I was completely puzzled by the meaning of his question. There was no man next to him; neither standing nor sitting. There was no one else in the room; not even a spirit using my clairvoyance. My look of puzzlement gave away my answer.

"You don't see him," Jones continued, "because your clairvoyance only allows you to see spirits tethered to the spiritual realm. The mortal and malevolent beings that walk the spiritual realm can only be seen by those with the right training and developed psyche."

"How can a mortal reside within a realm where the dead go?" I asked.

"They are called realm walkers, Mr. Steel. My friend here is one of them, as am I." That explained how he entered my apartment. Jones made a gesture toward

nothing, and before I knew it another man was standing next to him. I almost fell off the couch and onto the floor.

"Calm down Mr. Steel," Jones said. His tone was meant to comfort me, but what I had seen could drive someone insane. "This is my compatriot Aegyptus. He is only here for my protection. It is obvious his presence is not needed. Aegyptus, you may leave." As quickly as the second man had appeared, he disappeared through a peculiar wave in the air; the same type of wave you see when hot air is mixed with cold air. I had no assurance the second man had completely left, but I had no choice than to listen to what else Jones had to say. It was unfathomable how many resources he may have hidden in my apartment that could be called upon with only a thought or a flick of the wrist.

"Do not fret, Mr. Steel, we are completely alone now. I can see that not only do I have your undivided attention, but that you have assimilated what you've seen into some type of unknown knowledge of the world around you. You do not understand how wrong and right you are."

I stood up and leveled my gaze at Jones. I was now as much annoyed by this intrusion as I was intrigued. "What is it you want from me?" I asked.

Jones broke his first smile. "I have a lifelong career opportunity for your, Mr. Steel; one that would take your knowledge and skills and apply them to their full potential. I cannot provide you with many details until you accept the offer and we leave your apartment."

I was puzzled by his last statement. "Why do you keep saying we need to leave my apartment?"

"Because, Mr. Steel, we do not know who or what may be listening." I understood the "who," but I didn't understand the "what." How could something be listening instead of someone? As I hesitated, Jones spoke again. "Mr. Steel, do you accept my offer for the only career that fits your potential?" I nodded my agreement and he broke his second smile.

"Good," said Jones. "We will leave immediately. There is a vehicle waiting for us downstairs."

THE UNKNOWN

Jones allowed me time to get cleaned up; he didn't want me smelling like a night on the town when meeting his "employer." After a quick shower and shave, I threw on jeans and a plain black shirt to match the lack of color in Jones' demeanor. We drew the blinds and locked my apartment before heading outside to enter a waiting Land Rover.

I'd lived in Chicago all my life, except when in college, and things looked much different in the dead of night. The rear windows of the Land Rover were dark and seeing out was difficult. However, from what I could see out the front window and through the pitch black, we were traveling to somewhere I had never been before.

The Land Rover entered an oddly shaped building that looked more like a warehouse than anything else. To my surprise, the driver continued driving well past what I thought was the far wall of the warehouse. Clearly we were driving down a ramp into a lower level, but the lack of lighting in the ramp and the warehouse made it difficult to decipher exactly where we were going. As I looked to Jones, he kept his eyes locked ahead and this trip was obviously one he had made many times before. Upon reaching a level platform, the Land Rover parked and we all exited the SUV.

Few lights illuminated that parking lot, but I could faintly distinguish the outline of other trucks, much like the one we rode in. The echo from the SUV's doors made it obvious we were in an underground parking lot. The driver of the truck remained behind as Jones ushered me to a door. Seeing through the darkness was difficult, but Jones' deliberate movements showed no sign of worrying about tripping on an obstacle or running into a hidden wall. I trailed closely behind him to ensure I did not succumb to any such embarrassments.

The building we entered was pleasant. The temperature was clearly well-controlled and the atmosphere kept at a comfortable humidity. Although I had no prior experience with any government or military organization, I would have guessed this was some type of underground bunker used for important operations. However, the hallways were relatively dark and the hustle and bustle I was expecting were completely absent. So I continued to follow Jones as he led me down a series of hallways and into a well-lit conference room.

"Please sit down," Jones finally spoke. "My master will be with us shortly." Master? That was an odd way to address his superior.

Jones sat me down at the head of the table as he took a seat adjacent to me. I could hear footsteps in the hallway. They appeared to be coming from farther down the hallway, opposite the way we arrived. Before long, a large white man entered the room and closed the door behind him. "This is Bishop Steel, correct, Jones?" the man said.

"Yes my lord," Jones responded. "He is the paleolinguist with the clairvoyance I spoke to you about."

The large man smiled, apparently pleased to hear of my credentials. "Excellent," he said in a sly fashion. "Mr. Steel, I am Kayne, head of this organization. Inquisitor Jones has done well to find you."

"Inquisitor?" I interrupted.

Kayne broke a smile. "Ah, my fair inquisitor has been a bit secretive. That is probably for the best. Do you know of the Inquisition, Mister Steel?"

My studies of history had brought me across entries of the Inquisition, but not my ancient history studies. "You are referring to the medieval heretic hunting Inquisition? I assure you I'm not guilty of heresy."

Kayne stood up and began fidgeting with his fingers. He appeared to be tapping deep into his mind to call upon a story. Before long, I was blessed with new knowledge. "Mr. Steel, what you know about history is not always at it seems. From the beginning of time there have been unknown threats lurking about.



During the times of the Middle Ages, the followers of Christianity pulled their resources together to form the Inquisition as you know it. They hunted heretics and spoke ill about those who spoke against the Christian faith. However, this," he spoke as he gestured around him, "is not the Inquisition of which you know."

At that point, I wished I had a notebook to record everything I felt Kayne was about to tell me. But being unprepared, I had to commit it to memory. However, in my later years, I would discover that Grand Inquisitor Kayne only told me part of the story and the rest I would have to discover on my own. "The building you are in now is one of the Inquisition's headquarters. Located deep in the heart of a place I will not tell you, is the most secured facility you will find. This building is designed to keep all manner of people and beings away from those who aim to harm humanity."

I put up my hand to interrupt Kayne without being rude. "Why is it you and Jones here keep referring to 'things' rather than just people?"

"Dear Mr. Steel," he answered, "there is an entire world of unknowns around you. You are one of the lucky few who can see into one of the other realms."

"One?" I replied.

"Yes, Mr. Steel. One. There are many more. However, I cannot continue until I have your absolute agreement of involvement. I will warn you that what you are going to learn can damage the very fabric of your mind. What you are being offered is an opportunity unlike any other and should you divulge anything you learn, you will be hunted down and executed. Do I make myself clear?" Kayne said, staring daggers into my soul.

"I accept whatever offer you are giving me," I responded.

"Excellent!" He paused again to compose his thoughts. "Bishop Steel, what I am about to tell you can never be known by the populace. If this information was ever to be widely disseminated, it would destroy what little fabric holds humanity together." I nodded my agreement. "Bishop Steel, the Inquisition, of which you have just agreed to become a part of, hunts the supernatural."

The supernatural; I knew nothing about the supernatural nor did I think it would be a good idea to know about the supernatural. "You mean ghosts and goblins?"

"I mean the supernatural beings that have been a part of this Earth for thousands of years. Vampires, werewolves, demons, angels, dragons, aliens, ghosts; anything your dreams can fathom. We are the ones protecting humanity from the beings that lurk in the shadows. The world is much bigger than you realize, and much of it is still unknown.

"Your clairvoyance allows you to see into the spiritual realm. Your body and soul allow you to live in the mortal realm. What you cannot see is the other realms harboring even more supernatural terrors. You do not see the Abyss or the Cosmos. You cannot see the bridges that allow beings unthinkable to humanity to cross from one realm into another. You believe Heaven and Hell are just another part of religion, but you don't realize how tangible they are. We are not alone, Mr. Steel, and mankind needs the Inquisition to keep them safe."

I nodded my head, as if I actually understood what he was saying. "So you need me to be a hunter?"

Kayne smiled again. "We need you to be much more than just another hunter. We have lots of hunters and anyone can hunt the supernatural, and hope to return. What we need is someone who can reach into the minds of the unknown and learn from them so that we can eradicate them from Earth. No matter how much we hunt, they never seem to go away. We need to find a way to stop them. We need to remove the supernatural beings from Earth and preserve all of humanity for eternity." His voice became much more animated as he continued his tirade. "We need to crush these beings for the safety of all those around us. We cannot allow the witches of the world to become beacons to the damned, allowing them to invade our world and unleash the next apocalypse!"

Kayne calmed and recomposed himself. "Bishop Steel, you have a particular gift for learning, linguistics, and martial arts. A man like you is a treasure to the Inquisition as you have the ability to infiltrate the lairs of the unknown and come back alive. There are many supernatural creatures we know about, but it's those we don't know about or don't understand that frighten us the most."

"You need me to be a paranormal investigator?" I asked.

"We need you to join the ranks of our scholars and hopefully rise through the ranks of the Inquisition. Maybe someday we can all live in peace knowing the beings from the other realms are quiet and the supernatural that walk amongst us are afraid of our anger. Your knowledge of ancient languages may bring about a new wave of possibilities. You can be our ultimate hunter; and maybe someday the greatest Grand Inquisitor of our order."

Maybe Grand Inquisitor Kayne didn't say that last part, but he was determined to make me a scholar and hunter of the unknown.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT

The Inquisition was quite formal in their recruitment, outside of sneaking into my apartment and waiting for me to arrive. After agreeing to everything they told me and before I was allowed to leave, Kayne had me fill out a formal agreement for employment, if you can possibly call it that. To me, "working" for the Inquisition has always felt more like dedicating my soul to the eternal duties of being an inquisitor instead of treating it like a lifelong career move. I wasn't sure at that time, but whatever document I had signed appeared to be more than just a piece of paper; there was a definite arcane aura to that document that at the time I could only feel as something "not quite right." Regardless, I signed it with a regular pen and watched as Kayne rolled it up and placed it in his inside jacket pocket. At that point, he stood up, smiled, shook my hand, and instructed Inquisitor Jones to take me home. Before leaving the room, Kayne told me to pack for a lengthy trip to Israel the next morning as the Land Rover would be waiting streetside at eight o'clock. The Inquisition doesn't mess around and I would be learning the ropes while on the job; there are no formal training facilities.

I packed that night and woke up with plenty of time the next morning to get ready and meet Inquisitor Jones in the SUV. Before I had a chance to inform him that I didn't have a passport, he handed me one. I didn't question him and figured the only answer I would receive would be a smile or silence; I decided to let that one go.

We made it to O'Hare International Airport in less than an hour and made it through security in record time to meet my El Al flight. The flight was horrendously long and boring and flying in coach was less-than-desirable. Thankfully, I had my journal and a handful of magazines to keep me entertained. After touching down and going through customs, I was met by a gentleman named Aamir holding a sign saying "Steel" in English. After shaking his hand, I said hello in Hebrew, to which I saw a look of shock come across his face. He wasn't expecting me to speak Hebrew, and was cautious with his response. After probing my knowledge of Hebrew, he opted to stick with English and I was impressed with how fluent he was.

Aamir walked me to a Land Rover after picking up my bags, the Inquisition apparently preferred them, and refused to speak about my duties while in the SUV. Either he didn't trust the driver or was being overcautious; I never learned which one it was. We drove to his home in Jerusalem where he cleared a table and set down a map.

"Your task in Israel is quite simple, Steel," Aamir said, using my last name as my permanent designator. "You are to travel by truck to the Upper Jordan River, here," he pointed to it on the map. "You will travel into the mountains along the border of Syria, and search for the bronze dragon."

I was immediately taken aback as he said the words 'bronze dragon'. Not only did I not believe in dragons, but why the hell would I want to search for one if they truly existed? "You want me to find a dragon?" I replied.

"You are an Inquisitorial Scholar now, Steel," Aamir said. "You are here in Israel to research this bronze-colored dragon living in the mountains along the Syria border. You will keep your distance and observe the dragon from afar. There is no need to confront or even make contact with the dragon. Chances are it will be sleeping as they often do for hundreds of years at a time. This is your first assignment according to Grand Inquisitor Kayne of North America."

"Why aren't you doing this type of work, Aamir?" I asked.

"I am no longer a scholar and have many other duties to perform within Israel. This area is a hot bed for supernatural activity and we have need of an able-bodied scholar to research the habitat of this dragon. We know very little about dragons and although we have never needed to hunt them, we need to be prepared should they attack."

"Has anyone done this job before?" I asked.

Aamir looked down at the floor when answering me. "Yes, but they have never returned. However, they were all from Jerusalem and we fear they were taken by terrorists. An American often has an easier time traveling the area, as they can be

quickly passed off as foreign dignitaries, scientists, archeologists, or whatever. It is much easier to mask your involvement than it is to mask someone like me.”

I finally understood what I was being recruited for. The Inquisition needed someone like me who could hopefully survive dangerous areas and return unscathed. They needed someone from the United States because it was easier to provide a cover story for my presence in the area than someone who lives there. At that point, I felt like an Inquisitional patsy. However, there was no way I would allow them to make me look bad and I could always attempt to find a way out of the country if need be. Not that I knew how, but at least I could follow the spirits and see where they’d take me.

OBSERVATION

Aamir brought me to what he called the “guest house” which apparently translated into a safe house used by the Inquisition. It was a small affair, but at least it provided me with ample space to do my job. At that point, I didn’t really care that I felt used by Grand Inquisitor Kayne. Instead, I vowed to myself that I would do the best damn job possible and not let the Inquisition get the best of me. Besides, studying a dragon sounded exciting and maybe I could do a little archeological browsing while I was in Israel.

Aamir gave me the Land Rover we had arrived in and allowed me to do my job without any further interference. If I needed anything, I would have to find him; otherwise I was on my own. Aamir gave me enough money for food for a week and said if I needed to stay longer, he would provide more. The drive to the mountains was only around 100 miles, so I didn’t mind going there and back each day. I figured staying in the safe house each night would be easier, and safer, than finding a hotel near the mountains.

I didn’t reach the safe house until the afternoon and decided to drive to the mountains in the early morning. After a restful night, I drove to the mountains as the sun rose. During that first day, I spent most of my time searching for caves and outcroppings where other caves might exist. Aamir didn’t know exactly where the dragon was, but all the information he and his scholars had gathered pointed to these mountains. I was confident in their research, so I kept looking.

I was only able to search a small portion of the accessible mountain range that first day, and found nothing. I noted the place where I turned around and went back the following day. On the second day, shortly before noon, I found a well-hidden cave with weathered scrape marks leading inside. Although the clue wasn’t quite obvious, I figured that was as good a place as any to look for a dragon. After spending ten minutes listening at the opening for any movement or loud breathing, assuming a dragon’s breathing could be heard throughout, I did my best to creep inside without making any noise. After only twenty feet or so, the cave dropped off quickly into a large cavern, housing a massive, sleeping dragon. The dragon was quite large, around forty feet long from head to tail, with a bronze sheen to his scaly skin. It slumbered atop a sand and gravel bed, strewn



with bones of various types here and there. Its wings were nuzzled against its back, its legs tucked under its belly, and its hands with large boney claws resting under its chin. I watched in awe as the creatures back rose and fell to the rhythm of its breathing. It was truly a sight of wonderment.

Because I had arrived at the cave with the sun high in the sky, the shadows obscured part of the entry and the mouth of the cavern, but not enough for me to miss seeing it. If I had come an hour or two earlier, I probably would have fallen in. If I had come in the late afternoon, I probably would have missed seeing the scrape marks, as they would be hidden by shadows. My timing was impeccable and I was thankful the dragon was sleeping. Carefully, I peered into the cavern to see what was below.

This massive, bronze dragon did not appear to leave this cavern often. There were few marks around the cave entrance and the bones around the beast were clearly picked clean and no longer showed any signs of flesh (human or otherwise). The fables I had heard as a child stated that dragons could hibernate for decades if not centuries without needing food. My assumption at that point was that previous Inquisitional scholars fell into the cavern and became dragon food, thus allowing the dragon to not have to leave the sanctity of its cavern. However, this was all I could see as nothing else appeared out of place. Without knowing any facts about dragons, I pushed my assumptions aside and continued my vigilant observing.

That day, I spent five hours watching the dragon sleep and making notes about what I saw within its cavern. Finding it a good time to leave, I quietly exited the cave, marked it from the outside and got back into the Land Rover. After another restful night, and a proud one to know that I had found a dragon's lair, I went back to the site in hopes of investigating the surrounding area. I assumed the dragon would still be sleeping and instead decided it would be a good time to learn more about the environment around the dragon's lair.

My mark from the previous day was still in place and I searched for many hundred feet around the cave to note any signs of tracks, dragon or otherwise. The area seemed completely devoid of any dragon tracks; although a curious set of human footprints were there. The footprints were found all along that section of the mountain range and seemed to appear and disappear randomly. I was not sure how long the tracks had been there, but I was sure they should have been mostly weathered by the wind and sand. Either someone had been there recently, or someone was following me. Upon coming to this realization, I wondered if dragons had shapeshifting abilities like the werewolves I'd read about and if it left its cave at night. This could explain why the dragon was sleeping during the day.

With this new revelation, although a completely false one, I established an observation post around a rock outcropping that provided a sufficient view of the mouth of the cave with enough coverage to avoid being seen. I was determined to stay there well into the evening, if not overnight, in hopes of seeing the dragon

emerge. After holding my position for twenty minutes and taking notes about my assumptions, a large shadow suddenly loomed over me.

I turned around and found a large man in what appeared to be a cloak standing over me. He did not carry a gun, but the look in his face showed a definite sign that I was not wanted there. To my astonishment, he spoke to me in Sumerian.

"This is what the Inquisition sends? To what ends do you go to hunt that which you do not know, inquisitor?" the large man said, in perfect Sumerian.

His use of the ancient language was quite a shock to me. At first I thought it was one of the dead from the spiritual realm speaking to me, but then I realized that the spirits had never spoken to me and never seemed to acknowledge my presence. I replied to his question in broken Sumerian. *"I am not an inquisitor, sir. I am a scholar, here only to observe."*

The man paused as a look of shock came across his face. He clearly was not expecting a response in Sumerian, but a quivering fool speaking in Hebrew. His pause was long enough for me to react as I quickly extended my foot to land a solid kick to his stomach. The kick was hard enough and placed well enough that the man, clearly much larger than I, fell backwards. To my astonishment, instead of falling onto the ground, his cloak parted and large, disheveled wings sprouted from his back. That's when I froze.

Panic began to set in as the man hovered above the ground with flapping wings holding him in the air. His voice became loud and boomed out a command in Sumerian. *"Who are you?!"*

I stood up and composed myself. Although I did not have a weapon at that time, this being was not attacking me and I decided to speak the truth rather than incur his wrath. I replied in Sumerian, *"My name is Steel, Bishop Steel."*

The large being landed and tucked its wings inside the cloak. It let down its aggressive stance and approached me cautiously. *"Follow me,"* is all he said. I didn't know if he understood English, but his fluent use of Sumerian was enough to convince me that I should follow him. I wasn't sure if it was a curiosity of the use of Sumerian, or the scholar in me that wanted to see what would happen next.

As we reached the mouth of the dragon's cave, the winged being turned to me and spoke in broken English, *"Leave your notebook here!"* I did as he told and continued following him to the side of the cavern opening. A series of rocks led me from the cave into the dragon's cavern while the beast continued sleeping. The winged being did not seem intimidated by the dragon, helping to calm my nerves, thinking if he wasn't going to be eaten, why would I?

The winged being spoke loudly in Sumerian, *"Drac'thau, we have a visitor."*

At that point, I found it quite odd that the winged being would speak to the dragon as though it could understand. It was like a human speaking to their dog. The dragon roused and stretched its body.

Just then, the dragon replied in Sumerian. *"What now Mashda? Has the Inquisition sent more food?"*

I fell to the floor after hearing the dragon Drac'thau reply to the winged being Mashda in Sumerian. He stared at me and gave a snort. I think he was laughing. *"This fool?"* Drac'thau asked Mashda.

"I am not a fool," I replied in Sumerian. As with my surprise of hearing the dragon speak Sumerian, it was surprised to hear me echo it.

"He speaks the language of the ancients, Mashda." The winged Mashda nodded his head and the dragon seemed to agree with some unspoken statement.

"His name is Bishop Steel, and he claims to be a scholar for the Inquisition. He is not armed, and all he brought was some paper." The winged Mashda appeared to be making a case for my survival.

"This Bishop Steel is not here to hunt us then, is he Mashda?" the dragon Drac'thau replied. My body relaxed at that point and I felt as though I would faint from the overwhelming thought of speaking to a dragon and this winged Mashda. Mashda nodded his head in agreement with the dragon.

"It is time, Drac'thau," the winged Mashda said. *"It is time we connect with the humans and hopefully break the anger between us. But do you think he can comprehend the truth?"*

"He appears to be strong willed," replied the dragon Drac'thau. *"Most humans would cower before a dragon and one of The Fallen. But this human, this Steel, is very confident in himself. There is something he knows that we are not aware of yet. How does he know the language of the ancients so well?"*

Drac'thau and Mashda both looked at me inquisitively, waiting for a response. I wasn't completely sure of what they meant, but I thought I had an idea. *"I possess clairvoyance,"* I replied.

Drac'thau and Mashda paused, seemingly contemplating my statement. Mashda spoke first. *"He is the one, my old friend. He is the human that will someday bring us together."*

"Yes!" Drac'thau agreed. *"He can see into the spiritual realm. He has learned the ancient language from the spirits of the dead. Mashda, can you make me more presentable?"*

Mashda nodded his head with this last question and closed his eyes. Not knowing what the winged being was doing, I could only observe as the massive, bronze-colored dragon changed from a beast into a lizard-skinned man. *"Where are you from Bishop?"* Drac'thau asked.

I replied that I was from the United States, and Drac'thau nodded again to Mashda. Again the winged being closed his eyes, seemingly concentrating on something. Drac'thau's next reply was pleasant to hear. "Bishop Steel, I'm going to assume that English is your preferred language," he spoke in clear English. Mashda apparently had abilities that I could not fathom.

"Bishop, if I may address you as such, my name is Drac'thau. As you have already seen, I am a dragon. My Fallen friend, Mashda, has abilities to allow this interaction to be friendlier. We will speak to you in English as Sumerian is clearly not your preferred choice of languages. Although you speak it well, it is a bit broken and we must be clear about what we tell you.

"Mashda and I have been waiting centuries to find a human that can help connect us with the rest of mankind. We are all working toward a similar goal, but we will never be safe if the humans do not understand. Seeing as how you have not soiled yourself or fled in terror, you appear to have a strong will and an aptitude for knowledge. Considering you have a shamanistic ability and can see the spiritual realm, you have knowledge that many do not. I do not know how you have applied that knowledge, but I would like to. So please tell me, what have you learned from the spirits?"

I spent the next couple hours telling the tales of my youth to Drac'thau and Mashda, about my ability to see the spirits and how I learned from what I could see and hear and applied that to my linguistic studies. They were intrigued and asked many questions about what I had learned. I was extremely interested in what they had to say, but a common bond was apparently necessary for us to continue. I gladly told them everything including my interaction with the Inquisition and how I found Drac'thau's cave. At that point, I let them speak.

Mashda stepped forward. "Bishop Steel, we have confidence in you. The proper story of history must be told to a human, and you are that human. You have placed enough trust in us that you will live and we must place that same amount of trust in you. But the hour is late, and we have much to discuss. You must return to your home for tonight and come back in the morning. I will await your arrival near the mouth of the cave. Do not bring your papers as nothing we say can be written down. Mankind is too fragile to learn of its own secrets."

With that last statement, Mashda stepped back and nodded for me to leave. I did as I was told and returned to Jerusalem. I didn't sleep for a single minute that night.

PREHISTORY

MARCH 2, 1998

No doubt you have been told much about the beginnings of this planet you call Earth. No doubt you have heard of many theories from religious or scientific sources. We cannot tell you how this planet came to be; honestly, I don't think anyone can. What we can tell you is about the history of your people and the other beings of which you should be aware.

Before we begin, you must understand the importance of the four realms: cosmic, spiritual, mortal, and chaos. Each realm is home to its own denizens along with those who can pass between them. You don't need to see the realms to understand them; although you can see within the spiritual realm while living within the mortal realm, you do not need to learn who resides within those realms to understand their purpose within the history of Earth.

COSMIC REALM

The cosmic realm is home primarily to the pantheons of gods and goddesses, along with their servants. Gods and goddesses can only travel through the cosmic realm and may not enter any other realm. However, the pantheons are only as strong as those who worship them, making it difficult for the gods and goddesses to exhibit any type of power. Instead, they find a mortal realm and create a bridge to it. Through the use of this bridge, the gods and goddesses may project a part of themselves into the mortal realm to interact with its inhabitants. This is how the pantheons find followers.

The cosmic realm connects to every end of the universe. It's home to gods and goddesses, which form the pantheons, and the messengers that serve them, such as the angels.

Through the use of cosmic bridges, these pantheons are able to connect to the various mortal realms and reach out to the mortals within them. The pantheon then feeds off the people's worship of their pantheon, providing them with divine energy they can then share amongst their worshippers.

The pantheons only have the ability to create a single bridge. However, that bridge can be connected to multiple mortal realms. When humans have been told stories of different worlds, these are different mortal realms connected by the same cosmic bridge. If that bridge is discovered, mortals can even pass along it from one mortal realm to another, although they cannot travel to the cosmic realm. Using those bridges, the pantheon projects themselves into the mortal realm to obtain new followers. The more followers they have, the more powerful the pantheon grows. The more powerful the pantheon is within the cosmic realm, the more gods and goddesses it produces. This allows the pantheon to grow, although it also leads to internal conflict.

Do not convince yourself that the pantheon has control over the elements of the mortal realm. Belief in elemental control, such as control over thunder, is a human belief to explain something they do not understand, or a product of the supernatural abilities granted by the pantheon. As the pantheon grows in power, they gain the ability to grant their followers a small portion of that power. When one refers to magic from the gods, it is the pantheon's power they are tapping into. When a follower chooses a specific god or goddess, and is deemed worthy, they are blessed with the power chosen by their deity. Many followers then choose multiple gods to obtain multiple supernatural abilities.

With the continued following from their worshipers, the pantheon allows the spirits of their mortal followers the opportunity to enter the cosmic realm upon death. Humans refer to this as heaven, but it is actually the cosmic realm as the mortal wishes to see it. The cosmic realm is not tangible and instead appears however those within it wish it to appear. It does not physically change, but is rather perceived as different for each beholder. Unfortunately, only those that are part of the pantheon can reside within the cosmic realm for eternity. Many mortals have been adopted by the gods and goddesses to become residents of the cosmic realm, but the majority only stay there until they are ready to return to the spiritual realm. Some spirits have been known to stay within the cosmic realm for millennia before returning to the spiritual realm attached to their mortal realm.

When mortals stop believing in the pantheon, the cosmic bridge weakens. The pantheon can no longer support their followers and their blessings begin to wane. If the mortals completely abandon the pantheon, the cosmic bridge breaks, removing the passageway between the cosmic, spiritual, and mortal realms. Spirits within the cosmic realm, but tethered to the mortal realm, disappear, never to return again. No one truly knows where they go, although some speculate demons find and convert them. Not even I know the answer to that.

SPIRITUAL REALM

The spiritual realm is tied directly to the mortal realm. The spiritual realm is where your spirit goes when you die. This realm is home to billions of spirits who choose to live there for eternity, return to the mortal realm through rebirth, or travel to and from the cosmic realm. Each spiritual realm is tied to a single mortal realm, meaning they are a matched pair. Thus, Earth has a single spiritual realm, which you are able to view.

Spiritual realms form directly tied to a partnered mortal realm. While alive, mortals exist within the mortal realm. While in spirit form, their essence exists within the tethered spiritual realm. When a mortal dies, their essence passes from the mortal realm into the spiritual realm. When they are reborn, their essence passes from the spiritual realm back into the mortal realm.



The spiritual realm is home to spirits along with any number of malevolent beings. Many of these beings are associated with death or chaos, having some type of connection to the evil that inherently surrounds the mortal realm. The problem is that those with clairvoyance cannot see non-spirits within the spiritual realm. These malevolent denizens of the shadows are able to manipulate the space between realms and travel without being seen. We say they live in the spiritual realm because that is where we can hunt them. The truth is they reside within a fractal area between realms that only they understand how to travel through. Fortunately for most of us, these beings cannot harm anyone unless they fully move into a single realm as this fractal area is intangible and can only be used for travel. Unfortunately it means their movements are completely unpredictable and we must all be cautious should these beings decide to strike.

MORTAL REALM

What you call Earth, we call the mortal realm. You see planets amongst the stars, but only those inhabited by mortals are considered mortal realms. I cannot tell you how many there are, but there are millions, if not billions. You live within this mortal realm, and this mortal realm is attached to a single spiritual realm. All of humanity lives and breathes within the mortal realm, alongside many beings they would not understand.

Over the millennia, cosmic bridges between this and other mortal realms have allowed beings to pass between. I am not aware of any humans travelling to other mortal realms, but we know of many species that have entered Earth from beyond. When you look back through what you call mythology and folklore, there are numerous species that travelled across a cosmic bridge from their mortal realm into yours. Most are passed off as fictional stories or ancient legends, but that which you do not know or understand can kill you. As a member of the Inquisition, you will no doubt learn of these magnificent beings throughout your career. However, always tread cautiously; while some of them may seem harmless, they are here to cause havoc and threaten all of mankind.

CHAOS REALM

The last realm is that of chaos. Humans have called it the Abyss or the Underworld for centuries, but it has always been chaos. In fact, the chaos realm is

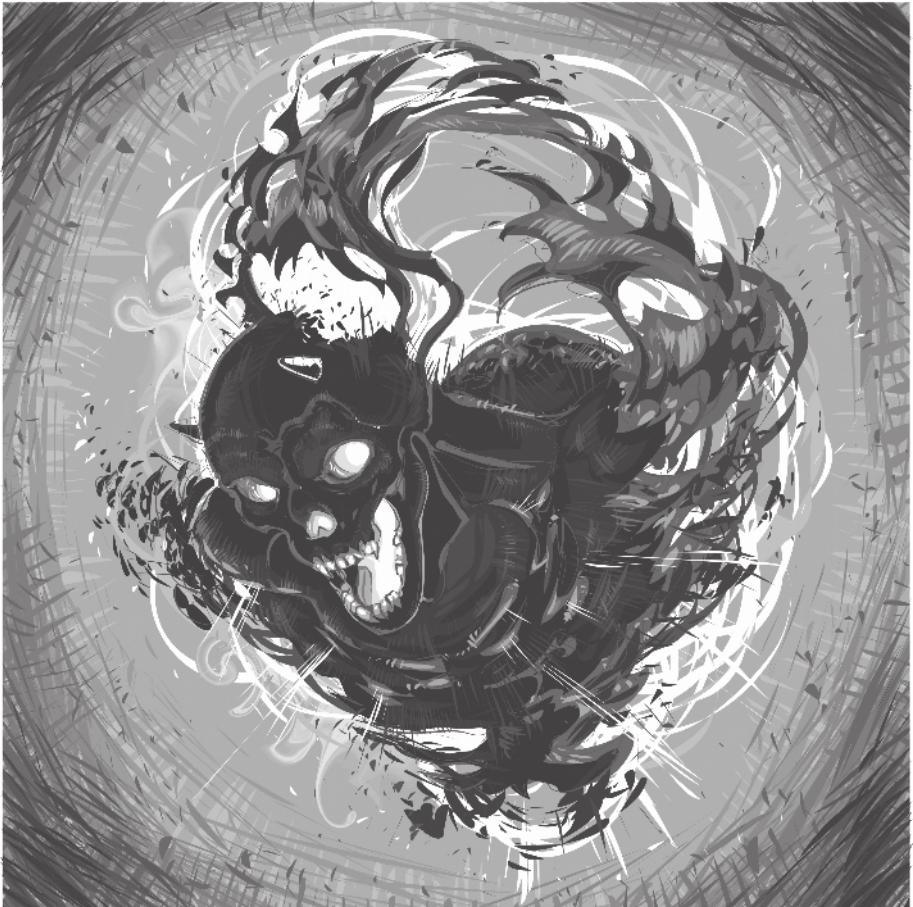
Mortal realms form around planets. Earth is considered a mortal realm, as are other planets throughout the universe where life exists.

The chaos realm connects to every end of the universe. It's home to demons and demonic beings. These beings cannot leave the chaos realm unless a mortal within a mortal realm allows them to through summoning, rituals, or weakening the fabric between the two realms.

everywhere and nowhere at the same time. You cannot see it, nor can you traverse it, but beware the denizens of chaos that find passage into the mortal or spiritual realm.

The chaos realm is difficult to understand as it is a swirling mass of nothing and everything, filled with the most horrific beings imaginable. These beings have a keen intelligence, and have caused millions of years of turmoil throughout this and many other mortal realms. These beings thrive on the naivety of mortals and want nothing more than to enter this realm and destroy it; for pleasure as much as anger or rage. Demons and demonic beings reside in the chaos realm, and you will come to know them well.

I have heard many mortals refer to the chaos realm as Hell. Hell is a cosmic realm where evil spirits are sent to be cleansed. The denizens of Hell, or whatever the religions call Hell, are part of the greater pantheons. They are gods and goddesses of their own domain and enjoy death and destruction. However, they are still a part of the pantheon because you cannot have purity without madness.





Hell is the opposite of heaven, forming a balance in the cosmic realm. The chaos realm has no balance and instead survives, and grows, through millions of years of lore. The more humanity learns or yearns for the power of chaos, the stronger it becomes. The chaos realm is the unbalancing power within the entire universe, and those within the other realms must maintain vigilance over it to avoid becoming engrossed by it. Should the chaos realm prevail, all of mankind will suffer.

REALM WALKERS

The pantheons have little effect on the other realms outside of projecting themselves and granting powers. Their power is dependent on how many worshipers they have and the hopes that those worshipers continue believing, without being able to see the gods and goddesses. Projecting themselves into the mortal realm is incredibly taxing and reduces the pantheon's power. Instead, the pantheon employs the use of realm walkers, or those able to pass from one realm to another.

Dragons, such as Drac'thau, are cosmic beings able to pass into the mortal realm. The pantheons employ the dragons to perform many tasks, such as wreaking havoc upon those who oppose their strongest worshipers. However, dragons are independent beings and their actual cosmic servitude is as demon hunters. Dragons are able to traverse the cosmic realm and all the mortal realms to hunt demons that have entered the mortal realm. How the demons enter the mortal realm is irrelevant, but when the dragons discover the breach, they send a force to fight the demons and send them back to the chaos realm.

Angels are cosmic beings able to pass into the mortal and spiritual realms. The pantheons employ angels to act as messengers to mortals and their spirits upon death. Unlike dragons, angels choose a pantheon to serve. They then become tethered to that pantheon in the same fashion as a mortal's spirit. However, they are immortal beings and can pass between realms at any time.

Because of their realm walking ability, angels relay the voice of the pantheon to the mortals for all types of purposes. They can hide within the spiritual realm and

watch over the mortals, becoming visible should the need arise. They can also bring actual messages from the pantheon to a heroic being, to spread the word of the pantheon. They can usher a spirit from the spiritual realm to the cosmic bridge to avoid becoming lost. This is their eternal duty.

However, when a cosmic bridge is broken, an angel suffers as much as the spirits of the worshipers. Angels residing within the cosmic realm are gener-

Realm walkers are the only beings that can pass freely between the realms without mortal assistance. They are even capable of entering the chaos realm, but cannot extract a being from the chaos realm. As long as a realm walker retains those abilities, passage throughout the universe is possible with merely a thought.

ally safe and can either travel across another cosmic bridge, or spend eternity serving the pantheon without the worship of the mortals. Angels residing within the mortal realm when the bridge is broken are trapped and become one of The Fallen. Angels residing within the spiritual realm when the bridge is broken are free to find another pantheon to serve. Some angels instead succumb to the lure of chaos and become one with the demons after their abandonment. It has also been said that angels purged from the cosmic realm for committing acts of sin against the pantheon are sent to the chaos realm to serve an eternal life as a slave to the demons.

THE FALLEN

Yes, I am one of The Fallen. I was once an angel serving the Sumerian pantheon. When the cosmic bridge broke, I was walking the mortal realm, which soon became my eternal residence. When one becomes part of The Fallen, they lose their immortal status. We can no longer travel to the cosmic realm, yet we retain whatever supernatural abilities we had before our alignment with the pantheon. Although

The Fallen are not immortal, we can be resurrected, destined to fight the eternal struggle between chaos and purity. Many members lose their will to fight and instead succumb to a horrific death by supernatural hunters or hand themselves over to the beings of chaos. Some of us choose to protect humanity in the name of our beloved pantheon, regardless of mortal beliefs. We are dedicated to stopping the vilest beings of this universe from destroying that which we've helped to build.

Fallen angels are not alone though. The most heroic warriors, destined to become one with the pantheon upon their spiritual travel to the cosmic realm, can be resurrected to join The Fallen. It is a daunting task and requires locating their lost soul within the spiritual realm, but it is always worth it. These mortals-turned-undead are mentally and physically strong and are necessary to bring the fight directly to the demons.

BEFORE MAN

It is imperative you remember what I have told you so far. To understand the true history of your mortal realm, and those around it, requires an understanding that humanity is not alone. Of course, as a member of the Inquisition, you will no doubt be tasked one day with eliminating that which you do not understand. I am

The Fallen are supernatural beings that fight for those within the mortal realm. Fallen angels within The Fallen were once part of the cosmic realm until becoming trapped within the mortal realm. Undead beings within The Fallen were animated by necrotic powers that no longer dominate them. All members of The Fallen are near-immortal, able to be resurrected within three days after death.

When a mortal realm is first forming, beings within the chaos realm are drawn to it. The fabric between the two realms is quite thin, allowing the demons to attach the chaos realm to the newly forming mortal realm, and even being able to pass through what little fabric exists. The dragons of the cosmic realm are demon hunters whose sole purpose is to combat the demons during the forming of a mortal realm. When the demons are defeated and the fabric is strong enough, the dragons move on, leaving some of their brethren behind. While living in the mortal realm, many dragons unfortunately devolve to simple, reptilian or serpentine beings.

certain you should be hunting me, but I am confident that you will not, nor will you ever. You are obviously a man who yearns for knowledge as much as you would like to please your superiors. Let us first step back to a time before man appeared.

Earth was destined for greatness from an early age. When life began to form on the planet, a mortal realm began to take shape. It is as if the future of Earth was written in the threads of its past. Not that the future is predetermined, but that life was always meant to be in some shape or form. However, when mortal realms begin to take shape, they act as beacons to the chaos realm. Demons found a way of attaching the new mortal realm to their own and with so little between them, regarding the fabric that separates one realm from another, they could pass

from one realm to the next. This passage into the mortal realm can be detected by the dragons of the cosmic realm, who immediately take action.

Using their preternatural senses for hunting demons, the dragons took flight, soaring through the galaxy to find the tear in the mortal realm. If demons can pass through this tear, they can possibly gain access to additional mortal realms by travelling the cosmos. You see, a demon cannot pass into the mortal realm without a tear being present or through the actions of one within the mortal realm. No one knows, or at least no one remembers, how long the demons spent going between the two realms, but a force of demon hunting dragons landed on Earth and a massive battle ensued.

Dragons have been bred for billions of years to combat the threat of demons and other malevolent beings. They age incredibly slowly and are believed to be near-immortal. As such, they are very good at hunting demons and besting them in combat. But the cosmic realm is very large and many mortal realms exist that need their protection. The dragons are not large in number, and their duties extend the length of the universe. Once they defeated this initial demon threat, the dragons bred a race of reptile beings to keep this new mortal realm protected; humanity refers to them as dinosaurs, although they are a devolved version of dragons.

As is natural throughout all of nature, creatures evolve and devolve with the passing of the centuries. Survival of the fittest sets in and those most capable of adapting to their environment are able to continue throughout the centuries. Of

course, life on Earth had already started evolving before the dragons arrived, and their dinosaur creations became one with the life growing up around them. No one knows if demon incursions occurred after the dragons left, but it is assumed the fabric between the mortal and chaos realm was able to grow strong enough to keep the demons at bay. With the dinosaurs lacking intelligence, the demons could not influence them through mental or spiritual means and life within the mortal realm was able to flourish. At some point, the dinosaurs all died and whatever life was able to adapt became the new dominant species. By then, the fabric between the realms was strong enough and Earth was able to evolve into an amazing place.

At some point in this distant past, man evolved from whatever roots were able to adapt to the new environment. With this process of evolution, a spiritual realm began to form allowing souls to be born into the humans. The production of new souls is a product of the spiritual realm and once species gain more than an animal intelligence, the spiritual realm forms, aligned to that mortal realm. As these souls were born into the human inhabitants, life took on a new form and became noticed by the universe.

MAN'S FIRST DAYS

When mankind became infused with the spiritual realm through the birth of these souls, they became a beacon for the cosmic realm. The first to arrive and witness this life transformation were the dragons. The dragons returned to Earth to ensure the closure of the fabric between the mortal and chaos realms. They found a planet completely changed from what it was before, but they did not question natural evolution. Instead, they watched these humans from afar to see if they were worthy of connection to the pantheons.

The first groups of man did not possess the mental or spiritual capacity to worship the pantheons. They were too fragile to experience that which they could not understand and instead led a nomadic life of hunting and gathering. When civilized settlements began to appear, the dragons witnessed the humans transform from simple thinkers to open minds. They gained the ability to discover more about the world around them through curiosity, experimentation and theorization. It was then the dragons knew humanity was ready to meet the pantheons and the pantheons were ready to offer mankind that which they had not obtained.

That is all for today, my friend.

When souls within the spiritual realm are first formed and become fused to the mortal beings that develop within the mortal realm, they serve as a beacon to the cosmic realm. The pantheons are drawn to these beacons, sending the dragons or angels to investigate. If mortal beings capable of worshipping a pantheon are found, a cosmic bridge is formed and the mortals are introduced to the gods and goddesses.

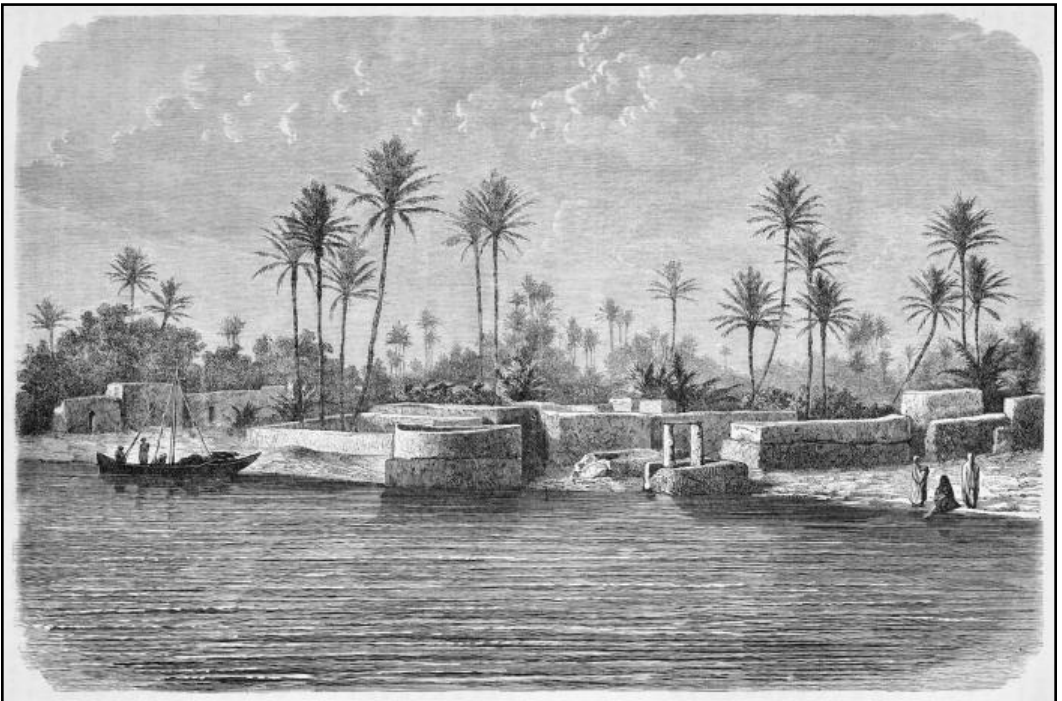
BRONZE AGE

MARCH 3, 1998

I went back to my room that night, as instructed by Drac'thau and Mashda. I don't remember how much sleep I managed, but it was enough to be refreshed the following morning. Just before sunrise, I traveled back to the cave and met with my new teachers, eager to hear everything they had to say. Mashda was waiting at the cave mouth and ushered me inside, asking nothing about the world outside and only being concerned about the lessons he and Drac'thau were ready to provide. By this time, I was quite comfortable around Drac'thau's draconic appearance and instructed him to retain his natural façade. He thanked me in Sumerian and Mashda used his ability to allow them both to speak in perfect English. With that, Mashda continued his lesson.

SUMER

Humans refer to the first period of civilized life as the Bronze Age, or the time on your calendar from 4000 BC through 1200 BC. From a cosmic perspective, humans were around for a much longer time, but this is the period when we made our first contact. It was during the Bronze Age that humans moved from thinking they were alone to wondering what the world holds. Of course, their perspective of the world was extremely limited and considerably small as tribes



had lost touch with those that migrated to distant lands, but this is when the pantheons first appeared.

Though mankind began life hundreds of thousands of years before, your modern-day calendar presents the first date of cosmic influence around 3000 BC. The dragons had been watching the humans as they thrived and developed civilizations. The first civilizations were in Mesopotamia, more specifically those located in Sumer. Although the humans had settled the area many centuries before, their seeds of civilization took many centuries to take root and the people were not ready for a cosmic encounter at such a young age. When the dragons felt the Sumerians were ready, they returned to the cosmic realm and reported to the gods.

The dragons approached the god Enlil about the Sumerians on Earth. Without a method of communicating with the Sumerians, the angels of Enlil, such as myself, traveled to Earth and entered the spiritual realm. From there, we were able to watch the Sumerians and learn their language. Beings from the cosmic realm have a language that would probably destroy a human's mind if they attempted to speak it. We instead only speak this language amongst ourselves and adopt the language of the worshipers as our means for communicating with them. Angels travel to the worshipers' home, enter the spiritual realm to avoid detection and learn everything they can about how these worshipers, or potential worshipers, communicate. The process is daunting, but only takes a couple years to complete. The angels travel back to the cosmic realm and teach the pantheon the language of their potential worshipers. I have heard theories that the gods bring languages to the humans, but the truth is the gods adopt the language of their followers.

Enlil, his Sumerian name, was the head of a pantheon. With the aid of the angels, a cosmic bridge was built to Mesopotamia to connect the cosmic realm with the mortal realm near Sumer. Enlil then projected his essence to Earth to make first contact with the Sumerians. The people were awe-struck by the visage of the god, and quickly agreed to worship Enlil, for who could possibly reject the word of a divine being? Then the remaining pantheon projected their essence to Earth as well. They spent many days interacting with their new worshipers, developing what you call a religion and formulating a list of deeds worshipers are to follow. Thus, the Sumerian pantheon was formed.

Sumer was the first human civilization to demonstrate a willingness to worship a pantheon. Part of this is due to the curiosity of mankind and part of it is the establishing of cities instead of living a nomadic life.

A cosmic bridge was established to Mesopotamia, connecting the Sumerians to the pantheon of the god they referred to as Enlil. They worshiped Enlil's pantheon through awe and fear, feeling an obligation to do so. These beliefs were passed along to the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Hurrians.

A pantheon is a collection of gods and goddesses lorded over by a single god or goddess. However, the strength of the pantheon does not need to reside within the worship of a single god, thus allowing the worshipers to choose which god they deem most worthy. The gods and goddesses of the pantheon are bonded together through a cosmic strength, and the worship of one is felt across all others. The more worshipers any deity gains, the stronger the bond throughout the pantheon and the stronger the pantheon becomes.

The worship of the Sumerian pantheon was reciprocated throughout the Akkadian people of Mesopotamia and then handed down to the Babylonians and Hurrians. The pantheon became quite strong and many stories were written about its gods and heroes (heroes are those humans particularly blessed by the pantheon, given extraordinary abilities to combat the evils across the land). The people of Mesopotamia were quite proud of their pantheon and the angels and I enjoyed many years of watching the worshipers please the pantheon and show their respect in many different ways.

The people of Mesopotamia did not understand the cosmic realm or the cosmic bridges. In their eyes, anyone that traveled across the cosmic bridge must be attached to the pantheon. These travelers were actually from distant mortal realms also attached to Enlil's cosmic bridge. They were able to find a passage to the cosmic bridge and crossed it into a distant mortal realm (i.e. Earth). These aliens were considered gods and goddesses in the eyes of the Sumerian people, growing the size of the pantheon as they saw it.

Two particularly dangerous aliens that crossed Enlil's cosmic bridge were Pazuzu and Namtar. Both of these beings were connected to the chaos realm, although they were seen as part of the pantheon. Pazuzu was the first being to introduce the occult to Earth while Namtar was able to usher in beings from the chaos realm.

However, cosmic influence is unpredictable and there's no telling what else might happen when a cosmic bridge is formed. One must remember the cosmic realm is everywhere. It connects to every edge of the universe and the pantheons hold influence over many mortal realms, or at least they wish to. If no mortal realms worship a pantheon, the gods and goddesses lose their bond to it and eventually fade to nothingness. New pantheons are only born from the will of existing ones. Where the first pantheon came from, no one knows.

Human scholars like to interpret findings from centuries past in interesting ways. For instance, pantheons are rarely as large as the scholars believe. As stated, uncountable mortal realms exist and each pantheon has more than one connection. Many times throughout the millennia a being from one mortal realm finds a way to cross the cosmic bridge and enters another mortal realm.

This happened many times with the Sumerian pantheon, leading scholars to believe the number of gods and god-

desses was uncountable. The truth is that most of these were creatures alien to Earth that had passed through the cosmic realm traveling from one bridge to another. Sometimes these creatures were benevolent, while others caused harm; sometimes these creatures brought forbidden knowledge to mortals who couldn't handle, let alone fathom, what they have been told. With the creation of the Sumerian religion came the seeds of the occult.

In later centuries, it became noticeable that the Sumerian people, and the greater Mesopotamia region that followed the original Sumerian religion in some form, were not wholly devoted to the pantheon. Although they worshiped regularly and showed their devotion, it appeared more out of fear than celebration. The Sumerian people were as afraid of the pantheon as they were enthralled by it. They attributed many natural things to the power the gods and goddesses held.

When a follower showed a considerable amount of devotion to a deity, that deity might grant them abilities unfathomable to most. These heroes were to use their powers for good, but the display of that power drove fear and anger into the hearts of many. Although the people of Mesopotamia continued to worship their pantheon, their minds became frail and open to corruption.

The intruding aliens from distant mortal realms saw this opportunity to corrupt the humans, and turn them away from the actual pantheon. They traveled under the façade of a god or goddess from the Sumerian pantheon, and convinced some of the Mesopotamians to worship them. There was no bonding to the pantheon, and these creatures did not gain any power from it. However, it enabled open-minded humans to learn of the occult and become demonic vassals.

Pazuzu and Namtar are beings from other mortal realms that consorted with demons. They convinced the Sumerians they were part of the pantheon and worthy of being worshiped, or at least revered. Pazuzu was a wicked humanoid being with animal and angel-like features. Although his visage was common in his own realm, to humans he was seen as a cosmic being. The truth is that Pazuzu was an elder warlock of the occult and had a certain power over demonic beings; although most likely he was a puppet to the demon lords. Regardless, he was able to bring the occult to Mesopotamia and teach the humans how to call upon dark powers.

Namtar was a spirit-like being from another mortal realm. We believe he was a realm walker or an ethermancer, but not an angel. He served as a messenger for the chaos realm and stole many spirits that were being ushered through the spiritual realm to the cosmic bridge. The Sumerians called him the God of Death, but he was no god and instead brought spirits to the chaos realm for eternal slavery to the demon lords.

It is because of this that after millions of years of hibernation, the demons awoke, and Earth became a new playground for their vile deeds. Just like the gods and goddesses, demons need followers to provide them with passage to the mortal realm and give them strength through worship. However, the demons don't need nearly as many worshipers as the pantheon and can survive with only a single messenger to guide the way. When their power fades, they fall into a

slumber until a new messenger awakens. Nobody truly knows who woke the demons of this chaos realm, but we believe it was Pazuzu and Namtar.

Pazuzu brought the occult to the Sumerian people while Namtar helped usher the demons into the world. Either together, or through parallel efforts, the two beings were able to rouse the demons into “seeing” the mortal realm that had developed on Earth. The dragons were primarily gone, only those watching mankind had remained, and the dinosaurs bred for protection were all dead. This left Earth vulnerable to influence from the chaos realm. Fortunately for all, demons cannot simply enter another realm. The only way for a demon or demonic being to travel to the mortal realm is through some type of conduit; Namtar acted as a conduit while Pazuzu taught the Sumerians to become conduits.

As demons were ushered into the mortal realm through cultic worship and chaotic messengers, new tales were written and the mythology of the Sumerian religion expanded to encompass those tales. What your scholars deem as mythology was actually a part of real life, an unfortunate side-effect of malevolent beings outside of cosmic control. The dragons remaining on Earth and the Sumerian angels, like myself, fought the demons to keep the Sumerians safe. Dragons were quickly deemed as evil due to their battle with malevolent beings, beings the Sumerians thought were good. As is common with the human species, they attempt to discern what they see, even though they don’t truly understand it. Many stories were told, and subsequently transformed throughout the ages, but there are many truths within those stories. These wars were very real and though it appeared the gods were clashing, the pantheon was in fact protecting the Sumerians from these alien beings. It became imperative that the humans be saved, although the influence of the occult continued to grow stronger.

Humans possess the ability to continue living and thriving while wars of cosmic influence continue around them. Although the overall number of demons allowed into the mortal realm was small compared to the Dark Ages, very few decades passed without at least one battle and the influence of the chaos realm spread across all of Mesopotamia, and beyond.

Alien beings like Pazuzu and Namtar soon became immortal through the hands of their chaotic masters, and only 3,000 years of war would see them defeated during the events that led up to The Fall. I was a warrior angel, equipped to battle the demons and their messengers. During the rise of Islam, the cosmic bridge connecting Mesopotamia to the pantheon was destroyed. I was left behind, becoming one of The Fallen. The date now escapes me, but I know it was at least 1,400 years ago. However, this is not a story about me, this is a story about mankind and Sumer may have been the first, but it was not the only.

EGYPT

The second civilization to come to the dragons’ attention was located in Egypt. The dragons took particular notice as the pharaohs united the lands with a peculiar understanding of the world around them. These Egyptians had a godlike

knowledge of the presence of chaos and how the mortal realm was balanced, a belief they called Ma'at. We never learned how the Egyptians came to know of these things as the chaos realm was primarily an unknown entity. It is believed one of the beings crossing the Sumerian bridge brought some knowledge to the Egyptians, but in the end they formed their own teachings and had an incredible understanding of the world and the realms.

The dragons felt it necessary to bring these Egyptians under the watchful eye of the gods and approached the powerful Ennead. The Ennead was akin to a council of deities and ruled over their worshipers equally. Instead of a single ruler and many subordinates, the Ennead had nine rulers and each one had their own subordinates. However, as is typical with any council, each one had its own views and preferred to heed their own worshipers, for narcissistic purposes, in my opinion. Regardless, the angels of the Ennead traveled to Egypt, entered the spiritual realm, and learned everything they could about these Egyptians. Around 2750 BC, the cosmic bridge was formed and the Ennead projected their essences to Egypt.

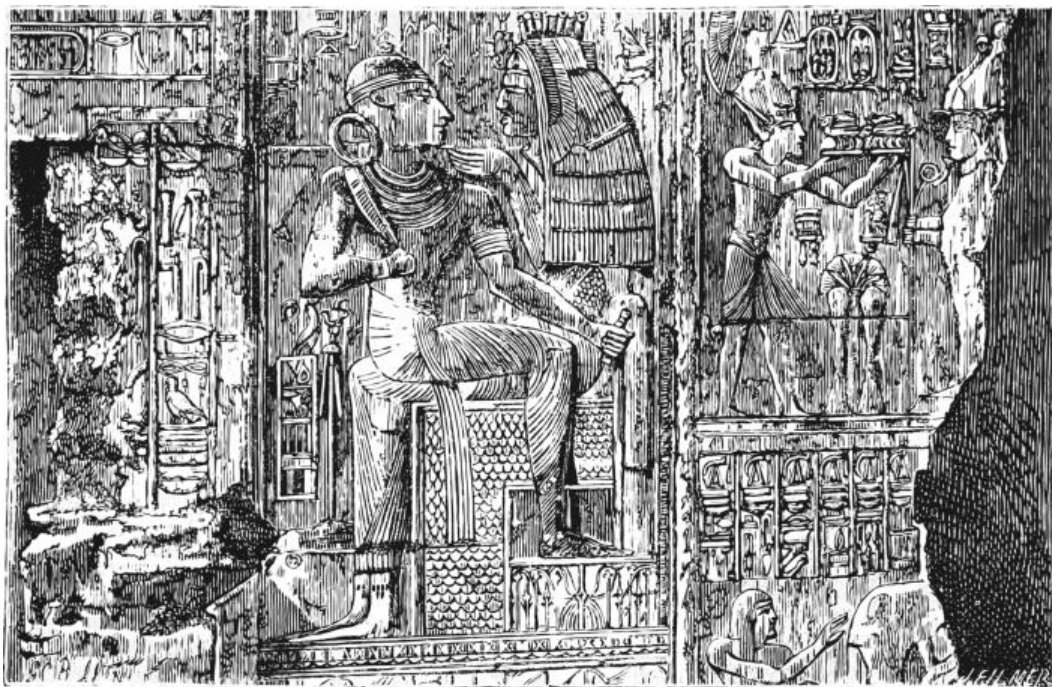
The Ennead was viewed in different ways between the different cities of Egypt, due to humans attempting to discern what they saw, and even held different names from city to city. The Ennead did not mind this as they felt it strengthened their individual bonds with each city to appear as different deities, when in fact there were only nine.

The Egyptians were very much in awe of the Ennead and erected many temples and statues in their name. While the Sumerians revered and feared their pantheon at the same time, the Egyptians embraced the Ennead's teachings and learned much about the history of Earth, through word passed down from the dragons, and the afterlife. As is apparent from their extravagant pyramids, the Egyptians felt the afterlife, and thus the spiritual realm, was not only sacred, but necessary for the continuation of the mortal realm.

The Ennead was enthralled by their Egyptian worshipers. Seeing how the pharaoh wore a headdress, some deities of the Ennead regularly wore anthropo-

Egypt was the second human civilization to demonstrate a willingness to worship a pantheon. They were very receptive to the concept of deific worship and even viewed their pharaohs in that same light. They were a fitting match for the council of cosmic beings known as the Ennead. However, many of the cities didn't view the pantheon in quite the same way, leading to many different beliefs regarding the pantheon. The Ennead didn't care about this as they were a council of cosmic beings who viewed their pantheon in many lights.

The Egyptians were fascinated by their deities and enamored by the teachings they provided. They weren't awe-struck nor did they fear the pantheon like their Mesopotamia neighbors. Instead, they embraced the word of the Ennead and used their new knowledge to great effect.



morphic helmets to appear more dignified and godlike to their worshipers. An extremely resilient bond formed between the Ennead and the Egyptians through ceremony and worship, and by captivating the people with their extravagant helmets, as seen in the hieroglyphs. Much of the sacredness of animals came from this display of dress; sacredness the Ennead didn't truly desire as they always felt they were much more important than animals in the mortal realm. Nonetheless, the Egyptians formed some of their own beliefs and the Ennead simply allowed it to happen as it pleased the Egyptians greatly. The happier they were, the more they worshiped and the more powerful the pantheon became.

Compared to Sumer, the relationship between the Ennead and the Egyptians was quite strong. Although the Egyptians had a mighty military force and extensive knowledge of engineering, they still looked toward the Ennead for basic worshiping, reverence, and the ancient means of relying on the gods to improve life. This was until Anubis appeared.

As is common with all pantheons, such as Enlil's and the Ennead, they rarely have a single mortal realm connected with a cosmic bridge. Although no one, other than the gods themselves, knows how many bridges exist at each time, there was at least one other bridge connecting to a mortal realm steeped in occult magic; humans refer to this magic as necromancy. Anubis was a demigod of this realm; I believe the Inquisition uses the term lich, although Anubis was the most powerful harnesser of the occult and one of its elders.

Passing himself off as the God of the Dead, Anubis was worshiped by Egyptians for the purpose of paying fealty to those seeking eternal rest. However, Anubis was not a god and was instead harvesting bodies to build undead armies. To do this, he taught willing Egyptians the ways of occult magic that harnesses necrotic

energy. Unlike Pazuzu who harnessed the power of the chaos realm and its demons, Anubis concentrated his efforts on raising the dead. We do not believe Anubis knew much about the demons, for if he did, his necromantic powers would surely have been even more devastating.

The Egyptians apparently could not comprehend the undead beasts being sent to fight their armies, nor did they understand how their mummies were being raised by priests of Anubis. Anubis and his necromantic priests unleashed armies of undead against the Egyptians and the surrounding nations for over 2,000 years. The Ennead responded by granting incredible powers to the most devout followers of the Egyptian religion, hoping to combat the undead threat. Even the Ennead did not understand the source of these creatures and were completely unaware of Anubis and his priests.

At some point, Anubis' power tore a hole in a faraway mortal realm, allowing his necrotic energy to flow from Earth to another world. This power attracted many horrific beings from the chaos realm, which had apparently overrun this other mortal realm, drawing them through the tear and into Earth. Seeing depictions of the gods throughout numerous temples and shrines, these beings assumed the visage of anthropomorphic beings, such as the jackal and falcon. However, these legions were not alone and their demonic lords followed along with other curious creatures, such as the sphinx and the djinn.

Frightened by the newcomers, the Egyptians quickly assumed these demonic lords were part of the pantheon and considered them deific. The legions of demons had no care for the likes of humans and waged wars on the Egyptians, and eventually Anubis and his undead armies. The tear didn't heal on its own and eventually new lords and warriors, such as the supposed snake goddess Unut, made their way to Earth. Some of these beings sided with the demons, some with Anubis, and some even sided with the Egyptians. The pantheon, in the eyes of the Egyptians, thus grew to an incredible size, but few of these beings desired the worship of the Egyptians; they wanted to enslave them.

The angels of the Ennead and a legion of dragons entered Earth and through it searched for the cause of this flood of chaos, finding the tear in the mortal realm. They sealed it and began hunting the beings that had come through. They fought hard and with the help of Anubis, and his legions of undead, were able to defeat the demonic and alien threat. The lands of Egypt became calm again and Anubis vowed to practice his necromantic ways more carefully, so his powers would not radiate to another realm.

After the devastating wars, the Egyptians spent less time worshiping the Ennead and more time welcoming neighboring nations into their cities. They became vulnerable to attacks from the Greeks, Macedonians, Assyrians, and eventually the Romans. Their beliefs merged with that of other cultures and the Ennead began losing strength. Many of the traditional Egyptian ways were replaced by those of the Greeks and Romans. Around the turn of the 8th century AD, all was lost when Christianity and Islam prevailed. The cosmic bridge was destroyed and the Ennead lost its reign over the people of Egypt.

INDUS VALLEY

Somewhere around the Indus River basin was the third civilization to come to the dragons' attention. The Harappan people formed an urban civilization that could rival areas of Mesopotamia and Egypt. They were incredibly skilled in metallurgy, being extremely intelligent with amazing technology for the era, but needed the guidance of a pantheon. The dragons approached the god Brahma and his pantheon to be that guidance.

Little is spoken about when it comes to Brahma and the Harappan. We know the pantheon was worshiped and icons of Brahma abound, as seen by the presence of swastikas, but the Harappan people were not meant to be. While they had vast knowledge and were incredibly skilled, they did not devote enough of their people to the defense of their cities and were eventually driven out of their homeland.

However, for around 1,000 years, the Harappan worshiped Brahma and his pantheon, and were taught many ways of relaxation and channeling one's inner-peace. This led to a relatively non-violent nation, who unfortunately fell to the weapons of their neighbors.

The relationship between Brahma and the Harappan was a precursor to the Hindu religion that came much later and the re-establishment of the cosmic bridge between Brahma and the Indus Valley. Unfortunately, this relationship did not survive the Harappan emigration. The cosmic bridge fell around 1700 BC and Brahma's influence was forgotten.

CHINA

There was one civilization that came under the watchful eye of the dragons without being discussed with a pantheon. By 2500 BC, China was a large nation filled with many tribal clans and a fluctuating number of leaders, including those who led their clans and those who united them. Although it would seem advantageous to introduce these people to the gods, they did not appear to be open to divine intervention. Instead, China, and the Xia Empire in particular, were well-versed in the workings of the spiritual realm.

It is our belief that clairvoyance first developed in Ancient China. By revering the deceased ancestors of nobles and leaders, the Chinese developed a religion of their own, built around shamans and spiritual priests who used their clairvoy-

The Indus Valley became the third civilization demonstrating a willingness to worship a pantheon, and the first to experience a collapse of the cosmic bridge connected to Earth. The people there were introduced to Brahma, but they were not strong enough to defend their homeland, quickly becoming overwhelmed by invasion. However, what they left behind eventually became the Hindu religion also connected to Brahma.

ance. The decision was made by the dragons to not interfere with the development of the Chinese spiritual religion and instead serve as watchers from afar.

The fabric between the mortal and spiritual realms is a delicate thing. Those with clairvoyance have the ability to look through that delicate fabric and see the world living parallel to their own. This spiritual realm appears as something tangible and ethereal at the same time. Spirits native to the spiritual realm look as though they are part of the mortal realm, although at times you can see completely through their body. Clairvoyance thus allows you to witness the actions of the spirits while the spirits may be unaware of your watchful eye.

The spirits of the dead are much like the mortals they once were. They go about their daily routines, although doing so for an eternity. They are completely aware of their surroundings within the spiritual realm and mostly aware of the parallel mortal realm that surrounds them. They rarely interact with mortals as doing so attracts the attention of undesirable beings. Spirits who interact with mortals act as portal beacons between the spiritual and mortal realms. If a spirit knowingly makes contact with a mortal in an interactive fashion, such as the mortal being able to see the spirit and the two touch hands, the fabric between the realms becomes disturbed and allows for passage to and from.

Realm walkers, like angels, are able to create this same type of disturbance to pass from one realm to another without any interaction. However, realm walkers are not native to the spiritual realm and thus cannot be seen by those with clairvoyance. This sixth sense only allows one to see, and possibly speak to, the native beings of the spiritual realm which primarily comprises spirits of the dead. This is how realm walkers wander the world unseen as they are not native beings of the spiritual realm.

China was the first civilization to develop a type of religious worship not connected to the cosmic realm. Due to the development of clairvoyance within their people, they were able to see into the spiritual realm, developing the first shamanistic religion. They began by seeking out their ancestors to learn from their mistakes. This was a blessing at first, but it eventually turned into a curse before their shamans learned to properly handle their abilities.

Chinese shamans always practiced spiritual reverence and never attempted to dominate the spirits. While these shamans were communicating with the spirits of their ancestors, demons brought to Earth by Pazuzu and Namtar broke free and entered the break in the fabric between the mortal and spiritual realms created during this communication. These demons then proceed to enslave those within the spiritual realm, completely unseen by the shamans who could only see beings tethered to the spiritual realm, not those foreign to it.



Ancient Chinese shamans and spiritual priests developed clairvoyance and eventually learned the ways of realm walking. They did this to communicate with the spirits of their most powerful ancestors. It was considered undesirable for them to seek out spirits of the poor and worker class; only nobles and powerful individuals were worthy of this relationship.

Until the shamans and priests found their ancestors, interaction between the mortal and spiritual realms was held only by angels; even chaos could not break through the fabric. However, the formation of this new religion was a double-edged sword and while it allowed the shamans and priests to learn from their past leaders, possibly making their nation much stronger, it attracted the attention of evil.

Spiritual reverence has never been a practice of the occult or the chaos realm; spiritual dominance, however, has and still is. While Pazuzu and Anubis brought two distinct forms of occult beliefs to Earth from their mortal realms, they too spread that evil across the land, maybe unknowingly. Creatures from alien worlds and demonic beings are curious, just like humans, dragons, and angels. By no means did those beings stay within a confined region; they traveled the land just like any human nomad would.

Practice of the Chinese rituals to connect with the spiritual realm started shortly after the Sumerian and Egyptian pantheons were established. Thus, the Chinese enjoyed many centuries of peaceful interaction between themselves and the spirits of their ancestors. However, once chaos was brought into the world, the disturbance of the fabric between the realms served as a beacon, calling demons to its origin.

Unbeknownst to Pazuzu, some of the demonic beings brought into the mortal realm sought out breaks in the fabric to the spiritual realm. It is also believed that some of Anubis' necrotic beings were drawn to this beacon, although we have no proof of this. These beings of the chaos realm followed the beckoning breach every time it occurred. They spent many months searching the land for its source until finally coming upon the tribal clans of Ancient China. We speculate on whether these beings confronted an entire clan during a spiritual ceremony or waited until the shamans and priests were contacting the spiritual realm before making their move. When the fabric was disturbed, chaos prevailed and these beings entered the spiritual realm, but only after slaughtering the shamans and priests.

What chaotic beings entered the spiritual realm is unknown, but we know they attempted to enslave the spirits within. The fabric holding the chaos realm at bay is quite strong, infinitely stronger than that between the mortal and spiritual realms, thus preventing these beings from connecting the chaos realm to the spiritual realm. As is true with chaos entering the mortal realm, they need a conduit to enter the spiritual realm. Pazuzu and Anubis did not possess this knowledge, but periodically a vile shaman emerges that knows how to bring a being of chaos into the spiritual realm, and havoc ensues. Fortunately for the entire world, the Ancient Chinese did not possess this ability.

The resulting chaos beings dwelling within the spiritual realm were obviously not native to the realm and thus could not be seen by those with clairvoyance. When the head shaman reached out to a spirit of an ancient, powerful nobleman, the response was most dire. The beings from the chaos realm had started consuming, enslaving, and destroying the spirits within the spiritual realm. It was as if a spiritual war was occurring and the mortals could do anything about it. The dragons had not witnessed the violation of the realm's fabric, and thus were not aware of the intrusion. However, they did realize something was wrong from the demeanor of the shaman as he spoke to his people. The message was clear, something was wrong within the spiritual realm. Being unable to do anything, the dragons sought the council of the pantheons and petitioned for the use of their angelic armies.

Drac'thau was one of those dragons and I was one of the militant angels of the Sumerian pantheon. Several legions of angels traveled to China to investigate. I was a leader of one of those legions and led the way into the spiritual realm. What we found was absolutely horrific.

Once the cosmic realm became aware of the spiritual dominance occurring in the spiritual realm, they sent an army of angels and dragons to purge the vile beings. What they found were demons that had consumed the spirits, turning into what is referred to as spiritual chaos, and war was declared.

The forces of angels and dragons were able to overcome spiritual chaos, but only after sustaining many losses. The war was horrifically violent and no one within the mortal realm was capable of helping. All they knew is that the spirits were no longer responding. After the war was over, the angels taught the shamans to become realm walkers to communicate with the spirits within the spiritual realm. This way, the fabric between the realms wasn't held open and thus no one else could enter.

The chaotic beings that had violated the fabric between the realms had all but destroyed the spiritual realm. Spirits are mostly powerless to intruders and rely on the angels to guide their way through the realm and protect them when necessary. These chaotic beings, for they did not look like any demons I had ever seen, had grown extremely powerful by consuming spirits, mutating their bodies to incredible extents. Those who had successfully rejected consummation were eternally dead and those who chose eternal life served as slaves. However, many beings from the chaos realm hold unfathomable power and those that entered the spiritual realm had started mutating their slaves from human spirits to horrific creatures, blending the spiritual and chaos realms.

Until the violation of the spiritual realm, nothing horribly malevolent dwelled within. Yes there was the occasional tyrant, but they had no power over the spirits. These new beings were able to enslave their spiritual brethren and even established their

own dominions. In a matter of days, the spiritual realm became a haven for chaos; spiritual chaos. The angels took-up arms and charged into the swirling anarchy.

The scene was truly macabre as the mixture of spirits and chaos formed a tangible being of darkness. The angelic legions fought hard, as did the spiritual chaos. The war raged for days, then weeks, then months. After ten months of nigh continuous battles, the angelic legions prevailed.

The war could have been won much quicker, but the spiritual chaos continued to replace their losses by consuming more enslaved spirits. This vicious cycle could not be broken until the spiritual realm ran out of spirits, which would have taken decades, or the root of the problem was eradicated. I launched a campaign to attack the heart of the spiritual chaos and led the greatest angel warriors in a final battle against the original beings of chaos. These demonic beings were unlike any I had seen before as their bodies had become disfigured and distended from the consumption of spirits. They had become the most horrific beings the cosmic realm has ever encountered.

Although we do not know how many of these beings originally entered the spiritual realm, three of them remained. My force of twelve angelic warriors met these beings with divine swords and extraordinary power. Although ten of my brethren fell during that battle, the tide of the war was turned as the final, bloated corpse of chaotic power fell to the ground. The price was heavy, but the loss of my brethren was necessary. With the destruction of these great beings, the consumption of spirits ceased and many of the spiritual chaos beings became lost, as if the hold on them had lifted. Many dropped to the ground, either dead from some unknown exhaustion or as a plea for freedom, while others fell victim to the shining blades of the angelic legions.

I emerged from the spiritual realm within one of the Chinese shaman's temples. After casting a spell to allow me to speak his language, I told him of the war that was waged that he could not see. As one of my angelic brethren emerged from the same point in the fabric, we agreed it was pertinent to teach these shaman to be realm walkers. Interacting with the spirits is much safer from within the spiritual realm than it is along the fabric between realms. By teaching them the ability to enter the spirit realm, they could continue their religion in relative peace. Thus, the first mortal realm walkers came to be, passing that knowledge down throughout all of time.

The spiritual realm was never the same after that war. We allowed many of the lesser spiritual chaos beings to stay as a demonstration of peace. We believe the good-natured spirits they once were prevailed in the chaos of their transformation, even though they no longer served as natives to the spiritual realm. They could interact with the realm walkers, but were now invisible to those with the sixth sense. Today, shamans still call upon some of these spiritual chaos beings for good and evil.

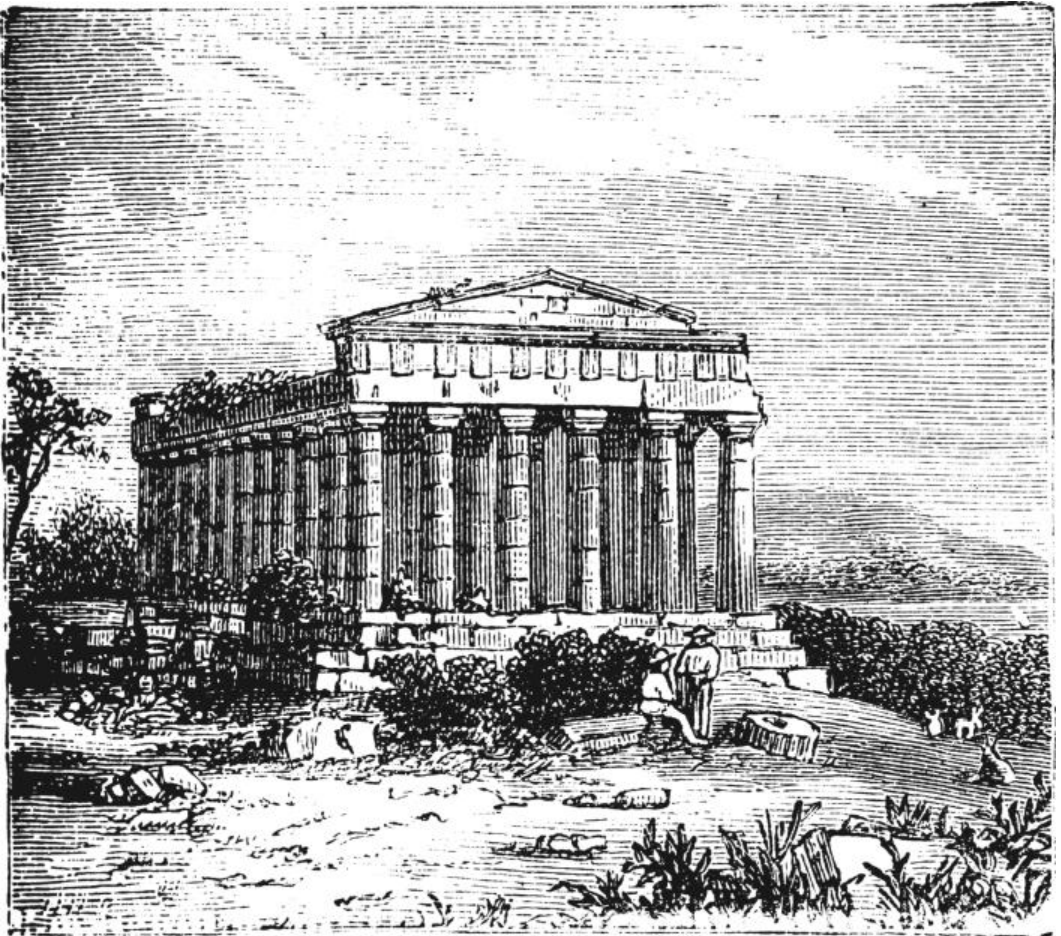
Although the angelic legions had prevailed, it is now our belief that four demonic beings entered the spiritual realm, not just the three. We do not know what happened to the fourth one, but we continue to speculate. Some believe it

BRONZE AGE

was a demon that brought the knowledge of entering the spiritual realm back to his occult masters. Some believe the being was transformed into spiritual chaos and holds a hidden dominion to this day. Others believe it was a minor demon was consumed by three demon lords, creating the bloated chaos we encountered. This is one truth we may never discover.

GREECE

Understand that the dragons and their watchful eye are not always needed to gain the attention of a pantheon. In fact, a millennium after the dragons made the cosmic realm aware of the Earth mortal realm, a powerful, somewhat selfish, pantheon was eager to extend its power over Earth. The Twelve Olympians, lorded over by their supreme god Zeus, were powerful and borderline narcissistic. However, the pantheon, and primarily Zeus, did not wish to be worshiped by simple peasants and farmers, they wanted to be worshiped by the world's greatest heroes. The Olympians are well-known for flaunting their godly powers and bestowing them upon those they deem worthy, a frequent undertaking.



Zeus and the Twelve Olympians were a power-hungry pantheon. They never cared for the dragons and made connections to mortal realms themselves. Most of this was out of selfishness to grow the power of their pantheon, but some of it was to establish their religion where no religion was found.

Zeus and the Twelve Olympians are known for the games they play with mortal beings. They love providing godly powers to mortal beings and pitting them against beings from other mortal realms. They encourage migration across their cosmic bridge and sometimes go so far as summoning the greatest warriors to travel to another realm in hopes of creating a battle of warriors. Their worshipers soon became little more than puppets.

Zeus and the Twelve Olympians approached the Mycenaean Greeks and their warrior aristocracy with the promise of great power in return for devoted worship. The Greeks shared the Olympians' yearning for power and quickly agreed, establishing a new religion that would today be deemed extreme and heretical. However, the Twelve Olympians celebrated with glee being worshiped by these "worthy" folk and created great stories to match their egos and the worshipers' extreme religious beliefs. It did not take many years before the whole of Mycenaean Greece was absorbed into this cult-like religion, worshipping at every chance possible and pleading to the pantheon to provide them with even an ounce of their power.

The Olympians were powerful and worshiped by many mortal realms. They had more than enough power to share with their worshipers and relished in the idea of those powers being used to dominate surrounding nations. However, the Olympians were not sat-

isfied with the simple display of power between the Greeks and their neighbors; they yearned for much more. It is well-known by scholars today that the Greeks ruled through conquest and that heroes were worshiped like kings, but true heroes, in the eyes of the Olympians, needed to be tested in horrific ways.

This era, being around the 15th century BC, was already filled with violence and horror. Pazuzu was unleashing demons upon the land and Anubis was wreaking havoc with his undead, but the Olympians decided to usher in new horrors to test the Greek heroes. The first, and possibly only, pantheon to knowingly open gates between mortal realms was the Twelve Olympians, allowing terrifying aliens and beasts to enter Earth and battle the Greek heroes. Although they may have expected direct confrontations, many of these beings made homes for themselves, forcing the Greek heroes to go on great, horrific quests to defeat them. Medusa, the Minotaur, and the Centaur are but a few, and hundreds, if not thousands, of odd creatures were led from their mortal realm into this one.

Many stories were written about these Greek heroes, but what is not told is how many fell in battle to these alien beings. The Olympians found it humorous and continued playing their puppet-like game. They convinced the Greeks that

staying alive required worship and sacrifice; in return the Olympians granted them powers. While many heroes learned to harness these powers, many more fell, overwhelmed by what they possessed. A countless number of heroes attempted to control their powers and unleashed them against the beasts plaguing the lands, only to die a horrific death, trapped in an unknown cave within a faraway land. The Twelve Olympians were sick and twisted, and continued their enjoyment of pitting humans versus aliens (although the alien beings considered humans to be the aliens). Every being brought to this world came from a home where their species either dominated or lived side-by-side with other similar species. On Earth, they were treated as monsters.

After more than 400 years of these sick games, people went into hiding. They had enough of the pantheon and the games they were playing. The humans and the alien beings started to fear each other so much that instead of conquest, they chose survival. Most of the Greeks left, and those that didn't were probably killed by neighboring invaders. Creatures from other mortal realms found new homes or, if they were lucky, found a passageway back to their home and left. After the collapse of the Mycenaean Greeks, the games were over and no one was left to fight. Most abandoned the Twelve Olympians and attempted to live (human or otherwise) away from their glaring selfishness. Others spread the cult-like religion like a disease, allowing it to return centuries later.

By 1100 BC, the Twelve Olympians had little influence over Earth. Of course, they did not care as they had dozens of other mortal realms to lord over. However, what little remnants remained were enough to create a surge as a new era was ushered in, even though the cosmic bridge disappeared until the pantheon's influence returned.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

The cosmic realm is fickle. The power of a pantheon waxes and wanes depending on the strength of its worshipers and mortal realm connections. The more worshipers one has, the more powerful the pantheon becomes. When a pantheon grows in power, messengers are "created" to serve the pantheon and act as an interface with the mortal realms. The question is – where does the pantheon come from?

Although only the most powerful deity possibly knows the answer, the truth is new gods and goddesses are "born" from the cosmic realm. Somehow the powers of the cosmic realm come together to birth a new deity, albeit one without any followers. These new deities have a

Sometimes the energy of the cosmic realm comes together to form a new deity. When that deity is birthed, he or she must find a pantheon to align with or create one of his or her own. The deity has just enough power to make a weak connection to a mortal realm in the hopes of connecting to at least one individual that will form a new religion. If that religion forms, the cosmic bridge materializes and the deity has now become a pantheon of one.

dire task ahead of them: find worshipers or be consumed by the cosmic realm. Deities without worshipers disappear after some unknown period of time, and newly born deities must find worshipers, or perish. These deities are born with just enough power to create a cosmic bridge of their own, albeit a very weak one. This weak power only allows the deity to interact with a single or very small group of individuals to convince them to worship the deity. Without the ability to fully project one's self to a crowd, convincing the masses is all but impossible. If successful, or if at least one believer spreads the word of this new deity, that deity's strength grows and he may fully project himself to his worshipers and their kin, hopefully spreading his influence and establishing a full religion. Once a deity's power grows, he may form a pantheon and "recruit" other deities, "create" messengers, or simply work with the angels.

Around 1750 BC, a new deity was born of the cosmic realm. He had no pantheon affiliations and he had but a few decades to find at least one follower to carry out his purpose. Given the name Yahweh, this lonely deity lacked the power of Zeus, the intelligence of The Ennead, and the charisma of almost every other deity there was. But he did possess a very important skill that would eventually launch him to become the most powerful god on Earth. Yahweh was a master orator and prophet.

If a clash ever came between Yahweh and another deity, it was an encounter of words and not powers. He was newborn, although deities have no age and live an eternal life, but being newborn meant he was weak. Yahweh had no followers and no influence with the pantheons. He was enamored by the people of Mesopotamia and their worship of Enlil's pantheon; not because they worshiped it with glee, but because they worshiped it with a sense of fear. He attempted to become part of the Sumerian pantheon, but because of this newborn state, Enlil mostly ignored him. Yahweh soon realized he was on his own, but maintained his focus on Mesopotamia.

Yahweh concentrated all his efforts and all his powers to build his weakened bridge to Mesopotamia. His essence was also weak, but would be just enough to

Yahweh was birthed by the cosmic realm and used his master oratory skills to teach a man named Abram about a new religion. Abram was already wavering in his beliefs in a polytheistic pantheon and was prepared to hear Yahweh's words. With his new beliefs, Abram took those teachings and spread them across the land.

At first, Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham by Yahweh, was not capable of finding many followers for his new religion, which would eventually grow into Judaism. However, he was able to teach his wife and children about this religion and it was his bloodline that helped spread it throughout the land. It is through this subsequent bloodline that Yahweh's power truly blossomed.

be heard by one person. After watching the people of Mesopotamia for one month, Yahweh found his best possible outlet to be a man named Abram.

Using the Sumerian cosmic bridge, Yahweh was able to watch some of the Mesopotamian people to find who was most likely to abandon their beliefs. He found Abram, a wavering believer in the Sumerian pantheon who was weary of the veneration of multiple gods. Yahweh transmitted his essence to meet with Abram, and spoke of a grand story.

The great prophet and orator told Abram of the Promised Land to the northwest. He weaved tale after tale of the Sumerian people and all those of Mesopotamia and their beliefs in the Sumerian pantheon. He spoke of the need for only one god and not an entire pantheon of gods and goddesses. Yahweh preached to Abram about spreading good across the land instead of focusing on power and conquest. Abram was captivated by Yahweh's every word and wholly believed this lone deity and his prophecies of the Promised Land. It was at that time that Yahweh established his religion of one, but this one would become a great influence across the land.

Yahweh's projected essence faded and left Abram to spread the word of this new religion. Before he faded, Yahweh vowed to protect Abram and his descendants for eternity in return for their devoted worship of him. Yahweh stressed to Abram the importance of new followers to this religion, for without them, he would fade into the cosmic realm. But instead of focusing his efforts on the nobles and heroes of the lands, he had reached out to the peasant Abram who could hopefully sway those within the lower classes of society. While it may be quite difficult to convince the narcissistic lords and warriors, the peasants were much easier to persuade, especially when many of them feared the worship of the multi-deity Sumerian pantheon.

Abram was duly convinced of Yahweh's words, but not his direction. Knowing the Promised Land was waiting for him someday, he followed his first task of spreading this new religion. Abram brought his wife, Sarai, and nephew, Lot, to find this Promised Land and spread the word of Yahweh. Following Yahweh's directions to Canaan, Abram brought the family there, but found the land was suffering from severe drought so Abram then traveled to Egypt instead. Sarai, under the guise of Abram's sister, was praised for her beauty by the Pharaohs and the family was given many provisions. However, the guise was eventually seen through and the family was forced to leave Egypt. Because Abram was able to recruit his wife and nephew to Yahweh's cause, his god retained his weak power, and was subsequently able to communicate with Abram during his travels.

Abram eventually split his herds to find fertile lands elsewhere with Lot settling near Jordan and the Kingdom of Sodom and Abram settling near Hebron. At that time, Abram built an altar to worship Yahweh and proliferate his reverence. Yahweh reminded Abram that the Promised Land laid in Canaan, keeping Abram focused on his "mission," and that Abram must produce more followers to ensure Yahweh could protect his family. However, Abram and Sarai could not produce an heir, coming dangerously close to ending the spread of this new religion. With



the birth of an heir through the acceptance of a handmaiden, Abram completed his agreement with Yahweh, providing a method of continuing his teachings and ensuring his bloodline would be protected.

Abram moved to the land of the Philistines where Yahweh changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah and through the power of his recently acquired angels, provided Sarah with the healing that would allow her to birth a child. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, Abraham's first son, Sarah birthed Isaac. Ishmael and his real mother left, traveling to the Sinai Peninsula, spreading the word of Yahweh. During this time, Abraham acquired much wealth and servants. After Sarah died, he took a concubine who birthed six additional sons. The beginnings of Yahweh's religion were flourishing through Abraham's bloodline, and with each birth, Yahweh grew stronger. Isaac traveled to Canaan, now known as Israel, to claim his inheritance of the Promised Land, as told by Yahweh.

Abraham's offspring flourished throughout the land, but it was Isaac and his son Jacob that had a tremendous impact on the new religion worshipping Yahweh. It is through the bloodline of Isaac and Jacob that Yahweh's religion was truly born, bringing forth Judaism and control over the lands of Israel. But the followers of Judaism lived in trying times as Yahweh could not grant them supernatural powers like the other pantheons. Instead, his religion was based on trust and protection, even though many Jews fell to swords from Babylon and beyond. They were a determined group and the great oratory skills and prophecy of Yahweh captivated them.

It was said by some of the pantheons that Yahweh's oratory ability was supernatural and that his words were believed because his worshipers were enthralled by his prophetic tongue. Many outside of Yahweh's angelic group question why a single human would go to such great lengths to spread the word of a deity that promised him a land riddled with famine and drought. The truth is most definitely much more difficult than that, but a newborn deity has so little power that to grant his worshipers any of it would mean certain disaster. Cosmic bridges depend on the deity's ability to maintain his strength, strength that is considerably drawn upon when transmitting one's essence to the mortal realm. With the inclusion of a circle of angels, most likely a very small one to start, Yahweh could at least send messengers and save his strength for other things. But Abraham's bloodline took centuries to grow Judaism before Yahweh was strong enough to offer the first worthy individual even a small fraction of his power.

When the Hebrew tribes of Canaan were captured by the Egyptians, Yahweh sent his strongest prophet to lead them to safety. The prophet Moses, a descendant of Jacob's, called upon Yahweh to grant him the strength to defeat the Egyptians and free the Hebrew people, leading them back to the Promised Land. While Judaism had grown significantly, Yahweh still had limited powers to grant Moses. He could not promise Moses the ability to defeat the Egyptians and instead granted him the powers to lead his people out of Egypt. After Yahweh visited the Egyptian Pharaoh in a dream, and instilled some measure of fear,

Moses was able to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. Using his divine powers granted by Yahweh, Moses was able to overcome great obstacles and performed magnificent feats in the name of his god.

Moses became captivated by the divine power and developed an overpowering attitude. He commanded Yahweh to establish the laws of their people to keep them from becoming sinners. Yahweh agreed and the Ten Commandments were born. However, Yahweh and Moses had become overzealous; Yahweh with his ability to grant divine powers and Moses with his newly acquired abilities. The two violently enforced the Ten Commandments, devastating a large number of Yahweh's worshipers. It is rumored throughout the cosmic realm that on that day, Yahweh experienced his first reprimand from the cosmic realm after ordering his worshipers to be killed at the hands of a prophet wielding his divine powers. The cosmic realm does not take kindly to those abusing their godly status. Yahweh most certainly became weakened and Moses was stripped of his divine powers, killing him before reaching the Promised Land.

Yahweh was said to have become extremely reclusive after that incident. Although his prophets and devoted worshipers continued to spread Judaism throughout the lands, Yahweh fell mostly silent. It was not until the birth of The Fallen Jesus of Nazareth that Yahweh returned his full essence to the mortal realm and his Jewish followers. During the course of the 1,300 years after his reprimand, a pantheon of sorts formed around Yahweh by angels expelled from the cosmic realm. What you refer to as Heaven is the cosmic realm, and Hell is the land where evil souls travel. Angels expelled from the cosmic realm can travel to Hell, sometimes called the Underworld, Hades, or Gehenna, and establish their own domain. While Yahweh assigned archangels to watch over his followers and the circles of angels, they were also tasked with expelling those who did not belong. Because Hell is an essential part of the cosmic realm, it grew quite large as the fallen angel Satan was able to establish an evil domain due to Yahweh's obliviousness.

Yahweh was not capable of granting divine power to very many worshipers. One worshiper, a man named Moses, was particularly skilled at leading his people. Yahweh provided Moses with what divine power he could, allowing him to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. However, Moses became drunk by the power he was provided, and Yahweh was more than willing to allow this to happen. The two became enamored by this power, as Yahweh had never provided it before, and violence eventually erupted. Yahweh was struck by cosmic energy due to his exploitation of the divine energy, causing him to become depressed and reclusive for centuries.

During the time of Yahweh's absence, a pantheon of angels formed who were for and against Yahweh's cardinal rules. Those who fought for Yahweh formed the Angelic Choir. Those who fought against Yahweh formed Hell and became the Princes of Hell.



Satan recruited more fallen angels to form his own angelic circle, although referred to as the Princes of Hell. These fallen angels gained many abilities through the exploitation of the cosmic realm. The Princes of Hell were able to influence many souls in the mortal realm with their evil, and even supplanted Yahweh's influence by granting supernatural abilities. Being a part of Judaism, the Princes of Hell were supported by Yahweh's worshipers, just as regular angels. They didn't possess the powers of a god, but they did possess the powers of an angel and somehow were able to enhance them enough to spread those powers to their own followers. The followers of Satan and the followers of Yahweh were worshiping the same angelic group, just on opposite sides of the morality scale. No one truly knows how much influence this had over the Jewish people or their neighbors, but violence among the people spread, committing what Yahweh, and most of the Jews, considered as sins. The angels rejected the spirits of these sinners, but the Princes of Hell did not. Thus, the followers of Judaism were able to follow the same cosmic bridge to either Heaven or Hell.

Jewish mythology, and all religions based on Yahweh, is filled with visions of demons that consort with the Princes of Hell. The truth is that these demonic beings were not demons at all. They were tainted spirits of the followers of the Princes of Hell who took on a demonic visage. Because these spirits were imbued with angelic abilities, most acquired the ability to realm walk, thus passing through to the mortal realm. These were not demons; they were damned souls corrupted by fallen angels calling themselves the Princes of Hell. And while the archangels and the Army of Heaven frequently battled the fallen angels and corrupted spirits, they kept coming, resulting in a never-ending war. Eventually, the archangels chose to focus their efforts on keeping the mortal realm safe, realizing they could never penetrate the domain of the Princes of Hell.

With Yahweh taking a mostly inactive role, the archangels recruited many angels to their cause to keep the mortal realm safe. However, the strength of the Army of Heaven lay solely in the hands of the archangels. If they should fall, the entire army would fail, being without the guiding hands of their generals. This organization of the angels was known as the Angelic Choir and depended on the power of the archangels to remain held together. Pantheons cannot normally support so many angels as they just aren't strong enough (with the possible exception of the Twelve Olympians), but the archangels found a way. The archangels found that by channeling their own power into the pantheon-like structure forming the Angelic Choir, they could sustain the power necessary to form the Army of Heaven and keep the mortal realm as safe as possible from the Princes of Hell and their corrupted warriors.

Everything, from the archangels to the corrupted spirits, was born from the word spread by Abraham and his bloodline. The cosmic realm is fickle indeed, and it's amazing how a single human can create an entire pantheon of good and evil.

That is all for today.

IRON AGE

MARCH 4, 1998

To say I was overwhelmed by what I had been told would be putting it lightly. Never could I have fathomed how intricate our world is and how much influence the realms have over each other. The annals of the Inquisition are riddled with holes and there are so many unexplained things in history that would only make sense if we opened our eyes to see what was really happening. We thought we knew where these supernatural creatures came from, or at least when they were first discovered, but how wrong we were. When I arrived back at the cave, Mashda continued his lesson as before.

GREECE

With the Sumerian and Egyptian cosmic bridges bringing a flood of occult activity, and the Greek cosmic bridge allowing alien after alien to pass from their native mortal realm to this one, the lands were filled with violence wrought by demons, undead, and creatures now considered myth. Although the Mycenaean Greeks had mostly abandoned the Olympians, the cosmic bridge remained open as enough believers remained to preserve their religious beliefs into subsequent centuries. However, the cosmic bridge was mostly unguarded and the alien incursion into Earth was probably worse than the undead armies of Anubis, although not as bad as the demons ushered in by his necromantic powers, and the demonic threat brought forth by Pazuzu. By the time of the Iron Age, deadly forces of aliens and demons began to form as the two clashed in wars that could have been stopped by the Greeks, had they been paying attention. Thus, when the Greek city-states of the Iron Age began, the era was deemed the Greek Dark Ages.

The Greek Dark Ages were punctuated by heroic deeds and epic tales describing Greek heroes that fought against aliens, demons, and whatever bastard children the two birthed. The Greeks quickly embraced the religious beliefs left by their Mycenaean predecessors and turned to the gods for help. Many heroes were imbued with great

As the Greeks ushered in their Dark Age, they reinvigorated their connection to the Twelve Olympians. This strengthened the bond between the pantheon and the people, allowing the people to become slayers of the supernatural beings that fought their ancestors.

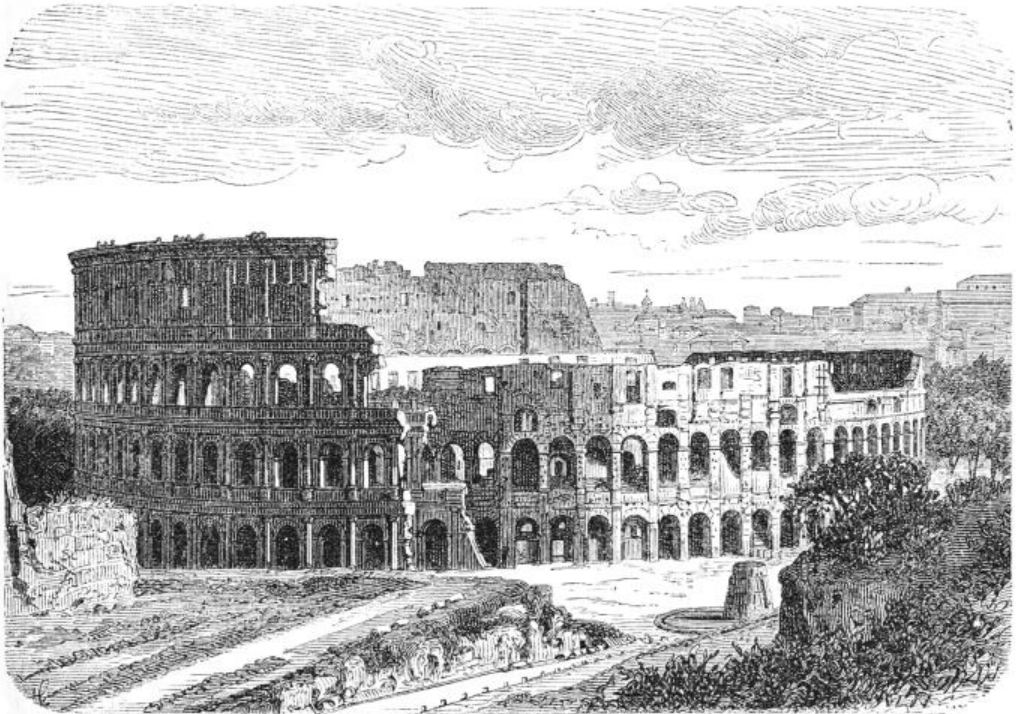
Greek slayers were essentially a precursor to the Inquisition, albeit with one major difference. Slayers hunted and inquisitors hunt the supernatural, but only slayers preached education of the supernatural to their people in the hopes of protecting them.

SHADOWED EARTH

power, ushering in a rebirth of arcane abilities barely touched upon by the Mycenaeans. It became apparent the Greeks had learned from the writings of their ancestors how to properly harness the powers from the Olympian pantheon and unleash them upon the horrors plaguing the land. As other kingdoms were concerned with their own safety, Greece became the first nation to spread their monster hunting techniques beyond their borders. This was the unofficial birth of the Inquisition.

The Greeks spread their influence across Mesopotamia and Egypt, demonstrating their prowess for killing the supernatural, earning the epithet “Slayers.” They assumed an extremely important role in the survival of Earth as their heroes trained to fight against the supernatural, with a focus on the monstrous horrors crossing the Olympian cosmic bridge. By training the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, the Greeks could focus on the threats in and near Greece. While heroes may have campaigned across long distances to track down a single foe, the Greeks allowed the Mesopotamians to handle most of the demonic incursion and the Egyptians the undead incursion. When the Greeks would track their supernatural enemies as they spread into new territory, they would train the inhabitants and continue their hunt. This was a truly noble cause, but ultimately they failed.

The Greeks had the backing of a very powerful pantheon with more than enough power to spread amongst the slayers of Greece. They were able to take this power and combat the supernatural with relative ease. Their neighbors, however, were not so lucky. Although the Ennead and Enlil could offer power to their worshipers, this power was only a fraction of what the Olympians could grant, and nowhere near powerful enough to quash the threat of Anubis’ necrotic



powers. The resulting Mesopotamian and Egyptian heroes were fewer in number than the Greeks, and they often struggled to combat the supernatural threat. By the time Greece ushered in its new era around 750 BC, most of Earth had come under some type of supernatural threat. Besides the Enneads efforts against the invading demons in Egypt, only two things kept Earth from succumbing to a supernatural war: Rome and the small number of occult followers. Like the pantheons, the occult is only as powerful as its followers and without a vast quantity of members, that power was limited.

ROME

Rome rose from a lonely village established at a nominal position for trade. The Romans learned much from their neighboring nations and were awestruck by the heroic tales of the Greeks. Lacking a religion of their own, the Romans learned of the Olympians and took them as their patron gods. Without knowing how to contact the pantheon, the Romans translated the Greek beliefs into their own, forming what can be thought of as a parallel pantheon that worshiped the same deities.

The Romans knew little of the pantheon, but were knowledgeable about the supernatural threat in nearby lands. They wanted to become heroes like the Greeks and protect their lands from the supernatural. By forming their own religion and connecting spiritually, in a figurative way, to the Olympians, the Olympian cosmic bridge extended to the Romans and the angels brought messages between the new worshipers and the pantheon.

With the rise of the Roman Republic around 509 BC, Rome was able to better organize their people and form a unified army. This discipline was engrained in their heroic warriors as they learned to harness the power of the Olympian pantheon and crush the supernatural threat within their lands. However, the Romans didn't stop there as they continued to combat the supernatural past their borders. This was met by resistance from many neighboring nations, but the power and discipline of the Roman army overcame this resistance as well as

Rome was influenced by the heroic deeds of the Greeks. They wished to acquire the strength and power of their Greek neighbors by seeking out their source of power. They came across the religious beliefs of the Twelve Olympians and quickly adopted them as their religion too. This allowed the Twelve Olympians' pantheon to grow incredibly strong.

All forms of the Roman Empire were quite strong and determined. They wished to build the largest empire around by conquering and assimilating as many kingdoms, towns, and villages as possible. Upon doing this, their responsibility of being protectors of their people grew infinitely, forcing them to concentrate their efforts on fighting the supernatural. Although successful protectors, their cosmic bridge ultimately allowed thousands of alien beings to migrate to Earth.

overcoming the supernatural threat. Instead of simply training these neighboring nations to combat the horror themselves, the Romans assimilated these nations into their own nation, holding them safe through the garrisoning of the superb Roman legions backed by heroic slayers.

As the Greeks shepherded in their Classical era, their dominance over the supernatural began to wane as they dealt with internal and external threats. The Roman heroes began to assume the roles of supernatural slayers as the Greeks could no longer rise to the challenge. After dealing with the majority of these national threats, the Greeks ushered in their Hellenistic period, where they regained a foothold against the supernatural and fought for heroic status against the Romans. Greece became annexed by the Roman Republic in 146 BC, and the new Roman Republic, backed by the former lands of Greece, became the major power combating the supernatural around the Mediterranean Sea.

As is told throughout the historical texts, the Romans did not stop their conquest. However, what isn't told is that the Romans were not only assimilating neighboring nations into the Roman nation, they were ridding Earth of the supernatural threat. The farther the Romans spread, the more renowned their heroics became. After a little more than 700 years, Rome evolved from a simple Republic into an empire, protecting most of current-day Europe, along with parts of Asia and Africa, from the supernatural.

The Romans made numerous attempts to unify their assimilated nations and "convert" them to Roman ways. With humans being humans, this was much easier said than done. They used their protection of the vassal states from the supernatural as leverage in an attempt to dominate their government. Unfortunately for the Romans, they had become so good at quelling the supernatural threat that the lands they controlled were mostly clear of the horrors. The nations began to see this, and stopped living in fear.

The Roman Empire stretched far, but it was stretched thin. Many of the assimilated nations were controlled by the Romans, but they did not subscribe to Roman beliefs. Without the threat of the supernatural, the nations grew even more distant from those Roman beliefs. The further away the people were from their dominating government, the angrier and more rebellious they became. The people turned more and more toward their Germanic roots and allowed followers of the occult to gain influence. Their purpose became to rid their lands of Roman dominance.

During the 3rd century AD, many nations within the Roman Empire began to revolt. War broke out in numerous locations and leaders from outside the Empire began to attack, looking to sunder the empire. This effort was spearheaded by many followers of the Germanic religion along with new followers of the occult. In fact, many different Germanic tribes united to combat the Romans. The Roman Empire began losing much of its political power, and soon they began losing much of their arcane power as followers of the Olympian pantheon turned to Christianity. With the ascension of Emperor Constantine and the dividing of the Roman Empire into the East and West empires, the dominance once held over the

Germanic lands was lost. After Constantine converted to Christianity and proclaimed it the state religion, the once powerful Western Roman Empire fell to attacks from multiple enemies. Besides their center of politics moving to Constantinople, the power of the cosmic bridge waned critically with the move from the Olympian religion to Christianity.

In 476 AD, the Western Roman Empire collapsed and the Olympian cosmic bridge was destroyed. This event ushered in the Dark Ages and a time where occult activity reached its peak.

GERMANIC NATIONS

The Roman Empire spread from the northern shores of Africa all the way to the British Isles. This included land controlled or bordered by Germanic tribes. The Goths were probably one of the most influential throughout this time, as they helped to usher in the collapse of the Roman Empire, but more importantly, they carried with them a new pantheon.

The Germanic people were connected to Odin's pantheon through the very famous cosmic bridge, Yggdrasil. As seen in the many branches of Germanic mythology, this cosmic bridge was known for beings from other mortal realms traveling to Earth. However, unlike the Olympian cosmic bridge, many of these beings were relatively peaceful, or at least only became violent when their lives or families were threatened. Some of these beings had deep connections with the spiritual realm, and some even had connections with the chaos realm. Although there was no shortage of supernatural outbreaks, the violence was nothing compared to Greece, Sumer, and Egypt. In fact, many of these beings were seen as protectors of the home and the land instead of enemies.

The Germanic people connected to Odin's pantheon through runes, using them to channel the pantheon's power to perform arcane feats. This angered some of the alien creatures, causing many new stories to arise about attacks from mythic creatures. The hidden truth is that many of these creatures feared the power being harnessed by humans and attacked to defend themselves. In general, most of these alien beings lived in peace either alongside humans or far from prying eyes.

The Germanic people had an incredible understanding of these alien beings, possibly because Odin's pantheon and their angels were very open about the existence of Yggdrasil. Due to this understanding, humans and aliens were able

The Germanic people were spread across Europe. Although their religious beliefs and mythology were slightly different from each other, they were all connected to Odin's pantheon (even if they didn't call him Odin). However, unlike the Romans, the Germans were much more understanding about their alien brethren. Many of them befriended the aliens that crossed Yggdrasil, going so far as living as neighbors. This friendship lasted for many centuries until the Inquisition discovered it and eradicated aliens and humans alike when the two were living in harmony.



to remain peaceful, and even allied when necessary. The domination of the Romans across Germanic lands, or lands bordering Germanic lands, was seen as a vicious threat. Not only did the Romans hunt the aforementioned peaceful creatures, but they chastised the Germanic people for consorting with them. Yes some of them had supernatural abilities, but many of them were not much different than humans. The Romans did not see it that way and deemed all aliens as a threat to be eliminated.

Numerous battles broke out due to the hunting of these beings, and the Germanic people fought hard against the Romans. It wasn't until the might of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths broke Rome's dominance that the Germanic people were able to practice their religion without the influence of Rome. However, by the time the Roman Empire fell, Christianity had already started spreading across the land and even entered Germanic territory. Even though many of the tribes converted, beliefs in Odin's pantheon never fully waned. In fact, because many beings had crossed Yggdrasil and found homes on Earth, the power of the cosmic bridge never failed. Even if the humans all rejected the religion, there were others now calling Earth home that did not. This, however, was not the case as many humans continued their belief in Odin's pantheon, maintaining more than enough strength for the runes to grant arcane power. This power was used against the Romans during their fall along with the many subsequent wars.

The Germanic people may have been key in destroying the Roman Empire, but their influence otherwise during the Iron Age was not significant. However, during the Dark Ages, Odin's pantheon and the powers of the runes became extremely important.

CELTIC NATIONS

Before the spread of the Roman Empire, the Germanic nations were more or less bordered on the west by the Celtic people, including Gaul and the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. Tracing their roots to the Hallstatt culture, the Celts were not like their Germanic and Roman neighbors. Before restricting their presence in this world to the British Isles in the 1st century AD, the Celts roamed far and wide across the lands of modern day Europe. They were able to expand their population across such a wide area due to a deep understanding of the natural world.

Instead of expanding through war and assimilation, the Celts learned to not only live off the land, but harness it for amazing purposes. Up to that time, starting around 800 BC, the Celts harnessed the most knowledge regarding nature including the elements and indigenous species. Unlike other civilizations, the cosmic realm saw this as a new opportunity to connect with the mortal realm.

Understand that the most direct worship of a pantheon is through the cosmic bridge, but to interfere with a group's traditions would be detrimental to the gods being viewed as superior. Although Christianity was able to convert the masses, the pantheons dare not tread on the beliefs of those within the mortal realm. For

a pantheon to appear superior, they should not supplant one's beliefs, they should embrace them. Thus, when Lugh and his pantheon reached out to the Celts around 500 BC, they did it through the Celts' worship of nature instead of a standard cosmic bridge.

Lugh sent many angels to study the Celts and learn of their natureworshipping ways. The angels studied how the Celts' druids communed with the spiritual realm through reverence of the trees and animals and their amazing ability to communicate with the animals. Thus, when they chose to finally approach the Celts, they all took on animal-like traits.

Before moving on, there is one very important thing to know. As a member of the Inquisition, you are well-aware of lycanthropes. What is known as the werewolf curse is a part of history, but not a very good part of it. What you know as the lycanthropic curse was a product of witchcraft and the occult, thanks to Baba Yaga. Additionally, mythology and folklore tell of numerous anthropomorphic and shapeshifting creatures, a product of aliens crossing various cosmic bridges. Although not lycanthropes, they are often viewed as such. What you don't know, or at least don't realize, is that therianthropy was a blessing brought to the Celts from the cosmic realm.

Lugh and his pantheon were not particularly powerful, nor was their cosmic bridge very active. However, they embraced the Celtic worship of nature and reached out to their druids as therianthropic gods and goddesses. Lugh appealed to their sense of nature by demonstrating the power of Earth's indigenous species by assuming a humanoid form of a favored animal. The druids were awestruck by the metamorphosis of these creatures into humanoid form, making a deep connection with the pantheon alongside their worship of the spiritual realm.

Lugh and the pantheon granted the druids sorcerous abilities to perform rituals that would imbue their greatest warriors with the therianthropic blessing. The pantheon taught the druids to harness the elements and better communicate with the native animals. Finally, the pantheon introduced the Celts to the Sidhe, a powerful fairylike race of angels that served as messengers for the pantheon and the spiritual realm.

The Celts and their druids used their therianthropic and elemental abilities to protect the nature surrounding them. However, they were not trained to confront the Romans and were ultimately pushed back to the British Isles. The Romans

The Celtic people were not much different than the Germanic people. Their religion was tied to Lugh's pantheon, but they too had a mixed relationship with many alien beings. Some of them were truly loathed like the Roman beliefs, but others were seen as allies like the Germanic beliefs.

The Celtic people were shattered during the Gallic Wars. Before the wars, they occupied many different areas across continental Europe. After the wars, they were mostly confined to the British Isles. However, many of the aliens they befriended stayed behind and became the folklore of people from France.

were trained soldiers and sought out the supernatural, targeting the Celts and their shapeshifting ability. Although the Celts had tremendous god-given talents, the Romans had better ones, granted by the Olympians. The Gallic Wars were a clash of supernatural abilities as the power of one pantheon clashed with the power of another, pitting the nature powers of the Celts against the arcane powers of the Romans.

The Celts were shattered by the Gallic Wars. Many migrated to northern lands, while those who remained were assimilated into the Roman Empire and various expanding Germanic tribes. Those that fled to the British Isles brought their religion with them and continued their worship of Lugh and the pantheon into the Dark Ages, where they were subsequently Christianized.

Lugh and the pantheon opted to consolidate their influence over the Celts by concentrating only on those living in the British Isles. Celts that succumbed to Roman or Germanic rule were left to the influence of those religions, forming a mixed religion with little meaning or simply converting to the religion of their new leaders. Although the Celtic tribes living in the British Isles were able to reassemble their forces, leadership, and ultimately religion, their religious influence was weak and their people embraced Christianity throughout the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries.

By the dawn of the 8th century, Lugh's cosmic bridge fell and the pantheon's influence over the Celts was lost. However, the therianthrope ability given to the Celts was not lost and lives on to this day. Instead of granting the people powers through the pantheon, these shapeshifting abilities were seeded into the people by performing certain rituals. It was as if nature was granting the supernatural ability, not the pantheon. It is said Lugh and the pantheon imbued the natural world with residual power as the cosmic bridge was close to collapse.

The therianthrope abilities of today, handed down by the Celts, were thought to be lost until being rediscovered and documented by the occult sometime after the Inquisitional crusades against the supernatural. The lycanthropic curse, caused by witchcraft and passed by creatures such as werewolves, has been a thorn in the side of Earth since the Dark Ages. Although the Inquisition views the two as one-in-the-same, they are not as one is a vile curse and the other is a cosmic blessing.

JAPAN

While the lands of modern-day Europe were consumed by Celts, Romans, Germans, and all the alien creatures that crossed the cosmic bridge, civilization was starting to flourish off the eastern shores of modern-day Asia. The people of Japan had dwelled there for many millennia, but around 660 BC, they came under the watchful eye of the dragons. The dragons approached Izanagi and Izanami's pantheon to become the patrons of the Japanese people. As before, angels were sent to learn the language and the cosmic bridge was formed.

Unlike some religions, the people of Japan zealously embraced Izanagi and Izanami's pantheon, forming a massive pantheon that grew for many centuries. Instead of simply defining a pantheon as a collection of deities, the Japanese people had an understanding of the spiritual realm from Chinese teachers, and associated the cosmic realm with the spiritual realm. Thus the concept of deities being spirits of everything was born, creating a spiritual religion.

The Japanese people had an amazing connection with the cosmic, spiritual, and even chaos realms. They constructed shrines to communicate with the various realms through different rituals and offerings. Although communication with the cosmic realm did not require such performances, the pantheon embraced it and opened their cosmic bridge for all to experience. This, of course, opened the cosmic bridge to many beings from other mortal realms as well, leading to many aliens migrating to Earth (not just passing through, but actually establishing new homes).

The Japanese worshipers, calling their religion Shinto, grew their religion to encompass these many alien creatures either as a part of their worship or as malevolent beings, such as feared beings in traditional folklore. The cosmic bridge was quite busy and many beings traveled through, including Amatsu-Mikaboshi.

Like Pazuzu, Amatsu-Mikaboshi had a way of tapping into the chaos realm. The Japanese people were able to respect the chaos realm without interfering with it, but Amatsu-Mikaboshi sought to use the chaos realm to his advantage. Many creatures of Japanese folklore are a product of Amatsu-Mikaboshi's doing, one of the most prominent being the oni.

Amatsu-Mikaboshi was a master of the occult and pursued his art at the various shrines connected to the chaos realm. However, instead of simply paying tribute to the realm, such as the Japanese people did, Amatsu-Mikaboshi was able to tear the fabric between the realms and extract demons from within. Being somehow able to reseal the tear immediately, he was able to control the flow of demons in and out of Japan. Additionally, he was able to enslave some of them while having suggestive power over others. The oni were much too powerful to be enslaved, but they willingly did his bidding knowing he would otherwise send them back to the chaos realm. Those he could enslave were imbued into various creatures, creating a number of shapeshifters. Through these efforts, Amatsu-Mikaboshi created pockets of demonic beings he unleashed across Japan. He never assembled an army as his demonic creations and the oni were difficult to command in an organized fashion. Instead, he unleashed them to create havoc and give the chaotic beings unfettered access to humans.

The Japanese people were not the only ones to create a spiritual religion, but they are believed to be the first. With this spiritual religion came great reverence of the five elements. By spreading their power throughout those five elements, the pantheon was able to empower the samurai warriors that fought hard to combat the supernatural threats across Japan.

Because the Japanese people had such a strong connection with Earth and spiritual realm, Izanagi, Izanami, and the pantheon were able to provide many people with a small amount of power by spreading it throughout the elements. Because the chaotic beings were not concentrated, those able to tap into this power needed to do so on-demand, wherever they were located. Thus it was imperative to spread that power throughout the elements, because the elements were everywhere the gods could not be, allowing their worshipers to call upon their power and remain safe. This practice grew into the reverence of the five elements and the respect shown to deities through scattered shrines, statues, and temples.

Although the Japanese people fought hard, they were never able to overcome the constant threat of Amatsu-Mikaboshi's demonic creations. It took the power of the samurai throughout the Dark Ages to finally end Amatsu-Mikaboshi's reign, although his ability to extract demons from the chaos realm lives on through the teachings of the occult. Thankfully, almost all of the demonic creatures were purged during the time of the crusades after Amatsu-Mikaboshi was killed. However, because of the occult, the work of the samurai will never end, even when combined with the Inquisition.

THE AMERICAS

Many thousands of years before the Iron Age, distant relatives of those settling in China and the Steppes migrated across a land bridge to what is now known as North and South America. Because these tribes were somehow related to those in China, they too carried the sixth sense, although they were probably unaware of it for many thousands of years. By the time the Iron Age arrived, these tribes, scattered across the Americas, had formed their own cultures and spiritual rever-

The Native Americans throughout North America also created a spiritual religion, although not to the extent of the Japanese. However, unlike the Japanese people's natural reverence of the spirits, the Native Americans were fueled by clairvoyance from their original Asian heritage many millennia ago. Because the people were so fragmented into small tribes, each spiritual religion was different from another, ranging from slight differences to completely different pantheons.

ence through mediums that communicated with the spiritual realm using clairvoyance; what we call shamanism.

The basic worship and communication of these spirits was extremely similar to that of the Chinese, although with slight differences here and there. Being that the dragons travelled around the Earth to watch humanity grow and prosper, they decided to approach the shamans from the Americas differently than those in China, to avoid another incursion of chaos into the spiritual realm.

The tribes in the Americas were very cautious when it came to spiritual reverence. They were very specific in

whom they worshiped or sought out for advice and would not be satisfied with a deity attempting to make a god-like connection without purpose. These tribes were already very aware of the world around them due to their clairvoyance and their connection with the spirits of their ancestors. Instead of sending a single pantheon to interact with all the tribes, the dragons brought, to the cosmic realm, an interesting proposal: assemble many small pantheons to serve as spiritual familiars to the tribes in the Americas.

The process of connecting to the tribes across both Americas was seemingly simple. The various pantheons made small connections, as none of them were very powerful pantheons, to each tribe or region. The deity, or deities if the pantheon was lucky enough to have more than one, would use the inherent power of the spiritual realm to channel their essence into the mortal realm, appearing as a spiritual familiar. Most deities took the form of animals that many of the tribes already revered to create a stronger bond with the people. To allow for communication between the tribes and their pantheons, a small amount of power was imbued into some object, or multiple objects if able, as a beacon to the cosmic realm. Most tribes used totem poles decorated with replications of their spiritual familiars. When the tribe wanted to communicate to their deity, they performed a ritual to call upon the deity, thus opening a line of communication.

None of these pantheons were particularly strong, thus very few tribal members were able to receive any type of supernatural power. However, this



method worked quite well for both the deities and the tribes as the tribes wished to keep that power in the hands of their shaman and the deities could only provide enough power to supply the shaman. The relationship was quite successful from the standpoint of these tribes being able to connect to the cosmic realm.

Although utilizing many pantheons to connect to the many small tribes was a success, it had some dreadful drawbacks. The tribes were never large enough to provide the pantheons with any significant amount of power. As such, they could not reach out to many other mortal realms as their power was stretched too thin. This meant the cosmic bridges to the Americas saw very little traffic, but it also caused a lot of fighting between the various pantheons. The fighting was quite basic in that each pantheon wished to grow their number of worshipers to extend their cosmic reach to other mortal realms. Fighting between pantheons sometimes translates into fighting between associated worshipers, or at the very least an inability to become allies. The tribes in the Americas thus either fought often or failed to establish friendly relations with each other, instead choosing to remain apart. This wasn't always the case, but it was common.

While this may not sound like a big deal, if any malevolent creatures from the spiritual realm escaped, for whatever reason, it was up to each tribe to deal with the incursion, lacking the ability to call upon a large number of allies. Some tribes succumbed to devastating attacks from ethereal beings, and were completely unable to fully repel them, which resulted in many deaths. In the end, the shamans held the tribes' only source of power and if they fell, the entire population would subsequently fall, unless extremely brave warriors could stand against the ethereal beings or the tribe was rescued by a neighboring tribe. The overall population in the Americas thus fluctuated quite drastically, as if a major blight repeatedly occurred that would then take many decades to overcome.

MESOAMERICA

While most of the tribes across the Americas utilized the very basic forms of spiritual magic, through the power of their shamans and their spiritual familiars, those in Mesoamerica discovered a very dangerous magic that is kept very secret by the cosmic realm. I will tell you now, only because I want your knowledge to be complete and I don't think you'll be able to harness this power. There have been many occasions when the occult has come upon this magic and The Fallen have had to battle fiercely to keep it a secret, killing all those who carry the knowledge.

This magic is referred to as blood magic; the art of tapping into the power released when a native of the mortal realm dies and their spirit breaks through the fabric to reach the spiritual realm. Unfortunately for us all, this is one of the most powerful magic sources available to mortals. Blood magic is extremely powerful because it comes from the fabric that holds the mortal and spiritual realms together, while separating them from each other.

As the cosmic bridges during the Iron Age were being constructed, the tribes of Mesoamerica were connected to the pantheon of Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl is

much like every other deity in the cosmic realm, but he has a very sinister side. The tribes of Mesoamerica were already familiar with the spiritual realm, due to their clairvoyance, and Quetzalcoatl was powerful enough to periodically transmit his full essence to his worshipers without the use of the spiritual realm. However, most of the time he needed to appear as a spiritual familiar, but the use of two different forms led his worshipers to discover the truth behind the different realms.

The Mesoamerican shamans, starting with those of the Mayan culture, theorized that there must be a reason why their deity can only occasionally appear as his full essence and typically appears as a spiritual familiar. Their thoughts were quite simple: there must be a hidden power in the spiritual realm that enhances his abilities. This

is partially true, as the inherent power of the spiritual realm adds to that of the cosmic realm when a deity transmits his or her essence, while there is no power within the mortal realm to utilize during transmission. This means a deity has to work much harder to appear within the mortal realm than they do within the spiritual realm. Powerful pantheons, such as the Twelve Olympians, have more than enough power to overcome this. Quetzalcoatl had enough to do it a few times a year and the majority of the smaller pantheons never had enough power to overcome this factor. Thus, the Mayans determined that power waiting to be tapped into lay within the spiritual realm. Their discoveries, however, led to something much greater.

Because of their clairvoyance, the Mayan shamans could see the spirits of their deceased as they traveled from the mortal realm into the spiritual realm. To better determine what power lies within the spiritual realm, they attempted to walk through the realms, which of course is impossible without the developed ability. The Mayan shamans did not have the realm walking ability, but when they sacrificed one of their own in an attempt to "follow" them into the spiritual realm, they became overwhelmed with supernatural abilities. Previous to this experiment, the Mayan shamans never sacrificed their own people and were never close enough to one of their own when they would die, preferring to remain within their temples for spiritual study. However, when the first sacrifice was made and the shamans were all present, it became clear to them that their

Shamans in Mesoamerica discovered a horrifically powerful magic known as blood magic. This sources from the energy created when a human dies and their soul passes into the spiritual realm. Because this power comes from the absorption of the energy that explodes during this passage through the fabric, it's incredibly powerful and completely unfettered (divine power is "regulated" by the pantheon).

The tribes throughout Mesoamerica connected to the malevolent pantheon of Quetzalcoatl. Although he was a cosmic being like all others, he reveled in the suffering of humans rather than the empowerment of them.



natural spiritual abilities were drastically enhanced by the break in the fabric that occurs when a spirit travels from the mortal realm to the spiritual realm.

The Mayans called this sacrificial magic and decided it was how their culture would survive possible wars, famine, and any other plague that befalls. By making periodic sacrifices, often in the name of their deities, the Mayan hierophants, shamans who wielded blood magic, were able to sustain an incredible amount of supernatural power, enough to easily rival a demon or angel. These sacrifices were done seasonally, sometimes monthly, and sometimes when the hierophants felt they needed an extra amount of power to overcome some tragedy, such as famine.

The Mayan hierophants traversed the lands of Mesoamerica, sharing their knowledge with other shamans, creating new hierophants. Although the tribes may not have liked each other and their people fought, the hierophants became sadistic puppeteers, pitting their warriors against those from other cultures through orchestrated events they secretly performed and blamed on other tribes. If a war was fought, it was most likely sparked by the twisted mind of a hierophant. We believe all hierophants across Mesoamerica were actually quite friendly with each other and enjoyed treating their people like chess pieces.

In the end, many Mesoamerican tribes perished or were threatened by extinction as their hierophants became essentially immortal. It got so bad that the hierophants even extracted beings from the spiritual realm, and sometimes the chaos realm, to haunt their tribe's land in the hopes of watching heroic efforts to eradicate the threat. It was a deadly game they played, and the demon lords were not happy to see their servants being taken away forcefully.

However, demon lords are also sadistic beings and after approaching the hierophants, they ended up becoming involved in these twisted games as a type of warlord. After the Iron Age ended, the Americas, and especially Mesoamerica, had become involved in a chaotic game whereas the hierophants and demon lords treated their people like pawns in an epic game of chess: humans versus demons. Unlike Europe and Asia, which were combating the armies of chaos during the Dark Ages, the Americas had become a continents-spanning sporting event.

THE STEPPES

The Steppes is another region of the world, located in modern-day Asia and Europe, where distant relatives of the Chinese lived. The Turks and Mongols of the Steppes also possessed the sixth sense, but like the Americas, the dragons decided to approach it differently than they did with China. These two cultures were much larger and less scattered than the numerous tribes in the Americas. Thus the dragons approached Tengri's pantheon to connect with the people.

Tengri and his pantheon already had a history of connecting to those who revered the spirits of their ancestors through shaman utilizing clairvoyance. Thus it only made sense to connect the people of the Steppes with this pantheon

The people of the Steppes created another spiritual religion fueled by clairvoyance. However, their religion was more rigid as Tengri was more powerful than the pantheons worshiped by the Native Americans. What allowed Tengri to perfect his connection to his followers was his ability to transmit his essence into the spiritual realm where his shamans would often be.

and embrace their shamanistic practices. Similar to some of the tribes in the Americas and those in China, the worshipers of Tengri, followers of Tengriism, were able to worship their deities through various mediums including totems, spiritual familiars, and messengers from the spiritual realm.

Tengri was a somewhat powerful deity, but preferred to only transmit his essence into the spiritual realm to allow for maximum transference of power between the pantheon and the shamans. The pantheon preached the use of these powers for good and thus

wanted to ensure their shamans had as much power as necessary. Because of this, the people across the Steppes never learned of blood magic and instead learned to perform the most powerful spiritual magic in the world.

Because of the practices of Tengri and his pantheon, and the method of spiritual magic they granted to their worshipers, there was little worry about their cosmic bridge in terms of dangerous alien beings crossing from other realms. Their bridge did have a strong connection to the spiritual realm, however, which may have allowed ethereal beings connected to other mortal realms to travel across, but we have yet to prove that theory. True ethereal beings native to the spiritual realm appear as natives regardless of what spiritual realm they reside in. It is as if the spiritual realm spans the entire universe, even though it does not. This makes it incredibly difficult to determine from where an ethereal being is native; regardless, we have yet to discover one using the spiritual realm for truly evil purposes. Only chaotic beings and mortal shamans have used the spiritual realm in this way.

THE RETURN OF HINDUISM

Brahma and his pantheon were the first to experience a collapse of their cosmic bridge along with experiencing its first reemergence. The knowledge of the religion from the Indus Valley never completely died and was rediscovered through icons and spoken stories. Although there were no worshipers for over a century, beliefs started to form sometime around 1500 BC. The cosmic bridge had collapsed 200 years prior, so the people were forming their own religion based on what they found and heard.

With the return of Hinduism, Brahma became the first pantheon to completely reconnect to humans after a collapse. This was mostly due to the people reconnecting with their ancestral past, finding the religious icons left behind by their ancestors.

The dragons watched as the Hindus formed their religious beliefs as a culture, instead of the pantheon presenting those beliefs to key individuals. Brahma was notified of this incredible show of devotion and worked to reestablish his cosmic bridge, which was apparently a much easier task than first establishing it as the people were generating power through worship that the pantheon was able to tap into.

Unlike most pantheons, Brahma conceded by allowing the people to define their religion, instead of him defining it. The people created their own ethos and Brahma and the pantheon swore to treat the people according to those ethos. However, the people did not look toward the pantheon for supernatural powers but instead for mental strength and the unification of their people, through common worship. The pantheon conceded and the first religion birthed by humans was born.

It is important to understand that Brahma and his pantheon do not interfere with life on Earth, and their angels stand vigilant over the cosmic bridge, preventing all intruders from alien mortal realms.

THE FOUR PHILOSOPHERS

During the 6th century BC, there was a very interesting movement across India and China in the form of disregarding deific religions for mortal philosophies. This practice was completely contradictory to the dragons' work, but they did not interfere as this went against their underlying principles. Dragons are here to watch the mortal realm, connect it with the cosmic realm, and keep it free from incursions from the chaos realm.

The general beliefs of those from India and China were such that they embraced many different ideals and not just those presented by the deities. Hinduism was a religion essentially designed by the people to serve whatever purpose they needed. If a new need arose, the people created other beliefs, such as one of the new philosophies. The spiritual reverence in China taught the people that learning from the past was as important as understanding the possible future and only mortals can ultimately decide their own path; hopefully that path would lead to knowledge and self-improvement and not war, which it often did and still does.

The four philosophers marked a new era for human beliefs. Instead of searching for religious guidance, the philosophers preached of inner strength and knowledge to guide one through life. Portions of these beliefs are often reciprocated throughout rigidly defined religions.

One side-effect of the four philosophies was a better understanding of mortal and spiritual realms. Through this understanding, mankind could better defend themselves against evil influences (usually mental and emotional influences) such as those offered by the occult. This potentially strengthens mankind's resolve against the occult, which in turn weakens the occult.

From this era, four philosophies were born: Buddhism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Taoism. Although some today refer to them as religions, those from the cosmic realm and The Fallen have always referred to them as philosophies to separate their ideals from those of deific worship. Be aware, though, that these philosophies do not involve any cosmic interaction and thus supernatural abilities cannot be gained from the deities. However, there is definitely something to be said about the coming together of mortals under a common cause for the survival of the species without supernatural interference.

KÖNG FŪZĪ

Confucianism grew from the teachings of Kōng Fūzǐ, a Chinese philosopher that lived during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Confucianism teaches a better awareness of the mortal realm and one's family. It is a more logical approach to mankind and its interaction with the mortal realm, rather than worrying about the relationship of the mortal realm with the spiritual and cosmic realms. Before Kōng Fūzǐ's teachings, there was little widespread acknowledgement of universal morals and respect regarding all of mankind. Many cultures, possibly without knowing it, incorporate these teachings into their laws.

LAO TZU

Taoism grew from the writings of Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher that lived during the 6th century BC. Taoism teaches respect of the forces of the mortal realm and how complimentary forces can be used to counteract each other, forming a natural balance.

It is believed that Lao Tzu was a very spiritual person who had very strong ties to the spiritual realm through clairvoyance. He would then have studied his ancient ancestors to learn from their mistakes and discoveries. Because writing was not as widespread as it is today, and most writings were driven from the emperors, Lao Tzu would have pieced together findings from many different centuries to create a complete understanding of the mortal realm. Fragments of knowledge would have been scattered across the spirits throughout the spiritual realm with no one to bring them together; this would have most likely been Lao Tzu's writings.

Many members of The Fallen study the writings of Lao Tzu and other works of Taoism to better understand how the mortal realm is formed and how we can better utilize it. When it comes to understanding the entire universe, even the cosmic realm doesn't have all the answers.

SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

Buddhism came from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, a philosopher from India who lived during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Gautama was very much in-tune with the spiritual realm and learned about some of its inner-workings. He learned about life and death and the process of rebirth. He learned about why some spirits are damned to an eternal life stuck in the spiritual realm and about

how to better live within the mortal realm. In the eyes of Gautama, humans can strive for an eternal deific life without actually being a deity. This wasn't a matter of possessing power from the cosmic realm, but rather self-enlightenment that allows one to better understand the mortal and spiritual realms and how they work, such as eternal reincarnation that allows your spirit to live an immortal lifestyle through rebirth.

VARDHAMANA MAHAVIR

Jainism is an old philosophy from India, highly influenced by the teachings of Vardhamana Mahavir. Although it is believed Jainism grew in the same way Hinduism did, as communal teachings, we regard Mahavir as a very influential individual, who helped to spread Jainism.

One of Jainism's most well-known philosophies is that of practicing non-violence. Followers of Jainism understand that to survive in the mortal realm meant respecting everything it contains (humans, animals, and even plants). Jainism is also believed to have developed without the use of any abilities, including clairvoyance, and without influence from anything other than human minds. They created many theories and strove for an understanding of the world around them.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

After centuries of allowing the archangels to run the pantheon, Yahweh "awoke" and was concerned with how the mortal realm had developed. Although Judaism had spread and Yahweh had a fair number of worshipers, it wasn't enough to make a difference in regards to the chaos that seemed to be everywhere. Even though much of that chaos was being combated by the various pantheons and their followers, Yahweh wasn't satisfied with mankind's ability to keep itself safe. Without a safe mortal realm, Yahweh's religion would struggle to proliferate, and without that proliferation, he would eventually succumb to the

The birth of the angel Jesus through human means was not only symbolic to the followers of Yahweh, it was a strengthening bond throughout the pantheon. By presenting a cosmic being to mankind through mortal means, the pantheon's worshipers were able to provide proof of Yahweh's existence and spread the word of a nurturing deity, as opposed to a power-hungry or malevolent one.

power of the cosmic realm and vanish for all eternity. Obviously no deity wants that to happen so Yahweh felt it was time to do something radical.

Yahweh's archangels were elated to see the deity had overcome his depression and moved to a more active position within his own pantheon. They spent many years discussing with, and demonstrating to, Yahweh how mankind had developed over time and the struggles their religion was facing. Yahweh's pantheon was much too weak to transmit his essence multiple times in

IRON AGE

the hopes of finding new followers, so doing something more drastic seemed like their best solution.

Yahweh and the archangels were well-aware of The Fallen and how they came to be. However, to expel an angel from their cosmic realm in the hopes of creating a fallen angel was risky as they often end up in the chaos realm, and those that don't are treated as alien beings and hunted by slayers. Instead, Yahweh and the archangels devised a method of birthing an angel into the mortal realm through conception into a human body. Thus a fallen angel would be born into the mortal realm, but brought up from infancy and treated as a deific entity. At least that was the theory.

The angel Jesus was chosen for his healing abilities and conceived into the Jewish girl we know as Mary. Jesus was born around 4 AD, being touted as the son of Yahweh, although only those of the cosmic realm know the truth. The goal of Yahweh was to demonstrate to the people that if a divine being were to walk amongst them, they would walk away from their violent beliefs and concentrate more on faith in their religion and pantheon, preferably Yahweh's pantheon to make him stronger. His motivations were pure in that he desired the ending of violence and the struggles of mankind by bringing everyone together under a common religion. In the end, as we have seen, mankind interprets deific messages in many different ways; often not the way they were meant to be interpreted.

Jesus, who became Jesus of Nazareth, was faced with incredible decisions while living in the mortal realm. Due to his birth through a mortal woman, his youth



The angel Jesus became near-immortal during the birthing process, becoming the equivalent of a fallen angel. As such, his death was that of a mortal death, but he retained the ability to be resurrected. This allowed him to become one of The Fallen, retaining his healing abilities.

was filled with the common life of a mortal youth. He became aware of his healing abilities, as he had retained them through birth, and set out to become a healer and philanthropist as a demonstration of good. He followed the Jewish religion and helped to spread its word throughout the Middle-East region.

However, no matter how much he spread the faith and no matter how

much he exemplified the good of humanity, his teachings were considered heretical and he was viewed with much skepticism, primarily by the Roman Empire. Without even knowing Jesus was a fallen angel, and a member of The Fallen, Rome decided he was a blight on their way of life and needed to be stopped. As we all know, he was subsequently crucified for his beliefs and teachings. However, fallen angels cannot be killed, and Jesus was subsequently resurrected by other members of The Fallen and brought under their shroud. He went into hiding within the spiritual realm; we believe he developed realm walking abilities through his birth into the mortal realm, and would frequently appear to perform what the humans considered “miracles” to aid Yahweh’s Jewish followers.

Ultimately, it was Jesus’ miracles after his resurrection that swayed many to believe in what became Christianity. Having a divine presence “alive” in the mortal realm was too much for mankind, but these random miracles that were deemed as a part of believing in Yahweh and Jesus could convince many to walk away from their traditional religious beliefs.

Christianity was born from a combination of Yahweh’s early centuries, before the archangels took over, and Jesus’ life and philanthropy. Although Christianity first came around shortly after Jesus’ resurrection thanks to his disciples, it didn’t really take root until Emperor Constantine made it legal to practice and the official religion of Rome. Of course, as Christianity took root, Yahweh’s pantheon grew stronger and the replaced pantheons became weaker as they lost worshippers. The combination of this and the fall of Rome led to the events of the Dark Ages.

That is all for today, my friend.

DARK AGES

MARCH 5, 1998

The dangers on Earth continue into the Iron Age. Although, with so many supernatural creatures roaming about, there were bound to be many heroes imbued with the power of the cosmic realm. History books have laid many claims to what the Dark Ages was like, but with Mashda's teachings, I doubt much of it was accurate. This is what happens when little is written down outside of what various religions want you to believe. As before, when I arrived back at the cave, Mashda continued his lesson.

COLLAPSE OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Most likely, what you know about the era known as the Dark Ages is excessively cleansed. World religions would have you believe this period was a time of learning and war. While this may be true, it is only a portion of the truth. The truth is that during the Dark Ages, the world became shrouded by the chaos realm, ushering in an apocalyptic era. This did not simply occur overnight; many events led to the collapse of mankind, but it started with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

In the early years of Christianity, belief of this new religion was spread throughout many regions in Europe. Of course, few embraced this new religion, as they were either deeply ensconced in their traditional ways or heavily regulated by the Roman Empire. However, when Emperor Constantine came to power, Europe changed and so did its people's beliefs.

In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine embraced the new Christian religion, declaring it legal and the state religion of the Roman Empire, but only after establishing the Christian canon in 326 AD. Many laws were enacted or changed to promote and embrace Christian beliefs, turning a blind eye to the old Roman ways. With the capital moved to Constantinople, the Roman Empire was split into two, with the Western half quickly losing its momentum from the Iron Age. Attacks were frequent and the Western Roman Empire started losing its grip over Western Europe. With the Visigoths knocking on their door, the Western Roman Empire pulled its forces away from faraway lands and strove to protect its homeland. Ultimately, they failed, and in 476, the Western Roman Empire

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire was truly the first key event in mankind's downfall as the Dark Ages ended. The Romans were a power of good, albeit a quite forceful power of good, against the occult and their supernatural masters and allies, ensuring the lands they controlled were free from these abominations. When the Empire cracked, so too did the control they had over the lands in the Occident, allowing the occult to become a major influencing force.

collapsed under a series of internal and external influences.

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire may not seem like much since the Eastern Roman Empire, which you call the Byzantine Empire, still held regional power and maintained the center of Christianity. It was the collapse of their cosmic influence that ultimately spelled disaster for the entire world. Recalling from the lessons learned of the Iron Age, the Roman Empire acted as a force of good against the supernatural and occult threats that lay in wait throughout Europe. When the Western Roman Empire fell, so too did that protection.

The steady decline from order to chaos started with Constantine declaring Christianity the state religion of Rome. Very quickly, the citizens of Rome turned their back on the Olympians, leaving their traditional beliefs behind. Although many attempted to hold onto their traditional beliefs, life in the Eastern Roman Empire became difficult for anyone not practicing Christianity. It may have been easier for heretics to survive in the Western Roman Empire, but after its collapse, the traditional ways disappeared. Unfortunately, any believers lost their Olympian connection as the cosmic bridge was destroyed near the mid-5th century. By that time, all the traditional heroes were gone as they had all pledged themselves to Christianity.

With the final remnants of the Olympian beliefs gone, and Christianity legalized, the final remnants of the Ennead disappeared from Egypt. Many within Egypt had already adopted Christianity, but the Roman hold over the lands meant a very small amount of the Ennead's influence remained. Once Christianity's hold was complete, the new religion prevailed and the Ennead's cosmic bridge was destroyed.

Christianity had also spread to the British Isles. Once again, the Roman influence meant practice of Christianity was more-or-less forbidden and traditional ways were still followed. Once the Western Roman Empire pulled back its forces to reinforce its doomed homeland, Christianity flourished and the Celtic Christian rites were born. Shortly after, the cosmic bridge to Lugh and his pantheon was destroyed.

With three major cosmic bridges destroyed, the now-Christians could no longer turn to their former pantheons for power against the supernatural. Fortunately for much of Europe and Egypt, most of the supernatural threats had been eradicated by the Roman Empire. Unfortunately for all, the knowledge of that threat and how it came to be fell into the hands of the occult.

The spread of Christianity during the Dark Ages caused the continued deterioration in the people's ability to combat the supernatural, while at the same time providing them a better place than what the occult was offering. Centuries later, the leaders of the Christian religions become paramount in the eradication of the supernatural through their militant forces and the organization of the Inquisition.

SLAVIC NATIONS

Throughout the Iron Age, a cosmic bridge was formed by Perun and his pantheon to the Slavic people. The knowledge of this did not exist abroad as it was done outside the influence and vision of the dragons. Many believe this cosmic bridge was far from new as it may have had remnants from followers in the early Iron Age. No one in the cosmic realm today knows, and no one bothered to find out when the bridge became known.

Regardless, Perun and his pantheon had a strong connection with the Slavic people by the time the Dark Ages began. Like many others within the cosmic realm, Perun and his pantheon followed tradition and granted powers to their greatest followers. Unlike the other pantheons, Perun was a practitioner of arcane powers, often called sorcery. His power was unique in that it tapped into the ancient power of the mortal realms, which come to be during the formation of the mortal realm, instead of providing power through the cosmic realm. While this may sound like a good thing, this ancient power is very volatile and difficult to control. This is the power that created the mortal realm and is imbued in everything that comes from it. However, it's very difficult to weave and is unusable by the cosmic realm.

Do not think of this power as similar to what Izanagi sprinkled across the elements. That power comes from the surface; sorcery comes from within. Everything created by the mortal realm or a by-product of things created by the mortal realm are imbued with its energy deep down in its core. This is a very difficult energy to tap into, even though it's found everywhere. The energy is stored so deep within an object, and is so small, that only the most learned are able to acquire its powers. Those who are able can develop the most powerful abilities a mortal can control. Like blood magic, arcane magic is extremely powerful. Unlike blood magic, arcane magic is also extremely explosive and can be modified to create different effects. Because a sliver of the mortal realm can be found in different combinations to form each object the realm creates, it is possible to create the effects of the creation of those objects by tapping into their arcane magic. Thus, you can harness the energy of the earth from a rock, but you may also harness the wind or the water if that energy is also stored within the rock. True sorcerers can see what energy is stored within every natural creation of the mortal realm.

Humans and animals are not creations of the mortal realm; they are creations of the spiritual realm. That is why the spirit returns there after death. However, mountains, lakes, trees, rivers, and minerals are all creations of the mortal realm

Perun and his pantheon are home to the occult energy known as arcane magic. This volatile power was incredibly difficult to wield, but was a known source of power across the universe. Many beings have sought the exploitation of this arcane energy and have learned to wield it to great effect. These beings become some of the most dangerous ones and all are tied to Perun's cosmic bridge.



and can thus be used to harness their arcane energy; if one knows how. Perun and his pantheon did not spread this knowledge very far. They only trusted their most devout followers to carry the knowledge of something so powerful and explosive, and only after many years of training. Wielders of arcane magic were very rare and those imbued with the power of the cosmic realm would have easily overwhelmed them. Once the three cosmic bridges were destroyed, though, there were fewer wielders of divine magic from the cosmic realm. Arcane wielders became a very important part of the machinations of Earth throughout the Dark Ages.

Perun's cosmic bridge was very busy with wielders of arcane magic throughout the entire universe. Very few ever passed between mortal realms, but one individual was a thorn unto the entire cosmic realm for thousands of years. Her name is Baba Yaga, the mother of witchcraft.

Baba Yaga is an immortal, demon-like hag steeped in knowledge of arcane magic and a known elder of the occult, like Anubis and Pazuzu. Hundreds of times the dragons and angels have clashed with Baba Yaga and her armies, and each time she disappears. We believe she has the ability to travel across the cosmic realm undetected and seems to favor connections to Perun and his pantheon.

One crucial piece of information to understanding the occult is that it's not a product of a single mortal realm. The occult is prevalent throughout the universe and is basically the same throughout. We don't know who first formed the occult, but we do know that Baba Yaga is one of its original elders; Pazuzu was also an elder, but not an original one. The occult's purpose is to drive chaos back into the universe through the practice of ancient magic. They bring their skills to a mortal realm and teach those within their millennia-old abilities. As much as we hate the occult, it is a balancing factor within the universe, and thus a necessary evil. Without the occult, and the chaos realm, there would be no need for the cosmic realm or the religions tied to it. However, Baba Yaga is one we would like to do without.

Baba Yaga was, is, and will forever be an extremely dangerous occult elder. She is a master at controlling arcane energies, knows how to weave them with ease, and has even elevated herself to immortality. She serves as an unbalancing mortal throughout the universe even though she completely eschews the use of the chaos realm. Her ability to exploit, and teach others to exploit, the power of the mortal realms makes her the most dangerous mortal in the universe.

Until the Dark Ages, the occult had been involved in manipulating powers that existed throughout the mortal realm and its connections to the other realms. Baba Yaga discovered that after a cosmic bridge was destroyed, remnants of the power it granted still remained, although in a much weakened state. Witchcraft is the ability to summon those remnants, combining them with other forms of energy to create supernatural abilities. Most of the time, this effort requires multiple people to focus their energy into summoning what they can. Baba Yaga,

however, knows how to weave arcane energies with the remnants of divine energies, resulting in the occult power we know as witchcraft. Baba Yaga's witchcraft is incredibly powerful and armies of angels and dragons have succumbed to its wrath hundreds of times.

During the Dark Ages, Baba Yaga came to Earth through Perun's cosmic bridge. It may have been luck, or she may have been watching as the collapse of the Western Roman Empire presented an opportunity for the occult to grow. The Slavic nations already worshiped Perun and thus his most trusted followers also possessed knowledge of arcane magic. Baba Yaga is very persuasive and focused her efforts to create new sects of the occult within the Slavic nations.

Baba Yaga presented herself as a godlike being with arcane energies. She was able to recruit a handful of sorcerers to her cause and a new occult sect was born. This new sect grew to an incredible size as the occult's influence spread across the fallen lands of the Roman Empire. Even though Christian missionaries were everywhere, the influence of the occult was strong and many turned to it for protection. Yahweh wasn't handing out divine magic to protect the plethora of small villages across Europe, but the occult was.

Within a couple hundred years, the occult stretched across Europe, Asia, and Africa, bringing together the teachings of Baba Yaga, Anubis, and Pazuzu. As Christianity spread across the land, so too did the occult, in a race to alter the traditional beliefs of mankind. Thankfully for all, Christianity was winning.

RISE OF ISLAM

During the earliest years of the 7th century, Muhammad, a prophet of Yahweh, brought his own teachings of Yahweh and the archangels to the people of what is now the Middle-East. Although similar to Christianity, the new Islam religion contained its own stories and revelations. We're not certain if Muhammad was actually contacted by one of the archangels or if Islam is his interpretations of Yahweh's teachings, but either way a new religion was born.

Muhammad spread his word throughout the lands where the original Sumer beliefs were born and adopted by subsequent cultures. These cultures were already exposed to the teachings of Yahweh and Judaism, and were now coming together beneath their own religious banner. As his teachings spread rapidly, the people rejected their traditional ways and Enlil's cosmic bridge was destroyed. The core traditional religions spanning thousands of miles had been replaced by followers of Yahweh comprising Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The floodgates for the occult opened wide as

The occult was often able to hide within the throes between Islam and Christian adherents. While warriors, religious leaders, and noblemen concerned themselves with holy battles, the occult would plot and scheme against those left in the wake of disaster. They may serve as a clean-up after conflict, providing a place for people to stay, or step in before a conflict, providing a means of protection.



Yahweh and the archangels' power was spread too thin to combat the occult and whatever supernatural beings remained on Earth.

The occult was still relatively small, compared to what they became, and the occult elders had not fully taken control. It was the subsequent efforts of Islam versus Christianity that created the opportunity for the occult to take hold.

Once Islam and Christianity spread far and wide, the two religions came to continuous clashes due to cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. These battles and wars took the attention of those involved away from any occult- and supernatural-hunting duties to protect their lands and the rights of their people. An opportunity presented itself in the 8th century, and the occult began planning their strike.

OCCULT ELDERS

We do not know, and probably never will, who all the occult elders were. We know Baba Yaga was the elder of the arcane, Pazuzu was the elder of chaos, and Anubis was the elder of the necrotic, but the others are unknown. During the 8th century, the elders came together to plan their unified strike against mankind in an attempt to make the chaos realm the dominate realm and turn Earth into pure evil. By doing so, they could use it as a launching point for further campaigns across the universe. In their discussions, they came up with the idea of creating the Armies of Chaos.

The Armies of Chaos consisted of demons, undead, and the occult followers that supported them. The plan was to take the forces of dark powers and pin them against the forces of divine powers in an ultimate struggle of good versus evil. Their plan was quite simple: create an army and strike the most pertinent locations.

In theory, their plan was easy enough that success was all but guaranteed. In reality, their plan would take a concerted effort across the entire world by unifying those who generally held animosity toward each other. If the occult elders could bring all of the occult together along with the beings they had allied with or controlled, humanity would not be able to stop them. With their plan theoretically laid out, the elders traveled back to their sects to start building their armies.



Occult elders are masters within the spheres of occult magic. The three most dominate spheres are arcane, chaos, and necrotic. However, additional spheres exist including AEther, blood, ceremonial, goety, and hedge. The spheres of divine magic include druidic, elemental, runic, thaumaturgy, and theurgy. The spheres of spiritual magic include hoodoo, shamanism (which includes ancestor worship, animism, and totemism), vodun, and voodoo. The spheres of mortal magic include alchemy and psionic. Other minor spheres exist, which may combine pieces from the other spheres, such as hermetic magic.



DARK AGES

The occult elders could not build a large enough army on their own. Instead, they needed to appoint generals, like a standard human army, to train and lead their forces. Additionally, these generals had to be able to call upon the dark powers to either unleash them against the enemy or bring about a force of demons or undead. These generals were chosen across the three main occult concentrations: arcane, chaos, and necrotic. Each concentration was appointed six generals with the task to initiate new followers, create additional, smaller sects, and recruit as many others to the cause as possible, such as Tengri shamans. By 1000 AD, the Armies of Chaos outnumbered the largest human army ten to one.



THE RISE

Possibly the occult elders' greatest strategy was to create five main regions to focus attacks from the Armies of Chaos. All attacks were deemed to be centralized around the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, China, British Isles and, with the assistance of the demon lords, Mesoamerica. By focusing their attacks, the Armies of Chaos would be able to keep their ranks stronger and dominate humanity's smaller forces. Should they have spread their armies

thin, they would have easily been outnumbered and overwhelmed. However, the occult generals were cunning and steeped in battle lore.

Although their attacks were concentrated, their recruitment was not. The occult elders searched far and wide to find anyone that would join their regime. After the fall of so many traditional religions, many small villages were left to fend for themselves because the followers of Yahweh were spread too thin to offer protection. They found safety in the occult as their lands were being plagued by the supernatural. The occult would offer a trade-off: they would hunt the supernatural if the village supported their cause. Most of these villages knew very little outside of their homelands and corrupt rulers had little desire to support them. The villages were too remote for the small armies to protect them, and the warriors were off fighting wars; the only one they could turn to was the occult. The more villages that signed-on, the larger the occult grew and the larger the Armies of Chaos grew.

Some of these small villages succumbed to a fate worse than the threat of the supernatural, as they were subsequently turned into slaves of the chaos realm. Those who weren't became stark supporters of the occult by learning how to harness the arcane, chaos, or necrotic powers. The true reason for the name Dark Ages was finally revealed.

BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Amidst the turmoil, one nation declared mankind must defend itself from the Armies of Chaos – a term they coined. The Byzantine Empire, the remains of the mighty Roman Empire, rose to the occasion by declaring the need to recruit the greatest warriors the world had known to combat the Armies of Chaos. They formed a council of Christian leaders and declared war against the occult. The Christian leaders and missionaries returned to their homes or distant lands with the news of this grand scheme to rid the world of the occult.

As the occult gained power, they were able to organize their forces, recruit the enemies of mankind, and ally with beings from the chaos realm in a massive attempt to enslave all of Earth. They tricked many villages abandoned by the collapsed Roman Empire into empowering the occult, allowing them to grow exponentially, extending their power and influence to great distances.

At first, the Byzantine Empire declared Constantinople the home for all war efforts. However, the Celtic Christian leaders felt it was their duty to assemble an army in the British Isles and sought out warriors from their own lands. Traders along the Silk Road recognized the threat against China, as the Armies of Chaos are quite obvious in their travails, and brought the same declaration to the markets in China. Missionaries from Egypt and followers of Judaism also recognized the threat to Egypt and brought that same declaration. Mesoamerica, unfortunately, was on their own as no one from Europe, Asia, or Africa knew they existed.

Starting in the 9th century, the world's warriors were to convene in the Byzantine Empire, by order of the Senate, to fulfill missions to weaken and cripple the occult and lead the battles against the Armies of Chaos. Due to the collapse of so many cosmic bridges, The Fallen were extremely busy recruiting new members and knew it was their duty to help mankind in their quest. Knowing the humans could not defeat the most powerful beings the occult had, The Fallen focused their efforts on the generals, elders, and demon lords.



During the course of their battles, the world's warriors found it difficult, if not impossible, to defeat the immortal beings of the occult – only an immortal can kill another immortal. Through visions sent by the archangels, the humans learned their weapons were worthless against the immortal beings and were told to seek out the power of the cosmos for assistance. It was then they discovered the true powers of magic.

Seeing the growing threat of chaos across the land, the nobles of the Byzantine Empire banded together to formulate a plan to stop what they began calling the Armies of Chaos. They sent missionaries to spread the word of their declaration of war against the Armies of Chaos and began recruiting warriors from across the land to join the efforts.

COSMIC POWER

Power that comes from the realms ultimately sources from the greater universe. These powers are the only thing capable of defeating an immortal being. Gods, angels, dragons, and demons are all imbued with this power; those who wield magic are wielding the magic from the realms; those who wield relic weapons are wielding the magic from the realms as the weapons are imbued with magic. Without one of these sources of power, killing an immortal being is not possible. Fortunately for mankind, the Armies of Chaos were comprised primarily of mortal beings. Undead are mortal as are most of the creatures dwelling in the chaos realm.

Armed with this knowledge, the warriors sought relic weapons from the Bronze and Iron Ages, recruited wielders of magical powers, and called upon their pantheons to smite the Armies of Chaos. Many great battles occurred as the clashing of weapons and the explosion of magical powers could be heard for miles around. Remaining pantheons were stretched very thin, either due to not enough followers or too many warriors to support. But the warriors knew how to reach deep into their soul and call upon the gods they worshiped for the inner-strength to best even a demon in battle.

Mankind was at its peak for courage and faith and they fought tremendous battles with incredible victories! But the Armies of Chaos were just too big; they had too many followers, too many supports, and too much power. Even with the power of the realms bursting from their hands, the warriors could not prevail; the odds were stacked against them and the hordes of demons, undead, occult followers, and slaves were just too much to handle.

THE FALL

After hundreds of years of fighting, the Armies of Chaos had grown to an insurmountable size. The warriors could not muster enough power from the realms to defeat everything that was thrown at them. The Fallen had managed to track down the occult elders and made a vicious stand that killed most of them, and though Pazuzu and Anubis lay dead, Baba Yaga escaped and the might of the occult generals lived on. Then Christmas came in 1065, and the world began its final descent into the apocalypse.

The remaining occult generals launched their final campaign to defeat humanity on that Christmas day. They marched across the Byzantine Empire and wiped out every warrior and soldier they found. They marched across the Middle-East and into Egypt, enslaving all who opposed them and killing those they couldn't. With two major enemies defeated, they merged their forces and marched north through Europe and east through China. They made landfall in the British Isles in September 1066 and by October 14, every nation and kingdom was under their control. Then, things got worse.

Throughout the chaos of battling in Anglo-Saxon and Chinese territories, the occult's ethermancers broke through the fabric between the realms. A group of demon lords were primed for attack and leapt through, reaching the cosmic realm. There they stormed across Yahweh's cosmic bridge and into the den of the archangels. They kidnapped the archangels, felling the entire Army of Heaven with the loss of their leaders and the source of their power. The demon lords brought the archangels into the depths of the chaos realm to rot in a chaotic cell where they couldn't break free.

With the Army of Heaven left powerless, the Armies of Chaos stormed across the Baltic Sea and found Yggdrasil, the cosmic bridge to Odin's pantheon. The remaining followers of Odin were in an uproar as every alien worshiper converged on Yggdrasil to make a last stand with their pantheon. The days of Ragnarok fell upon the pantheon as the Armies of Chaos clashed with the gods and their worshipers. But the demons won, and Odin was killed. With victory on their shoulders, the demons left, burning Yggdrasil and destroying the cosmic bridge in their wake.

Even with the combined strength of mankind and the alliances they formed, the Armies of Chaos had grown too large and powerful to be stopped. After a number of bloody battles and horrible defeats, chaos prevailed and the apocalypse was brought down upon the people of Earth. A new era was ushered in; one of enslavement and oppression.

With the help of several ethermancers, a swarm of demons was able to burst into the cosmic realm and attack the deities within. Many perished, being capable of being slain at the hands of another immortal being. Many others acted with haste, destroying their cosmic bridge to Earth, preventing the demons from storming their pantheon.

SHADOWED EARTH



After hearing of the brutal deaths of Odin and his pantheon, Perun and Tengri destroyed their cosmic bridges to keep their pantheon safe. Izanagi's and Izanami's pantheon became enthralled in the battles throughout China. They shifted their elemental magic to the mainland and sent all samurai warriors to protect the shamans. Again, the Armies of Chaos prevailed and Izanagi and Izanami destroyed their cosmic bridge to prevent the demons from crossing.

In the end, the occult was left standing, holding the victory flag over all of mankind. The fate of humanity had been sealed. The apocalypse had come and the entire world became shrouded in a blanket of chaos.



CRUSADES

MARCH 6, 1998

I had nightmares that night. I've always had faith in humanity to prevail over anything evil, but I had no idea how much evil was truly out there. The idea of taking up arms imbued with cosmic power only to be struck down by a horde of demons terrifies me. I can't imagine what our ancestors went through during the Dark Ages and how they ever managed to survive. When I returned the next day, my look was much more dejected than before. Mashda merely nodded his head in agreement with my feelings and continued his lessons.

THE FALL

The Fall, the apocalypse, the point in history where mankind went from dominating to be dominated. The energy prevalent throughout the Dark Ages had all but vanished. With so many cosmic bridges gone, the commoner could no longer wield the magic of the gods. Those who harnessed magic by worshipping a pantheon were left powerless. Only residual energy remained, and only the occult knew how to harness it. After The Fall, the world fell victim to the whims of the occult and the chaos realm.

In an instant, many wielders of divine magic found their powers ripped away from them with the destruction of the cosmic bridges. Without knowing how to tap into the residual energy, mankind became powerless against the chaos that just defeated them. The only glimmer of hope was the still-standing bridge to Yahweh's pantheon.

MISSIONARIES

The period after The Fall was dangerous. The Armies of Chaos had prevailed and all over the world, humanity was failing. Slavery was common as demon lords held control over villages, cities, and sometimes entire kingdoms. The occult and their undead armies frequently raided major cities for pure pleasure, creating ruins in their wake. Many died, and many more suffered for years under their chaotic masters.

To combat the ever-growing threat of chaos and the occult, leaders of the Christian community turned to their missionaries more than ever before. While Christian missionaries were meant to spread Christianity and convert the polytheistic followers, their new missions were designed to save humanity and create strength against the demons and the occult. However, the missionaries couldn't do it without help.

To aid the missionaries in their quest against the forces of evil, they were taught to harness what divine energy remained on Earth, provided by Yahweh and his pantheon. They set off for the far reaches of Europe, attempting to rally all humans to rise against their chaotic masters. Although most humans were willing to set aside their traditions to seek Christianity's protection, their combined voices were not enough. The missionaries may have succeeded in completing their thorough conversion of Europe to Christianity, but it wasn't enough to defeat the demons and the occult.

INNER CONFLICTS

After 25 years of chaotic rule, the occult started to clash with the demon lords and their hordes of minions. The occult was determined to control Earth and create a new haven for their alien masters. The demon lords were determined to enslave mankind, possibly even the followers of the occult, and create a new realm where they could travel throughout the universe, gaining access to the spiritual and cosmic realms. These two ideals were in conflict, and each side began to squabble with the other. Arguments would break out between leaders. The arguments led to fighting, fighting led to battles, and the battles led to wars. After 30 years of dominating Earth, the Armies of Chaos were beginning to crack as the chaos realm and the occult began to clash. Mankind saw their opportunity.

CHRISTIAN POWERS

During the time of missionaries and infighting, Christian leaders were plotting other ways to overcome their chaotic masters. They began recruiting holy warriors shortly after the missionaries were sent across the land. These warriors were taught to harness Yahweh's power and combine it with any residual energy that remained on Earth. This wasn't the same as the occult's witchcraft, but rather a way of channeling the cosmic realm even though the cosmic bridges were gone.

These same Christian leaders watched eagerly as the Armies of Chaos became overwhelmed with infighting and petty squabbles. The opportunity to strike back was presenting itself, and they began planning what would become the First Crusade.

CRUSADES

History, as written, tells us the crusades were holy missions to recover the holy lands and push back the growing Islamic threat. While this version makes for great stories and history lessons, it is far from the truth and is more of a cover story than anything. The First Crusade was launched to save mankind from its chaotic masters.

With the occult weakening and the demon lords enthralled by battles with the occult, the Christian leaders launched the First Crusade in August 1096. They

called upon the warriors they'd been training, and sent them off to recover the archangels from the chaos realm. The mission sounded almost impossible, but with the help of an ethermancer, the warriors could gain access to the chaos realm and find the archangels.

The crusades were launched with warriors leaving from France and Italy to journey to Constantinople, where the ethermancer found the weakest point between the mortal and chaos realms. Two parties were sent out, one from each location, and after one month of questing through Europe and the chaos realm, they found the prison holding the archangels.

To say the battle was epic would be an understatement, but the warriors freed the archangels and with them fought against the demon lords and their armies to escape the chaos realm. Good prevailed and the archangels lifted the warriors out of the chaos realm and back to the mortal realm where they quickly sought out the Army of Heaven.

In September 1096, the Army of Heaven, in its full force, descended to Earth and joined the Christian warriors and missionaries to fight what remained of the Armies of Chaos. The war waged for almost three years, and on July 1099, the last demon lord and occult leader were expelled from Earth, freeing humanity of its enslavement. Although mankind had won back its freedom, there was still much to do to ensure another Fall never happened again.

Luckily for mankind, the forces of chaos cannot rule for long before infighting occurs. The occult were as bullheaded as their demonic allies and the two continually vied for ultimate power over the enslaved population. Amidst the confusion this caused and the distraction it created, Christian leaders were able to organize their warriors and plan the First Crusade.

The First Crusade was an epic battle between good and evil. Bands of warriors were sent to Constantinople to seek out an ethermancer to bring them to the weak spot in the fabric near Jerusalem. Two parties made the quest across Europe, finding the ethermancer who allowed passage into the chaos realm. From there, they fought hard to locate the imprisoned archangels. With the release of the archangels, the Army of Heaven was restored who then descended to Earth to eradicate the forces of chaos.

SECOND CRUSADE

Now that the world was a safer place and humanity was able to thrive, the Christian leaders set out researching why The Fall happened and how they could prevent a reoccurrence. Almost 50 years passed and the Christian leaders were without answers or hard evidence to support any of their theories. There was little knowledge they could locate through standard outlets, and the religions of the past had done little to write down what may have occurred. Fearing another rise of chaotic armies, a second crusade was assembled to acquire this knowledge.

Without truly knowing where to look, the Christian leaders knew the occult had played a major role in The Fall, and were deemed the best place to begin looking. This Second Crusade was meant to scour all of Europe for occult sources and knowledge that may lead to an understanding of why The Fall occurred. By this time, most followers of the occult had gone into hiding, abandoning many of their holy places. The mission was quite successful and the Christian leaders amassed a large collection of scrolls, rumors, whispers, and tales about the occult and the build-up of the Armies of Chaos.

INQUISITION

After 35 years of research and evaluation of all the material they had, the Christian leaders learned the source of the occult's true power was held in the magic they wielded. Although the leaders had little understanding of the types of magic, not realizing the occult primarily harnessed necrotic, chaos, and arcane magic, they deemed that all types of magic were at fault.

Magic was deemed as heresy and wielders of magic were thus heretics. Christianity's new mission became the eradication of all heretics to preserve humanity and avoid another Fall. They formed the Inquisition to combat this heresy.

The original iteration of the Inquisition was mostly powerless against true threats to Christianity and mankind. The inquisitors were political figures and could do little to combat any magical or supernatural threat; there were simply too many and they were too strong. To overcome the war against witches, as all magic users were labeled, and the supernatural that threatened mankind, the Christian leaders formed a second, secret Inquisition.

The public Inquisition concentrated its efforts on powerless humans they felt were heretics and were thus a threat to Christianity. The secret Inquisition took lessons from the slayers and warriors of old and combated the supernatural and magical threat that served as real threats to mankind. Two years after founding this second Inquisition, a third crusade was launched to clear the land of all supernatural and alien threats.

SUBSEQUENT CRUSADES

Throughout the Middle Ages, multiple crusades were launched by the Inquisition to rid the land of anything they felt was a threat. Almost all alien beings that traveled across the cosmic bridges during the Bronze and Iron Ages were hunted to extinction. Humans labeled as a witch were brought in for interrogation, and eventual purgation; few of them ever got a real voice. Followers of the occult were sought out and deemed guilty of spreading the threat of chaos. These times were violent, but many enemies of humanity were slain.

However, the Inquisition was small and loosely organized. Many occult sects survived while in hiding and lived to threaten the Inquisition later, even to this day. But in the eyes of the Christian leaders, the missions were successful and mankind was safe once again.

MIDDLE AGES

MARCH 6, 1998

That night, I said goodbye to Mashda and Drac'thau. I thanked them both profusely for their lessons and the knowledge they gave me. As Mashda's lesson had reached the organizing of the Inquisition, I knew the best place to learn more was within the libraries of our organization. It would take a lot of work, and a lot of time, but I was determined to connect all the dots from the years of the Crusades up to the present day.

MARCH 7, 1998

In the morning, I informed Aamir that my mission was successful and had collected observations regarding the bronze dragon. As is proper within his position, he asked no questions and arranged for my flight home. After a very long flight, I was back in Chicago with a personal mission to write my new history book: *The Unknown Truth*. A book that no one would ever see or read.

THE THIRD CRUSADE

JUNE 14, 1998

After three months with the Inquisition, I had seen only a fraction of what the organization dealt with on a regular basis. Most of my time was spent waiting for a call that an inquisitor had need of my services, for at the time I was still a scholar. To keep me involved in the organization, I would return to headquarters and consult our extensive library. On this particular day, I decided to read more about the roots of the Inquisition.

The Inquisition was founded in 1184 to combat heresy and the general threat of the occult. After a few months of their ecclesiastical activities, the Christian leaders realized their Inquisitional recruits were not equipped to handle the occult, or really anything that posed a real threat to humanity. Due to their investigations during the Crusades and these first months of heresy hunting, they learned that witches, a colloquial term they used for all magic-wielders, were much too powerful for the Inquisition to handle. As such, they created a secret witch hunting sect of the Inquisition.

This new sect recruited warriors and trained them in similar ways to the heroes of the Crusades. These warriors needed strength in their resolve as much as martial prowess to combat the occult, and that's what the traditional Inquisition was lacking. Thus, the warriors were a perfect match and the first group of inquisitors, with their grand inquisitor leader, was formed.

The Church had recovered a lot of occult material during the Crusades and was well aware of what was assembled against mankind leading up to The Fall.

Because the occult was so strong, and witches dealt with alien and supernatural beings, they were all considered part of the witch's plot and had to be eradicated.

Under the guise of another holy war, the Inquisition organized the Third Crusade in 1187, determined to eliminate all witch threats from England to Jerusalem. At the time, three Inquisitional groups were present: in England, France, and the Holy Roman Empire.

After The Fall, and acquiring occult material, the Christian leaders were determined to keep humanity in the dark about what was truly going on. Besides the obvious changing of horrific tales to nothing more than folklore, claiming supernatural creatures never really existed, the Third Crusade was given a history-worthy purpose as the freeing of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The truth is that this crusade was meant to eliminate all witches and their supporters, the supernatural and alien beings, ranging from the northern-most reaches of the Inquisition, Scandinavia, to the farthest extents of their influence, Jerusalem. Yes, the main purpose may have been the safety of Christianity, but it was also the burying of Earth's ancient secrets.

Interestingly enough, the Inquisition kept their written accounts of this part of history. Either to teach inquisitors of the truth, or as a reminder of what's really out there, the private annals of the Inquisition holds tomes depicting what really happened. They speak of the frequent clashes between the inquisitors and the witches during the Third Crusade. They speak of the different alien beings encountered and how many of them had looks of despair and seemed lost, wanting only to return to their homeland. But as was common in those days, the Inquisition had a strict mission to adhere to and no exceptions were made. All aliens, supernatural beings, and witches were killed. Of course, these inquisitors only encountered a small portion of what survived The Fall.

NORTHERN CRUSADE

DECEMBER 15, 1998

I came across the concept of polytheism numerous times during the first several months with the Inquisition. However, I knew very little about it outside of the bits and pieces Mashda had shared and what little I could find elsewhere. One entry in the public history books gave me pause. Between the Third and Fourth Crusades was a smaller crusade against supposed heretics in northern Europe. Instead of settling with the public view, I consulted the Inquisition's library for the truth.

The Crusades laid the foundation for the supernatural-hunting Inquisition, starting a new chapter for all of mankind. To avoid another apocalypse, these new breed of slayers were determined to keep all humans safe from the threats of the unknown and the occult.

Interestingly enough, the Inquisition tells a very similar story to the one presented publicly. Around the turn of the 13th century, a crusade was declared, unofficially by the Inquisition, to purge areas of Europe, primarily in the northern regions, where many human still believed in the traditional religions. Called pagans by Christian leaders, what they found were several villages and towns that still practiced ancient religious beliefs. Of course, according to Mashda, the cosmic bridges of these religions, mostly Germanic, were long gone.

What's not spoken of in the public eye was the discovery of alien beings from Germanic folklore; specifically dwarves and elves. During this crusade, the Inquisition purged the remnants of the dwarven and elven folk that dwelled in the northern reaches of Europe. From Mashda's lessons and Germanic tales, I deduced that these alien beings crossed Odin's cosmic bridge, Yggdrasil, to settle on Earth.

Either because they became trapped when the bridge fell, or these tribes chose to make a new life here, there were dozens of alien beings thriving near human settlements. The humans appeared to acknowledge and honor the presence of the dwarves and elves, and all three continued their beliefs in Odin and his pantheon. Unfortunately for all, these beliefs were heretical in the eyes of the Inquisition and all alien beings, such as the dwarves and elves, were to be purged. Without consideration for the well-being of these dwarven and elven tribes and the children they had been raising, all were slaughtered alongside their human friends. The alien remains were all burned and buried, while humans that submitted to the Inquisition were spared future terror after the completion of their conversion.

Notes within the edges of the Inquisition's tome state 'The inquisitors felt many of the converted humans never truly embraced Christianity and secretly contin-

Many Crusades were launched and many creatures of folklore were eradicated. Mankind became ignorant of the greater world around them, allowing the Inquisition to keep their minds safe from the horrors that lurked about. By dealing with the threats directly, instead of allowing the people to deal with them, the Inquisition protected all of Europe, allowing the people to push the boundaries of freedom - spiritually and scientifically.

With each subsequent Crusade, the Inquisition discovered more and more alien beings that had crossed the cosmic bridges before The Fall. Seeing them as a possible threat to mankind and a way of revealing the truths of Earth's history, all were marked for purgation, allowing Christian missionaries to come in and better convert the masses. Traditional religious beliefs were no longer valid and only those preached by the Inquisition were considered safe to the general sanity of mankind. It was the Inquisition's goal to keep everyone free from the psyche-altering effects of knowing the truth about the world before and during The Fall.

ued their worship of the ancient religions, possibly forming a new one. Anyone found to be harboring pagan beliefs are to be punished for the sins of their ancestors.'

To this day, the Inquisition has never truly purged these ancient religious beliefs in some of the northern regions of Europe, and probably never will. As long as their adherents do no harm, no harm will come to them. However, many of these regions are continuously watched for suspicion of occult activity.

ADDITIONAL CRUSADES

DECEMBER 16, 1998

Crusades became a common occurrence during the Middle Ages. Some of them were motivated by the Churches' desires, and their public Inquisition. Others were the secret missions of the supernatural hunting Inquisition and some were simply motivated by some Christian leader's desires to purge whatever land they had deemed infected by the occult.

During these missions many cultists were slain, although the Inquisitional library contains a lot of notations about how so many cultists are continually located. It was as if the occult was growing and thriving beneath everyone's nose. Few understood why, and to this day, we still don't know how cultists can hide so easily.



One of the books discusses the different types of alien creatures finally purged from Earth during these Crusades. During these additional crusades, it was noted that all mythological creatures from every culture were to be hunted to extinction. After the various religious leaders across the world deemed these creatures as mythological, and converted all religious beliefs to folklore, much effort was done to eradicate the source of the myths and ensure no one learned the truth.

However, as we know from history, those from Europe were oblivious of the Americas. Nowadays we know of many alien creatures still living in the Americas, although we don't know where they came from. After researching these books, I also found that areas in Asia and small islands long distances from the mainland are not discussed. It appeared the Inquisition during the Middle Ages may have been good at purging the alien threats, but they knew very little of what was actually out there.

No matter how many crusades they launched, the threat of the supernatural never went away. Merging this information with other books discussing the reorganization of the Inquisition, it's logical to say cultists were thriving, and apparently growing in number.

EVOLUTION OF THE OCCULT

JANUARY 9, 1999

My studies from the previous month were mostly inconclusive. Once I got the chance to get back to my studies, I searched for information about why the Inquisition was failing and more cultists were always found. These studies led me to a book about the occult's new practices during the Middle Ages and how they differed from what was known about the Dark Ages.

During the Dark Ages, the occult was very visible and often accepted as a legitimate religion in many regions. This could be because of the influence of the so-called pagan religions, or because the occult offered protection due to the loss of the Roman Empire's influence. During the Middle Ages, the occult was forced underground after the crusades and the constant purging of magic abroad. All cultists were deemed as heretics and heretics were purged according to the Inquisition. However, the occult survived.

During these crusading periods, the occult went from being religious sects that offered protection to underground organizations that offered insight. Gone were the days of outlandish displays of cultic beliefs, bringing new ways for occult followers to practice their devious religion.

As the Inquisition evolved, so too did the occult. They moved away from converting the masses to their beliefs and into recruiting important individuals that could greatly further their cause. Through this recruitment, the occult was able to pass on its secrets from generation to generation.

Why the occult survived is mostly a mystery to the Christian leaders and those who compiled the tomes in the library, but many facets were common across the different cults.

SECRET ORGANIZATIONS

Due to the ongoing purgation of the occult, surviving cultists turned to secret organizations and moved their practices away from the public eye. No longer did they outright recruit and induction into a cult was through invitation only; extremely secretive invitation.

LOSS OF PROTECTION

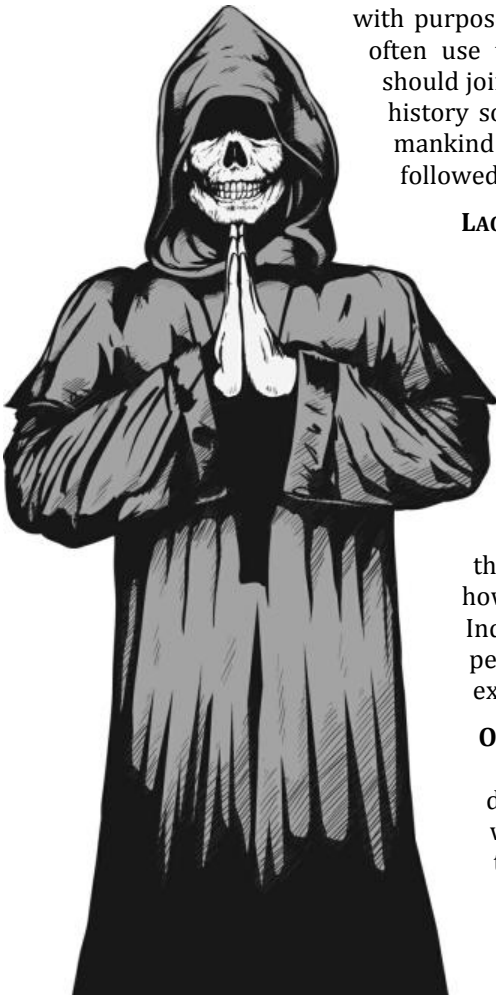
Obviously, the occult could no longer offer protection to the villages abandoned by large armies. Thus, they denied offering protection to villages and towns and instead could only offer to provide individual people with purpose. Purpose is the term the occult would often use to convince new recruits of why they should join. This purpose is to open up the truth of history so that the new recruit understands why mankind is alive and why their masters must be followed.

LACK OF MAGIC

With the collapse of so many religions, magic was not as common as before. Although witchcraft, as explained by Mashda, would always be prevalent due to the residual energy left after the collapse of a cosmic bridge, there was little magic to be had. Thus, the occult regulated who was granted access to the knowledge of the various energy sources and how to harness them. This also meant they could regulate how visible their organization was to the Inquisition as most of their followers appeared as normal, everyday humans and exhibited no magical abilities.

OCCULT DISCUSSIONS

No one within the occult was allowed to discuss the occult outside of where they worship or do business. By not discussing their affiliations in public, investigating them became much more difficult. Cultists apparently lived by a very strict code that almost all follow today.



Due to these new occult practices, hunting them was very difficult; this difficulty was only amplified by the loose organization of the Inquisition. Inquisitional texts of this period make several notes that due to the Inquisition's inability to fully rid the land of the occult, even though they were good at hunting down supernatural and alien creatures, several secret organizations rose to fill the gaps.

SECRET SOCIETIES

MAY 22, 1999

It took a while before I was able to continue my studies about the Middle Ages, but I moved on from Inquisitional records to information about the other secret societies during the time.

The Middle Ages were ripe with emerging societies as opponents, or cautious proponents, of the occult. Those who were opponents supported the Inquisitions' efforts by covering the regions where the Inquisition couldn't reach. Those who were proponents were quietly scheming with the occult directly, by working with them, or indirectly, by inadvertently promoting their activities. The most prominent organizations were the Knights Templar, Freemasons, Knights Hospitaller, Rosicrucian Order, Hashshashin, and the Teutonic Knights. These organizations were a boon and a bane to the Inquisition, making it even more important since its inception.

During the time the Christian leaders were planning their coup against the forces of chaos, around 1080, the Islamic nations were secretly forming a group of elite warriors to attack key leaders of the Armies of Chaos. This secret organization, called Hashshashin, or the Assassins as it is more commonly referred to, had good intentions in regards to the fight against the forces of chaos and the occult. However, after the First Crusades were launched, the Hashshashins also turned their attention to attacking officers of the Crusades. These encounters drew from the history of Christianity versus Islam, and caused major problems to the Crusaders' triumph over the chaos realm, the occult, and many of the heretics who embraced the ways of evil. Although their intentions were good, in the eyes of their religion and nations, the results were detrimental to our activities. Many of the Hashshashins as-

With the veil of oppression lifted, many sects of the Church found it necessary to protect their people and their beliefs. Pilgrimages became frequent, holy wars were fought, and a definite need to establish services arose. With this, many other secret organizations formed, often with the same motives: protecting the followers of the faith. These organizations were paramount in protecting the people, but they also found it easy to discover the secrets of mankind's past. They collected much esoteric knowledge and often regressed to behavior displayed before The Fall.

sassinated important inquisitors during subsequent purges of the supernatural and associated witch hunts.

Shortly after the First Crusade, the Christian leaders assembled their first true militant order called the Knights Hospitaller around 1099. These warriors were key allies during subsequent crusades and played vital roles in combating the occult in areas where the Inquisition did not hold any influence. However, outside of the Crusades, the Hospitallers focused their efforts on the political maneuvers of the Christian Church rather than the war against heresy.

The Knights Templar organized around 1119 with the intention of keeping people safe during their pilgrimages across Europe. Their numbers were vast, peaking at nearly 20,000, and they played vital roles during the Crusades, helping to keep the paths clear of malevolent parties. However, the Templars had one extreme drawback: greed.

As the Templars established safe travel routes across Europe and organized the first medieval banking system, they also came upon many travelers carrying esoteric information. As a means of bartering for one's life, the Templars collected as much of this secret information as they could, keeping this knowledge hidden from the masses. The more they collected the more they learned about the occult and many of the truths behind The Fall. Many Templar leaders went into hiding and began learning how to harness some of the residual energies that remained. None of this was used against other secret societies, and the Inquisition has never been able to crack the Templars to discover what they had planned to do with that knowledge.

During the first decade of the 1300s, the Templars were brought up on charges of apostasy and heresy with their acts of harboring occult secrets and turning to witchcraft. Although their leaders were tried and killed and their organization disbanded, pockets of Templars remain to this day and are continually in contention with the edicts of the Inquisition.

After the official founding of the Inquisition, around 1190, the Catholic Church organized their own militant order called the Teutonic Knights. Like the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Knights were concerned with the political aspects of the Church, although they did provide assistance during the Crusades. While their efforts were important during the Crusades, they provided little assistance to the Inquisition afterwards.

The Inquisition fought against and alongside many secret organizations during the Middle Ages and leading into the Early Modern Age. This added another layer of need to the Inquisition, being determined to keep all of mankind in blissful ignorance. Those that assisted the Inquisition were seen as a blessing and an ally; those that opposed it were seen as an enemy. Many new enemies of the Inquisition grew during this time, paving the way for many more to develop in the coming centuries.

After the disbanding of the Templars, around 1390, those who did not go into hiding moved on to lay the path of the Freemasons. Unlike their Templar heritage, the Freemasons were a secret organization that believed in the furthering of humanity, regardless of its past and the knowledge of the occult. Although they chose to disregard a single religion as superior over another, they were frowned upon by almost all Church leaders due to their secrecy. From the standpoint of the supernatural hunting Inquisition, the Freemasons were a huge boon as they offered charity, shelter, and a friendly atmosphere for villages and towns across Europe that were coming under the occult's influence. Due to their efforts, many cults were driven further underground as their influence waned and people instead turned to the open arms of the Freemasons.

The final prominent organization, the Rosicrucian Order, organized around 1407, has been a thorn in the Inquisition's side since its inception. The Rosicrucians are an order determined to learn of the buried secrets of humanity's past, including all matters of the occult and how The Fall was brought about. Many Inquisitional leaders felt the Rosicrucians were the other half of the Templars and act as an opposing force to the Freemasons. They embrace the occult, but in a way they claim is merely educational. However, the Inquisition has found numerous instances of Rosicrucians using various types of magic, including chaos magic, to further their research. Just like the Templars, no one has been able to discover the Rosicrucians' goals and they too are in constant contention with the edicts of the Inquisition.

REBIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

NOVEMBER 2, 1999

I was determined to find the good that came out of the Middle Ages, other than technological and educational advancements. I found it in a dusty section of the Inquisition's library in regards to their view of how Christianity grew and affected those throughout Europe.

Shortly before The Fall, the Latin and Byzantine Christian rites drifted apart due to sporadic conflicts, squabbling, and disagreements on how to defeat the Armies of Chaos. Many Inquisitional scholars debate whether this schism between the two ultimately caused the fall of humanity due to the lack of proper alliances among all of Europe, but most simply come to the conclusion that the Armies of Chaos were simply too powerful when allied with their occult compatriots. Regardless, after The Fall and during the Crusades, the Church was driven apart into an East and West, further defining the Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics.

Although this may have been a detriment during the last years of the Dark Ages and during the Crusades, the Middle Ages benefited from this schism as both Churches were able to grow significantly, independent of each other. Both saw a growth in educational institutions, both saw numerous converts, and more im-

Although the schism throughout Christianity drove Christians apart, the rapid growth of these new Churches allowed the people to become united in their beliefs and turn the traditions of their past into mere folklore and mythology. These became merely the stories of their ancestors, not the truth that everyone surely knew about. But then, isn't every folkloric and mythological tale a cover for some type of reality? Not even the Inquisition had all the answers, but they would never stop at finding and burying them.

portantly, both saw an increase in their influence over the greater whole of Europe as old polytheistic beliefs were replaced with new Christian ones.

This rebirth in Christianity was quite beneficial to the Inquisition in that there were fewer heretics to prosecute as more people were prone to convert without arguing, seeing all their neighboring nations already converted. Humanity grew quite significantly with a bond that formed around religion.

Of course, with every positive action, there is a negative reaction. All traditional beliefs were replaced as folklore, legend, and mythology. People became ignorant of the greater world around them. The concept of the supernatural and the occult was lost to the majority.

Only those who joined the occult or a secret organization truly understood. The result was catastrophic: the supernatural were now able to hide in the shadows, making them that much harder to find.

The Inquisition no longer benefited from reports of horrific creatures as everything was passed off for something else: folklore, tall tales, or simply someone's imagination. This allowed the occult followers to better hide amongst their peers, while demons, malevolent spirits, undead, shapeshifters, and anything else imaginable simply "disappeared." In some cases, mankind lost its ability to distinguish the chaos from reality, and demons soon appeared as regular humans (in some type of supernatural disguise), or could no longer be seen without the right abilities, such as those trained by the Inquisition.

Thus, the Inquisition's vital mission began; protecting all of mankind from that which they cannot see or understand.

EARLY MODERN AGE

JANUARY 5, 2002

The turn of the millennium was a busy one for hunting the supernatural. Many new creatures awoke from seemingly eternal slumber and the occult chose that year to be their “Year of Dominance” when they would make another attempt to bring about another Fall. They failed, but it took a lot of effort on the Inquisition’s part. To fuel the occult flame, they took advantage of the paranoia that ensued after September 11, 2001 to attempt a second coup against the world. Again they failed, and again the Inquisition’s resources were taxed heavily.

My research took a back seat during these years of hectic hunting, and it wasn’t until 2002 when I was able to dig into the Early Modern Age.

THE NEW WORLD

The most important event during the Early Modern Age, in terms of mankind and the Inquisition, was the discovery of the New World and the number of people that migrated there. What most of them didn’t know was that besides the presence of the Native Americans, the New World was filled with undiscovered horrors.

North America was teeming with horrific creatures never before seen. They continuously threatened the colonists, but the Inquisition was unable to do much as they didn’t have a presence in the New World. During those centuries, many Inquisitors left Europe to protect the colonists, ultimately leaving parts of Europe vulnerable.

Central and South America were mostly quiet, but lurking in the shadows lay hidden demons and relics from centuries past, of which Mashda spoke about, waiting to be discovered or unleashed upon the new inhabitants. During this period, the Inquisition’s force of scholars grew tenfold to properly research all the new horrors and ancient relics they were encountering.

Inquisitors continued to leave Europe, assuming it was mostly free from supernatural threats, to form new hunting groups throughout the New World. One may think this is a good thing, but the Inquisition became stretched horribly thin, and soon be-

The Inquisition faced a new challenge with the mass migration of settlers to the New World. Thousands of people were moving there, but none of them were protected by the Inquisition. The possibility of exposing them to the horrors of the supernatural was a huge risk that the Inquisition couldn’t afford. To ensure the people didn’t realize who was traveling with them to the New World, the supernatural-hunting inquisitors traveled under the guise of heretic-purging inquisitors that served the Church.



came overwhelmed. Without being able to enlist the help of a network of mercenaries like today, the Inquisition lost ground against the supernatural forces in the New World and the occult lying in wait throughout Europe and Asia.

This thinning of the organization resulted in many attacks against cities throughout Europe and Asia. Whatever supernatural threats remained could easily find their way past the Inquisition's forces and into highly populated areas. Besides plotting to discover everything of interest in the New World, the occult capitalized on these attacks and increased their threats against these same cities. It didn't take long for much of Europe and Asia to feel renewed pressure from the occult and the supernatural.

Without enough Inquisitors to protect everyone from attacks, the people needed a way of defending themselves. This led to the discovery of clockwork devices to keep the people safe.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Many books speculate the Inquisition's involvement in the Revolutionary War. The truth is the occult, the supernatural, and the Inquisition had nothing to do with the revolt against the British. However, that didn't mean the Inquisition had nothing to do during this time.

During the Revolutionary War, the occult was able to hide throughout the New World, continuing their exploration of the Native American lands and the secrets they held. It's noted in the Inquisitional library that the occult discovered much more about the history of the Native Americans and Meso-

america before the Inquisition. Much of our knowledge was taken from the tomes they discovered and the books they wrote, stolen by inquisitors after numerous campaigns.

While the colonists were defending the thirteen colonies from British attacks, the occult snuck in and continued westward into the lands of the Native Americans, searching for ancient relics, supernatural beings, and those who could wield magic. The Inquisition did all they could to combat the occult, but there was simply too many cultists to chase down and the threat of the revolution continually pulled them in different directions. After all, they still had a patriotic duty to protect the colonies.

Coincidentally, while the occult was busy sneaking around, exploring unknown areas, the supernatural creatures living in the New World were mostly in hiding due to the war. Apparently the presence of so much gunfire was enough to scare them away. The Inquisitional books theorize that since gunfire was new to these creatures, it kept them in hiding; another theory is that the sound was frightening to them. This theory is also prevalent in the texts regarding the Civil War.

After the war was won and the new United States of America was established, the Americas began to thrive and the fear of the supernatural began to wane. This aided the industrial revolution, since so many citizens were no longer living in fear. Most thought the supernatural threats had either left or were dead. Little did they know, many of these threats moved westward, fell into the shadows, or came under the control of the occult. With the spark of the industrial revolution, clockwork science came to the Americas.

WITCHCRAFT

Information about witchcraft in the New World was horribly skewed. The Inquisitional books like to make comparisons to what was actually happening and what was being presented to the general public, and ultimately what was written in the history books. Much of what the populous knows about the witch trials throughout New England was a cover for the actual witch hunts taking place throughout the colonies.

During the occult's exploration of the New World and their desire to tap into whatever energy they could find, they frequently came under the watchful eye of colonists while performing their blasphemous witchcraft rituals. Although the Inquisition responded as fast as they could to eliminate the occult's presence, many colonists started to panic as most of them were ignorant of the concepts of magic, which dated back thousands of years.

The supposed outbreak of witchcraft in the colonies was an interesting turn of events. Most of the accusations were completely false and clearly contrived, but they did allow the Inquisition to walk about the colonies with a sense of freedom as mankind's attention was drawn elsewhere. Many inquisitors used this as a diversion tactic to continue going about their regular business of hunting the supernatural.

The Inquisition had a difficult decision to make; prosecuting the witches publicly would confirm the presence of witchcraft. Ignoring the sightings would result in continued panic. Instead, they orchestrated the Witch Trials in Salem, and other undocumented areas, to teach the colonists that witchcraft is illegal and witches are not actually real. They did this by seeding the ideas of witchcraft amongst people who had no magical abilities. With natural human curiosity and the ease of word spreading quickly amongst the colonies, all fake witches were tried and prosecuted. Unfortunately, many were also hung or burnt, an unfortunate price for protecting mankind.

Within this chaos, many accusers were exposed as fake and the witch hunts came to end. The colonists were convinced the threats were fake and little more came from it. The Inquisition had successfully buried the supposed threat of witchcraft, from the viewpoint of the colonists. Subsequent sightings were given the “inquisitional treatment” similar to the concepts of turning old religious beliefs into folklore and mythology in the prior thousand years.

After the Salem Witch Trials, the Inquisition was much more diligent in quashing threats of witchcraft. This required new inquisitors and the foundations of an organization that grew until the Victorian era.

MESOAMERICA

JANUARY 21, 2002

The Inquisition’s library is very consistent across all of its Early Modern Age books: the natives of the New World were not that dangerous. For the colonists, they may have been dangerous, but to the Inquisition, their spiritual magic was not that much of a concern. The natives of Mesoamerica however, were extremely dangerous.

While the English were settling the colonies, the Spanish were exploring Mesoamerica and interacting with the natives they found, particularly the Mayans. The Spanish had intentions of conquering and colonizing the area, most likely in the same fashion as the English. The problem with the conquest of Mesoamerica was the natives there were considerably stronger and more violent than the northern natives. Additionally, they possessed occult-like knowledge and harnessed in-

Mesoamerica was possibly one of the most incredible discoveries in the eyes of the Inquisition. This was the first discovery that all but proved the occult existed as a global entity and not just one that was confined to Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

credibly disastrous magic: blood magic (although the Inquisition called it sacrificial magic at the time).

As described by Mashda, blood magic is extremely powerful and, when harnessed by the Mayan hierophants, resulted in serious trouble for the Spanish. This can only be described as another type of crusade such as what was seen in Europe. The Mayans were

powerful humans with knowledge dating back centuries, knowledge that could be extremely volatile in the hands of the occult. To make matters worse, they seemed to have regular dealings with demons. Sensing disaster with the discovery of the New World, the Spanish consulted with the Church for advice on how to deal with this new threat. The Church deemed this another crusade-like cause and the offenders thus had to be eliminated. With that declaration, the conquistadors were born.

The Spanish already had a good presence within the Inquisition, but that force was clearly not strong enough to deal with the Mayan threat. The Church, with help from the Inquisition, formed another militant group based out of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires. This militant group, the Spanish Conquistadors, had one simple mission: eliminate the Mayan threat. From the standpoint of the Inquisition, that mission was actually to eliminate the occult-like threat of the Mayans and avoid a Fall throughout the New World.

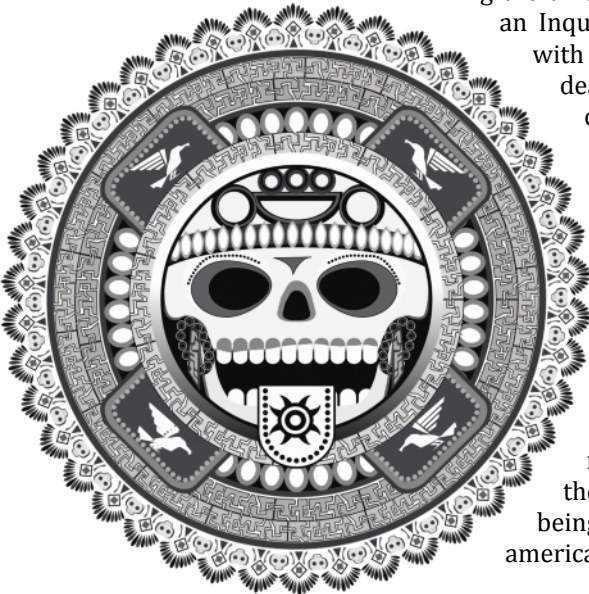
Battles broke out all over Mesoamerica, with most Conquistadors and Mayans lying dead in a disgusting bloodbath harnessed by the hierophants. Blood magic was completely foreign to the Conquistadors, and their Inquisitional brethren, and thus no one knew how to properly combat it. The more they killed the natives, the stronger the hierophants became. Without the knowledge of how blood magic works, the Conquistadors would slaughter all those they encountered. It took many battles for them to realize that with every death, the hierophants grew stronger. Instead of slaughtering, they set out to convert the natives in hopes of them abandoning their powerful hierophants.

After around 100 years of conquest throughout Mesoamerica and South America, the Spanish Conquistadors were successful in either eliminating or converting the threatening natives (those who weren't

an Inquisitional threat were typically dealt with in the same fashion the colonists dealt with natives). The mission was

considered a great success and the Church and the Inquisition were satisfied the New World would not succumb to a Fall like Europe and Asia. Of course, with every positive there is a negative and the Mayans had left behind over a thousand years of knowledge and relics. Many of which were sought out during the Victorian era.

Although the Mayan and many natives like them were eliminated, there were many reports of unknown beings encountered throughout Mesoamerica and South America by the Spanish



Conquistadors. Given their lack of knowledge of the supernatural, most of these creatures were labeled as new species or different types of existing species. It wasn't until the Modern Age when the Inquisition finally performed deep explorations across the area to properly identify these beings. Unlike the United States, these creatures were mostly left alone during the Early Modern Age.

PIRACY

After the conquest of Mesoamerica and South America, the Spanish Conquistadors had to deal with a lot of piracy throughout the Caribbean. While this may seem like simple history, many pirates actually had ties to the occult or occult-like organizations.

Many of these occult followers were seeking ancient knowledge from the New World and the rumors about what had been discovered in Mesoamerica. Only a few of those tied to the pirates were magic wielders, but of course they were the most threatening. The Inquisition's books do not tell if these magic wielders discovered the secrets of blood magic or if that didn't come until years later. Regardless, these magic wielders were a serious threat against the Spanish fleets and the Conquistadors that were continuing their efforts throughout South America. There are no documents describing the magic they were wielding, but some speculate it was witchcraft brought from Europe and not blood magic learned from the Mayans.

During this time of piracy, many new discoveries were made from occult sources in the Caribbean, specifically New Orleans. The natives there harnessed a new magic they called voodoo. However, after deep research, the Inquisition found this was another type of spiritual magic similar to what other natives of the New World were harnessing. Regardless, the occult followers sought out this spiritual magic during their days of piracy. There are numerous notations in the books about extraordinary encounters with pirates, during the later years of piracy, which contained magical activities. The Inquisition worked diligently to bury this knowledge, ensuring all written accounts were void of any discussions on magic.

Some of the most notorious pirates were probably backed by witchcraft- or voodoo-wielding cultists.

Pirates became another thorn in the side of the Inquisition, much like the long-standing war against the occult. Many pirates spent time in the Caribbean and the Barbary Coast, learning the ways of spiritual magic such as hoodoo, vodou, and vodun. This magic was often unleashed in the form of curses that plagued many of the soldiers that combated the pirate threat. With regular occurrences of this spiritual magic being unleashed, the Inquisition had to work diligently to bury the secrets of the Caribbean.

CLOCKWORK

FEBRUARY 1, 2002

Clockwork technology was a necessary evil during the Early Modern Age. As the Inquisition was forced to concentrate their efforts on the growing colonies in the New World and the war against the Mayans, many cities throughout Europe and Asia were left to defend themselves against the supernatural and occult threats that still remained. The Inquisition was simply not large enough nor was it organized properly to handle these threats on both sides of the world. It is thus that scientists throughout Europe developed clockwork devices to keep their people safe.

Clockwork technology utilizes gears and winding mechanisms to perform all types of automated functions. Its use was quite varied, although it was typically only employed in the fight against the occult. By creating clockwork war machines, even small ones, the people of Europe could quickly combat occult threats, such as summoned beings, with a minimized risk of harm. A warrior could ride inside a clockwork machine, offering another layer of protection, or load a machine and allow it to launch long distance attacks using ranged weaponry.

Regardless of the employed use, it gave the people of Europe a little more protection against the unknown while the true hunters of that unknown were often in the New World, fighting new threats. Of course, if a supernatural creature was unleashed inside a city, it would still be devastating. But at least when the occult brought a force bearing down on a city's walls, that city had a better defense against the magic wielders.

Without the Inquisition to face down these magic wielding enemies first, and any supernatural creatures they summoned, the people of Europe came into contact with knowledge the Inquisition strived to keep secret. After an attack, the Inquisition would arrive and do everything they could to keep those secrets buried and explain away what the people saw. Typically called "damage control," the Inquisition spent much of the Early Modern Age reburying the secrets they fought so hard to keep. However, the safety of the people took precedence over their ignorance, and damage control became the most common task for an inquisitor.

At first, clockwork technology was a tremendous boon to the Inquisition. It allowed those in remote places to defend themselves against the forces of the occult and much of what they encountered could be explained away as clockwork devices (albeit a complete fabrication of what they really encountered). As time progressed, the occult designed a machine that would allow them to cut the fabric between the mortal and spiritual realms to allow easier passage for beings from distant mortal realms into Earth.

In the early years of its use, clockwork technology was a boon and a bane to the Inquisition. It meant they could continue focusing their efforts in the New World while being spread thin throughout Europe and Asia, but it also meant a lot of secrets the Inquisition was trying to keep hidden were being revealed. Thankfully, the history books were expunged of such information.

Only some of the clockwork technology made it to the New World. No war machines did, otherwise the Revolutionary War could have been considerably different. Small, personal items found their way to the New World, but nothing significant enough to make an impact on history.

ILLUMINATI

During my research into clockwork technology, I came across the first entries regarding the Illuminati, a secret organization that plagues the Inquisition to this day. The Illuminati is neither an opponent nor proponent of the occult, but they are a stark opponent of the Inquisition.

During this time of damage control, a new secret organization formed built on the secrets being uncovered while the Inquisition was spread thin. Considering themselves the illumination of humanity by uncovering the secrets the Inquisition buried for centuries, the Illuminati secretly gathered all accounts of supernatural and occult activity throughout Europe and the New World. They actively opposed the folklore laid out by the Church and decided to prove it was actually real and not folklore or mythology.

With the help of the Church, the Illuminati was outlawed and disbanded throughout all of Europe and the New World. Unfortunately, in typical secret organization fashion, the Illuminati went underground and survived in hiding to this very day. Today they are the biggest human threat to the Inquisition and are almost as bad as the cultists we fight every day. Their goal is to uncover everything we keep hidden, and expose our activities.

The Inquisition does not hide the truth for our own good; it is for the protection of mankind. Should everyone know the truth, it would cause mass panic. The Illuminati has been known to cause panic-driven revolts and wars across the world since their inception.

After the occult, the Illuminati is the largest enemy faced by the Inquisition. Even though the Illuminati is an enemy to most of the Inquisition's enemies, one of their goals is to expose the Inquisition and free mankind from the shroud of disbelief. In their mind, understanding the truth about the supernatural and otherworldly beings around them is paramount to mankind's survival, not blissful ignorance.

MODERN AGE

SEPTEMBER 3, 2003

“Modern Age” is such a strange term for me. When it comes to the Inquisition and what I’ve learned in my years as an inquisitor, so many things have changed since the dawn of the Modern Age. Until after the Victorian era, it seemed as though humanity might succumb to another Fall. In the end, the Inquisition prevailed, and with what I learned from Mashda, I question if The Fallen weren’t a big part of that.

The Inquisition likes to deny the existence of The Fallen to most of its inquisitors. I’m unsure if they do that in hopes of us inquisitors hunting down The Fallen and treating them like other supernatural beings, or if they simply wish to keep them secret from all but the highest inquisitors. Regardless, there is little in the Inquisitional library about The Fallen’s involvement during the early decades of the Modern Age, but I don’t think the Inquisition could have prevailed over the occult without them. That’s what I’ve discerned from my research.

WESTWARD EXPANSION

The difficulties of the Modern Age started in its infancy. The newly formed United States was emerging from the Revolutionary War and stepping into the Industrial Revolution. As this began, citizens of the colonies began migrating west, seeking new opportunities. Beyond the threat of territory wars with Native Americans, the possibility of encounters with the supernatural was constantly looming over those brave enough to travel west. Thus, the Inquisition had to stay one step ahead of the travelers to eliminate or hide those threats and keep humanity naïve of the world around them.

To achieve this, the Inquisition began recruiting heavily after the Revolutionary War for the sole purpose of protecting explorers heading west. Most of these individuals were on their own; only the luckiest ones were accompanied by a single companion, and thus combating supernatural threats was difficult. The Inquisition began employing clockwork technology to increase the odds of success, which was already in use throughout Europe. With the absolute need for secrecy, only small devices could be employed. Clockwork technology spread throughout the New World because of this, but was limited to use by the Inquisition.

The Inquisition was largely successful in providing safe passage for this westward expansion. Unfortunately, their use of clockwork devices came to the attention of the occult as they plotted ways to exploit it. While the technology was available in Europe, it wasn’t being employed by inquisitors as broadly as it was in the United States and the western territories.



CLOCKWORK OCCULT

The Inquisition became very preoccupied during the early decades of the Modern Age. Besides protecting the explorers heading west, they were busy keeping the growing cities and states free from supernatural threats. They spent a lot of time keeping the factories free from shadow organizations, investigating unexplored areas in South America, and most importantly, they kept the battlefields of the Civil War and the War of 1812 clear of ghosts, undead, and demons. Although the Inquisition's numbers were increasing, so too were their territories, and thus they were still spread too thin. As in the previous age, the occult capitalized on this.

The Inquisition was busy protecting mankind from supernatural threats, so the occult was mostly ignored. Because of this, they were able to watch the Inquisition and how they used their clockwork devices to combat or subdue the supernatural. As the Modern Age rolled into the Victorian era, the occult, along with many other opportunists, began hunting relics throughout North and South America.

Relic hunters were able to confiscate a large quantity of artifacts, hundreds to thousands of years old, many of which had some type of supernatural property. While this worked against the ideals of the Inquisition, the relic hunters were more interested in learning about these ancient cultures and placing the relics in museums than harnessing their innate power. The occult, however, had much different ideas. They too spent countless years scouring North and South America for relics and spells scrawled on walls and tab-

lets. Somehow, they were able to combine these ancient energies and rituals with clockwork devices.

As the Victorian era rolled on, mankind became more cultured and the thought of global cooperation between nations took hold. Global trade ensued and migration across the globe became commonplace. However, within the darkest depths of humanity's population, the occult plotted the next Fall. With the knowledge they acquired during the Middle Ages regarding powerful beings from faraway mortal realms, combined with the relics and rituals of the Americas powered by clockwork devices, the occult was able to breach the spiritual realm and connect with those distant mortal realms.

These breaches were cosmic portals, similar to the cosmic bridges Mashda described, allowing alien beings passage from their mortal realm to Earth. Because the occult was spread throughout the universe, many of the beings had occult abilities and even knowledge about Earth's past. More and more beings were brought over and the occult consumed more and more knowledge, energy, and ancient abilities, allowing them to grow significantly in power.

Unlike the cosmic bridges Mashda described, the portals weren't a massive migration of populations of alien beings; rather they were particular beings the occult was specifically reaching out to, allowing them passage to Earth. However, there apparently were a lot of beings the occult contacted and brought to Earth. Within a couple years, the occult was able to amass an incredible force of cultists backed by powerful alien beings in the hopes of bringing about the second Fall. The Inquisition had to act quickly.

REORGANIZATION

Unlike the Dark Ages, the occult was not backed by hordes of undead and demons. Instead of choosing a full assault against mankind, they moved to perform precision strikes against those who actively opposed them. With the opposition out of the way, most civilizations would be easy to overcome as they would be completely overwhelmed by the concepts of the occult, the supernatural, and

In the dawning years of the Industrial Revolution, the United States of America began expanding well past the thirteen colonies. This presented the Inquisition with another problem, much like the original expansion to the New World; there simply weren't enough inquisitors to protect the people as they migrated westward. This activity would eventually lead to the second Coming of the Occult.

The occult snatched the initiative and reorganized well ahead of the Inquisition. During the early years of the Victorian era, the occult began what is essentially networking their multitudes of sects so that they could work together to make precision strikes against the Inquisition. Due to the thinning of the Inquisition during the migrations occurring globally, these attacks were serious setbacks to the organization.

The occult's precision attacks led to a new uprising of the evil within mankind, forming what the Inquisition calls the second Coming of the Occult, the first being the activities that led to The Fall. The occult was growing incredibly strong and the Inquisition struggled to fight back. After swallowing its pride and calling upon other organizations, the Inquisition prevailed and determined it too must reorganize to prevent another disaster, such as this one during the Victorian era.

the alien beings they had recruited. Due to mankind's ignorance during the previous six hundred years, they would never be able to handle the truth.

The occult organized hundreds of precision attacks across the world, during a span of four years, against the Inquisition, Illuminati, and what remained of every other surviving secret organization. Due to the Inquisition's lack of proper organization and numbers, these precision attacks were devastating; the grand inquisitors were forced to do something drastic.

The grand inquisitors, with the assistance of the Church and the cooperation of all allied secret organizations, determined the only way to eliminate

the occult's efforts was through proper planning and organization. The goal was simple: with teams placed in key locations around the world, they could quickly strike back at the occult. (Although it's not well documented, I believe The Fallen also played an important part in keeping the occult from bringing about the second Fall. Otherwise, how was humanity able to prevail when its protective forces were weakened?)

Four grand inquisitors were eventually assigned to each continent, except Antarctica. Each grand inquisitor was assigned six lord inquisitors. Each lord inquisitor was tasked with assembling a team of scholars and hunters to fight the occult threat. These individuals were taken from what remained of the Inquisition, its allied organizations, and armies around the world.

By properly organizing the Inquisition, the occult threats were swiftly eliminated by the end of the Victorian era. Strike teams were able to respond quickly as they were located near where the occult would attack (as opposed to before where strike teams may be so far away the occult was gone by the time they arrived). The Inquisition was able to stay better informed about where the occult was by concentrating on intelligence as much as they did field encounters.

Four years after the end of the Victorian era, the Inquisition was fully reorganized into the manner they still exhibit today, the occult threat had been eliminated, and the concept of using mercenaries was born. After spending another four years investigating how the occult was able to form such a formidable force, it was determined that clockwork devices were enhancing their abilities. All clockwork technology was deemed heretical and outlawed by the Inquisition. However, by the time World War I broke out, clockwork technology was obsolete and mostly forgotten.

PSIONS

APRIL 16, 2004

Sometime during the early years of the 20th century, the first signs of psionic abilities appeared. No one has definitive knowledge of how these abilities form, nor does anyone seem to understand how they work. The only conclusion any of the Inquisitional texts come to is that psionics are real and those who have the ability know how to manifest them. However, when interviewed, psions don't have an answer for why they can manifest these powers, just that they can.

In an age where all those who wield magic were considered a witch and hunted by the Inquisition, approaching the concept of psionics required serious consideration. When the first case fell under the eye of the Inquisition, it was during World War I and the individual was hiding for fear of being tried like the witches in Salem. However, when the Inquisition came knocking on his door, they approached him with extreme caution and curiosity instead of a desire to lock him up and try him as a witch. The lead inquisitor was determined to investigate the matter, not purge the individual.

The Inquisition has buried the man's name for some unknown reason (only those involved would know, but they're all dead). They brought him to the Inquisition's headquarters in New York and spent a countless number of months investigating the man's abilities. Their findings are well-documented, although their experiments are kept secret.

After their investigation, the Inquisition determined psionic abilities were a manifestation of mankind, and not a creation of occult knowledge. In other words, it wasn't magic, it was human evolution. The power of psionics comes directly from the mind and one's ability to control the world around them using only their mind. It does not require knowledge of the realms nor does it require any residual power left on Earth. It's the next step in humanity as our Earthly forms move to a better method of controlling our surroundings through the power of the mind.

Due to the Inquisition's findings of psionics not being related to the occult or ancient magic, it was deemed legal and is now the only form of supernatural power allowed by the Inquisition. Of course, these powers are probably too much for most humans to understand, and thus need to be kept secret; at least until mankind can accept them without causing worldwide panic. To achieve this, the Inquisition continu-

Psions were first discovered during the early years of the 20th century, becoming a prized possession of the Inquisition (and a feared enemy should one decide otherwise). Recruitment was typically forced, but the Inquisition couldn't allow psions to go on unchecked, fearing they would unleash their powers against mankind and cause another uprising of the occult, or the organization of a deadlier foe.

ously scoured the globe to find humans gifted with psionics abilities and recruited them into the Inquisition. This was the active order into the 21st century.

Psionics was not a common occurrence. It was an extremely rare manifestation within humans and thankfully only a dozen cases had been reported, or at least discovered, by the time World War II had ended. Should psionics have been a prominent feature in either war, things could have gone horribly wrong. Those powers are nothing to mess with and their use during a world war could have been devastating. I cannot imagine a force of psions marching across a battlefield.

After almost 90 years of investigation, the Inquisition has found no proof of ill side-effects from single individuals manifesting psionic powers. However, they have found that when a group of psions manifest together, residual energy is left behind that causes natural vegetation to rot and can 'alter' animals that come into contact with it. This is similar to a mutation, but all animals have been killed immediately after the incident, preventing further investigation (no one knows, or wants to know, how bad a mutation can get). Thus, the Inquisition has mandated that no psion can work in the field with another psion.

Two psions rarely show residual side-effects, but the Inquisition aims to be as safe as possible. Their field trials have shown that when at least four psions manifest together, there is always residual energy left behind. Any more than that and the residual energy gets worse. Should an army form, who knows what would happen.

NAZIS AND THE OCCULT

MARCH 13, 2006

Since the early years of the Crusades, and probably thousands of years before that, secret organizations have existed working with, against, or in parallel with the occult. However, throughout the recorded history of these organizations, none have been more visible in their dealings than the National Socialist German Workers Party, more commonly referred to as the Nazi Party.

Besides their well-documented rise to power in Germany and involvement in World War II, the Nazi Party, and their leader Adolf Hitler, were stark proponents of the occult and yearned to research everything they could about its history.

After the occult outbreak in the Victorian era, the existence of the occult was virtually impossible to hide from the world. Rumors ran from one end of the globe to the other about what the occult was and how they attempted to overthrow the world. Much of the occult's abilities were still considered folklore and

During the years before World War II, the Nazi Party organized forces to seek out esoteric knowledge of the occult and other items hidden away throughout history. It's assumed these investigations were launched due to an apostate turning from their occult roots to the Thule Society or that the Thule Society was actually an occult organization working for the Nazi Party.



its true history was never revealed. Although the occult did possess ancient texts depicting pieces of their past, most of what was discovered during the Victorian era by the occult, and the relic hunters, had been recovered by the Inquisition, Illuminati, or safely stored in museums where it could never be touched.

The Nazi Party consisted of a handful of occult members who still carried the knowledge of what was discovered during the Victorian era. These members were actively being hunted by the Inquisition, but once the Nazi Party formed, they fell under the protection of an entire army that prevented the Inquisition from ever getting near. During the years leading up to World War II, the Nazi Party documented everything these members knew about the occult and its true past. Once their initial investigation was complete, they laid out a roadmap for discovering the truth about Earth's past and how to tap into the residual energy that remained. What no one knows, as it's kept from every historical text and investigation, is that the Nazi Party was determined to launch an army of witches, warlocks, and ethermancers against the Allies.

The idea of the Axis having magic wielders in their army was tortuous. Even the Illuminati, determined to expose the Inquisition, knew that allowing the Nazi Party access to the true history of the occult and its ability to readily tap into ancient energy was devastating for not just the Allies, but all of mankind. While the Allied forces were combating the Axis on the battlefield, the Inquisition, with



the reluctant help of the Illuminati, was battling every Nazi investigator attempting to discern more about the true history of the occult or making attempts to harness residual energy. The Inquisitional library even makes mention of assistance from The Fallen when a Nazi Party member was successful in discovering the secrets of ancient magic.

During the war, assassinations were successful in eliminating these Nazi threats. Although the Allied Forces were successful in destroying many of the Nazi camps, their most powerful leaders and occult investigators were all located in underground tunnels and facilities designed to keep them safe from attack. It took stealth and subterfuge from undercover agents and covert teams to win the war against the Nazi's newfound occult. Without them, the Allies wouldn't have stood a chance against an army of occult magic-wielders.

SUMMONING GATEWAYS

AUGUST 14, 2009

After witnessing it firsthand, I found it necessary to research the occult's summoning gateways.

During the Victorian era, the occult had utilized clockwork technology to create powerful gateways that could create a wormhole-like creation through the spiritual realm to reach a distant mortal realm. After the Inquisition finally stopped the occult from bringing about another apocalypse, the technology was all destroyed and the designs were burned. Those who know how to build the devices were killed, regardless if they were members of the occult or not. All traces of these devices were removed from Earth to avoid any possible future uses.

After World War II and the fall of the Nazi Party, the occult went back into hiding and began investigating other ways to contact their masters (or possible slaves) within other mortal realms. Instead of attempting a new technology that may not work, the occult went back to ancient ways of summoning distant beings through group rituals.

Group rituals are fairly simple: a group of cultists support a single magic-wielding leader as they perform a ritual to open a summoning gateway. Through devotion and concentration, this group may succeed in opening their gateway, bringing their master, or a creature to enslave, from its native mortal realm to Earth. What happens afterward depends on the cult and their leader, but the Inquisition will attempt to stop whatever the group has planned.

One of the Inquisition's most important activities now is combating these group rituals, the summoning gateways they form, and whatever creature is brought through. Since the end of World War II, the occult has been responsible for the introduction of a number of aliens into Earth that overwhelm even the Inquisition. This includes the large amorphous being sightings and other monstrous beings that seem to come from a fantasy novel. The only good news we have is that these creatures are alone in their travels. Should an army of them

arrive on Earth, mankind would be doomed and the occult would triumph. These aliens are more horrific than any the Inquisition has experienced in the past.

LONE WOLF

OCTOBER 12, 2011

After serving in the Inquisition for thirteen years, I have become a full purgator and granted the title lord inquisitor. I've made Chicago my home, although my grand inquisitor speaks of transferring me to Minneapolis while allowing me to keep my home in Chicago as a getaway. There is already a lord inquisitor in the Chicago area but the one in Minneapolis was killed a couple months ago. Transfers usually take a lot of time though and it may not happen for about two years.

Today marks the day I transition into my new position with new responsibilities. No longer will I have time available to perform historical research within the Inquisitional library outside of the missions I'm on. Being a lord inquisitor means you have to maintain a retinue, contacts, and allies along with training new scholars and inquisitors.

I've been assigned to the region of Chicago through Minnesota giving me northern Illinois, northern Iowa, all of Wisconsin, and all of Minnesota. This may seem like a quiet area, but in fact the lands of the Midwest are bustling with occult and supernatural activity. My job is rarely quiet and the continued search for new inquisitors means I rarely have a chance to relax.

It is thus that I close this chapter of my Inquisitional career and end my research into the history of the organization. Instead, my journal will be filled with entries regarding real-life experiences from the missions I or my team of inquisitors performed.

I am on my own now. Most of my missions will be performed alone or alongside my retinue and only my most trusted allies will be called upon. I have now become the inquisitor that the occult fear the most, the lone wolf. No longer will I have to rely upon a lord inquisitor who fetters my abilities. I can hunt and purge and rid this land of the plague that hides within the shadows.

With clockwork technology well behind them, the occult set out to discover new ways to summon their supernatural or otherworldly masters to Earth. However, instead of turning to technology, they returned to the occult's roots from centuries ago and began performing sophisticated rituals headed by a powerful hierophant to break through the fabric and summon a new monster to Earth.

When an inquisitor is promoted to purgator and is allowed to break away from their lord inquisitor, they're referred to as a lone wolf. They are given the choice of forming a retinue or continuing their investigations alone, calling upon others when assistance is needed (such as hiring mercenaries).

RADICAL

AUGUST 8, 2014

Many of my colleagues fear me. Many of them detest my methods. Many of them respect me to my face but wish to stab me while my back is turned. I've been called a radical more than once, but maybe it's radical thinking that will win this eternal war.

No one in the Inquisition truly knows my connections to The Fallen. No one truly understands who I consider a contact and who I hunt down to extinction. I do not see the world through the same eyes as the Inquisition. I see the world through the eyes of a man that knows more than any human should ever know.

We are not alone in this world, and the only way to survive is to call upon every last ally we can find to stand against the true horrors of this realm and every realm. An apocalypse is brewing; I can feel it.

As the Inquisition steps into the 21st century, many inquisitors are turning to radical ideas and methods for combating the supernatural. This is forming a bit of a disconnect within the organization between those who stick to traditional protocol (called traditionalists) and those who employ radical means (called radicals).



NEW AGE

In Shadowed Earth, 2015 marks the beginning of the New Age. Federal debt became overwhelming to many countries while corporations continued to turn a healthy profit. Seeing an opportunity arise, the largest of the corporations decided to step in and "assist" the failing governments by buying the rights to that particular nation, creating a mash-up of democracy and corporate executive control.

MARCH 15, 2053

That brings my recounts up to date. Upon becoming lord inquisitor, I stopped researching history; the rest of my career was spent tracking cultists and the supernatural. My journals are filled with retellings of missions and what I discovered. Much of it was repeated in reports filed with my superiors, but the whole truth could only be found in my journals. Thanks to a silent

friend, those journals were hidden within a pocket between the spiritual and mortal realms. Only I and my friend knew the incantation to open that pocket. If the Inquisition knew of it, I would have been tried and killed.

No one would ever understand why I withheld this from my superiors. The truth is, the only reason I know the truth is because Mashda and Drac'thau needed someone to understand the hidden history and change the Inquisition's view of The Fallen, the dragons, and probably the entire concept of the cosmic realm. Many of my missions were only successful because of this knowledge, since I was able to reach out to both, treating them as allies. However, I was never able to sway the Inquisition's view.

This knowledge could be crucial as humanity moves away from the Modern Age and into what people are calling the New Age. I fear for all of humanity as we usher in this new era. Evil is growing and the Inquisition may not be able to stop it.

GOVERNMENT COLLAPSE

The true beginnings of the New Age were around 2015 when the first corporate entity became a nation unto itself. One by one, countries fell into deep debt and declared some type of government bankruptcy. As this happened, major corporations began to step in and supply funding for public services. Former government employees started drawing their wages from these corporations, who had the resources to keep the country going and assets to prevent a depression.

Government employees were able to keep their jobs, but fell under the whims of the corporations' executive officers. Unlike the 20th century where corporations simply backed government officials, these officials had to make all their decisions according to corporate wishes. Positions like mayors and governors were still necessary to run cities and states, but they lost their ultimate power to



make changes. All major decisions were forced to run through the corporation's executive office before the mayors and governors could gain final approval.

Presidents and Prime Ministers were also still necessary, but they were instead treated like a business Vice President and not the leaders of their country. One major thing the corporations didn't change was the power of the people to elect government officials. Officials still had to run and win the votes as they always have; there was just another level of government above them – the corporation's executive office.

As the years went by and more and more governments were taken over by major corporations, all government jobs were dictated by the corporations. Instead of a mayor being the highest authority for all city employees, new business units were created to manage those employees. High-ranking government officials were turned into administrative roles within the corporation for dealing with the public. Governments became just another part of the corporate world. But, as long as the people were getting paid and the countries remained solvent, people were generally happy.

Around 2040, governments were allowed to break away from the corporations. All previously government-run services were still owned by the corporations, and nothing was going to change that. Public matters now fell strictly under these new governments, but they were only allowed to collect a small amount of the available taxes to keep running. They became considerably smaller than they were before, but they also had considerably fewer responsibilities. Most government officials were forced to keep their regular jobs along with serving as government officials. The term thrown around most often was "Minimalist Government."

Since then, these governments handle all public matters concerning national and international relations, the welfare of their residents, and public safety concerns. Should these dealings involve corporate assets or services, the governments are forced to petition the corporation either for approval or as a proposal for the corporation to act upon. Although they don't have total control of local authorities or the military, they can easily make a request for services, should the need arise. They do have the ability to establish the laws agreed upon by their residents, which are in turn enforced by the local authorities on corporate pay-rolls, as this falls under the general welfare of their residents.

This formula of government outreach to the community while corporations provide all the jobs has worked well and countries are beginning to turn around rapidly. Unfortunately, the corporations have taken it upon themselves to form covert teams to do their dirty work, operating outside of local authorities and the military. This has made enforcing government laws much more difficult, but the corporations seem to spend most of their time attacking each other and leave the residents alone.

From the standpoint of the Inquisition, this has made our jobs considerably more difficult, as combating the occult and the supernatural is harder to hide from these covert teams.

CORPORATE OPERATIONS

As the corporations got larger and the governments got smaller, there was a severe alteration in the flow of money. As countries became less and less dependent on their governments, their militaries became unnecessary, as no one's launching attacks on other countries. The corporations replaced most standing armies with much more affordable, highly skilled teams of mercenaries and soldiers to perform covert operations against other corporations.

Militaries in large countries, such as the United States, still exist, but they have been relegated to national defense only. In fact, most of them spend their time dealing with natural disaster relief than they ever do defending the country from military attacks. The corporations understand the importance of maintaining a military, but it's becoming obvious that their use has changed considerably since 2040 as war is a rare occurrence in countries controlled by the corporations. It seems they believe money is better spent on subterfuge than on open warfare.

As the corporations continue spending money on their covert teams, there has been an increase in clashes with the Inquisition. Sometimes this is purely an accident as the two cross paths during missions, but sometimes it appears the covert teams are hunting the same threats as the Inquisition. Being that the Inquisition is backed by corporations, billionaires concerned with their assets, and the Church, they may be attempting to rid the world of the Inquisition and rid the world of the occult themselves. However, the corporations don't understand the occult and the supernatural like the Inquisition does and thus have never been able to eliminate any serious threats. They are simply getting in the way and preventing us from doing our jobs.

When corporate covert operatives come into contact with magic-wielding cultists or horrific supernatural nightmares, it usually drives them mad. The Inquisition has had to deal with numerous cases like this, resulting in the individual being psychically scrubbed of their memories.

This act of corporate buy-out became quite frequent, but the people rejoiced as they saw new jobs appear alongside regular paychecks. The corporations reduced government overhead and red tape to minimal levels and allowed government officials to continue functioning while maintaining regular jobs. Without the need to govern what became corporate assets and services, these government officials found the minimalist design to be advantageous to all.

Corporate desires began to spread rapidly as government programs were replaced with corporate operations, such as an army being replaced by an elite strike force. With the world becoming so dominated by corporations, war on a grand-scale was eliminated, moving to guerilla tactics and espionage activities. This soon got in the way of Inquisitional activities, leading to unnecessary clashes between the organization and the corporations.



As we move into the New Age, the corporations are becoming as much of an interference as the secret organizations of old. This has caused a lot of Inquisitional purges of the occult to fail, which has led to the third coming of the occult.

3RD COMING OF THE OCCULT

The Inquisition refers to the new rise of the occult as the third Coming of the Occult. The first was during the Dark Ages and resulted in The Fall. The second was during the Victorian era, thwarted thanks to the Inquisition and others. This third coming is being fueled by the chaos of this New Age and all the changes that have happened in the past thirty years. While I'd like to blame the corporations and their covert teams for getting in the way, the true source of the occult's power lies in the new cybernetic technology.

The Inquisition does not have the authority to make decisions like it did in the Victorian era when it outlawed clockwork technology. Corporations are driving the research and production of cybernetics and are thus declaring them legal. Although the general populace doesn't have access to cybernetics, the corporation's covert teams, the Inquisition, the Illuminati, and somehow the occult, do. Just like the occult did with clockwork devices, they have found ways to enhance their summoning abilities using cybernetics.

The Inquisition has yet to discover how the occult is using cybernetics to enhance their rituals as all investigations have led to dead-ends. Clockwork devices were free-standing and their use in a ritual was easy to observe. Cybernetics are enhancements of the human body and only the user truly knows how to harness that device during the ritual. To keep the Inquisition away from this inside information, cultists using cybernetics for summoning kill themselves before being taken into custody.

Very little has been discerned from witnessing the occult's new rituals. We don't know if they are channeling their energy through the spiritual realm, like with clockwork technology, to span the cosmos or if their cybernetics simply enhances their magic. Either way, the occult has been able to easily pull aliens from other mortal realms to Earth and even learned how to breach the chaos realm.

The new armies of the occult are now on the rise.

CYBERNETICS AND PSIONICS

In today's underground world, cybernetics have become commonplace. The Inquisition, Illuminati, occult, and corporate covert teams all use them (although I choose to remain cybernet-



With the full acceptance of cybernetics, strike forces, inquisitors, and even cultists became empowered by technology. Mankind truly started winning the fight against the supernatural, with many species being completely eradicated from Earth. However, the occult has a way of evolving and adapting, taking new technology and finding ways to harness it for their malevolent purposes. This is leading to the third Coming of the Occult.



ic-free). The technology has a definite place in the fight against the occult and apparently the fight against other corporations (of which the Inquisition stays away from). The technology is not cheap though, and the Inquisition and Illuminati have to stretch their funds to pay for cybernetic implants. The most common users are the corporate covert teams as they have no problem funding these human enhancements and often times are the ones developing the technology. We still don't know how the occult acquired them, though.

Cybernetics is being called the next breakthrough in mankind's evolution, much like psionics was over a hundred years ago. The general populace doesn't truly understand how right they are in their assumption. It's not that cybernetics will help humanity live longer, but it does allow them to overcome deadly illnesses and, more importantly, gives the Inquisition an advantage over certain denizens of the supernatural world. By utilizing cybernetics, the Inquisition has been able to permanently rid the world of some of its supernatural threats.

When we coupled our new cybernetic technology with the power of psionics, the Inquisition was able to overcome much of the occult threat since the dawn of the millennium. Due to our belief that only psionics are acceptable and all forms of magic are heretical, we have a way to keep our inquisitors safe when they go toe-to-toe with the deadly spellcasters. Two-hundred years ago, inquisitors struggled and had to rely on strength in numbers. Since our numbers were limited, groups of inquisitors had to team-up to get the job done. Nowadays, our numbers are much greater, but our tools are even more so.

However, as humanity enters the New Age, the occult is starting to win... again.

SUPERNATURAL THREAT

Cybernetics and psionics have played a bigger part in this world than humanity realizes. Because of it, the Inquisition has managed to rid the world of all therianthropic creatures along with their druidic lineage. Therianthropic cults and druidic families have found they are no longer a match for the Inquisition or the encroaching civilizations of mankind. They can't hold back the humans from settling even the remotest wilderness and have thus given up hope. Around five years ago, the last sign of any therianthrope was spotted. Since then, we believe they are all gone.

Therianthropes are not the only ones to succumb to the upcoming New Age. Other than Drac'thau, the dragons have all left or been killed. Granted, there weren't many around, but encounters with dragons were extremely dangerous and few survived. Cybernetics changed that, and the dragons that remained left, fearing for their lives. Drac'thau is protected by Mashda's magic and spends most of his life looking like another human. He fears his time too is coming to an end. Besides, there are new mortal realms forming in the vast universe that need the protection of the dragons.

Necromancy has all but disappeared as well. Most undead creatures are no match for cybernetics and psionics, and thus their necromantic puppeteers are abandoning their powers. There's no point in creating an undead army as they



will never survive an encounter with the Inquisition. It's been rumored that only the most formidable necromancers still remain on Earth, practicing their magic for the purpose of creating powerful undead creatures and not wasting their time on building undead armies. However, just like the therianthropes, it's been five years without any signs of activity.

DEMON CULTS

All of this reduction in supernatural threats may feel like mankind finally overcoming the occult and their supernatural kin, but it's far from the truth. Yes the Inquisition has been able to concentrate their efforts on more pressing issues, but those pressing issues are becoming extremely volatile. The one we are all most concerned about is the rise of the demon cults.

The demon cults have become more and more dangerous since the 1990s. Not only do they utilize chaos magic, they have also discovered how to harness blood magic and use the power of sacrificing humans to increase their rituals for summoning demons. They're continuing the practices from many centuries ago where a human serves as a vessel for a demon, becoming possessed by that demon to gain supernatural powers. What usually happens is the human vessel is all but destroyed by that demon and becomes little more than an empty shell after the demon no longer needs him.

The demon cultists care little for the vessel, and the sacrificed human, as the demon becomes their master and they its slaves – except for the warlock that summoned the demon and the hierophant that empowered the ritual. In

turn, the demon provides the power needed for the slaves to become imbued with the essence of a demonic being, becoming what the Inquisition calls a chaotic human. These chaotic humans are able to harness some aspect of the chaos realm's supernatural powers, but can still be overcome by a trained inquisitor. This method has one devastating side-effect: if the demon is banished, the chaotic humans retain their abilities, but are freed from their demonic master. When this happens, the chaotic humans often roam about, causing destruction everywhere they go. With a demonic master, they are typically isolated around the demon or at least herded into a much smaller region. This makes hunting them much easier. Without this connection, we must scour the land searching for every last one.

Demon possession is a common feature of all demon cults, but sometimes they take it another step. Instead of presenting a single vessel for a strong demon to be brought into the mortal realm, the demon cults present all their most powerful to become one with a demon of lesser strength. Instead of becoming chaotic humans, they become massive, demon-like beings with human features. These particular demon cults are usually the ones that are sent after inquisitors or members of the Illuminati to kill.

When the Inquisition is able to kill one of these human-like demons, we always find cybernetics implanted on the body. This leads us to believe the cybernetics allow them to call upon so many demons and prevent those demons from turning the human into a simple vessel to be destroyed at any given time. When their rituals are observed, their warlocks always use cybernetics, to a much greater extent than those being possessed by the demons. None of these humans or human-like demons has been taken alive for interrogation.

Bestial and undead beings are little match for the newly empowered mankind. They have mostly disappeared and are no longer considered a threat. Those that do exist fear mankind much more than mankind fears them. Instead of relying on beasts and necrotic energy, the occult has started focusing their efforts on demons. The Inquisition calls them Demon Cults and their influence is spreading rapidly.

ALIEN CULTS

Assisting the demon cults in launching the occult into its third coming are the alien cults. These cults have been working for centuries to bring their alien masters (beings from other mortal realms) to Earth for worship and conquest. During the Victorian era, alien cults were the source behind the second Coming of the Occult and went quiet once their clockwork technology was stripped from them. As the new millennium neared, the alien cults began working again to bring their masters to Earth. That time they used psions that escaped the clutches of the Inquisition, but they mostly found failure as the psions couldn't offer enough power for the necessary ritual. Cybernetics, however, are playing a different story.

Alongside the demon cults is an influx of what the Inquisition calls Alien Cults. These cults are using ancient rituals to summon horrific creatures from across the stars to Earth. These beings are extremely dangerous and quite difficult to defeat. As quickly as mankind gained a leg-up on the supernatural, otherworldly beings are forcing them back down.

As with the demon cults, the cultist leaders of the alien cults are utilizing cybernetics to enhance their rituals. Although we still haven't been able to study the use, we believe the basic cybernetic use is to strengthen the bond between the cult's leader, performing the ritual, and all his followers. By strengthening that bond, we believe the gateways formed to cross the universe are strong enough to bring the being to Earth. Albeit speculation, the Inquisition is sure that by breaking the perceived bond between the cult's fol-

lowers and their leader, we can prevent that alien being from ever reaching Earth. No one has tested that theory and lived.

Unlike demons, aliens, without the aid of the cosmic bridges, do not arrive in droves. Instead, they arrive one-by-one or accompanied by a cadre of their minions. We have yet to discover an alien incursion backed by dozens of powerful aliens. Instead, it is typically one very strong alien and its cult slaves or one strong alien and a handful of weak minions. This has made combating them easier, but locating them harder. The alien cults are able to hide their ritual locations as they don't attract quite the attention a demon cult does.

When an alien is brought to Earth, it doesn't unleash its fury upon humanity. It finds a place to live and seems to prefer communicating only to its cultists. It may provide them with power or the promise of a New World, but keeps quiet until "the time is right." When that time comes, that's usually the first time the Inquisition learns of the cult and their alien master. This is when they choose to strike and the Inquisition is forced to scramble their forces. The resulting encounter is always violent and bloody, but nothing compared to an encounter with a demon cult.

To this day, we've only encountered five alien masters in one incursion. This may be the result of multiple cults coming together, or a single cult that was able to hide their alien masters for quite a long time. We don't know how difficult the rituals are to summon these aliens, but given their numbers, we assume it's quite difficult. If the rituals were easier, we'd probably see a lot more aliens and encounter these cults more frequently.

Alien cults are referred to as sleeper cults. They are patient, stealthy, and choose their battles appropriately. We don't know how many exist and we don't know how many aliens may actually be residing on Earth. There is also the possibility that these cults are biding their time until the occult has become powerful enough to overcome the Inquisition and Illuminati before unleashing their alien masters across the world. This last theory scares even the Inquisition.

THE LOOMING APOCALYPSE

As humanity officially enters the New Age, another apocalypse is looming. Threats from the occult have been building as they combine their rituals with cybernetic implants. The demon cults have been surfacing more often and their violent outbreaks have become bolder. The alien cults are definitely out there and the Inquisition has to spend a lot of resources looking for

them. To make matters worse, spellcasters rarely operate alone anymore and instead choose to combine their motivations with those of the cults that surround them. Even necromancers can be found within the ranks of demon and alien cults and witch covens. Witch covens, combined with sorcerers, are larger than ever before. The occult is starting to work together, much like they did before The Fall.

After the formation of the Inquisition, and the purges of the occult during the crusades, many cults became disconnected from each other and went underground for protection. They stayed this way for several hundred years, even during the Victorian era and the second Coming of the Occult. While they were bringing powerful beings to Earth, the combined efforts of the Inquisition, Illuminati, and The Fallen, while not properly organized, were able to overcome the mostly disconnected occult. With the occult coming together after the turn of the millennium, they're growing in overall power like they did during the Dark Ages. Even the highly-organized strength of the Inquisition is becoming taxed by the might of the occult. The apocalypse is nearing.

It's time for something drastic.

As mankind becomes wholly absorbed in the New Age, a new apocalypse is looming overhead. The occult is starting to regroup once again and their combined might could spell disaster to mankind.

FINAL GOOD-BYE

MARCH 16, 2053

My memoirs are complete; fully dictated on this voice recorder. As I finish my last entry, I light a fire and gaze into the flames. My condo has changed little since I bought it almost 60 years ago, and I chose not to get rid of the real fireplace.

This voice recorder contains more damning information than anyone can be privy to know; even those in the Inquisition. I throw it into the flames and watch as it melts and becomes useless. No one can know my story, and no one can know the truth about history. The written word is dangerous enough, and the Inquisition operates better if they only know what they've discovered through their long centuries of struggle. Any more than that and an untrustworthy inquisitor could have access to the most devastating information humanity has ever learnt. Information that would break the minds of everyone, allowing the occult to rip through the veil of naivety the Inquisition has worked so hard to uphold.

No, only The Fallen may know the truth about history, unless another, worthy inquisitor comes along. It's the duty of the Inquisition to keep mankind safe, but it is the duty of The Fallen to keep history safe. It is thus that I have made a drastic decision.

No grand inquisitor has ever lived to see retirement. They have all died in the field or succumbed to some type of "accident." I have reached an age for retirement, but I can feel the Inquisition breathing down my neck, ready to take me out at any moment. I will not give them the chance; I will beat them to it.

There is a knock on the door. I open it and smile, greeting the only true friends I have left. "Hello Mashda. Hello Drac'thau," I say.

"It is good to see you again Bishop," Mashda replies.

"Your English has improved incredibly."

"When you're as old as I, you have time to learn new languages! Besides, we thought it would be easier to blend in if we spoke the language." Mashda was beaming with excitement. His smile was either due to his expertise with English, and my recognition of it, or for what was about to come.

Drac'thau spoke. "My dear old friend, it is wonderful to see you again, and your decision is one that could help all your kind." The dragon looks incredibly human under the disguise of Mashda's power, of which they've perfected over the decades.

"Mashda," I say, "have you mastered driving?"

"Mostly, but Chicago confuses me and I'd rather let you drive and I'll navigate."

"Let's go."

In my early years of being an inquisitor, after serving many years as a scholar, I was moved from Chicago to Minneapolis to fill a vacancy. I chose to keep my condo in Chicago and live in a modest apartment in downtown Minneapolis. When I was named inquisitorial judge, I was moved back to Chicago and back into my condo. I managed to spend a few weeks a year in that condo while living

in Minneapolis; otherwise it was tended by a maid service. I always felt at home in Chicago, since it was where I grew up. I let the Inquisition know this and asked to one day be returned to my real home. When I became grand inquisitor, I was able to stay here.

The city has changed as much as I have over the past decades. Although the landscape looks different and the metro region has grown, it still feels like the Chicago I've always known. Mankind, however, does not.

Mankind seems to change faster than the cities they live in. Fads come and go and what's in fashion today is merely a glimpse of the past tomorrow. This is how the New Age feels and it will only get worse if the apocalypse actually comes. What you see today may not be around in five years. Yes, the collapse of the governments resulted in a lot of political and financial changes, but humanity as a whole still looked the same. But introducing cybernetics into our daily lives made everyone a little different.

As I drive across the freeway, I contemplate everything I've seen in my life and what may come. I think about the changing face of humanity and how the corporations bailed out the failing governments. I think about what the Inquisition has had to deal with in the past and what they'll have to deal with in the future. More importantly, I think about how I can keep all of mankind safe. My decision is the only solution I can conceive.

We arrive at our destination and I look over at Mashda in the passenger seat. He is deep in contemplation, hopefully making sure this is the right place.

"This is the right place?" I ask him.

"Yes. I've been here before and remember this entry." Mashda's face relaxes as he seems to mentally note landmarks he's seen before. "Ah yes. I see your welcoming party ahead."

I pull into a clearing and notice a few other vehicles parked ahead. A group of humanoids concealed in robes lines a path into the woods. "Are they with you?" I ask Mashda. He nods his head, indicating they are all members of The Fallen.

"Are you nervous Bishop?"

"No. I have accepted my true place in this realm." My words are confident, but my body language is not. Of course I am nervous.

We pass through the line of Fallen members with only brief eye contact. They are all friends of Mashda, but none of them truly know me. Mashda walks next to me with his head held high, avoiding undue eye contact with me. He can sense my regret, but doesn't want to see it on my face. We come upon a very large clearing with a circle of stones in the center. "What is this place?" I ask.

"It is an old druidic circle, teeming with residual energy. It is a shame the therianthropes have died off as they were very good at protecting the wilderness." Mashda points toward the stone circle. "You will lie on the stone altar in the center. Please remove your clothes."

My heart races as I cross the clearing and step into the stone circle. The residual energy within the circle is so strong that even I can feel it. I remove my clothing and glance around, seeing The Fallen members forming a circle around the altar.



I lie down on the altar. The stone is cold and sends chills up and down my back. Mashda stands over me and looks down.

"Do not worry my friend. The ritual will only take a minute or two. Once it's complete, you will be able to enter your next life." Mashda's face turns quite serious as he pulls a ritual dagger from his belt.

And plunges it into my heart.

I am a mortal being. My body is tied to this mortal realm and my essence is tied to the spiritual realm. As Mashda plunges the ritual dagger into my heart, my spirit leaves my body and breaks through the fabric between the mortal and spiritual realms.

I was born with a sixth sense and could see into the spiritual realm. Being within the spiritual realm is completely different than peering into it, though. Everything looks different, surreal. I can see the world around me and another layer: the spiritual realm. It is as if the two live together and apart at the same time. I had never learned to be a realm walker and thus never experienced this. This is completely foreign to me.

One would think that passing through the fabric between realms would break your sanity. But as your spirit leaves your body, the mind breaks free of its human shackles and sees things in a different light. Nothing appears frightening, but rather comfortable. The spiritual realm feels like warmth I've never experienced.

This must be what the Christians call Heaven. This is the afterlife that everyone experiences upon death. This is the comfort of knowing your essence doesn't end when your human body does.

As I look at the world around me, I see Mashda approach. "Is this a dream world?" I ask him.

"No my friend. This is the world that you experience after you leave your mortal body. This is the world I've traveled through during my long life."

"So why am I here?"

"All mortals come here after they die. This is where your spirit lives. Your human body is only temporary. When you are reincarnated, you come here before traveling back to the mortal realm. But for all of eternity, this is your real home."

"So now what happens?"

"It is time for me to bring you back."

I grab Mashda's hand as he pulls me back through the fabric and into the mortal realm. I can see the other members of The Fallen surrounding me, chanting something, lending their power to the ritual.

Mashda lifts my spirit into the air and lowers it down back into my body. "The ritual is complete!" he proclaims.

I open my eyes and look around. "Did it work?"

Mashda smiles and nods. "Welcome to The Fallen, Bishop Steel."

I am a near-immortal being. I used to be a human, working for the Inquisition. My name was Grand Inquisitor Black Steel. Now my name is Bishop, a revenant undead warrior. I am one of The Fallen. My mission? To stop the apocalypse.

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

The Shadowed Earth core setting is a book of canon that outlines the overall story defined by the Shadowed Earth alternate history. This canon is designed to connect all the major points on a virtual timeline to create a synergy between the game settings and fiction placed within the context of Shadowed Earth. Although this canon is being used by Mystical Throne Entertainment, it is also available for those playing one of our games, reading our fiction, or looking to create their own setting using the content presented herein. What follows is a collection of methods on how to use Shadowed Earth in your games.

PUBLISHED SETTINGS

At its heart, Shadowed Earth drives our fantasy horror alternate history tabletop role-playing settings powered by the **Entropic Gaming System** – such as *Faith & Demons: The Rising*, *Judgment Day*, *Beyond the Firelight*, and *The Fallen*. However, we want to connect those settings with an overarching storyline that follows the world from beginning to end instead of presenting a setting that only provides a snapshot of one short era.

Although the Shadowed Earth timeline moves the story along in a matter of ups and downs, your games may break that timeline, resulting in an outcome contrary to the Shadowed Earth canon. This is completely acceptable and Game Masters are encouraged to create their own endings. Upon completion of a campaign, GMs can then tie that campaign to the Shadowed Earth canon and further their own storyline, following the same, similar, or even a contradictory path compared to what's presented here. In other words, use this book of canon to create your own storyline or use the one we present for you.

When a GM creates his own storyline using this book of canon as just a set of guidelines, he'll be able to take the content from each individual setting – like *Faith & Demons: The Rising* – and create his own campaign placed within that setting's era, using the unique character options available. Additionally, GMs are free to connect their campaigns to other Shadowed Earth game settings and create their own multi-era timeline, combing that timeline with the fantasy horror of Shadowed Earth.

UNPUBLISHED SETTINGS

There are many important points along the Shadowed Earth multi-era timeline. GMs can take one or more of these points and create their own fan-created Shadowed Earth settings. Although these cannot be published, they can be used to build amazing campaigns for players to experience the Shadowed Earth in a new way.



Because Shadowed Earth combines history with fantasy horror, there are an endless number of ways to create your own unpublished setting. Begin by picking out your favorite point in history and mix it with the canon presented herein to build a setting that is just your own. You can then combine that with any other potential settings, possibly even combining them, to build a continent-, or even world-, spanning experience.

For example, if your interests lie in Ancient Rome and Egypt, you can extract the canon for that era (the Iron Age), combine it with whatever aspects of history you prefer, and create your own historical fantasy horror experience. You can create a heroic experience where the characters are heroes of Rome, fighting against the aliens that traveled across the Olympians' cosmic bridge. Or maybe the characters are fierce Egyptian warriors fighting the incursion of undead unleashed by Anubis.

Many of Mystical Throne Entertainment's settings, especially those powered by the **Entropic Gaming System**, contain options that can be universally applied across different eras. By mixing and matching, or adding your own, you can create a campaign in any era. By establishing the canon of Shadowed Earth in a single core setting guide, the character options are thus connected by way of the overarching storyline and can mostly be used universally.

CREATE YOUR OWN SHADOWED EARTH

Maybe the GM doesn't want to use Earth's history, or maybe the players want to add more elements of fantasy into their campaigns. Shadowed Earth can be used as a guideline for building your own world by using its timeline and the ebb and flow of the occult and the chaos that goes along with it.

Although Shadowed Earth defines a handful of dates, most of the content simply follows the flow of history without confining its storyline to a particular date. If you create your own timeline, simply build your own flow of history within the Shadowed Earth canon as a backdrop to that history. In other words, the canon does not define the timeline, but rather the history of that new world defines when each major event occurred.

Another option is to extract only the pieces of Shadowed Earth you want to incorporate into your own setting. Maybe you want everything associated with the chaos realm and dark powers, but don't want the cosmic and spiritual realms. Maybe you don't like the concept of mortal realms and cosmic bridges and instead create a world populated by all types of fantastical beings. Or maybe you just want to use the fantasy horror elements and enhance or modify a setting you've already created. Either way, the canon is there to guide the way.

FICTION

Shadowed Earth is not just for tabletop role-playing games; it's also the setting and framework for a line of fiction in multiple formats. If you find a piece of Shadowed Earth fiction you enjoy and would like to create your own setting from it, simply connect that fiction to the Shadowed Earth canon, choosing an appropriate era, and create the character elements desired. You can also combine this with one of Mystical Throne Entertainment's published settings which already provide character options, and build the setting and its era around it.

A major advantage of publishing the canon in this guide is that whatever fiction is created within the setting will be tied directly to the setting. Thus, all of the fiction, regardless of what era and region it's presented in, is tied to the same major timeline and follows the same "rules" of the Shadowed Earth setting. The terminology will be the same, and you'll be able to import that into your games as desired.

FANTASY HORROR

Fantasy horror, sometimes called "weird," is the key element behind the alternate history that defines the Shadowed Earth historical timeline. It's not "epic fantasy" nor is it "survival horror"; instead, it's a mixture of the two whereas the world has elements of horror that can be overcome by the elements of fantasy. Magic is never as commonplace as it is in epic fantasy, but it does wax and wane as the timeline progresses. It should never be perceived as something simple, nor should it be perceived as something that doesn't exist. This is true with the horror elements too. Horror is the driving force behind what mankind faces on a daily basis. It produces natural conflict and can be adjusted to make the setting more or less deadly.

Removing either fantasy or horror causes the Shadowed Earth canon to break down. The alternate history is dependent on the threats from the chaos realm and the occult. To investigate those threats, you must have characters with the right type of knowledge and willpower. To overcome those threats, you must have characters capable of defeating them. Otherwise, you end up with everything horrific defeating humanity and turning them into slaves. After all, it is the divine powers of the cosmic realm that bring humanity out of The Fall. However, The Fall would have never come about if it weren't for the occult and the horrors of the chaos realm.

Without these two elements, the setting is just alternate history. If you want to play a historical setting that removes the fantasy and horror, it's possible, but many of the major points on the timeline would have little to no meaning.



ALTERNATE HISTORY

Shadowed Earth is an alternate history of Earth from its very early years to the near future. Although the major timeline is laid out in an orderly fashion, it's nowhere near the only options available. A final option to discuss is creating your own alternate history, picking out the options you like and replacing the ones you don't.

Alternate history is just a deviation from history, but the overall pace and direction of it continues much as it actually did (or at least how we think it did). Using Shadowed Earth as a template, you can create your own alternate history by changing some of the major events, adjusting the technology, removing pieces you don't want, or adding things you do.

For example, The Fall is a major point in the Shadowed Earth timeline, signifying the apocalypse where the Armies of Chaos essentially rule all of Europe, Asia, and Africa. You can remove The Fall and have humanity prevail over the Armies of Chaos, creating your own twist on the alternate history. Maybe with the victory humanity claims over the Armies of Chaos, they move into a period of unbelievable peace and focus their efforts on science instead of the Crusades. You can move the invention of clockwork technology or create your own alchemical technology.

Another example is the second Coming of the Occult during the Victorian era. According to the Shadowed Earth timeline, humanity was able to defeat the occult and stripped them of their clockwork technology. Maybe you'd like to define this as a second apocalyptic event, ushering in years of enslavement. Maybe World War I and II were not against the Germans, but rather humanity fighting against an occult that had grown extremely powerful and needed to be overthrown.

FINAL WORDS

Shadowed Earth is a large alternate history timeline. By producing this book of canon we present a massive sandbox for you to play in, with major points that allow the transition from one era to another and move the overall story along. It creates synergy between all of our current and future settings, and gives our fiction authors a massive timeline to play in without breaking the setting's rules.

In the end, Shadowed Earth is what you want it to be, and what we want it to be. You can incorporate it into your own settings, use it as-is, or expand on one of the campaigns we present in one of our published settings. If you don't want to use a particular piece of canon, remove it or change it. If you only want to use one or two pieces of canon, extract those and make the rest your own. All that matters is that you take history, add some chaos and fantasy, and turn it into something you find exciting! It's the story that counts, and with Shadowed Earth, the number of possible stories is endless!

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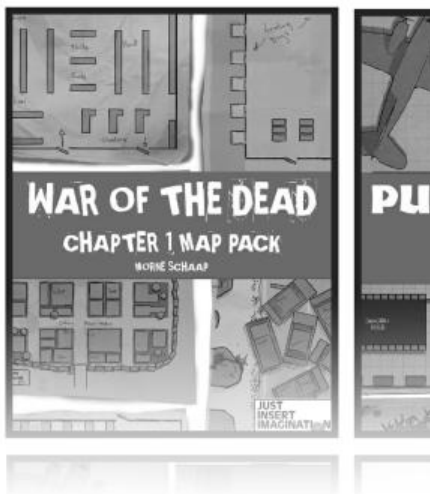
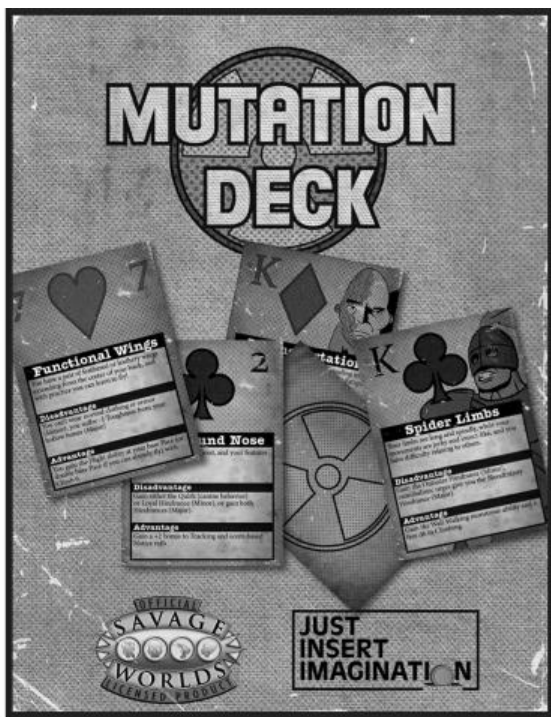
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"History is a lie. Many men have said that history is written by those who achieve victory. The truth is that history is written by those who want to hide the truth from the fragile minds of humanity. Why, you may ask? If humanity knew the truth about the world around them, it would truly drive them insane. The mind of the average citizen cannot fathom the powers that lie just beyond their reach; nor do they possess the willpower to steel their minds from the horrors that surround us every day."

- Grand Inquisitor Black Steel

Few understand what lurks within the shadows. Their knowledge, however, is key to humanity's survival. For thousands of years, humanity has been fighting a battle with the occult and the horrors from the Chaos Realm and other Mortal Realms. Sometimes they win, sometimes they lose, but the war never seems to end. As time moves on, humanity became stronger, able to stand against those wishing to enslave or kill them. However, to do this, almost everyone would have to think these horrors do not exist. It is the books of history that reflect this change from knowing to disbelieving.

Shadowed Earth is a fantasy horror alternate history setting that spans all time. It takes the folklore, mythology, and legends of old and makes them real. It then combines those with elements of horror to make it more dangerous. This is the core setting guide, establishing the framework and canon that makes-up all of *Shadowed Earth*. It is written as an all-encompassing setting for *Mystical Throne* Entertainment's various RPG settings and fictional offerings and is presented with no particular system in mind. You can use this book to expand your *Shadowed Earth* games, create your own *Shadowed Earth* settings, or plug-in various modules, placing them in the alternate history of *Shadowed Earth*.

The *Shadowed Earth* core setting guide includes:

- A narrative retelling of all major historical events within the *Shadowed Earth* alternate history
- A journey from Prehistory to the New Age
- Major movements of the Occult and the Inquisition
- Introduction to the major organizations
- A small GM's Guide for using *Shadowed Earth*

The truth may be more dangerous than the lie...

